

Bettina van Hoven

Women's Lives in Transition in Rural East Germany

Abstract

Political, economic and social changes after German unification have significantly affected rural women's everyday lives. Rural restructuring led to numerous redundancies without alternatives for re-employment. In particular women in remote areas with poor infrastructure have been unable to settle in their new lives without meaningful work. The absence of social networks, the feeling of being neglected by political actors and the inability to enjoy the abundance of new consumer products through lack of money have caused many women to feel isolated and useless. This paper addresses the experiences of rural women in the former GDR.

Keywords: rural women, GDR, employment, everyday life.

Introduction

The economic liberalisation and democratisation in Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) in the process of transition has initially been perceived as relatively unproblematic (Smith and Pickles, 1998). West European thinkers saw it as a powerful tool to set right the 'faults' of history, whilst East European politicians hoped the ongoing economic and social problems could be solved. A key critique more recently has been that this conceptualisation has failed to include the day-to-day reality of people living through times of transition. Indeed, citizens in ECE countries have found themselves in a trajectory, invented by outsiders, that regarded transition as inevitable, even desirable, and with a clear beginning and end (i.e. the triumph of capitalism) (Laurie et al., 1999). Various commentators have emphasised that transition has not occurred in one straight line but has instead taken many forms, depending on history, place and opportunity. The geographies of transition have been marked by local and regional dynamics resulting in a variety of pathways, each with specific gains and struggles

(see contributions in Pickles and Smith, 1998, or the various research reports in this journal).

In the former GDR, the driving forces towards a swift transition to market capitalism were West German politicians. As part of the transition process, West German legislation was transferred to the former GDR largely unchanged. Although a key political aim was the rise in standard of living in the new Bundesländer, this target has not yet been reached (van Hoven, 2001; Pfaffenbach, 2001). Unrest continually developed, for example, through the perception by East German citizens of unequal incomes and excessive unemployment compared with the West (although this was also substantiated by research in the early 1990s, see for example, Maier, 1993). Earlier studies emphasised that negative experiences of German unification were particularly acute for East German women whose social, cultural, economic and political position has radically altered as a consequence of unification (Braun et al., 1994; Behrend, 1995; Kolinsky, 1995, 1996; Meyer and Schulze, 1998; van Hoven-Iganski, 2000). Nevertheless, Western politicians initially believed that the former GDR would soon 'catch up' with West Germany, ignoring differences in local and regional constraints and opportunities such as between the predominantly industrial and rural areas. In some parts of the former GDR, for example the southern Bundesland of Thuringia, research suggested that many people are indeed better off. However, my own research in the northern Bundesland of Mecklenburg-Westpommern illustrated that recent developments have caused people, women in particular, to experience an increasing sense of displacement and isolation. Comparing both, it can be concluded that:

...women's personal history was narrowly interwoven with the economic developments in each region [...] South Thuringia has become a setting of 'winner' biographies where women experienced vast changes in their work lives which led them to orient themselves towards the new economic structures and take advantage of these within and beyond the former border. Their initiative was rewarded by a sense of freedom and independence as well as a relatively high income. The social cost, i.e. local conflicts based on jealousy, appeared bearable in relation to the gains. At the same time, Mecklenburg-Westpommern is characterised by 'loser' biographies, as unification has caused large-scale disillusionment and disorientation. Women who had felt relatively well-off and emancipated in the GDR could not find their place in the New Germany and remained looking back to their old lives in the GDR. Many withdrew to the isolation of their homes. Even those who were more active, did not feel rewarded by a sense of self-confidence or independence. (van Hoven and Pfaffenbach, forthcoming, np)

Developments such as indicated in the above quote cannot be disconnected from historic legacies, i.e. the way in which people worked and

lived under socialism. It is evident therefore that the difference between these regions will not result in a simple process of 'catching up' and that the speed of transition will depend, at least in part, on the 'weight' of the socialist legacy and the extent to which the local population is able to take advantage of new economic, political and social opportunities. Following from the argument that transition must be seen as contextual, and place and time specific, my interest in researching transition has been to represent the individual experiences of women in Eastern Germany (van Hoven, 2001; van Hoven, 2002 forthcoming). In this article I want to illustrate some aspects of the problematic transition to capitalism for women in Mecklenburg-Westpomerania. Key criticisms by women related to changes at local level induced by settlement of property claims in the process of agricultural restructuring in their villages and the lack of employment opportunities. In both cases, women experienced a kind of displacement. Whilst the first development evoked a feeling of colonisation, the second had a more far reaching impact as it led to the loss of women's social status through the disintegration of social networks and financial independence.

Data Collection

This article is based on a wider study conducted between 1996 and 1999 (and updated in 2002) on women's changing geographies in Mecklenburg-Westpomerania since German unification (van Hoven-Iganski, 2000). Starting in October 1996, I collected experiential data from 40 women correspondents in Mecklenburg-Westpomerania. Using a topic guide, I encouraged women to write about their experiences around the time of unification and thereafter. During a later phase in the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants representing various regional and local political and non-governmental groups. In addition, focus groups were held in six remote villages near the Polish border. The last interviews were held in July 2002. Of the correspondents and focus group participants, most women were over 40 years old and had worked within the agricultural sector all of their lives. Since unification, few had changed careers but a significant number of women had experience in one of the short-term government-funded employment schemes (ABM). Many had retired early or were without work.

Agricultural Restructuring

Thiemann (1996) noted that economic and social progress is largely determined by private ownership of property. Przeworski (1995) observed that private ownership is often regarded as a prerequisite for the functioning of democracy (see also Yuval-Davis, 1997). Although these perceptions

indicate that for the development of individual personalities freedom of property is a key requirement, these views have become problematic, if not disastrous, for the livelihoods of many residents in rural villages of the former GDR. Many respondents have not equated ownership of property with democracy but see it in a wider process leading to humiliation and social disintegration in their villages. In 1989, agricultural co-operatives cultivated over 90% of arable land in the Bundesland of Mecklenburg-Westpommern (Brick, 1996). In a first phase towards private ownership, Germany initiated extensive 'land readjustments' with the aim of developing 'a multifaceted agricultural structure and [to create] suitable conditions for the re-establishment of competitive enterprises to enable participation of all people, who are occupied in the agricultural sector, in the development of incomes and prosperity' (LwAnpG, 1996: § 3, own translation from German). The restitution of property was based on ownership structures of the years between 1933 and 1945 and between 1949 and 1960, i.e. when farmers were disowned by the Nazi regime or as a result of the post-war agricultural restructuring in the GDR (see also Merl, 1991; Smith, 1996a). Many of these farmers had migrated to the West and could now return to reclaim their land.

Government schemes were devised to develop 'suitable conditions' for the market economy by encouraging farmers to start family farms, or establish new types of co-operatives. For former GDR farm workers, however, the lack of starting capital, and the lack of knowledge and experience of marketing their products inhibited large-scale initiatives. Research by Hubatsch and Krumbach (in Meyer and Uttitz, 1993) indicated that a minority of former co-operative members (40%) were willing to risk 'going their own way' and that the vast majority (82%) preferred to remain within a collective type of farm. A key reason, suggested by Krumbach (1991), was the loss of social securities associated with the former socialist system and the loss of social networks and emotional support obtained from the community of farm workers. As a result of the hesitation amongst East German farmers and the legal opportunities for West German agricultural entrepreneurs, many Westerners successfully reclaimed arable land and property, and began establishing individual farms. Stark (1996) indicated that 90% of the privatised firms from Treuhand properties were sold to West Germans. Consequently, East German farmers experienced the 'land readjustments' as a second expropriation. Most respondents to the research for this article emphasised their sense of being colonised by the West. Two respondents illustrated the events around the restructuring of the former co-operatives:

In 1990 these West [German] citizens arrived in the village, [these] former Wilmsdorfer resurfaced and said 'It's us now here and we want our

property back. Where are our animals?' I really became aggressive and some of them complained but [they] didn't get anywhere with it. I said to them 'Are you not ashamed of yourself? You can't just leave and abandon your cattle in the sheds, it starves!' I said they should've asked someone to take care of it. They claimed to have had so many cows. 'Nothing you had,' I said, 'your husband sat his arse by the oven all day and snoozed. Those people should be reimbursed by you!', 'I said.

God, it was terrible... The Treuhand had a priority list for those who have land and [those] who haven't. The 'Wiedereinrichter' (those who came back to run their farms once again) were treated favourably. Large co-operatives stood at the very end of that list... Every time we lost 100 to 200 hectares [of land], we also had to make four or five people redundant, but the other [farms] didn't take them. [Instead, the workers] were left out on the streets. And the battle in the village! Hardly anyone said 'hello' to the other. It was like war. Once it became so bad, there was a fist fight right [in the mayor's office] We started out with 2,600 hectares of arable land and today we have 1,000. It went downhill rapidly because of the 'Wiedereinrichter'... It was a considerable cut altogether... We are 27 people today out of 190 originally.

Some commentators have argued that the development of agricultural structures since unification is at least problematic as the former co-operatives were subsumed to a set of national policies already subject to critical discussion in the West. Merl (1991) claimed that attempts to reform these policies were 'forgotten' and existing GDR policies were disregarded entirely as alternative solutions. For example, the opportunity to improve working conditions for agricultural employees by introducing shorter working days and socio-political standards similar to those formerly included into co-operative plans had been neglected. This neglect had a particularly negative impact on women who were often reduced to a 'helping hand' to their husbands (see also Meurs, 1994). The transformations in rural areas have therefore largely ignored rural social issues for the benefit of a market-oriented approach (see also Herrschel, 1997; Jones and Wild, 1997; Smith, 1996b for perspectives).

It is noteworthy that in the studied area, many agricultural co-operatives remained in the hands of farmers from within the region. Speculations about reasons for this included the fact that the research area was simply located in a very undesirable part of the country with poor soil quality and poor infrastructure. In spite of a kind of local rather than external (i.e. Western) co-operative structure, only few co-operatives managed to undergo a smooth transition. A significant burden were the various facilities formerly associated with the co-operatives, such as local shops, childcare facilities, canteens, launderettes and so on. The success of privatisation of

local facilities had a direct impact on the restructuring of the social composition in the communities, because the local labour market, the economic and social 'wealth' of the village and the continuity of community services were affected. In most villages, the restructuring process was accompanied by large-scale redundancies. It is important to note that the loss of jobs within the former co-operatives was significant to small villages such as those studied since, in the majority of these villages, no alternative employment opportunities existed.

By now the agricultural restructuring process has largely been accomplished and those farms that succeeded operate within the structures of the Common Agricultural Policies of the European Community. However, the social consequences induced by the restructuring process and hinted at in the quotes cannot be overemphasised. Instead of experiencing the development of incomes and property, community leaders had to deal with economic crises, an ageing population, migration of younger residents, high unemployment figures and social degradation. Communities had to find their own strategies when attempting to overcome old political structures and institutionalise new administrative ones. One mayor explained:

It's a real joke. We've got, for instance, and I am not sure if you know what it's like elsewhere, but we can buy new equipment for our kindergartens worth 800 Marks a year. That's because our budget is so tight due to compulsory expenditures. As a result, we decided to extinguish the street lights in the village at half ten, 'cause we have no money.

Integration into the Labour Market

The developments described so far indicate a significant, multifaceted transformation of the East German countryside that affected the composition of the local population and changes in the landscape. It was indicated that the restructuring of agricultural land resulted in large-scale redundancies that could not be absorbed by newly emerging employment opportunities. Women in particular who were formerly occupied within the agricultural sector were affected. This can, at least in part, be explained by the gender-differentiated employment patterns prior to unification. The integration of women into paid employment in the GDR was facilitated through so-called Women's Politics. These policies developed gradually from being largely work policies between 1945 and 1965 to promote women's further education and professional training to specific family politics from the 1970s onwards. In this last phase, which has also been termed 'mommy politics' (Marx-Ferree, 1993; Kolinsky, 1996), women were encouraged to combine motherhood and employment through measures such as the following: one year paid leave after each child with a guaranteed return to one's

workplace; free contraception; a state birth premium of 1,000 Marks, extensive childcare services and, for young couples, generous low-interest loans and the right to a bigger flat. Although about 90% of women worked as a result of these policies, Marx-Ferree (1993) and Nickel (1990a, b) illustrated the over-representation of women in several employment sectors, such as the services sector (72.2% of all jobs were occupied by women), education (77%), public health (83.3%) and social services (91.8%). Of all female graduates in 1987, 60% were predominantly occupied within 16 out of 259 skilled trades only. All of these sectors were 'typically female,' i.e. with over 85% women (Fink and Grajewski, 1994; Nickel, 1990a, b). Overall, women were largely placed in manual, labour-intensive work, rather than leadership or managerial positions.

When the women interviewed for this study recalled their experiences of the workplace, however, their concern was merely with where they worked. Instead, they emphasised that their employment had provided financial independence as well as a place for social networking and personal development. Women felt socially respected and emancipated. In previous publications, I suggested that women formed especially strong social relations through their working collectives (van Hoven, 2001; Iganski, 1999). Many women indeed emphasised that it was virtually impossible to think of the workplace and their social lives as separate units and that their identities were inextricably linked with their integration in the workplace. In the next section of this article, I will outline the consequences of unemployment since unification as experienced by rural women.

Nowadays, unemployment has become a widespread reality in women's everyday lives. Between 1989 and 1995 approximately 86% of agricultural employees throughout Mecklenburg-Westpomerania were made redundant (Krambach et al., 1997). A more accurate perspective can be obtained using gender-differentiated figures which indicate that only 8,000 of 100,000 women formerly employed within agriculture in Mecklenburg-Westpomerania in 1989 were still employed in 1992 (Ackermann et al., 1993). Many jobs in the administrative and services sector were rationalised. In these sectors, women represented the vast majority of employees, up to 93% of all employees per sector. Typical rural professions like 'milking women,' 'veterinary engineer,' or 'potato sorter' ceased to exist as they became insignificant to the new agricultural structures. Adding up these developments, the Deutscher Bundestag (1992) concluded that 75% of all jobs that were lost as a consequence of unification had been held by women.

Particularly in the first years after unification, the government introduced several early retirement and short-term employment schemes (*ABM* and § 249h). More recently, however, the continuity of such schemes has become threatened by a lack of government funding. At the time of the research for this article, the access to schemes to alleviate unemployment

appeared to be gender-differentiated. For example, 70% of women aged over 55 took early retirement, compared with 50% of men. In addition, although 68% of all unemployed in Mecklenburg-Westpommern in 1992 were women (Boje et al., 1992) and the unemployment rate for women was twice as high as that for men, only 48.5% of *ABM* were offered to women and one third of § 249h (Schröter et al., 1997). In part, this uneven distribution of job opportunities can be explained by the nature of employment offered within these schemes, i.e. in construction and landscaping. Only a few 'female' projects were offered, e.g. focusing on social or youth work. Interviews revealed that many women also experienced a discriminatory attitude by employers towards their participation in certain occupations. Arguments for choosing men rather than women included that the handling of expensive equipment required a significant level of responsibility, that women would bear children and leave the labour force too soon, or that they were too old and 'the pretty face was missing' (see also Beer and Müller, 1993 and Marx-Ferree and Young, 1993). Although women were made redundant more frequently than men, men were twice as likely to find work again (Schumann and Jahn, 1991). As a result, several women aged over 40 felt 'obliged' to leave the labour force while 20–25-year-old women began migrating to the West (Schröter et al., 1997).

In addition to discrimination experienced on the labour market and the lower availability of short-term employment for women, many women were also prevented from re-entering the labour market through increased family obligations (90% of women were mothers and 30% single mothers – Nickel, 1990a). Single mothers found themselves in a paradoxical situation. As a result of financial problems, many unemployed women had to withdraw their children from childcare facilities. At the same time, the unemployment agency would not provide work for them unless they were available for a job which meant that children had to be cared for within public childcare facilities (Marx-Ferree and Young, 1993). Due to the decreasing number of children many childcare facilities were closed (Kolinsky, 1996), thus making childcare less accessible even for those women who could afford this service. This development was a clear sign of a political campaign by the Christian conservative party to promote women's return to the realm of their homes to be 'good mothers.' It was proposed that the number of children in public childcare should not exceed 12%. Rueschemeyer (1994), however, stated that the number of women who *needed* to work to maintain an adequate standard of living exceeded this figure. As a result of such propaganda, these women remained 'unavailable' for employment, running a high risk of poverty (DeSoto and Panzig, 1994; Köppl, 1997). This was particularly troublesome as their right to unemployment benefit was also limited (Kolinsky, 1996). In the mid-1990s, more than half of all welfare recipients throughout the former GDR were consequently female

(Schröter et al., 1997). Of these welfare recipients, the number of women under 25 receiving benefits was significant, indicating that the exclusion of women from the public sphere may remain on the increase.

Overall, it can be concluded that political actors have promoted the preservation of a traditional breadwinner model and hindered the integration of women into the labour force. For the women interviewed for this study, this development was a significant step backwards compared with the way in which they experienced integration in the GDR. Although some women welcomed a break from hard manual labour under socialism, the majority felt degraded in their roles as housewives and mothers only. In addition, they contended their financial dependence on the State or their husbands. Especially since incomes were so low that even if their spouses would work, they could not live comfortably on one income alone. The key issue for women was, however, that they *wanted* to work. Renate, one of the respondents, stated:

My husband could bring home 10,000 marks and I would know that I wouldn't be tight for money, and I wouldn't have to work. I could stay home, put my feet up. But that wouldn't be me. I'd miss something... I've worked all my life... ever since I was 16 years old. Perhaps I'd go to work half days. Yes, that would be okay.

In the section on data collection above, I noted that most women in the focus groups were unemployed at the time of the interview. All but three women had experienced unemployment since unification. I also noted that the experience of being unemployed has been distressing for women in rural areas. They felt a loss of social recognition and inclusion and their experience of loss was also related to the lack of social contacts and emotional support in the village and the limitations in their consumer behaviour. Even though the political line at the time was that women should stay at home more, there was little support for these women, particularly at the local level in rural areas. The lack of public and private transport also prevented the participation of rural women in activities in the cities. Only recently (2002) more local activities were recorded in the form of women's groups who conducted monthly meetings. The future prospects for women in this study to get jobs have further diminished. Whereas they first sought suitable employment, they began looking for *any* kind of job soon after unification. One group described what it meant to have to do 'any kind of work:'

Olga: *Today, it is worse [than in the GDR]. You have to work as well.*

Hedwig: *Yes, just that women don't get work anymore.*

Olga: *And women don't earn enough to...*

Hedwig: *But who does work has loads of work.*

Liesel: *But it's not enough for 4 million [unemployed].*

Olga: *And if you then consider the sort of work that they do offer you. They just want to exploit you. I know, we went to the employment agency and they were looking for cleaning personnel for toilets, somewhere near the border, or something. Well, I won't go in shifts, nightshifts and weekends for 8 marks an hour? Am I stupid?*

Liesel: *At least you can drive.*

Olga: *Nonetheless, who's going to work for 8 marks an hour? Nightshifts, weekends and holidays?*

Margarethe: *And then toilets...*

Olga: *Well, for 8 marks an hour, that is exploitation. If they would pay me properly, I would do that work.*

Hedwig: *I don't know, I wouldn't like to do it.*

Olga: *Well, somebody has got to do it and if its kept clean properly. But one shouldn't have to be exploited in that way.*

At the time of the interviews for this study most women were merely hoping for short-term employment. Although many women initially experienced some form of disqualification since unification, more recently they have experienced problems adapting to the demands of the labour market. Many women have been unemployed for several years and are no longer used to regular working hours, fulfilling the demands of the employer and the pressure associated with this. During the study period 1996–1999, several women felt stigmatised and good-for nothing. In 2002 even respondents within politics stated that one now speaks of a 'lost generation of women.' One respondent summarised her current life stating that 'everything today is shit.' Although a large number of women have remained at home, the level of communication amongst villagers has notably decreased. Several respondents explained that a key problem was the lack of initiative, although many women also clarified that they simply felt ashamed to go out much as they tried to avoid talking about their unemployment.¹ Conflicts at local level are not, however, restricted to problems at the individual level. In villages where people were still working, material wealth was expressed through house renovations or new cars. This has caused diversification among residents between the employed and the unemployed.

In order to cope with the conditions of their new lives, women have adopted several survival strategies. For a few women these were more outward strategies, trying to project their own feeling of loss onto fellow villagers and becoming very active in organising events at local level. Many

¹ Interestingly, during the course of the focus group interviews the majority of women respondents said they enjoyed the meetings and the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns with other women. As a result, in some groups, plans for further meetings were made.

women, however, turned inward and became more focused on their families. Three women correspondents even described that they were so fearful, desperate and disillusioned after becoming unemployed that they considered committing suicide, an outcome only averted with the help of close family and friends. Remarkably few women have sought help from social welfare organisations when dealing with problems resulting from the new demands of their everyday lives. Their main inhibition resulted from the feeling that asking for consultation was equivalent to going 'soliciting.' When asked how women spent their time most women claimed they were very busy doing things around the house or garden. Some women tried to keep in touch with their former workplace but felt as though they were intruding. Others described being restless and feeling helpless. The following excerpts from group discussions illustrate some women's experiences:

Renate: The psychological consequences belong to it. We became unemployed immediately after unification... we weren't paid much [in the GDR] and from that we got 63% [unemployment benefit]. Meanwhile it's only unemployment support, that's 10% less. And then staying home, one person bothers the other... one comes through one door, the other leaves. And one cannot really talk about the whole thing either... one has to cope with most of it on one's own and nonetheless deal with all the rest. One has to budget and be careful not to be in debt... but, well, one always tried... I mean I just couldn't have coped at home, I must be honest. In the beginning, I always ran out of the house... into the garden and cried. There was enough work in the house, but one just couldn't... all alone... then one had to go somewhere to talk, to hear something else... I just couldn't cope.

Heidrun: That's exactly it. No work... I am also the type of person, I've always worked, I need to be with people. [When I was unemployed] it was horrific. I got up late, at 9am, went to my mother's to eat, sat at the table, went back home, 'shit, you don't have to do the household, you could do it tomorrow, you'll still be home.' Really, my house sometimes looked worse than when I was working full-time... I didn't feel like doing anything... I could've cried day and night... terrible, terrible, and one has such a bad mood, there were always arguments with my husband 'Well, I can't help it if you're unemployed!'

Many key informants, i.e. mayors or members of political parties, emphasised that developments as described above have caused a considerable number of women to become increasingly socially, economically and politically inaccessible. In addition, an erosion of values and social contacts has begun taking place in their environment despite the prioritisation of the values of solidarity, support and communal togetherness in the GDR. Rather than seeking opportunities for their engagement at local or regional level

themselves, women expected that they would experience communication, integration, acknowledgement and self-esteem exclusively through employment. Women's 'wait-and-see' attitude implied a dependence on external impulses while women denied themselves the opportunity to make changes that they can identify with themselves. They have not yet recognised that work does have a significant impact on the development of personal initiative but it is also linked to various other factors.

Conclusion

The experiences of women discussed in this article illustrate that transition has neither set right the 'faults' of history, nor cured economic and social problems. Instead, the women's stories suggest that socialist legacies have often been neglected in the process of establishing a new economic and political system. 'Setting right' expropriation under socialism by re-establishing property rights according to Western legislation, for example, has evoked a feeling of colonisation for the respondents. The fact that many Westerners were able to reclaim and purchase property based on the new legislation consolidated the divide between people of the old and new Bundesländer. In addition, the process of privatisation and rationalisation during agricultural restructuring left many villagers unemployed, especially women.

In this study, the impact of unemployment on women's everyday lives was often devastating. Although women's position in the GDR workforce was determined by gender-differentiated patterns, contemporary Western political and economic structures have also produced a gender-differentiated labour market. Few women have been able to break through such structures due to widely practised discrimination, lack of adequate qualifications as well as both restricted social and physical mobility. Although short-term employment measures were designed to alleviate the pressures on the labour market, they have not contributed to the maintenance of women's potential as social and political agents and as a labour resource capable of developing with new innovations and requirements of the workplace. Instead, post-unification transformations led to a diversification and social stratification at local level. Whereas women in the GDR largely shared common experiences in their everyday lives, the level of women's involvement in the labour market, or the retreat from the workforce through retirement has produced a variety of contradictory experiences that contributed to women's socio-political exclusion, lack of networking and lack of identification with the 'New Germany.'

The study suggests that the greatest risks are prevalent for women above 45 who have been unemployed for most of the years since unification. These women are difficult to reintegrate into the labour market as their

skills have begun to decrease. The government has recognised the seriousness of this problem and has begun to devise specific projects for older women to help them until their retirement and create an opportunity for women to augment their pension fund. However, politicians and women's organisations from local to regional level have unanimously confirmed that the continuing withdrawal of women has caused them to remain ineffective in their attempts to help as well. It appears that long-term solutions should be drawn from discussions including politicians, organisations and local women, but also professional social welfare organisations which can offer strategies to help women cope with the realities of their unemployment rather than keep promising schemes which remain ineffective in providing work.

References

- Ackermann, E., Braun, M., Dolk, B., Lindner, K. and Schönrock, R. (1993), *Frauensoziale Problemgruppe ländlicher Arbeitsmärkte. Eine soziologische Studie aus der Umlandregion Rostock*. Rostock: Universität Rostock. AG Arbeitsmarktforschung.
- Beer, U. and Müller, U. (1993), Coping with a new reality: Barriers and possibilities. In: *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 17: 281–294.
- Behrend, H. (1995), East German Women and the *Wende*. In: *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 2: 237–255.
- Boje, J., Gladisch, D. and Dahms, V. (1992), *Abschlussbericht. Beschäftigungsperspektiven und arbeitsmarktpolitischer Handlungsbedarf im Arbeitsamtbezirk Neubrandenburg*. Berlin.
- Braun, A., Jasper, G. and Schröter, U. (1994), Rolling Back the Gender Status of East German Women. In H. Behrend (ed.) *German Unification. The Destruction of an Economy* (pp. 139–166). London and East Haven: Pluto Press.
- Brick, M. (1996), Die Bedeutung der Landwirtschaft zur Erhaltung und Entwicklung der ländlichen Räume in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In: *Der Landkreis. Sonderausgabe: Ländliche Räume braucht das Land. Die Überlebenschance dünn besiedelter strukturschwacher Gebiete*.
- DeSoto, H. H. and Panzig, C. (1994), Women, gender and rural development. In: *Tagungsbericht 16. bis 18. Juni 1994 "Frauen in der ländlichen Entwicklung"*. Landwirtschaftlich-Gärtnerische Fakultät der Humboldtuniversität. Berlin.
- Deutscher Bundestag (1992), *Drucksache 12/3910 vom 03.12.92. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die grosse Anfrage der Abgeordneten Petra Bläss und der Gruppe PDS/ Linke Liste- Drucksache 12/2360-. Perspektiven für Frauen in ländlichen Räumen in den neuen Bundesländern*. Bonn.
- Fink, M. and Grajewski, R. (1994), Arbeitsmarktsituation für Frauen im ländlichen Ostdeutschland. In: *Landbauforschung Völkenrode* 44 (1): 13–25.
- Herschel, T. (1997), Economic transformation, locality and policy in eastern Germany. In: *Applied Geography* 17 (4): 267–281.

- Hoven, B. van (2001), Women at work – experiences and identity in rural East Germany. *Area* 33: 38–46.
- Hoven, B. van (Fall, 2002, forthcoming), Experiencing democracy – Women in rural East Germany. In: *Social Politics*.
- Hoven-Iganski, B. van (2000), *Made in the GDR. The changing geographies of women in the post-socialist society in Mecklenburg-Westpomerania*. NGS/KNAG, Utrecht.
- Iganski, B. (1999), The meaning of women's 'second family' for current patterns of discontinuity in rural East Germany. In: *Germany: continuity and change*. German Monitor volume 46. Atlanta/Amsterdam: Rodopi Press.
- Jones, P. N. and Wild, T. (1997), Regional and local variations in the emerging economic landscape of the new German Länder. In: *Applied Geography* 17 (4): 283–299.
- Köppl, U. (1997), Promotion of women in rural projects of Brandenburg. In: *Proceedings of the Second International Conference 'Women in Rural Development' June 28–30, 1996*. Berlin: Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture, Humboldt-University.
- Kolinsky, E. (1995), Women after Muttipolitik. In: E. Kolinsky (ed.) *Between hope and fear. Everyday life in post-unification East Germany*. A case study of Leipzig. Keele: Keele University Press.
- Kolinsky, E. (1996), Women in the New Germany. In: G. Smith, W. E. Paterson, S. Padgett (eds.) *Developments in German politics 2*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Krambach, K. (1991), Meinungen von Agrarproduzenten- Beweggründe für das Verbleiben in einer Genossenschaftlichen Existenzweise. In: S. Merl, E. Schinke (eds.) *Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik in der ehemaligen DDR im Umbruch*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Krambach, K., Kuntzsche, S. and Watzek, H. (1997), Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung in den drei Nordbezirken- Agrarwirtschaft, Agrarpolitik und Lebensverhältnisse auf dem Lande. In: Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (ed.) *Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989- Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung*. Schwerin.
- Laurie, N., Dwyer, C., Holloway, S. and Smith, F. (1999), Geographies of new femininities. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- LwAnpG (1996), Landwirtschaftsanpassungsgesetz in der Fassung vom 20.12.1996. Bundesgesetzblatt (BGB1.) I. S. 2082.
- Maier, F. (1993), The labour market for women and employment perspectives in the aftermath of German unification. In: *Cambridge Journal Economics* 17: 267–280.
- Marx-Ferree, M. (1993), The rise and fall of 'Mommy Politics:' Feminism and Unification in (East) Germany. In: *Feminist Studies* 19 (1): 89–115.
- Marx-Ferree, M. and Young, B. (1993), Three steps back for women: German unification, gender and university 'reform.' In: *Political Science and Politics*. June: 199–205.
- Merl, S. (1991), Reprivatisierung aus der Sicht des Produktionsfaktors Arbeit. In: S. Merl, E. Schinke (eds.) *Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik in der ehemaligen DDR im Umbruch*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

- Meurs, M. (1994a), From hoes to hoes: State policy, agricultural mechanization, and women's work under central planning. In: *Review of Radical Political Economics* 26 (4): 99–117.
- Meyer, S. and Schulze, E. (1992), Wendezeit- Familienzeit. Veränderungen der Situation von Frauen und Familien in den neuen Bundesländern. In: *Frauenforschung* 10 (3): 45–57.
- Meyer, T. and Uttitz, P. (1993), Nachholende Marginalisierung- oder der Wandel der agrarischen Sozialstruktur in der ehemaligen DDR. Ergebnisse einer Befragung der Mitglieder einer Produktionsgenossenschaft. In: G. Geissler (ed.) *Sozialer Umbruch in Ostdeutschland*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Nickel, H. M. (1990a), Geschlechtertrennung durch Arbeitsteilung Berufs- und Familienarbeit in der DDR. In: *Feministische Studien* 8: 10–19.
- Nickel, H. M. (1990b), Geschlechtersozialisation in der DDR. Oder: Zur Rekonstruktion des Patriarchats im realen Sozialismus. In: G. Burkhardt (ed.) *Sozialisation im Sozialismus. Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung und Erziehungssoziologie (ZSE)*. 1. Beiheft.
- Pfaffenbach C. (2001), Waechst die Nation zusammen? Ost-West-Unterschiede in Deutschland. *Geographische Rundschau* 53: 4–9.
- Pickles J. and Smith A. (1998) (eds.), *Theorising transition. The political economy of post-socialist transformations*. Routledge, London.
- Przeworski, A. (1995), *Sustainable democracy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rueschemeyer, M. (1994), Women in the politics of Eastern Germany. The dilemmas of unification. In: M. Rueschemeyer (ed.) *Women in the politics of post-communist Eastern Europe*. London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Schröter, U., Löser, H. and Bröse, G. (1997), *Erster Frauenbericht des Landes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*. Schwerin: Die Frauen- und Gleichstellungsbeauftragte.
- Schumann, F. and Jahn, W. (1991), Zur Lage der Landwirtschaft in der BRD. In: *Dokumentation AK Feminisierung der Gesellschaft*. PDS/Linke Liste. Bonn.
- Smith, F. M. (1996a), Housing tenures in transformation: Questioning geographies of ownership in Eastern Germany. In: *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 11 (1): 3–10.
- Smith, F. M. (1996b), *Contested geographies of German unification: neighbourhood action in Leipzig: 1989–1993*. Unpublished thesis: University of Glasgow.
- Smith A. and Pickles J. (1998), Introduction: theorising transition and the political economy of transformation. In: J. Pickles and A. Smith (eds.) *Theorising transition. The political economy of post-socialist transformations*. Routledge, London.
- Stark, D. (1996), Recombinant property in East European Capitalism. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 4: 993–1027.
- Thiemann (1996), unpublished article obtained with personal correspondence.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (1997), Women, citizenship and difference. In: *Feminist Review* 57: 4–27.