

# **Newcomers to rural Denmark: exploring migration processes and social life changes**

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## **Abstract**

Rural areas are undergoing major changes functionally and economically but also socially and culturally where processes of rural in-migration reflect a shift in rural society. Traditionally studies on social changes in rural areas have been based on an understanding of tension or conflict between newcomers characterized by the domination of locals. Other studies show that incomers dominate and change rural life in both physical and social terms by introducing different building styles, individual values, lifestyles and due to limited involvement in the local community. For a high social cohesion in rural communities it is important that local residents connect with new groups of inhabitants, and vice versa. But whereas newcomers are thought to generate new activities and bring new life in an often aging and depopulating rural community, different and perhaps conflicting lifestyles, ideas and viewpoints may hamper relations between newcomers and locals.

The purpose of the paper is to explore processes of social change in rural communities by examining migration processes and social changes in remote rural locations in Denmark. Through a survey among both in-migrants and long-term residents focus lays on three themes: changes in rural life due to in-migration, the development of relationships between local residents and newcomers and the integration of newcomers in rural communities. In this way the paper gives insight into the relation between migration processes and social life change and it also gives new insight in how rural communities can attract newcomers as well as can keep them from moving out again.

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