

Women's careers in ICT in Norwegian rural contexts

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Gendered patterns of ICT work in rural context

- **Rurality** traditionally associated with
 - patriarchal gender norms
 - a strong gender divide in primary industries
- **Out-migration**
 - For education and work opportunities
 - Women's out-migration
 - Gender divide in workplaces making rural labour market challenging for women with gender atypical education
 - Women's educational and career ambition
- **In-migration**
 - Strong gender divide in labour market makes it less likely for women and men with gender atypical education to return to rural region



Research questions

- **What are women's narratives of moving-in, moving-out, and moving-through in the rural region?**
- **What do these narratives tell us about gendered patterns of ICT work in rural region?**

A case study of women in ICT work in a rural and sparsely populated region in the western part of Norway

- Part of **Nordwit**



Methodology

- 25 women aged 24 to 59
- **Recruitment**
 - Organisations working with regional innovation, ICT development, research, and funding agencies, as well as public and private companies
- **Interview guide**
 - Women's professional life histories
 - Experience of relationships between gender, rurality, technology, work
 - Career opportunities – Support structures + Positive drivers
 - Barriers or challenges for career
 - Visions for the future





25 women aged 24 to 59

16 of the women grew up in the region
3 in-migrated from other parts of Norway
6 with immigrant backgrounds

Interviewees

Women's educational background

½ a university degree in computing

½ non-technical discipline + ICT

Characteristics of ICT workplaces in the region

- Organizational thinness with few and small private businesses
- The public sector
- University collage, research institution, research funding institutions, innovation incubators
- ICT workplaces have quadrupled since 2000



Narratives of moving out- moving in - moving through

Moving out:

- 16 of the women born/grew up in the region
- 15 moved out at one point for taking higher education or work in large cities

Moving in:

- 24 of the women have a moving in narrative
- returning home
- joining partner
- work

Moving through:

- Thinking of moving out because of other exciting works
- Thinking of moving out because of lack of personal network
- Commuting (regional and external)



ICT work opportunities for women

- More than 1/3 of the interviewed women worked with digitalization in private secondary ICT sector
- 1/3 of the interviewed women worked in academic positions, in less-male dominated disciplines
- Less than 1/3 of the interviewed women worked as ICT experts in public sectors



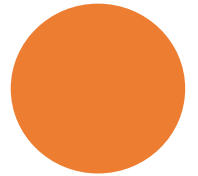
Characteristics of the ICT works

- Small ICT divisions in public sectors or secondary ICT sector
- Small private companies
- ICT work in small places with low density of people



Women's experiences of the ICT work

- Many different roles in the workplace
- More visible both in the workplace and the region
- Opportunity for training through work
- Few ICT jobs available





The entanglement of working and living in the rural area

- **Moving back- storyline:** The sense of belonging to the rural area
- **Rural idyll- narratives:**
 - Rural as idyll place for bringing up children
 - Close to nature and outdoor activities
 - Enjoy being outside, like outdoor activities and nature, and perhaps the reason moving back home was that I missed mountains, proper mountains*
 - Logistic
 - The biggest advantage of working as a researcher in [place] is that you save a lot of time that you waste in big cities in transport and organization of your work*
 - The rural-idyll was threatened by urban-rural power structures
 - It is not like we are a random group of peasants sitting here, trying to produce something. We have competences that are no less than in any other place.*

The entanglement of working and living in the rural area

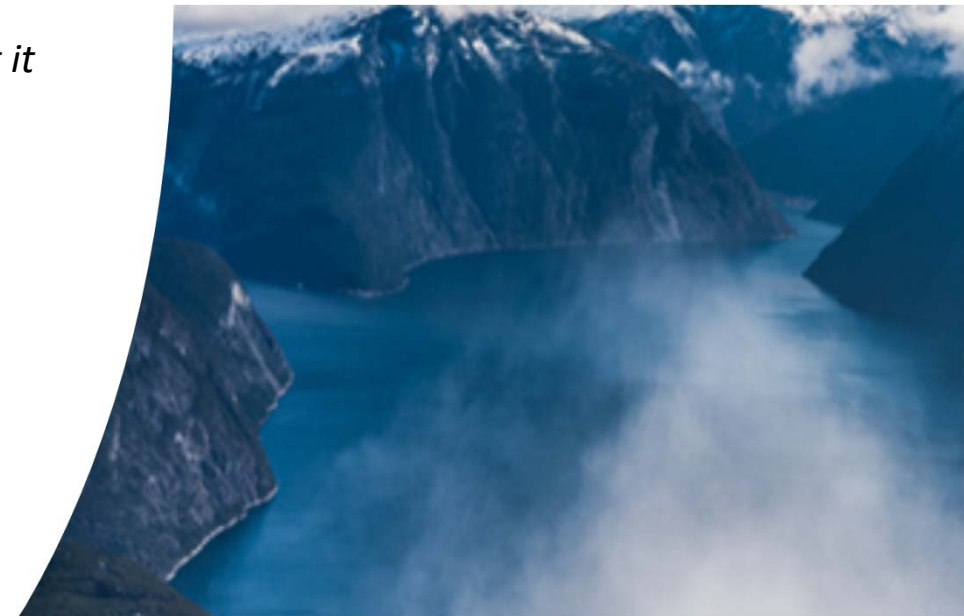
A double-edged space of opportunities and barriers

- Lack of social network

*I see that it takes time **to build a new circle of friends**. I see that it may become more important to me in the future. If I can't find any **close friends after one year**, then maybe **I can search for a job somewhere else**. So, it's important.*

- The cultural codes of outdoor activities

I am not a ski buddy



Conclusion

- **Women with gender atypical education moving back to rural area**
 - Digitalization across sectors creates opportunity for women to in-migrate and work with ICT and digitalization in rural area
 - Small ICT divisions in public sector, and secondary IC sector
- **The thinness of organizations**
 - Positive side: women become more visible-training through workplace
 - Downside: few relevant employers, difficult to switch jobs
- **A double-edged space**
 - Limited sense of belonging, or shared value of rural idyll



Read more

- Corneliussen, H. G., Seddighi, G. & Dralega, C. A. (to be published spring/summer 2022). The Discourse of Rurality in Women's Professional-life Narratives: Gender and ICT in Rural Norway. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Gender Inequalities in Tech-Driven Research and innovation: Living the Contradiction*
- **Related publications**
- Corneliussen, H. G., & Seddighi, G. (2020). [The Challenge of Implementing the National Gender Equality Norm in IT Organizations](#). *IADIS International Journal on Computer Science and Information Systems*, 15(2), 1-14.
- Corneliussen, H. G., & Seddighi, G. (2020). [Employers' Mixed Signals to Women in IT: Uncovering how Gender Equality Ideals are Challenged by Organizational Context](#). In P. Kommers & G. C. Peng (Eds.), *Proceedings for the International Conference ICT, Society, and Human Beings 2020 (41-48)*: IADIS Press.
- Corneliussen, H. G., & Seddighi, G. (to be published spring/summer 2022). *Unconventional routes into ICT work: Learning from women's own solutions for working around gendered barriers*. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Gender Inequalities in Tech-Driven Research and innovation: Living the Contradiction*





Thank you!

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