

Perspectives on cultural rural

Abstract book

Rurality as a cultural product –
Pre-conference symposium in Kokkola, Finland,
16th–17th of August 2009,

organized with the cooperation of the XXIII ESRS congress in Vaasa, Finland,
17th–21st of August 2009

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Foreword: Rural is everywhere

The Social Research Team of Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius – Kari Iimonen, Jouni Kaipainen, Ilkka Luoto & Olli Rosenqvist – was glad to host an international group of 14 researchers specialized on rural questions. Organized with the cooperation of the XXIII ESRS¹ congress in Vaasa, the symposium was held in Kokkola on 16th and 17th of August 2009.

Despite an early start on Sunday morning in Hotel Seurahuone's Rautavaara cabinet, the participants were happy and motivated to work. Perhaps the weather helped, pouring rain and winds which reached gale force kept people inside and created a suitable atmosphere for focused discussions.

The goal of the symposium under the headline: Rurality as a cultural product, was to rework and reshape cultural phenomena, activities and interpretations concerned with rural areas, rural representations and rural people. The biggest challenge of the meeting was to clarify the concept of rurality through sociological and humanistic windows. Major questions were; how are rural activities intertwined or reflected by way of narratives, representations, art, signs and symbols? How can the authentic and artificial ruralities and the symbolic 'simulations' and 'mutations' of them be turned – or how have they already been turned – to entrepreneurship and economical welfare?

Although the theme of the symposium is spiced with academic jargon, a firm connection with concrete rural policy making and the cultural rural can still be found. The most striking result to emerge from the symposium was that even if the concept rural is easily conceived as a geographical periphery, it is surprisingly central in our everyday culture. We are rural minded to such a degree that urban features are often defined and explained by rural sources. What seems to be purely urban is actually genuinely rural. For example, it can be said that in skateboarding very urban skills are needed, yet exactly the same skills were prerequisites for the timber rafting workers of the 1930's in Finland. Another example can be taken from upbringing: quite many small children in western cultures become familiar with the shape and sounds of different farm animals before they can even say a single word.

Rural is everywhere: it still has an influence on prevailing values and attitudes. In Finland a 'real' rural lifestyle is averagely only two generations away. Rural reminds us of the good old days, being at the same time a symbol for nostalgic and other positive emotions. The latest emerging trends show that the rural has not disappeared. It has potential, over and over again and in many ways, to become fashionable. Ruralities like open space, quietness, local oddnesses, rustic fashion/trashion and outdoor life make the rural a desirable object of consumption.

There is a growing interest towards peripheral places which are mixed with the postmodern mobile life style, being sources of second homes, sojourning, adventurism, local culture and hobbies. Rural by itself is not anymore merely a romantic source of nostalgia but to a large extent, it has become an appendage for styles, cultures,

¹ European Society for Rural Sociology

identities and skills. In the most extreme examples of neoliberal utilization rural is used like a spice in marketing. To add a little bit of rural to something makes it more tasty, fashionable and desirable. Certain cars, like SUVs might be more appealing to potential customers when provided with an impressive cowcatcher which symbolizes serious off-road sessions. There are also television dramas which are flavoured with a rural set design and countryside surroundings to give more intensity and intimacy to a story and its characters, or it is not so uncommon that a shabby camping place near by the town is advertised as a restful rural resort.

As we saw and heard in our symposium, rural has started to mix with nearly everything. To comprehend this wholly, the challenge for us as social scientists is to ask without prejudice where does rural locate in our collective mindscape and on the other hand, how is it possible to define geographical or physical rural at all? On the developmental level things are not so complicated and culture does have both animated (*cultura animi*) and cultivated (*agricultura*) dimensions which meet each other in people's everyday life.

The recognition and strengthening of cultural nuances and local cultural knowledge will create versatile possibilities for rural development work and direct opportunities for employment for local inhabitants. It is good to remember that culturally viable and self-asserted rural can be presented both as comfortable dwelling places and tempting visiting places.

When inviting rural experts to Kokkola, a relaxed timetable and an enjoyable cruise in Kokkola's archipelago were promised. Now, after four months it is time to admit that we failed to fulfil those promises: Sunday and Monday were loaded with programme and the cruising ship was stuck on the island of Tankar. Instead, we got a presentation-rich afternoon and a safe haven from the storm – and a dinner – in the city hall.

We would like to offer our warmest thanks to our guests for inspirational presentations and discussions, and also to the Finnish Cultural Foundation for its economic support for organizing the symposium.

On behalf of the symposium committee,
on the 6th of December 2009,
in Kokkola, Finland

Ilkka Luoto & Olli Rosenqvist

Symposium programme

Rurality as a cultural product Pre-conference symposium in Kokkola, Finland, 16th-17th of August 2009

**Sunday 16th of August,
at symposium venue Hotel Seurahuone, conference room Rautavaara**

09.00

Chair, Dr Ilkka Luoto

Opening words – Welcome to Kokkola

Rural images: cultural resource of rural development

Dr Imre Kovách

Institute for Political Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

Rurality as a globalised mediascape? Impressions from television drama production
and distribution in Australia, Britain and New Zealand

Dr Martin Phillips

Department of Geography, University of Leicester, UK

Active culture – Mobilising rural communities

Dr Chris High

Open University, UK

Dr Gusztáv Nemes

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

11.30

Lunch at hotel

12.30

Chair, Dr Olli Rosenqvist

Rurality constructed by food
PhD Student Marja Kerttu Kurkela
University of Tampere, Finland

Evaluation and Conservation of Agricultural Landscape

Dr Maunu Häyrynen
University Consortium of Pori, Finland

13.30

Beverages

13.50

Nature, distinction and quality of life:
advertising residential utopias in interstitial spaces
Dr María Jesús Rivera Escribano
Institute of Advanced Social Studies, Spain

Place and human embodiment

Dr Pauli Tapani Karjalainen
Department of Geography, University of Oulu, Finland

Experience of rural place: A geosemiotic perspective

Dr Ilkka Luoto
University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Finland

15.20

Beverages, snack

15.40

Chair, Dr Pauli Tapani Karjalainen

Suspicion about the lights that allow the "look" to become effective
in the form of representation

Dr Eloy Alves Filho
Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil

Dr Arlete Maria Feijó Salcides
Universidade Federal do Pampa, Brazil

Master student Clarice Greco Alves
Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

Animating rurality: from cultural product to cultural process

Dr Keith Halfacree
Department of Geography, Swansea University, UK

18.45

Bus transportation to the symposium dinner

19.00

Meeting with the press by the quay

19.30

Symposium dinner on the sea - sailing with m/s Jenny

22.15

Bus transportation back to hotel

**Monday 17th of August,
symposium venue at Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius**

08.40

Bus transportation to the symposium venue

09.00

Chair, Dr Ilkka Luoto

Snapshot of Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius
Development Manager Anne Jokela

09.15

The social sciences research team
Dr Kari Ilmonen, Dr Olli Rosenqvist and MSc (Econ. & Bus. Adm.) Jouni Kaipainen

10.15

Team work concerning issues and ideas raised during the symposium,
discussions and planning of possible joint actions in future

11.00

Closing words of symposium

11.15

Beverages, snack

12.00

Bus transportation to Vaasa ESRS congress

Rural images: cultural resource of rural development

Dr Imre Kovách

Institute for Political Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

This paper aims to present outcomes of European projects and Hungarian studies about cultural construction of rural. As results indicate cultural representation of rurality operates mainly through the local images that, according to concept of 'culture economy' and 'intermediate, project class actors', are one of the key resources of territorial development.

Studies pointed out increasing importance of the cultural components of territorial development. The interaction between the cultural imperative and local social restructuring are marked with terms of culture economy, intellectual property, discourse and rural image that introduce new discursive strategies and values in connection with nature, food, traditions, consumer culture and urban-rural relations. The creation of new local values is a component of development projects that require actors to have a vision to identify development goals. Construction and representation of the rural image both shape concept of rural and political, civil responses to rural restructuring. 'Constructors' of rural images and actors participating in these discourses exercise some kind of power over rural development.

According to the concept of a culture economy (Ray 1998, 2001), rural areas adopt cultural markers in endogenous projects and local cultural features are keys to reaching development goals. Culture economy works through a local cultural identity and it can generate descriptive and perspective forms of knowledge. Studies on tourism and the renaissance of food culture report an essential cultural reconstruction of European rurality that together with other markers of a re-composition of internal and external cultural facts of the rurality, jointly express that culture is actually a basic resource of territorial development. Therefore actors taking part of the discourses and designers of rural images can have increasing impact over the development system.

This paper aims at contributing to the understanding of the role of rural images in local development by examining dynamics of cultural representation of European and especially the Hungarian rurality in art, mass media, economy and everyday culture as well as the interaction between rural images and development projects. The paper is based on theoretical and empirical studies about rural images (tape interviews in five European countries, survey about rural images in Hungary and a published anthology/collection of rural images including urban culture, films, media, political discourses, rural tourism advertisement, exhibitions and museums, rural development planning).

References

- Ray, C. (1998). Culture, intellectual property and territorial rural development. *Sociologia Ruralis* 38: 1, 3–20.
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Rurality as a globalized mediascape? Impressions from television drama production and distribution in Australia, Britain and New Zealand

Dr Martin Phillips

Department of Geography, University of Leicester, UK

The paper explores the concept of mediascapes (Appadurai 1990, 1996) in relation to the production and distribution of television dramas set in the countryside. It is argued that the concept implied two distinct, but inter-related media geographies, one focused on material dimensions of 'media in space' and the other concerned with symbolic aspects of 'space in media'.

The paper draws on an AHRC² funded research project to explore these two media geographies in relation to television drama series produced within Australia, Britain and New Zealand and distributed in these countries as well as elsewhere, including Finland. It is argued that whilst media research has often over-looked the rural in favour of the urban, there is clear evidence that the countryside is an important, although contested, global mediascape.

The paper highlights the local and international mediascapes of production and distribution associated with rural drama programmes, and considers the degree to which distinctively national constructions of rurality are performed in and around the programmes. The paper also explores the degree to which changing global and local television markets impact upon the images and narratives of these programmes, before considering the 'translation' of producer constructs of rural spaces into the viewing of such programmes in rural and urban places within Australia, Britain and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The paper ends by briefly considering the significance of rurality as a globalized mediascape within Finland.

References

- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global culture economy. *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7: 2, 295–310.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

² The Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK

Active culture – mobilising rural communities

Dr Chris High
Open University, UK

Dr Gusztáv Nemes
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

We're keen to participate in the symposium, to explore with others the idea that culture can be an active force in rural development. For us, culture is not only tangibly embodied in the outward forms of objects and buildings, or even of art or rituals. It is also intrinsic and embedded, held within the customs, networks, collective memory and the social texture of communities. We offer a contribution based on our work on participatory video, but also on prior experiences in Hungary and India.

Participatory video means the practice of making films with rural people that express their ideas, concerns and hopes. Rather than passive recipients of the dominant visual cultural form of our times, they become active makers and shapers of the medium, involved in the film-making process from conception to production to editing. As rural researchers we are interested in the capacity for participatory analysis and social learning that this opens up. As rural development activists, we've seen how communities and individuals who take part come to life, mobilising their energies, building strong relationships and forging a common identity. In pilot work in Hungary and Ireland we've found that local people have been able to fluently express themselves and have enthusiastically taken up the opportunity to participate in expressing their living, local culture in ways we'd not always expected.

Our emphasis on modern visual media should not be read as an opposition to traditional culture, but rather an opportunity to celebrate it and re-express it. This creative bricolage – reassembling cultural resources in response to the issues and sensibilities of the day – is a common theme within the other experiences we'd be happy to discuss: (i) the Hungarian dance-house movement, and (ii) the Thiruchuli book project in Tamilnadu, South India. These raise the issues of culture as a seat of resistance, and the relationship between local communities who embody their own traditions with outsiders with their own passions, interests and prejudices. How can researchers and activists effectively 'hand over' the process of (re)creating cultural capital to rural people?

The symposium comes at an opportune juncture, with an initial round of funded projects and capacity-building initiatives completed and a series of publications in train. We welcome the opportunity to learn more about cognate work, and above all to develop new projects on top of our successful international collaboration, and to link our growing network with enthusiastic European colleagues.

Rurality constructed by food

PhD Student Marja Kerttu Kurkela

Department of Regional Studies, University of Tampere, Finland

I am interested in exploring the ideas, images and idylls that food, and its promotion by the local food movement in Finland creates about rural. As food is physically, culturally, socially and economically an integral part of human life the issues related to food are often very complex. Food and agriculture have impacts on the health and well being of individuals, societies and animals, as well as on the environment. This has meant increased attention towards the agro-food sector in recent years. The concept of local food is anything but clear however, at the same time, it is irresistible to a human geographer interested in the different meanings of place and their construction.

Rurality is a lot more than just agriculture today. But still, physical rural space – when viewed as a landscape with fields and/or animals – is often created by some kind of agricultural production. This agricultural landscape is one of the most well known things about rural and rurality. Still, according to Rosenqvist (2000), there are many ruralities and rurality itself is actually under a continuous battle of different definitions.

In addition to the creation of rural space, food with all its brands, brochures, projects and campaigns, creates and constructs rurality in a more imaginative sense. Whether this rurality is based on innovative modernity or on the traditional values and ideas about rurality, or perhaps even on some kind of combination of ruralities or on a completely new rurality, is a question I hope my research will help me to answer.

In Finland the local food movement and it's research are focusing mainly on rural development and they both find justification from the rhetorics of improving regional economy and promoting small and medium size entrepreneurs, in much the same way as the majority of the European alternative agro-food field. As a somewhat contrast to the European way, the North American local food movement and research is more normatively bound on social movements contesting mainstreams and corporate industrial agro-food systems (Goodman 2003).

As the promotion of local food is seen as one branch of new rural policy in Finland, a closer and more analytical look is needed to actually see how, and what kind of picture it constructs about the rural. By constructing the idea of the message delivered by food from rural to urban, I want to re-think the idea of local food as a savior of rural and ask what other kinds of messages - perhaps unintentional - are delivered at the same time.

References

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Evaluation and conservation of agricultural landscape

Dr Maunu Häyrynen
University Consortium of Pori, Finland

According to Denis Cosgrove, landscape is an historically evolved way of seeing. Our present idea of the countryside is linked to pre-existing notions of agricultural landscape, which do not necessarily adapt to the changes of the land. Thus the hegemonic vision of agricultural landscape is coupled with yielding elements of landscape, reminiscent of redundant land uses, and social structures and ways of life.

The evaluation and conservation of agricultural landscape tend to focus on its redundant elements. The accelerating pace of change – productional, demographic, climatic – widens the gap between the past and the present in the landscape. Conservation also counts as a change factor, turning pieces of the countryside into canonised cultural heritage.

Following WJT Mitchell, one should not ask what a landscape 'is' or 'means' but what it 'does'. In the context of fragmented countryside and its diversifying values, the idea of agricultural landscape may either maintain established division lines or bridge between the regimes of production and consumption, the old and new rural communities, the redundant and emergent landscape.

Nature, distinction and quality of life: advertising residential utopias in interstitial spaces

Dr. María Jesús Rivera Escribano
Institute of Advanced Social Studies, Spain

When 'rurality' becomes an object of academic interest, complexity rather than certainty lies ahead of us. This complexity is rooted, amongst others, in two aspects. Firstly, the undefined character of the term. Its abstract dimension is seemingly grasped (intuitively, at least) by academic and non-academic interlocutors. The problem here is that interlocutors' discourses are too often different (whether they are academic or not). Secondly and closely linked, the profound changes faced by rural society and spaces have eroded the traditional knowledge and understandings of 'rurality'. Consequently, 'rurality' remains largely undefined and difficult to operationalize. It is not a product in the sense of a finished and permanent outcome. On the contrary, the process of constant transformation of rurality, rural society and rural spaces is intrinsic to social dynamics themselves. However, one way to approach the constant transformation of rurality might be, precisely, by looking at the different concretions it may adopt; to the many temporal and spatial crystallizations of rurality in different products. Looking at the way different crystallizations of rurality emerge and intertwine in time and space will help us to understand the complexity and nature of 'rurality'.

This paper focuses on a given crystallization of 'rurality': the increasing resort to countrified images in the design of residential environments in interstitial spaces. They are spaces that have become important spaces for residential purposes, located on the borderline between urban and rural areas (symbolically, at least). They are close to the city at the same time that they are apart from urban life. They are close to nature, but not in wilderness. Instead, they present us with an extremely manicured countryside and domesticated nature(s). Interstitial spaces are very often considered as urban space instead of rural as most of their dwellers are usually commuters, and they are close to the city. Nevertheless, they are, at the same time, both, urban and rural spaces, as they also share some features with 'rural residential environments'. In fact, in their construction as objects of desirability, their representation as dwellings-in-nature is as much relevant as their proximity to city.

In order to understand these representations, the paper looks at the way 'the lure of the countryside' is used in advertising new private estates and housing developments in interstitial spaces. Advertisements reflect, to some extent, the social discourse underlying this residential model. Unsurprisingly, it enhances the idea of 'quality of life' as the main asset of the new home (both house and residential environment). This 'quality of life' is related to elements such as 'social distinction' and 'nature'. For their part, these concepts are shaped by the convergence of values such as leisure, family life, or countrified aesthetic. As such, interstitial spaces become the ideal environment for residential utopias: spaces not just to live in, but to have a whole and desired new everyday experience and social reproduction.

The reflections of this paper are based on advertisements published in a regional newspaper of Navarre (a northern region of Spain) and related to the private estates

and developments built in the surrounding villages of Pamplona, the capital city of Navarre. The traditional habitat of this area, characterized by the profusion of small villages, and the relief of territory (valleys, hills, mountains...) encourages people's perception of interstitial spaces as rural spaces, despite their proximity to city of Pamplona.

Place and human embodiment

Dr Pauli Tapani Karjalainen

Department of Geography, University of Oulu, Finland

Place is incorporated into the ontological anatomy of all human experience. Place is a term for our engagement in the world outside/inside ourselves. As being a nexus of meaning, place is constructed by experience. In this sense, place is not a neutral, objective segment of physical space but a site of concrete human involvement. As a result, place is not only a tangible landscape but also an intangible mindscape; place, indeed, is a fusion of these two. In a living context, place is a flexible phenomenon constantly showing ever new phases, thus ceaselessly forming ever new constellations of meaning.

Further to analyze the contents of place experience, I will introduce two concepts closely tied up to what ever living context. I will first refer to the notion of intimate sensing, that is, the experience of life at the ontological ground level. Intimate sensing, as an opposite of remote sensing being observation of objects at a distance and without a touch, intimate sensing embraces not only the visual images but also the images of tactility and smell, taste and sound, in short, the whole gamut of the sensory attractions all along in connection with a person's existential situation in her/his place. Intimate sensing makes up the triangle drama that the body, self and place are playing together. Second, I will discuss the notion of topobiography.

Biography, literally, means the description in words or otherwise of one's course of life. Topobiography, accordingly, is the expression of the course of life as it relates to the lived places. Everyone has her/his biographical places the complete mapping of which would be a futile task. This is because of the nature of biographical places: they are deeply personal and uniquely memory-laden. We all remember differently. And in different situations each one of us recollects anew. Autobiographical memory is situated understanding. As life goes on, new situations shape our memories. As a strict corollary, there are no two places absolutely alike, and no two persons have ever seen absolutely the same place.

In my presentation I will give examples both factual and fictive about the various ways of experiencing the phenomenon of place.

Experience of rural place: A geosemiotic perspective

Dr Ilkka Luoto

University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Finland

There is a growing interest towards rural places which reflect a postmodern mobile life style being sources of second homes, sojourning and consuming. The places rich in experiences are sources of cultural 'simulations' and 'mutations' where places transform by internal and external forces – by interventions of subcultures, ideas, attitudes and styles – to something where both unexpected, expected or even designed forms of experiences can be found.

When places are understood as more relative, overlapping and socially shared than static or unchangeable objects of perception, their essence become objects of language. In the worldliness of the language observer positions and paths are laid with the bricks of signs, symbols and words. In geosemiotics all the signs and symbols not only take their meaning from how and where they are placed but also from who observes and by what means they observe.

As far as we know, words are the building material of common understanding and the adhesive of common culture. According to Yuri Lotman, all the imaginable words and signs form a semiosphere which reflects the idea of semiotic space where the dynamic system of symbols creates cultural meanings in constantly changing terms within language.

Places are intersections of discourses where language acts as a medium which binds humans to places. Places read as texts and discourses, contain tensions which are conflicting, but which also strengthen each other. A deeper structural connection of language, experience and place indicates that we perceive and think by means of places. In other words, a place is a factor which ties perception to signs and meanings. A place is also a merging point for more extensive cultural meanings and narratives. These narratives bind or separate the users of place by making or demolishing the common identity base. In the geosemiotic realm, discourses of social life are systems which can always be localized somewhere.

Suspicion about the lights that allow the 'look' to become effective in the form of representation

Dr Eloy Alves Filho
Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil

Dr Arlete Maria Feijó Salcides
Universidade Federal do Pampa, Brazil

Master student Clarice Greco Alves
Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

The present analysis is part of a set of current studies dedicated to investigate the processes that characterize culture and indicate the importance of language and speech in social construction. In this perspective, our goal was to deconstruct and expose the processes through which the rural/urban dichotomy has become natural in social interaction. From the presupposition that societies cannot be managed without the previous existence of values that lead to actions and that such values are due to a common representation or a consensus of/about reality, stories from comic books with the character 'Chico Bento' were used as an alternative to produce and propagate 'truths' that aim to internalize concepts that are in accordance with neoliberal values, to demonstrate how much they have been working to update a historical dichotomy, polarizing the urban and rural environments.

Following the ideas of Foucault, Canclini and Hall on this subject, we took the stories from comic books and analyzed them, both as social representations and speeches. The corpus of this research comprises twelve 'Turma da Mônica' comic books, more specifically, twelve stories with the character 'Chico Bento', included in the issues published in the first decade of the 21st century. It was possible to show that the meanings attributed to the way people live 'in the country', in other words, in the rural area, present in 100% of the stories analyzed, worked as a political means to neutralize heterogeneity. Namely, they reinforce the superiority of urban values and ways of life over rural ones. We could also verify that all the urban characters present in the rural area were represented as culturally superior, modern or more advanced. Considering that, for the perspective of the analysis adopted, language is not conceived as a transparent and neutral means to represent reality, but, instead, is linked to our knowledge and understanding of the social world, we suggest that it is necessary to overcome the historical rural/urban dichotomy, once cultures are not clustered in fixed and stable groups anymore.

Therefore, it abolishes the concept of being urban/educated, aware of historical great achievements, or rural/popular, mastering the meaning of objects and messages produced by a certain community restricted to a certain location. The proposal of a reformulation in terms of cultural capital means not to represent it as a set of stable and neutral goods, with values and meanings determined once and for all, but as a social process, which, similarly to any other capital, produces profits and is differently appropriated by the segments of the Brazilian population.

Animating rurality: from cultural product to cultural process

Dr Keith Halfacree

Department of Geography, Swansea University, UK

To begin to appreciate rurality as a cultural product and then to proceed to investigate how this resource may be deployed to promote diverse forms of 'rural development', a suitably nuanced understanding of what is meant by rurality is essential. Although the latter topic has been a very long-standing ontological and epistemological concern for rural social scientists, it remains (perhaps inevitably) unresolved. Consequently, beyond the near-tautology of rurality as that which makes somewhere, someone or something rural, definitional consensus largely ends. Re-engaging with this debate, the paper presents the status of rurality today from four different, sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary, perspectives.

First, it indicates why many authors have suggested that rurality no longer remains a useful or significant category within social science, notwithstanding its widespread popular resilience. Second, it returns to the challenge posed by this durability to argue that one cannot dismiss this presence easily. Indeed, it is through popular representations that rurality retains much of its ontological distinctiveness. Moreover, the suggestion from Baudrillard of 'map preceding territory' (rather than vice-versa) suggests, thirdly, a rurality much less spatially confined or rooted than immediately anticipated by commonsense understanding, a state some researchers have called post-rurality. Complicating things still further, adding a non-representational affective aspect to the definitional mix leads, fourthly, to the proposal that there may still be something in human (and perhaps other life-forms') existential experiences of and engagements with rurality that also support retaining the term as a valid social scientific concept.

The paper ends with a model of rurality, directly inspired by the work of Henri Lefebvre, that goes some way to reconciling the four perspectives, whilst accepting that rurality today remains inherently plural, hybrid, and still partly 'undiscovered'. In conclusion, the paper suggests that it might be better to see rurality as an animated cultural process more than a more static cultural product.

Culture as an element in regional development

Dr Kari Ilmonen

University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Finland

A worldwide trend for the integration of culture into regional development strategies has been taking place from the 1990s onwards, a trend in which towns and cities have adopted culture-led development strategies in the hope of strengthening their competitive position (Miles & Paddison 2005: 833–839) and culture has even been regarded as a significant resource in village development strategies in China (Oakes 2006: 13–37). The OECD report *Culture and Local Development* (2005) recommends the strengthening of communities' cultural capital through education and work practice, as this is believed to have a beneficial effect on local and regional development. All this led Radcliffe (2006: 228) to claim that a 'cultural turn' with its attending discourses, paradigms and actors had taken place in development work.

The term 'regional development' is frequently taken to refer to economic, social and ecological development and to imply the conscious and active exercise of influence on the development of a given area or region and its leadership and administration which is assumed to call for a certain kind of regional development knowhow. In the Finnish context culture (including the arts) has been gaining a progressively stronger foothold alongside other aspects of development in the strategies and scenarios espoused by local and regional authorities. One example of the raising of culture to the level of equality with other branches of development can be perceived in the *Regional Programme for Central Ostrobothnia, 2007–2010*:

"The culture of Central Ostrobothnia is increasingly being viewed as a local, regional, national and international resource, and the exploitation of culture and the arts as a means of creating an image for the region and its economic life and promoting competitiveness is being seen as an important part of the development of well-being in the region and the stimulation of its economic opportunities." (K-P-liitto 2007: 27)

This brief quotation contains many of the terms that lie at the heart of the discourse of regional development: 'resource', 'exploitation', 'economic life', 'image', 'competitiveness', 'well-being' and 'promoting' (see Ilmonen 2009).

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Utilization of rurality: from cultural product to cultural process and back again

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The presentation analyzes some of the meanings that were given to rurality in the previous presentations. Keith Halfacree crystallized very well that rurality is more a cultural process than a cultural product. But at the same time, if we want to convince the financiers of research and financiers of development projects that we are doing something useful, we can't get rid of considering the utilization of those cultural processes. María Jesús Rivera Escribano suggested very well that we, maybe, should look "at the way different crystallizations of rurality emerge and intertwine in time and space, to help us to understand the complexity and nature of 'rurality'".

Theoretically spoken, the most interesting features of the rural are the properties of contrast and open space implied in the etymology of the notions of countryside and rurality: especially, if the notion of open space is interpreted not only in a physical sense but also in a metaphorical one, as a social or cultural space. Contrast animates the rural and open space gives freedom to it. Together they make movement possible. Metaphorical space refers to a non-physical space that is disentangled from the material reality. It can be described on one hand as a relative, symbolic, produced and even lived place, and on the other hand, as a social or cultural position or positioning, in which the giving of meaning based on difference is central (e.g. we vs. others). Metaphor can be said to be a transfer or mutation of meaning.

Contrast, open space and metaphorical rurality are interesting elements around which we can try to start to crystallize products of cultural rurality. Bruno Maximus's hypnorealistic painting – Steady hand of a rubber boot slinger (Figure 1) – captures very well some important features of metaphorical ruralities. In the background of the painting there is the rural idyll which is an idealized image of the rural physical space. In the foreground there is a self-confident postmodern individual, a mysterious smile on his face and a playful smile on his broken shoe – looking to the remote faraway adventurous future somewhere else. In his hand he has got a rubber boot – the traditional work footwear of farmers and forest workers – used not as footwear but as an object for throwing. The boot, the thrower and throwing itself represent ruralities detached from their original meanings. Besides being a cultural product in the form of painting (the case described above), boot throwing can be said to be a cultural product in the form of performative activity that combines sport and merry-making.



Figure 1. Steady hand of a rubber boot slinger. Oil painting by Bruno Maximus (2005). Photograph: <<http://www.galleriat.net/work.asp?id=980>>. Accessed 15 August 2009.

Rural economics as a discipline to come

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Rural economics as a discipline sees rural issues in a different light. Economics is a consequential science which looks at the final products and does not care so much about the process or deontological rights. An economist usually evaluates the consequences of the actions, not the rules of the game. But in welfare economics there is a tradition to look also at equality. In rural economics one must always have distributive considerations because of the wealth effects that many real life policies have. For example willingness to pay (WTP) amounts depend on wealth as well as preferences.

Separate spheres or hostile worlds thesis sees that culture and economics are so different views of the world that any orderly social system keeps the realms apart. Commodification means the process whereby a cultural object (such as a rural festival or amenity) comes to be treated and discussed in the same way as a market transaction. One can ask if non-market valuation leads to (quasi or complete) commodification of rural cultural objects? One can argue against the vision of a world bifurcated in separate hostile spheres. Many actions have both market and non-market effects. Also social relations like networks often have economic dimensions. So measuring both use values (economic impact) and passive use values (contingent valuation, choice experiments) is recommended. (See Davis & Dolfsma 2008.)

In standard nonmarket valuation and cost-benefit analysis (CBA) agencies and researcher 'launder' preferences in determining WTP amounts so as to screen out poorly informed or disinterested preferences (Adler & Posner 2006). One can join the deontological, rights based and distributive considerations to consequential economic thinking by sprucing up preferences (approximating view). Correcting for mistakes, biases and wrong motives is highly recommendable practice. But the problem is that this approximating view has no theoretical base in microeconomics. Many economists (e.g. Gary Becker) say that (evaluated ex ante) preferences are solid (not constructed in situ) and all actual preferences, no matter what their motivation is, are valid for economic analysis.

In rural economics speaking of someone's well-being means that we are talking about how good their lives are for them. That is possible as there is only an evidential connection between preferences and well-being (Hausman & McPherson 2009). Sometimes one can take preference satisfaction as indicating welfare. But when these two views conflict one should always look at how well people's lives are going and forget preferences.

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