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Re-exploring the rural/urban dichotomy

Farm shops in urban settings

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Title: Re-exploring the rural/urban dichotomy. Farm shops in urban settings

Abstract

The division between rural and urban values and practices is a classic theme in European ethnology. Often with a more or less outspoken ambition to defend vanishing rural values from the urban lifestyles threatening to take over traditional rural communities. During the last decades, the urban/rural divide seem to be renegotiated, at least from an urban perspective. The residents in communities outside major cities are accused to be a threat to a modern liberal lifestyle, supporting right wing populists, Brexit and Trump, to name a few of the stereotypes used in urban writers reflections on rural people. In the food area, however, rurality is generally a good thing. Traditional, small scale agriculture and food production encapsulates values on display at many dinner tables of the upper middle urban class. This has lead to new business opportunities for rural actors. Some has tried to take the idea of the farm shop to the city. But what happens when the products enter new contexts? The material for the paper is observations and interviews with retailers in southern Sweden who have established “farm shops” in urban areas. How do they market the rural values of their merchandise? How do they perceive the consumers reasons for visiting farm shops in the city? The theoretical perspective is a retake on the life mode analysis developed in the 1970s to investigate its relevance for the 21st century.

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