

Modul 3 Comparative Agricultural Studies: Selected Issues of Rural Sustainability


For more than 20 years I have been interested in the synthesis of scholarly debates in different disciplines across spatial scales, human cultures and interests. I have worked in Europe, Asia and Africa in connection with landscape and land use research together with related university teaching. My understanding with regard to “**Sustainability of Rural Landscapes**” is:

Sustainability is closely connected to how humans and cultures manage resources with a view to long term, continuous usage; it deals with perceptions on environmental problems, technologies and resource supplies and frequently involves exploring alternatives on how to simultaneously solve global, regional and local issues in a fair and feasible way.

Landscapes are under continuous change. While urban landscapes seem to gain ever increasing importance, the development of rural landscapes can be divided into two principal directions: the intensive rural landscapes developing somehow analogous to urban landscapes with more and more use on them and the extensive rural landscape, which is the majority of rural landscapes in the industrialized world, that are increasingly given up and for which we need new kind of uses.

Globalization with an ever increasing flow of resources is so far increasing this separation. The ongoing globalization could, in principle, be a benign process, but a process that needs to be promoted and adjusted in relation to sustainable development and extensive rural landscapes. Sustainable development as a process needs to be associated with a comprehensive understanding of the flows of money, people, goods and ideas, either promoted, restricted and regulated through a number of important policy areas such as: trade, agriculture and food, energy, transport, technology and innovation, and tourism, in order to identify the tensions in globalization, recognizing the trade-offs involved, and thus pointing to possible areas of reform in current land use practices and institutions.

Another problem is the ever shrinking number of inhabitants/stakeholders in rural landscapes combined with a lower degree of occupation of these decreasing actors. In Japan, perhaps 5% of the working hours that were usual during the early 1960s are today spent in rural landscapes. This number may vary from country to country, but in general, never before on Earth have so many people been disconnected to rural landscape and lack an appropriate understanding of the potential uses in connection with rural lands. Some argue that considerable savings could be made by giving up agriculture completely and by avoiding agricultural subsidies and connected resource uses. This is not my opinion: many additional costs will rise in other sectors and will be simply transferred to other places. We can develop incentives for people to stay in, or even to move to rural landscapes from urban dwellings. This may help solve some of the most challenging future issues – like increasing rates of energy use or water consumption in relation to urbanization - in an alternative more sustainable way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Orlitzky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and 'O'.