

Éva G.Fekete

How do social innovations of local food system reshape rural spaces?

In addition to the beneficial effects of food mass production and globalization (expansion of assortment and decline in prices), adverse effects have depressing impacts on rural societies. Many rural areas have shrunk both economically and demographically; consumers have lost their confidence in food; environmental impacts of the applied 'efficient' technology and transportation have become dangerous; the loss of food sovereignty has caused economic and political dependency.

Production and consumption of food locally aim to answer social and environmental challenges created by the market. That is why it can be seen as social innovation. Moreover, appearance of social enterprises and other community economic development tools, as well as the connection with local culture stress a social innovation character of producing and consuming local products.

Social innovations related to local food system should be aware their effects on production of rural space. They may change the land use system and effect on regional identity, increase local employment and capabilities of local communities, expand the local market, create new networks within and between rural and urban spaces, create new (or old?) type places of consumption, improve local human resources.

Our research is based on the concepts of sustainable development and social and solidarity economy and aim to add elements for a resilient rural policy. It is focused on the roles of local food production and consumption in revitalization of rural areas, as well as the barriers needed to remove and the opportunities and methods to generate social innovations dealing with these issues.

Supported by Hungarian Scientific Research Fund – OTKA K 112928