

Alessandro Bonanno, Hans Bakker, Raymond Jussaume, Yoshio Kawamura and Mark Schucksmith, eds., *From Community to Consumption: New and Classical Themes in Rural Sociological Research, Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Volume 16*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2010 (275 pp.), ISBN 978-0-85724-281-3, US\$124.95.

Reviewed by Keiko Tanaka

This edited volume, published in the Research in Rural Sociology and Development series, is a product of the *XII World Congress of Rural Sociology*, held in 2008 in South Korea. I was delighted to read a few chapters, which were based on the paper presentations I had listened to and read in Goyang as a participant of the meeting. I congratulate the four editors for their fantastic editorial work with 18 manuscripts written by authors from across the globe (15 countries) with varied English writing skills. As expected from any edited book, the intellectual merits of the chapters are uneven. By keeping the length of each chapter relatively short, however, the editors ensured that all the manuscripts met a high standard of quality in presenting arguments grounded in appropriate theory-framing and empirical data.

As emphasized in the first page of the Introduction, this book is not a typical conference proceeding, but a collection of quality research papers from 13 different countries, including five on Europe, seven on Asia and the Pacific, three on Latin America, and one on Africa. All manuscripts went through a rigorous peer-review process. The book is divided into four thematic sections: (1) Sociology of Agriculture, (2) Development, Rural, Community, and Migration, (3) Consumption, and (4) Natural Resources and Rural Women. By organizing the book thematically, rather than geographically, each section allows readers to compare conceptual approaches to a given theme among three to six case studies included in the section. Readers will soon discover that despite the diverse sociohistorical and geophysical contexts of the agrifood system, farming, and rural communities in these countries, farmers, rural residents, urban consumers, and citizens across the globe share similar challenges (e.g., depeasantization, aging, food safety, migration, rural identity, and natural resource management), which have resulted from agrarian restructuring during the last five decades. Under pressure to make agriculture, fisheries, and forestry more competitive and efficient (see Chapter 5 for the case of the global poultry industry), there has been tremendous creativity and resilience put

forth to preserve farming and the rural economy as viable loci for economic, cultural, and social production. Such examples as joint farming in Norway (Chapter 1), Résau Semences Paysannes in France (Chapter 2), the Noh-no kai in Japan (Chapter 4), and the Rural Heroines Exciting Network in Japan (Chapter 18) show the importance of building networks, or “social capital,” among those who share common interests. The case studies from the above chapters and also from Chapter 7 by Chiengthong give a life to *repesantization* as a sociologically valuable concept by illuminating how the state, corporate, community-based organizations have played important roles enabling and constraining farmers and rural residents in pursuing their livelihoods.

In the U.S. and Europe, the (re)building of the local food economy has become part of growing social movements to improve the advanced capitalist system of food production and consumption. Yet, these movements are often grouped largely into two categories – one that emphasizes food consumption as a sign of distinction (i.e., foodies) and the other that focuses on food as a human right (i.e., food sovereignty). In *Part III: Consumption*, two case studies of direct marketing illustrate that both in Japan (Chapter 12) and Vietnam (Chapter 13), direct marketing has become an important entrepreneurial strategy for farmers as well as a response by consumers to address their concerns with food quality and safety. In Chapter 14, Morales presents an interesting example of how the state, through state-owned companies for food distribution (i.e., *Mercal C.A.* and PDVal), plays a vital role in the production and distribution of food in society, notably to ensure food access among low-income households by maintaining affordable food prices and consistent food quality.

The changing sociocultural and geophysical landscapes of rural communities is another overarching topic in the book. Ashwood (Chapter 8) and Cavalcanti (Chapter 9) present theoretically engaging discussions that problematize the classification and categorization of “rural” and “community” respectively, not only in the appropriation of their representations, and therefore, meanings, but also in the control of the economic, political, sociocultural, and moral resources associated with these terms. The complexity and fluidity of rural “otherness” is addressed by Murakai et al. (Chapter 11) in a case study of migration of retirees to rural Hokkaido in Japan and also in two case studies about immigrants in rural Australia (Chapters 10 and 17).

The Japanese case studies in this collection (e.g., Chapters 3, 4, 18) particularly show important roles which women play in reorganizing producer-consumer relationships and redefining the meaning of farming and “rural” through “Chisan

Chishō” (local production, local consumption) initiatives. Černič Istenič’s study of the fertility behavior of the farm population in Slovenia (Chapter 6) suggests that for many farm couples, the reproduction of offspring becomes more than a strategy for household survival and continuance of kinship lineage; it also expresses the commitment of farm couples to the welfare of their community and to the preservation of rurality as a space for investing in economic, political, sociocultural, and moral resources.

In the last section, Chapters 15 and 16 both emphasize the importance of capacity building in environmental governance. Chapter 15 cites instances of sustainable forestry management in post-socialist Croatia and Albania, while Chapter 16 examines community-based water governance in Ghana. These case studies, along other studies published elsewhere, remind us of the importance of historical context in which the organizational capacity has emerged for natural resource management.

The book will be particularly useful to those of us, including myself, who teach undergraduate and/or graduate seminars on the sociology of globalized food and agriculture in U.S. universities and colleges. The book provides rich case studies of the challenges which rural communities and the agrifood sector outside the U.S. face, including agricultural sustainability, aging of farming population, the role of rural women, and management of communal resources. Because these case studies employ a diverse range of theoretical and methodological approaches, the book can be used as a textbook for research design courses in rural sociology. Moreover, the relatively short length of each chapter makes the book accessible for upper-level undergraduates who have already taken an introductory course on the sociology of food and agriculture.

There are two minor weaknesses of this collection. First, I was disappointed that none of the work by Korean scholars (whose country held the XII World Congress) was included in this collection. Second, the intellectual merit of this book would have been greater if the editors had provided a concluding chapter that synthesized the theoretical and methodological issues raised from diverse case studies across the world.

Overall, this is a remarkable collection of rural sociological studies on a wide range of topics and issues, which is generally hard to find in English publications. This edited book makes a significant contribution to the literature of the sociology of food, agriculture, and rurality.

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