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The XXVI European Society for Rural Sociology Congress

Places of Possibility? Rural Societies in a Neoliberal World

18-21 August 2015, Aberdeen Scotland

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How can new forms of food governance contribute to creating alternative economic spaces for the revitalisation of rural areas?

Working Group 26: How can new forms of food governance contribute to creating alternative economic spaces for the revitalisation of rural areas?

Egon Noe [1]; Markus Schermer [2]

1: Aarhus University; 2: University of Innsbruck

In a context of recurrent economic crisis, lasting distrust towards the incumbent agrifood system and withdrawal of state institutions from core regulatory tasks, new initiatives are emerging throughout Europe. Diverse stakeholders forge new alliances with partners in order to develop or maintain the quality of food, the sustainability of agriculture and the agrifood economy as well as lively rural areas. At the same time mainstream actors incorporate similar arguments and appropriate values like seasonality, rare breeds and varieties, traceability, localness, or short circuits for their ends. However, there are other mainstream market actors, some producer cooperatives for instance, who adapt their activities and contribute to an enhanced resilience of agrifood systems. New forms of long-term partnerships and networks between food chain actors emerge, which are built on shared sets of values. These find expression in the products as well as in the relationships between partners along the supply chain. Some of these arrangements seem to make the growth of a 'values-based food network' possible, which may benefit the livelihoods of rural regions. Such new forms of food governance establish themselves on different levels and scales, oriented vertically along supply chains or territorially within regions, market oriented or policy driven. Working group 2b examines the emergence and impact of these new forms of governance in rural space.