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Embeddedness, the new food economy and defensive localism

Michael Winter

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Abstract

This paper examines embeddedness and the turn to quality in agro-food research. It suggests that the notion of embeddedness requires critical scrutiny and that the implications of the turn to quality for the geography of agriculture may not be as radical as some have suggested. The relationship between quality and local embeddedness is explored in some detail drawing on empirical work on food purchases in five rural localities of England and Wales. It is suggested that the patterns of food purchasing revealed, with local food figuring more highly than organic, illustrate a defensive politics of localism rather than a strong turn to quality based around organic and ecological production. Far from heralding an alternative post-global green future, as promoted by a range of proponents of sustainable agriculture, the turn to local food may cover many different forms of agriculture, encompassing a variety of consumer motivations and giving rise to a wide range of politics.

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