

Rurality and the Production of Spaces of Good Life

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Thinking about good life is as old as philosophy. But which life is a good life? This paper focuses on people who decided to in-migrate in a peripheral region in north-east Germany – the Uckermark. The Uckermark is one of the regions with the lowest population density in Germany and it is strongly affected by emigration. “It is an extreme departure area and there are those who say that here arises a vacuum but a vacuum always attracts something new”, said an interviewee. The in-migrants understand the emptiness as a possibility to find a new way of living and in consequence to find a good life. In 26 in-depth interviews with in-migrants they reflected their former life, their wishes and imaginations, the decision to in-migrate and their current life in the Uckermark. The reflection process is a crucial part of a process I call production of spaces of good life.

Taking the German Uckermark as case study this paper deals with the question how spaces of good life are produced and which role rurality plays in the production process. Following LÉFEBVRE and the German philosopher SEEL I am going to present the production process. Therefore I understand LÉFEBVRE'S theory of the production of space on a private level. The individual produces spaces through three moments of production: The material production, the production of knowledge and the production of meaning (SCHMID 2010: 320). The three moments afford perceived space, conceived space and lived space. In his trialectical understanding of the production of space LÉFEBVRE bridges the binary between materiality and ideality with the practices of daily life.

In my presentation I will show that rurality is a produced meaning. During the reflection the interviewees use rural as a kind of sorting pattern. They link it with practices, values, ideals and emotions, which they evaluate as good life and which they understand in a dichotomic way to their former life in a city. In the case study rurality is both ideational and material (HALFACREE 2006: 47). It makes clear that „there is not one [rural] but there are many“ (MURDOCH u. PRATT 1993: 425).

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