

dead Bees, cloned Cows & the 'Zombie' rural

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Technology & Rural Life

Outline

Recent controversies

- Bee crisis
- Cloned cows

What this says about non-urban areas

‘Defining’ the rural

Knowing what is 'rural'

- Ted Hughes - West Devon - “**un-exorcised**”
- Artistic and poetic understandings of rural life
- Alun Howkins - ‘Death of Rural England’
- Mayerfield-Bell ‘Childerley’ - ex-urban
- William Gibson - future is already here just not evenly distributed
- Some rural areas already in the future!

honey bees

- Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)
- Sudden drop in bee numbers
 - causes - pesticides, combination of mites, diseases and chemicals
 - answers - breeding, GM, **organic**
 - Indication of the intensification of all areas of agriculture
 - Globalisation of the bee industry - diseases, species, pesticides into new ecological systems

Cloned cows

- embryos imported privately from the US
- **logistics chain** - private breeding programme
- 1 cloned bull entered food chain, progeny still alive
- FSA investigation – self-reporting system,
- Animal cloning UK development - **Dolly** the sheep
- Welfare concerns - use of embryos, cellular clocks - premature aging, **unkown unknowns**, consumer resistance.

It all comes together

- Globalising flows of technology & communication
- **Finding the social through the environmental**
 - Environment a way of expressing moral concern
 - Nature beyond the national envelope
 - Borders of culture/nature
 - Trans-national, **glocalisation** by technologies
 - **Nodes of cosmopolitan rurality**

Challenging ideas of the rural

- **Zombie concepts** - based on national states - “they are not appropriate to the global age of ecological, economic and terrorist threats”(Beck 2003:455).
- “There is coming into being a new system in which everyday practices involve an **exceptional level** of cosmopolitan interdependencies” (Beck 2003:455)
- Need new explanations of the rural that are spatial but account for the new ways that rural areas are connected to other rural areas as well as urban areas.
- Technology the central feature of this new mode of rural life.

Finding 'rural' life again

- Policy discussions - rural areas increasingly about resource provision/use
- Discussions of the environment - generally located in rural areas - often coded debates about the rest of society.
- Rural not less socially distinctive but distinctive in different ways - that fulcrum is increasingly technology
- This would appear to be around discussions of technology as the borderlands of culture and nature.

Questions

- Are there distinctive 'rural' areas anymore?
 - What makes them different?
 - Beyond spatial questions
 - How can we understand them?