CULTURE AS EMBODIED PRACTICES IN RURAL FINLAND

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Cultural practices are seen as an integral part of sustainable place-based cultures. Since the modernisation and new livelihoods it is often argued that many rural cultural forms have detached from their material basis. Despite the structural changes, various rural cultural practices are still embodied and reproduced within rural places across the generations. Cultural practices can be understood as relatively stable and partly unconscious schemes, but also as symbolic acts that reproduce culture. In this paper, I discuss rural culture as embodied practices and schemes in relation to the present rural places. Cultural practices refer to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and its division into three relational forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. As an embodied form culture refers to dispositions of mind and body i.e. skills, practices, habits and taste. Objectified form refers to material objects, cultural goods and artefacts, like works of art and handcraft, whereas institutionalised form refers to institutional recognition e.g. titles, educational qualifications and societal positions. I analyse how rural culture is embodied in rural residents’ practices and perceptions. Rural practices can be distinguished from other cultural practices; residents regard them as something that only rural place affords. The analysis is based on 35 semi structural interviews among residents of a small rural town in Central Finland. Deriving from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, rural culture is mediated via embodied practices that, in turn, mould residents’ perceptions of the place they afford. Habitus as a conceptual frame entwines the relation between actor, place and culture.

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