

Partnership development

When simple problems require complex solutions

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Post WWII Danish rural development is characterised by a strong movement towards fewer and larger farms, a decline in rural population and a loss of functions, including local schools, shops and workshops. Furthermore, fewer larger municipalities are causing a general centralisation of public services and jobs. A central mantra behind this development seems to be a narrow economic rationality preaching ‘let fall what cannot stand’. In other words, schools, home for the elderly, small shops etc. are judged solely on their economic performance in relation to larger centralised units.

Despite this rather dole image of the Danish rural areas, a counter reaction has started to develop is developing. New initiatives acknowledging that the rural areas hold a value in themselves have shown themselves successful in establishing viable businesses. They strive at revitalising rural areas and are often found engaging in new forms of collaborations such as partnerships.

In this talk, Klaus Brønd Laursen invites you on a theoretical informed journey into these new initiatives. He discusses the necessity to reconceptualise our valuation of rural qualities. This step is essential in order to maintain these qualities beyond the individual actors. His argument is that a central component in capturing and transferring rural qualities is the organisation within the given value chain. Klaus Brønd Laursen argues that partnerships are well-suited but fragile solutions to the problem of maintaining the often normative values characterising many rural qualities. In his talk, he use examples from his previous and ongoing work on partnerships and rural development. He shows that if we are to fully understand the social processes in question, we must move beyond how neo-classic economy conceptualise value and, equally, draw inspiration from post-structuralist theories of organization to fully capture the many-faced nature of these new initiatives. Only then can we begin to appreciate the qualities of normative values in rural areas as more than a simple sprinkle on top of the cake.

Klaus Brønd Laursen currently employed as a Postdoc in the B2B group & MAPP at the Department of Management, Aarhus University. He holds an MSc in Political and Social Science and a Ph.D. from the same university. His Ph.D. dissertation analyses partnerships in value-based food chains. This research has been published in Journal of Rural Studies and Cybernetics & Human Knowing. He is currently involved in research on role of provenance food in rural development and several projects on animal welfare.