

Commodification of rural spaces owing to the development of organic farming in the Kootenay Region, British Columbia, Canada

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This paper aims to depict the commodification of rural spaces in a form that embodies the values and lifestyles of an entire region. Based on our field survey, we have a better understanding of the form and characteristics of rural commodification in the Kootenay Region of British Columbia, Canada. The demand for locally grown, fresh, high-quality, safe, and reliable vegetables, fruits, livestock products, etc., has led to the development of organic farming in this region. In other words, the commodification of rural spaces by way of adding value to agricultural products via organic farming and responding to local needs is a unique feature of this region. The Kootenay Co-op, farmers' markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs have played important roles in this development. In this region, which has a small population and a small agricultural market, it is difficult to import food products from outside due to high transportation costs. This, in turn, has encouraged the growth of safe and reliable food production for the local market. An important factor in the development of organic farming here is the pacifism and environment-oriented cultural traditions represented by the Doukhobors, Quakers, opponents of the Vietnam War, and the influx of retired people and tourists, which led to the development of a free, friendly, healthy, and sustainable community in the region.

Keywords: commodification of rural spaces, organic farming, co-op, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Kootenay Region

I Introduction

Since the late 1980s, multi-functionality of rural areas has become extremely important for the rural development of developed countries. For example, beyond its primary function of food production, rural areas now provide places for leisure, relaxing and housing for healing, and living spaces for urban residents, helping them experience the cultural and educational values of villages and recognize the importance of environmental conservation. This trend of “commodification of

rural spaces” involves promoting the consumption of various resources in rural spaces (Cloke, 1993; Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2011). This commodification involves “the investment of real estate by tourism and outsiders, the trade of agricultural products and rural crafts, and the marketing of agricultural resources to which the image of rural areas is given” (Woods, 2005:174). We have been examining the structural changes and characteristics of rural areas in Japan since 2007 based on the concept of commodification of rural spaces (Tabayashi, 2013, 2015). We felt that including for-