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From national policies to territorial anchorage: The case of Jämtland

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Abstract –This article highlights the articulation of a new territorially based governance model in the province of Jämtland in Sweden. Opposed to previous top-down governance that was based on national consensus between the state, the agrarian party and the national farmers association, this new model is bottom up, departing from farmers and food artisans and builds upon the creation of direct links between producers and consumers, e. g. an alternative agri-food network (AAFN). The example selected departs from the development of the farm dairy sector, a precursor in the re-localization of food in Sweden. The implementation of this new model has not been easy. Path dependency and lack of experience still seem to be important obstacles.

INTRODUCTION

The productivist, top-down agro-food governance model implemented in Sweden during a major part of the 20th Century separated consumers from food producers and meant increased productivity at farm and industry level that was mirrored by a continuous decrease in the number of farms and food processors. This model became obsolete during the 1980's but the actual shift away from productivism is a recent phenomena, except from Jämtland, where the physical characteristics of the landscape impeded further concentration and forced authorities to take measures to prevent a decrease in the number of small scale farming already during the 1970's. This experience carries important lessons for current policies that aim to promote rural and regional development by focusing on "place based firms" (farms and other rural firms). The purpose of this article is to shed light on the territorial governance model was developed in the County of Jämtland starting off from the farm dairy sector and other key events.

METHODS AND SOURCES

Case study methodology was used to get in-depth understanding of the studied subject within its own context. Additional and more specific methods, such as interviews with key stakeholders at the County Board Administration, the National Center for Artisan Food(KSI 1-5) and 24 out of 28 of all currently active farm dairies in Jämtland (FDI 1-24) were conducted between 2010 and 2012. In addition, two focus groups were conducted with the steering

committee of the most important rural development project (FGI 1) and the steering committee responsible for events when the Capital of Jämtland, Östersund, became Food Capital of Sweden in 2011 (FGI 2). The primary oral sources were complemented with primary and secondary written sources composed by policy documents and scientific articles.

THEORETICAL FRAME AND ORGANISING CONCEPTS

The debate about the re-localisation of food circles around the emergence of alternative, short food chains and networks and has many different points of departure. One is the focus on re-localisation of food that led the emergence of new relations between farmers, consumers and other agents and that are defined departing from the nature of their interaction. Another is the study of the role of quality and quality schemes implemented by AAFN (Higgins et. al 2008:15-27). An additional line of research analyses vertical and horizontal multi-level organisation of agents, resources and the territory under a new frame of governance. In all cases territorial governance, defined as "the process of territorial organisation of the multiplicity of relations that characterize interactions among actors and different, but non-conflictual interests and construction of a shared territorial vision" (Davoudi et. al 2008:37). This article focuses on the articulation of AAFN and the emergence of a new territorial organisation.

THE FARM DAIRY SECTOR – JÄMTSPIRA

In the late 1970's the regional dairy (NNP) decided to stop collecting goat milk because it was too expensive, therefore the CBA launched subsidies to modernize the goat farm sector. Goat milk was processed by the regional dairy, but as collecting goat milk had become too expensive, it became urgent to find alternative market channels for the surplus goat milk (Styrjanet al.1991). A project called "Swedish Goatcheese" investigated how to establish a joint marketing and product development for the Jämtlandic cheese and in 1983 six goat farmers started a cheese cooperative, Jämtspira. They had a common warehouse and distribution organisation and a modern assortment was developed. The farmer households were personally involved in all problems and activities. In addition, all involved producers were responsible for a number of marketing days per year. One producer described this: "we were out putting cheese into people's mouth to make them discover our products". The lion's share of investments was paid for with public funding (KS 2). Jä-

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mtspira opened up a new market for Jämtlandic cheese and from 1983 until 2010 (when the cooperative was shut down), 20 goat farms had been involved over time, products were developed, courses were held, production grew from a total of four tons in 1983 to an annual total of 400 tons.

Involving the producers in all activities of Jämtspira meant that a new type of cooperative was established, one that promoted cooperation between producers and that based its economic existence on the direct relation between producers and consumers.

ELDRIMNER

A key to achieve the success of Jämtspira was to increase knowledge amongst producers. Therefore the CBA established a school dairy to support the farm dairies. In addition, as a measure to support product development, study trips abroad to learn from curdlers in other countries were initiated in 1992 and have since then been held on a regular basis. In 1995 the CBA formalized educational efforts by establishing a regional school for food artisans (Matora). The working scheme is based on diffusion of knowledge and know-how about fashionable cheeses, supporting and promoting networking between food artisans, and helping to solve infrastructural problems, for example by building three mobile trial dairies that can be rented for a very modest sum (Rytkönen et. al 2013).

The success of this actions led to the transformation of the regional school/knowledge center into a national center for artisan food in 2006. The philosophy is quite simple, but nevertheless efficient (learning by doing, seeing, interacting and experiencing). As the Eldrimner initiative became national and the goat cheese curdlers became their display window, the interest for becoming a food artisan, and not only a curdler, has grown dramatically. Now Eldrimner also offers courses and field trips to develop charcuterie, jam production, beer making, et cetera.

MER VÄRD MAT, MVM (VALUE ADDED FOOD)

In the year 2000 and with the purpose of coordinating regional resources and initiatives, the National Farmer's Association) initiated a project to which all regional authorities, NGOs and stakeholders were invited as members of the steering committee. The main focus was on learning producers how to sell their products at the same time that marketing initiatives were conducted with the purpose of opening new markets, at first locally and later on to other parts of Sweden and abroad. There were also many parts of the project that helped producers solving practical/structural problems. The result of MVM was that the food sector as a whole took a leap forward in product development, sales figures, but most of all valuable experiences on how to work professionally with selling the local produce (FG1, PI 1-24).

FOOD CAPITAL OF SWEDEN

One of the main purposes of the *Sweden the New Culinary Country* initiative is to promote rural development through food at regional level. As a way to create publicity for different regions, the ministry of rural affairs decided to nominate a Food Capital of Sweden each year and that this award should rotate. In 2011 Östersund was selected as Sweden's first Food Capital. In order to meet the challenges and face the challenge of the nomination a coordinating steering committee was established. All initiatives during 2011 further helped placing Jämtland as the most prominent food region in Sweden, but an important result is that a process of clustering started to take place, leading to the creation of a Green Center was created in the village of Ås and the most important authorities, organisations and NGOs in the agro-food sector have moved in there, creating a long term platform for future territorial organization.

RESULTS, PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES

In between the named initiatives many other projects initiated by organisations and NGO's in which farmers, food artisans, restaurants owners are expected to participate. This is very time consuming therefore people are tired and progressively less interested in participating in new projects. In addition, achieving a sufficient level of profit can be problematic for some producers. A few producers lack basic hospitality skills, while a few other lack capital to reach break even. And public investments in agro-food development support are poorly monitored, therefore there is no knowledge about the impact of conducted investments.

CONCLUSIONS

The mentioned examples highlight a significant shift from a governance model in which producers and consumers were alienated from each other to one in which the agro-food system rests on a participatory approach for producers and on close relations between producers and consumers. The examples also disclose a break and a step away productivism.

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