



PROJECT MUSE®

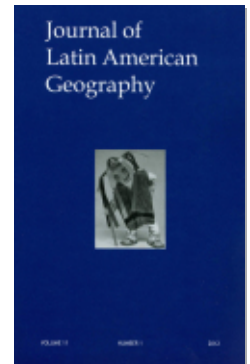
*Tourism and Agriculture: New Geographies of Consumption,
Production and Rural Restructuring* (review)

Thomas Klak

Journal of Latin American Geography, Volume 11, Number 1, 2012, pp.
183-184 (Review)

Published by University of Texas Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lag.2012.0019>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/470645>

Tourism and Agriculture: New Geographies of Consumption, Production and Rural Restructuring. Edited by Rebecca Torres and Janet Momsen. New York: Routledge, 2011. xvi + 224 pp., maps, tables, and index. \$148.00 hardback (ISBN 978-0-415-58429-6).

Janet Momsen has for years been out-front analyzing issues that will resonate with anyone who has spent ample time in rural areas: How can the decline of small farming families and the significant rural unemployment be reversed? How to integrate the rich artisanal capacities of small farmers with the growing alternative tourism industry? Co-editor Rebecca Torres has pursued similar questions more recently, and brings a rich understanding of rural development dynamics and tourism in Mexico. The editors combine their Latin American and Caribbean expertise with that of twenty-one other scholars. They represent a diversity of disciplines, ranging from history to psychology, although it is not obvious from the written chapters which disciplinary vantage point each author brings. They report in fourteen short chapters on agriculture-tourism issues in world regions ranging from eastern and western Europe, Japan, Latin America, and the United States, to Ghana and the Fiji Islands.

It is unfortunate that the topics of this book --rural livelihoods, innovative agricultural trends, and alternative tourisms-- do not capture the scholarly attention that urban economic or political issues do. This volume connects these crucial issues to globalization, new forms of production and consumption, and new types of cultural exchange. A recurrent theme among chapters is that tourists visiting rural areas are primarily from cities, and often seek to reconnect with their severed rural roots. They desire connectivity to how food is grown and cared for, to increase awareness of the origins of often taken for granted products, and the people behind them. The book reports on new economic opportunities for rural producers through ecotourism, wine, food and rural tourism and specialized niche market agricultural production. The reader might quite logically think that there would be natural affinities and synergism between well-established small-scale farming and the emerging tourism activities in those same regions. The book reports that too often the two compete for land, water, labor and investment capital.

Unfortunately, the case study chapters do not follow a common structure. Nor do their methodologies examine tourism in a comparable way, so that one can follow similar challenges playing out across case studies. Instead the chapters are organized according to the preferences of the authors. This makes it challenging to extract the general points about agriculture and tourism that might transcend contexts. To some extent is also the case that agriculture-tourism connections are place specific, as this book leads the reader to conclude. But theory must transcend place, and this book makes little effort in that direction.

Now a few comments on individual chapters. Chapter 2 on Hungary focuses on describing particular places where rural tourism occurs, and even individual entrepreneurs, and does not seek to extract principles that could apply elsewhere. Readers of this and other chapters would have benefited from data about rural tourism growth that could highlight particular tourism arrangements that are particularly promising.

Chapter 3 on Ghana focuses a particular way that agriculture and tourism can complement each other through "farm tourism." Kudos to the authors for reporting interestingly on questionnaires administered to visitors at two farms, though it is unclear why these two particular farms were singled out. They seem to be rather ordinary efforts to bring urban dwellers to farms to connect with ostriches (and their meat) and cacao, respectively. All fine and well, but again, there is the difficulty of ascertaining the

study's broader applicability. Further, the surveyed visitors to the farms were virtually all Ghanaians, so these enterprises do not help with the important role of rural tourism in bringing in foreign exchange dollars.

Chapter 4 on the Yucatán draws on data gathered in the 1990s and 2003 (Chapter 9 is similarly based on data from 1987 and 2003). The focus of the Yucatán chapter is on migration to a Cancun shantytown, hardly the quintessential context for agriculture-tourism synergism. So one can see that the book's coverage of agriculture-tourism interactions is very broad. That makes sense, but also makes it difficult to see transcending patterns among such eclecticism.

The book would also benefit from tighter methodologies and editing. For example, Chapter 6 on Fiji relies heavily on citations to personal communication, but provides no further information about the sources. In chapter 4 (page 57) the author explains that Don Mario was chosen as a case study "because he typified the average *milpa* farmer." But ten pages later we're told that "Don Mario's *milpa* practices have been indirectly contrasted to those of a normal or typical *milpa*, but the truth is that there is no one reality and no single true *milpa*."

Chapter 10 on organic sheep farming in central Italy offers an intriguing and innovative agriculture-tourism example. Over 1,000 people have adopted a sheep on this farm through Internet sales, and receive farm products shipped to them. Adopt-a-sheep provides wider advertising for the farm, encouraging visitation.

An added problem with the "stand-alone" nature of the chapters is that many repeat some of the basic justifications for linking agriculture and tourism, justifications most readers of such a volume hardly require. Further, many chapters aim to provide a national-level overview of the status of rural tourism in a particular country. In my view, this approach is less desirable than focusing on what has worked, what has not, why, and general lessons that potentially could be applied elsewhere. The chapters as a whole are short on quantitative evidence that could substantiate authors' claims that their particular case studies are successful. As a geographer, commenting on a book edited by two geographers, I must note that among the numerous maps, only two include even a rudimentary scale (a geographer's pet peeve).

Given the editors' scholarly expertise, and the wide ranging empirical material assembled in this volume, it is a pity that they did not attempt to draw out the important themes and trajectories in a concluding chapter. Readers would have benefited from the editors' own synthesis of emerging trends and hopeful directions for greater agriculture-tourism integration. Beyond their short introductory chapter, which highlights but does not analyze themes found in various chapters, the editors leave it to case studies to tell the story. Indeed, it surprises me that the editors left a book with such rich empirical material at the case-study analytical level, rather than the synthetic level. Such synthesis is left to the reader, to carry forward ideas and inspirations from the case studies to promote stronger agriculture-tourism linkages in both the global North and South.

Thomas Klak
Department of Environmental Studies
University of New England