

Defending country living: Opposing legitimization strategies in online discussions

The aim of this presentation is to explore what kind of legitimization strategies are used to defend living in the countryside in Finnish online discussions. By legitimization we refer to the ways of making the countryside and country lifestyle seem like acceptable in the discussions. The data consists of 46 blog posts and their comments from 17 Finnish lifestyle-blogs and a total of 150 discussion threads from two Finnish anonymous online discussion boards, *Ylilauta* ("Overboard"), and *Vauva.fi* ("Baby.fi") from the years 2018-2021. The data were analyzed with discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 2003) combined with legitimization theory (Van Leeuwen, 2007). We identified passages of the discussions where rhetorical legitimization strategies were used, and coded who were represented as in-group and who as the out-group and how they were named. A typical polarization strategy is talking about "us" and "them" (Oddo, 2011; van Dijk, 1998); in this way legitimization of one's own lifestyle can be carried out by projecting oneself as good and innocent and the others as bad and evil. We coded utterances where positive or negative attributes were given to the "in-group", the countryside and the people living there, and respectively where different attributes were given to the "out-group", the city. According to our preliminary results, the discussions may be seen as reactions against different threats; climate change discussion being one of them. Also, actions against climate change are often described as a threat to the existence and well-being of country people and their families, which necessitates the use of legitimization strategies in the discussions.

References:

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