



Towards A New Territory for Rural Museums

Consultation with Audiences

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Prepared for:
Rural Museums Network
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Project Aims

To identify a platform for re-invigorating Rural Museums and helping them to be more relevant to modern audiences.

Research Objectives

- To discover what the countryside means to different audience segments.
- To understand the kind of museum experience audiences enjoy.
- To identify the perceived purpose of rural museums.
- To explore in detail what contents and approaches would make rural museums more relevant to people.
- To understand how audiences feel about objects in rural collections.
 - Food, crops, livestock
 - Farm machinery/physical work/
scale of operations
 - The idyllic farm of yesteryear
 - Craft skills
 - Markets, market towns, economics
 - Rich and poor, country society
 - What's going wrong?

Methodology • Stage I

2 extended and 2 regular focus groups with potential audiences for Rural Museums.

MEN AND WOMEN	CITY DWELLERS GLASGOW	COUNTRY DWELLERS DEREHAM
BC1C2	YOUNGER AGE 20-35 MIX OF SINGLES, COUPLES AND FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN	NOT COUNTRY BORN AND BRED 5 SUBURBS ALL HAVE MOVED FROM A TOWN IN PAST 10 YEARS
MUSEUM VISITORS		
3 RURAL MUSEUM VISITORS PER GROUP	OLDER AGE 40-60 MIX OF KIDS/NO KIDS LIVING AT HOME	COUNTRYSIDE BORN AND BRED MIX OF FARMING AND NON FARMING

6-8 respondents 1 1/2 –2 hours

Each respondent brought in a personal object which symbolised the countryside.

Dates and locations • November, 2005

Moderators • Susie Fisher, Jane Barrett

Methodology • Stage II

One extended focus group with rural stakeholders with local influence

Held in Glastonbury, November 2005

The group comprised

The Manager of the Chamber of Commerce

A local Councillor, Chair of the Conservation Society

Lecturer on Sustainability (Forestry and Wind Power)

FWAG Environmentalist/Agronomist

Director of the Country Development Trust/Regeneration

3 local business people, taking an active interest in local affairs

Moderator • Susie Fisher

Stimulus Material

- Objects, symbolising the countryside, brought in by respondents.
- Picture array, representing current rural museums.
- Trigger boards; rural topics.
- Old magazines for picture tear exercise.
- Bubble cartoons and other projective techniques

Overview

- There is something of a class war between City and Country. City people are largely unaware of agriculture and are interested in the country as landscape and escape. Country people feel angry and misunderstood. They want to justify and protect their way of life and regain national esteem.
- Rural Museums are perceived as worthy but dull. No surprises expected and no urgency to visit.
- As museums, the sector is expected to give itself a facelift and show itself confident in the modern world.
 - **Advertising and promotion**
 - **Technology competent**
 - **Tempting design and product proposition**
 - **Customer aware**
- Relevance lies in the themes of
 - Food**
 - Animals, nature**
 - Town and country**
 - Personal challenge**
 - Contrasts, then and now**
- Opportunities lie in
 - Partnerships with commercial organisations.
 - Extending the content beyond agriculture to embrace the rural life and heritage of each museum's particular area.

What Different Audience Segments Did We Meet?

URBAN PLEASURE SEEKERS
Looking for time out in the countryside.

“We try to get away as much as possible.” Older Urban

COUNTRY CONFIDENT & WEALTHY
Make their own rules.
Contemptuous.

“People are just too wet these days.” Born & Bred

URBAN FAMILIES
A place for the children to run

“Keeping them occupied at the weekend means a lot of outdoor activity.” Young Urban

BROKEN EX FARMERS
Loss, tragedy, blood and bone.

“My father was ill and we came out of farming. It was his whole life.” Born & Bred

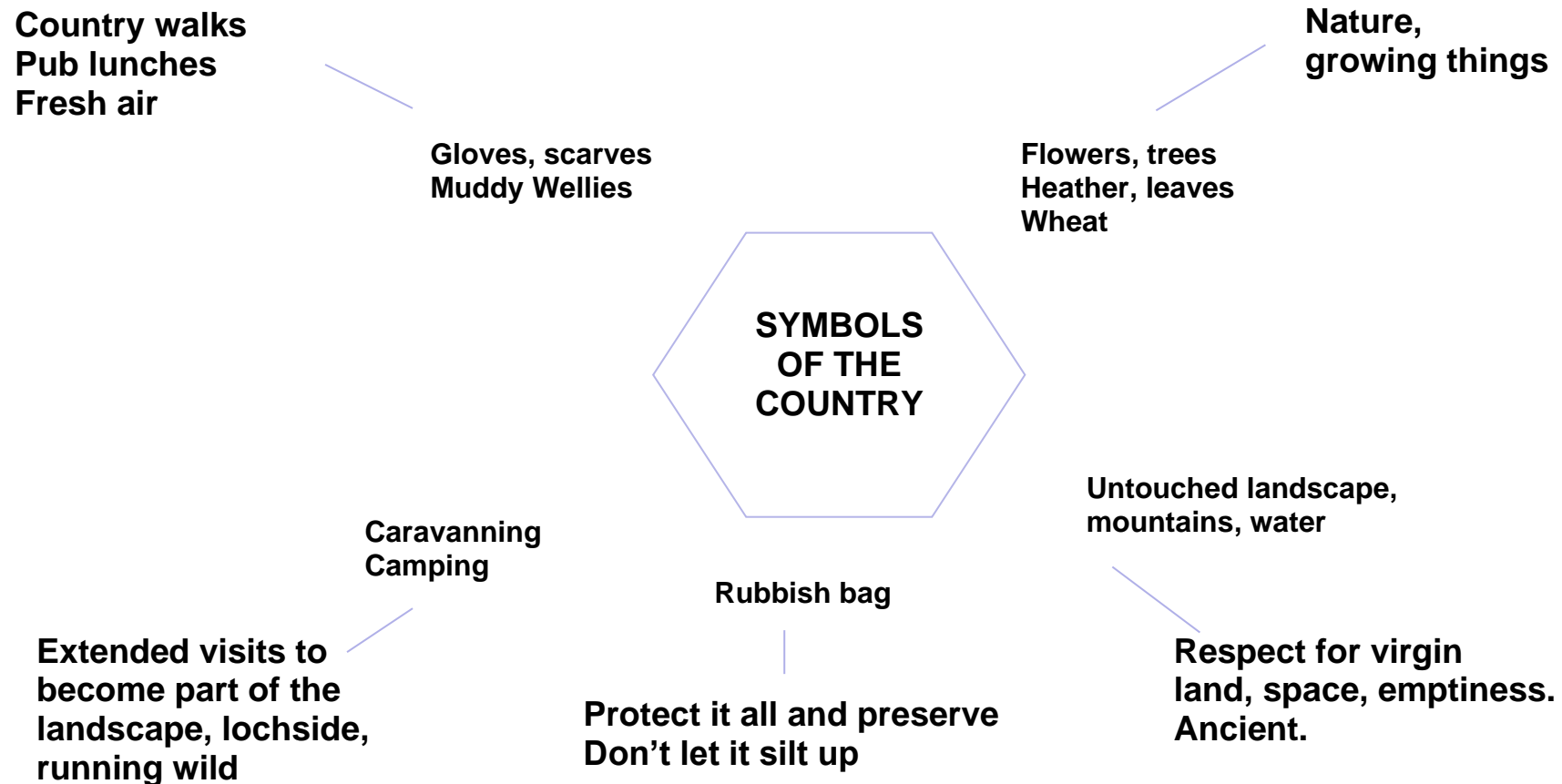
WISHFUL COUNTRY INCOMERS
The fulfilment of a dream.

“You can breathe the air. It’s fresh.” Rural Incomer

COMMENT

- THE AUDIENCE’S BASIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE COUNTRYSIDE PROFOUNDLY AFFECTS THEIR ATTITUDES TO RURAL MUSEUMS.

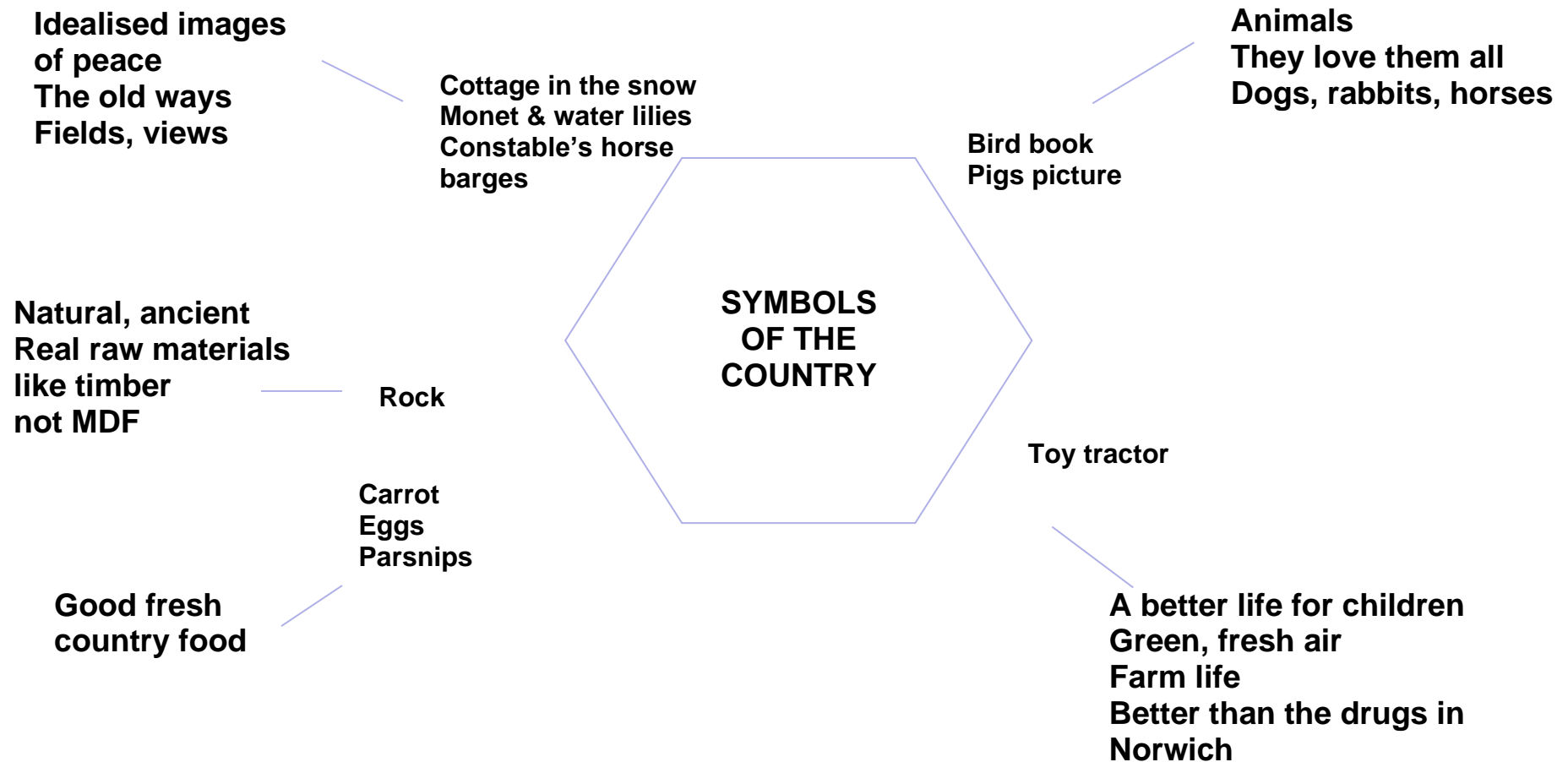
Their Objects Bring The Relationship To Life • Urban



COMMENT

- FROM THE AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE, THE EXPERIENCE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IS NOT MEDIATED BY FARMING. THEY BARELY THINK ABOUT FARMING

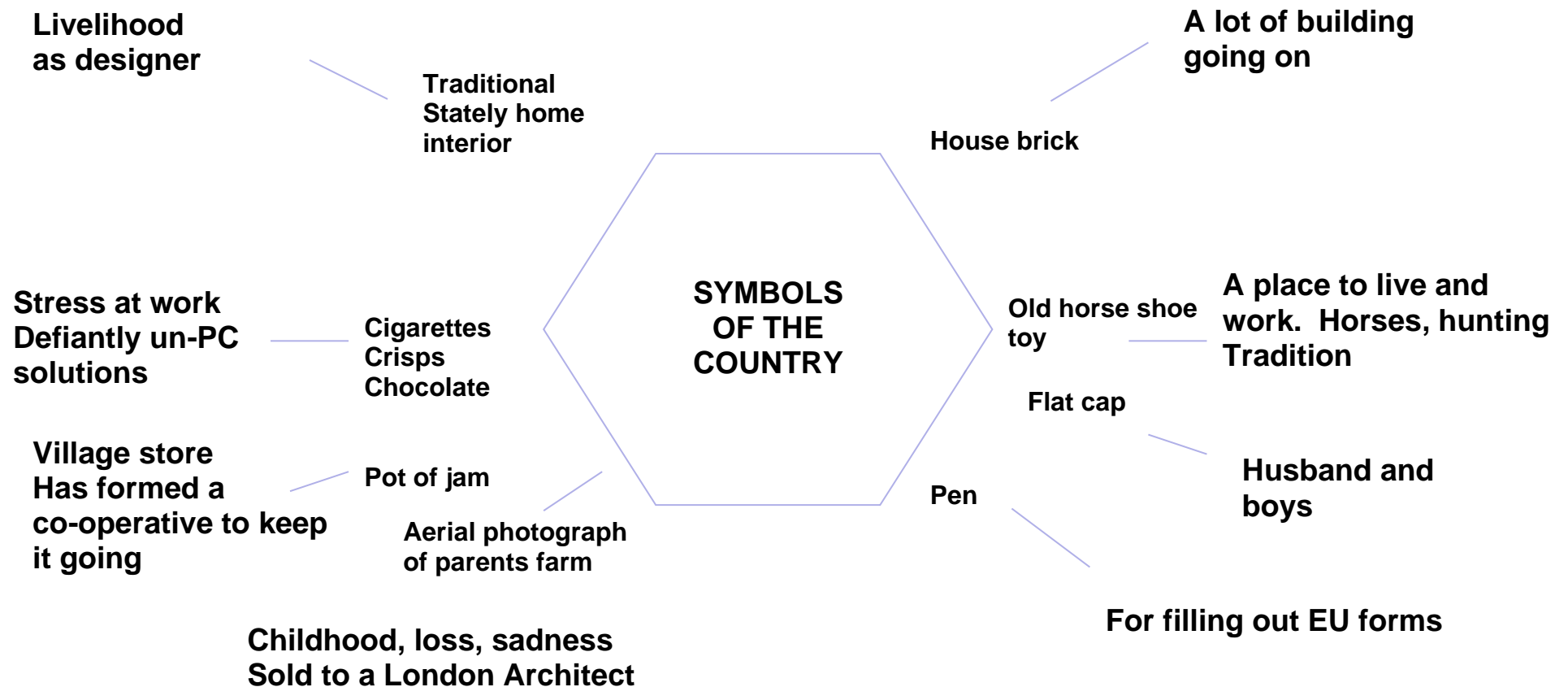
The Symbolic Objects • Country Incomers



COMMENT

- THIS IS ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE. INCOMERS HAVE MADE A POSITIVE CHOICE TO LIVE IN THE COUNTRY. THEY HAVE AN IDEALISED IMAGE OF COUNTRY LIFE, IN WHICH AGRICULTURE AND FARMING ARE A RELIABLE PART.

The Symbolic Objects • Country Born And Bred

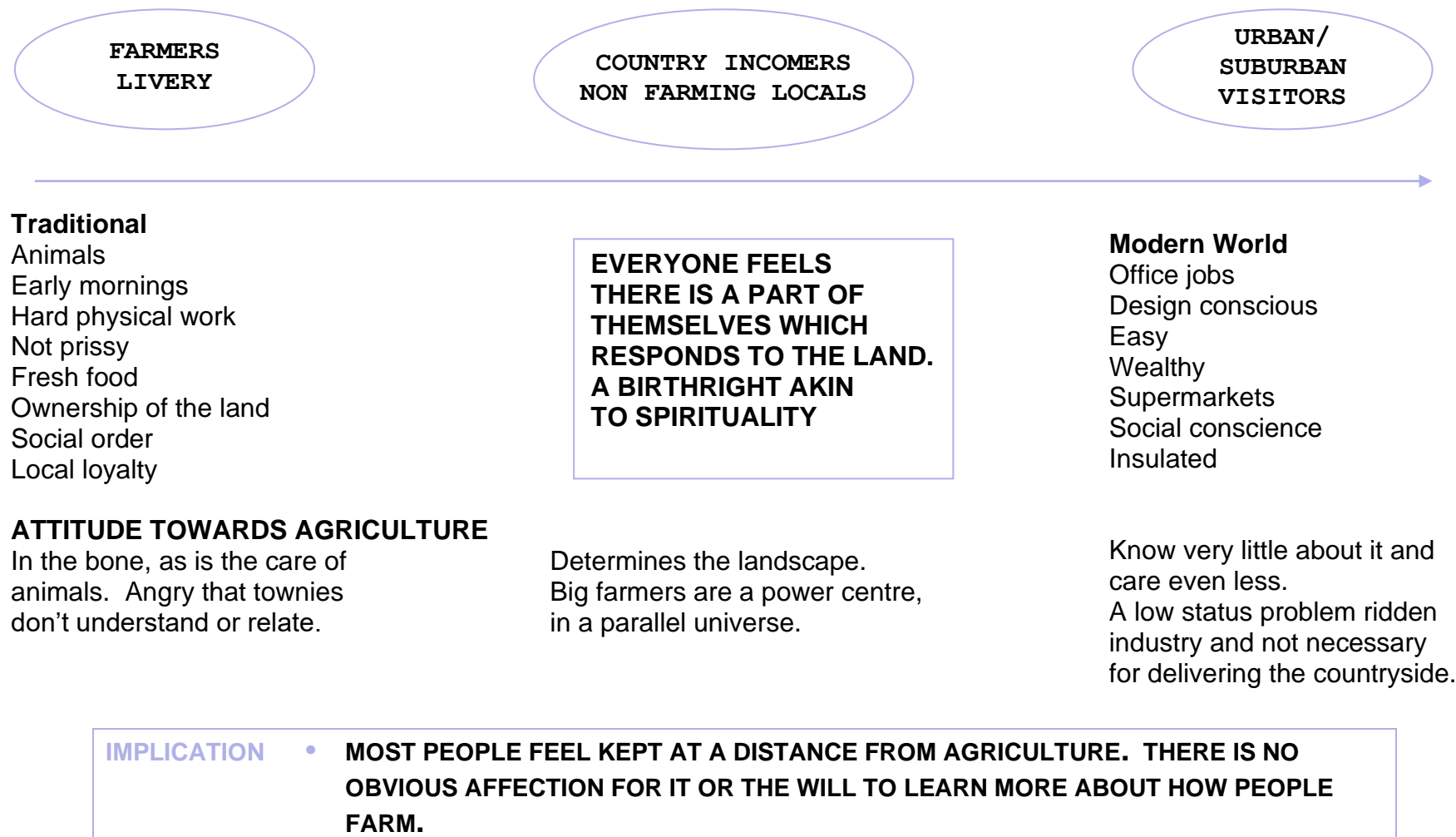


COMMENT

- ANIMALS, AGRICULTURE, EARNING A LIVING. STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN TRADITIONAL COUNTRY WAYS AGAINST UNCOMPREHENDING TOWNSFOLK.

Three Main Sectors Emerge In Terms Of

Attitudes To The Countryside



Ambivalent Feelings About Farming

- Farmers are close to animals but they kill them.
- Farming is the source of food, but food comes from supermarkets.
- Farming is a low status, kicked about occupation, but it's crucially important.
- There is a relationship of mutual contempt between town and country.

A conundrum

People who have never farmed know next to nothing about how farmers **actually** live and work. Little sense of process, depth, evolution.

Farmers are operating in a parallel universe.

And yet

At the same time people feel there are no surprises to be revealed about farms. It is as if they already know all they need to know by looking at the countryside (and by books and images from childhood?).

IMPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• THERE IS LITTLE MOTIVATION, TOP OF MIND, TO PROPEL PEOPLE TOWARDS A RURAL MUSEUM. ONE OF THE TASKS WILL BE TO CHALLENGE PEOPLE, PIQUE THEIR CURIOSITY, SURPRISE THEM.
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Perceptions of Rural Museums

- Dull, staid, out of the way.
“Not much there.” Glasgow visitor to Kittochside
- It takes a long time to get round to going but some of them are excellent when you get there. Gressenhall and Glastonbury were praised.
“Gressenhall is fabulous. It’s an under used facility.” Incomer, Norfolk
“It took me two years to go and see it with my niece and her three children.” Stakeholder, Glastonbury
“It’s taken off since the County Council followed the national policy of free entry. It was absolutely fascinating. First class rural life museum.” Stakeholder, Glastonbury

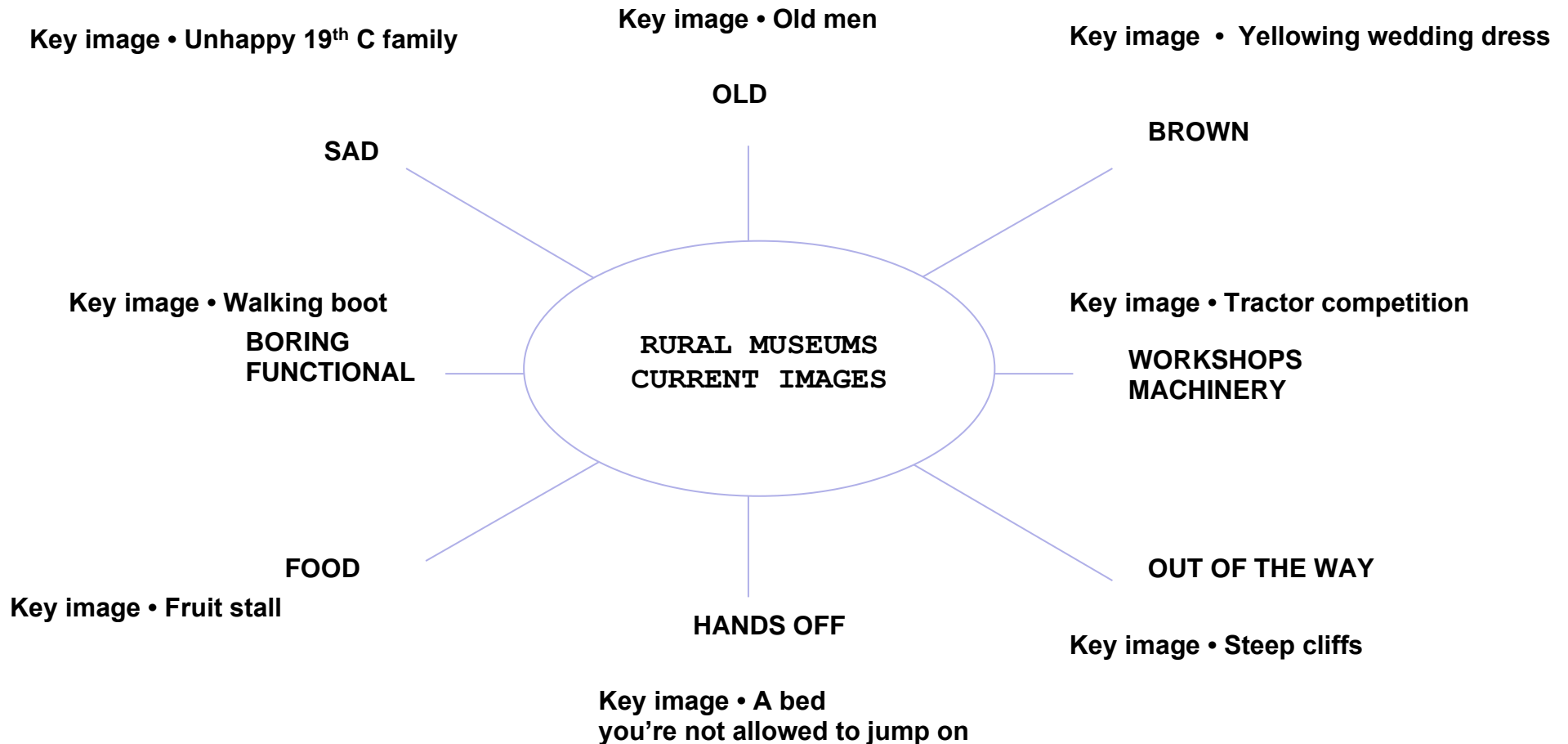
But

- People seem to be paying lip service.
The assumption is that rural museums must be for children and by extension, ‘not for me’. Universally people felt children **should** be taught about their rural history, but were doubtful whether the children would be interested.
“My teenage daughter would kill me if I took her there.” Incomer, Norfolk
“You learn about rural life at school. I’m not sure they have the appetite.....” Stakeholder, Glastonbury

IMPLICATION

- TO ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE, RURAL MUSEUMS SHOULD BE CONFIDENTLY IN THE MODERN WORLD.
PEOPLE ARE RELUCTANT TO BE DRAGGED BACK INTO A HARD WORK, ‘GOING NOWHERE’ WORLD.

Probing The Image Of Today's Rural Museums



IMPLICATION • THE IMAGE IS NOT UPBEAT ENOUGH FOR MOST PEOPLE. TOO FUNCTIONAL AND FADED. TOO LITTLE GLAMOUR.
IS IT GOING TO BE A FUNCTIONAL, FADED EXPERIENCE?
“IT’S A COUNTRY WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS.” NORFOLK INCOMER

What Is The Purpose Of Rural Museums?

Everyone agrees in a 'one size fits all' kind of way.

Education

"To teach people about the countryside."

"An educational tool linked to history."

Incomer Norfolk

Glastonbury Stakeholder

Identity

"Where we have been. Where we're going."

"Social and rural identity."

Glasgow Urban

Glastonbury Stakeholder

Preservation

"Show old objects in context."

"Record local culture and history."

Glasgow

Glastonbury

But only country residents back it with feeling.

Food

"Show where food comes from, cheese and butter."

"From corn to the bread, stage by stage."

Norfolk Farmer

Norfolk Incomer

How things used to be done

"It's how life was yesteryear. It's handy for people from towns and cities to know what the country is about."

"How farming works."

"It's for people from the town to see how farming used to be."

Norfolk Incomer

Norfolk Farmer

Norfolk Farmer

IMPLICATION

- **FOR THE URBAN MAJORITY, RURAL MUSEUMS HAVE A GENERIC PURPOSE ONLY. THIS MEANS THERE IS NO URGENCY TO VISIT, NO PRIOR AGENDA. THE SECTOR NEEDS TO ROOT OUT AND IDENTIFY WHAT IS URGENT AND SPECIFIC FOR URBAN DWELLERS.**

Is The Category Name 'Rural Museums' Dragging You Down?

- Could the whole amount to less than the sum of its parts?
i.e. Rural Museums are dull, static, brown, not much there.
Whereas

a Blacksmith
a Weaver
a laundry
a bakery
a dairy

evoke a picture of a specific goal-orientated activity, with recognisable outcomes and skills to admire. And people at the heart of them. Life.

- Rural museums suggest farming; which is currently low status and low awareness. At the same time, people feel they already know the farming stereotype (crops and animals) which Rural Museums will present. So at some level, potential visitors dismiss/downgrade the idea of visiting.
- Is farming and rural life too **broad** a category to get your mind around? Only when the category is broken down, can people identify the parts, feel surprised, recognise how much they don't know.

IMPLICATION • RURAL MUSEUMS MIGHT CONSIDER POSITIONING THEMSELVES ON THE BASIS OF THEIR SPECIFIC STRENGTHS AND POINTS OF DIFFERENCE. ALTHOUGH THEY WILL DRAW ON A COMMON WELL OF INSIGHT ABOUT RURAL LIFE.

The Nature Of The Objects In Rural Museums

- Most urban audiences cannot talk about farm objects, nor do they want.
"I would rather go for a walk." Younger Urban

The objects are interesting only because they are part of a broader experience.

e.g. cooking biscuits
milking a cow
planting seeds

“Machinery, tractors, pictures. Not an awful lot to be honest.”

Older Urban

- They want to see these objects at work in context or at best to have hands on contact and use them themselves.

“A working farm is more exciting, for a hands-on approach.”

Younger Urban

“I prefer a craft fair. The rural museum, there’s isn’t much apart from the farming of the land. You know, there are the tools and stuff they used. In a craft fair, you are learning a skill, that is still around today.”

Younger Urban

- Beamish was a great favourite, because it faithfully plunged the visitor into the whole environments.

**Kitchen and baking
Old fashioned shops, with butter land out
Old Pub**

**Sweetie shop
Dentist
House**

“You could go into the house and someone was sitting with the old spinning wheel and she was darning and making stuff.”

Older Urban

IMPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• THE OBJECTS ARE MOST COMPELLING WHEN THEY ARE PUT TO WORK IN CONTEXT. THE AUDIENCE HAS TO ESTABLISH CONTACT RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING.
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Rural Museum Objects Are More Relevant

If You Have Country Roots

- Country dwellers also talk less about objects than they do about animals and food.
 - “Shire horses for children from inner city areas.” Farmer
 - “How you make cheese and butter.” Farmer
 - “Lambs actually growing.” Incomer
- All are there to make things more real for city children.
 - “Museums are not necessary for the country person.” Farmer
- Nevertheless, where the audience knows and remembers a little already, museum objects will stir interest and add to the picture.
 - “My Uncle had a farm and a little outside toilet and a tin bath. It’s nice to see how hard it was.” Incomer
 - “It’s the days when people worked the land, threshing and stacking. It was incredibly interesting to see the tractor going along. See the round bales of hay. They used to be square.” Incomer
- Contrast between then and now. Start to establish the drama and relevance needed to engage peoples’ interest.
 Milk went into the churns and was moved by horse carts in Glastonbury.
 To the railway station. Now it’s all gone into huge tankers.

IMPLICATION • RURAL MUSEUMS HAVE TO MOVE TOWARDS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VISITOR RATHER THAN EXPECTING THE VISITOR TO COME TO THEM.

Are Rural Museums Just About Farming?

- Yes for those who know them. No for everyone else.
- Rural Museums are naturally assumed to be museums which are in the country. They can include

Country town museums
Castles

Water mills
Local history (like tanning)

“Rural equals a rural area. The contents depend on local history, you need more than just farming.”

Glastonbury Stakeholder

“Try and spotlight what used to go on there and make something of it. Like the weaver’s cottage in a village where they did the weaving.”

Older Visitor

- Narratives about the local area and what it used to be like, woven into the basic story about rural farming, stand a better chance of being special, not generic. Tourists and locals are open to having a deeper view on aspects of their local environment.
- Many people see farming alone as too narrow a subject, when the museum could be presenting a history of place.
The picture of farming life, currently on offer, carried with it little sense of history, evolution, the passing of time. It would engage more if it had more historical depth.

IMPLICATION • RURAL MUSEUMS ARE WIDELY EXPECTED TO DEAL WITH THE NARRATIVES OF THE LOCAL AREA AND NOT JUST FARMING LIFE.

A Summary Of The Current Motivations And Barriers

For Rural Museums

MOTIVATIONS

In the country
Educational
Things to do for the children
Whole environment
Animals
Demonstrations
Hands-on

“I cannot imagine anyone saying ‘Oh look, we will go to this rural museum, there’s an old tractor there.’”
Older Urban

BARRIERS

Don’t know about farming
Out of the way
Indoor
Dull, static objects
Old, sad
No surprises, no excitement
Never think of it
Not value for money

IMPLICATION

- **RURAL MUSEUMS DO BEST WHEN THEY OFFER HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE PLUS LIVING EXHIBITS AND DEMONSTRATIONS. EVEN SO, THEY SEEM DULL AND PAST IT. THEY WILL NEED TO MASTER A MODERN, CONFIDENT STYLE, RAISE AWARENESS AND SURPRISE THEIR VISITORS IN ORDER TO TURN THE TIDE.**

Who Are The Likely Audiences?

If rural museums grasp the modern agenda.....

LIKELY

Country Incomers

- Wanting to know deeper and behind the scenes of the environment they've chosen to live in.

Parents of under 10s

- Looking for an entertaining, hands-on, educational Sunday afternoon for the kids.

Tourists

- Interested in the local area, looking for diversions.

Farming community

- Examining their own identity, looking to see how they are portrayed.

Urban day out

- Looking for brief immersion in the countryside, might be drawn in by the shock of a parallel universe.

UNLIKELY

Country people believe rural museums are for people from the towns, so they can learn about farming. And people from the towns are by and large not interested enough to go. Urban audiences must be specifically targeted.

IMPLICATION

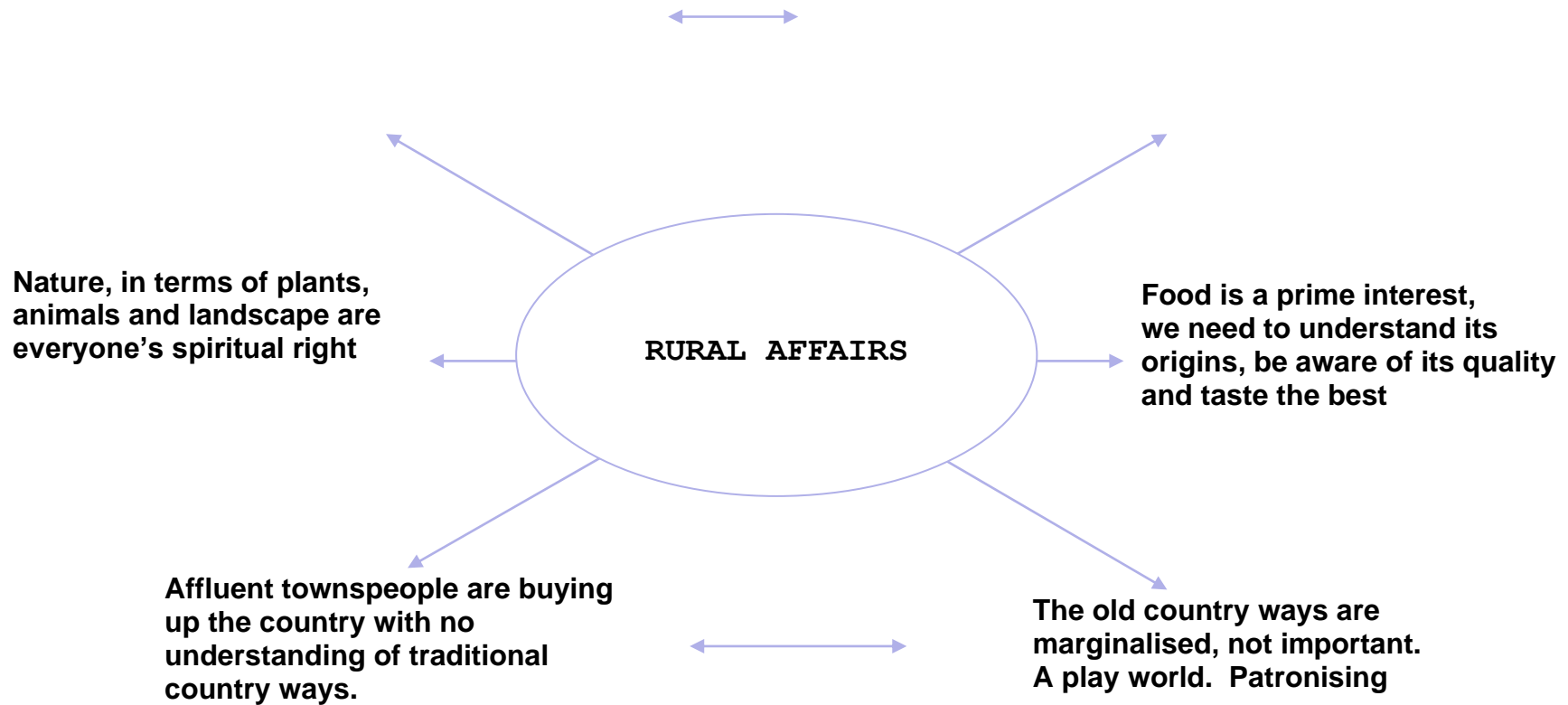
- ALL THESE AUDIENCES WANT TO BE STIMULATED, INVOLVED, PLEASURED AND ENTERTAINED. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF A THIRST FOR ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE PER SE. RURAL MUSEUMS MUST ANSWER THE 'SO WHAT'? QUESTION.

Where Does The Audience Begin To Discern Relevance?

Here are the recurrent themes

Big business and technology
are the real drivers of the
modern world including farming

Human beings are insulated, soft
out of touch with reality.
Farming is a much needed reality check



IMPLICATION • THESE ARE THE ISSUES WHICH SET PEOPLE ALIGHT. HOW DO THEY RELATE TO THE TRADITIONAL RURAL ISSUES?

Verbatim Quotes • Live Issues In Rural Affairs

“Rich people are pushing the prices up. People can’t live here.”

Incomer, Norfolk

“They’re sitting in the Georgian Tea Rooms, down in Harrods and country folk are getting up early and looking after the animals.”

Farmer, Norfolk

“People don’t relate the food to crops. Where does milk come from? It’s just the supermarkets’ policy not to relate their food to anything animal.”	Farmer, Norfolk
“It’s hard work and they don’t make a lot. I feel sorry for them.”	Younger Urban, Glasgow
“I think the big corporations have put a stranglehold on farmers. I don’t think farming is rural anymore.”	Younger Urban, Glasgow
“There are too many houses being built. They are not in keeping with the landscape.”	Younger Urban, Glasgow
“Craft skills were handed down from generation to generation, but this generation is the last. When they see the technology that is happening in the big world, it’s hard to compete with.”	Older Urban, Glasgow
“A lot of farmers are making stuff to sell at farmers’ markets. And they have got shops, making jams and things like that.”	Older Urban

Food, Crops And Livestock •

A Cause Waiting For A Champion

- Food is important and motivating to everyone. Townspeople are out of touch with where it comes from.
- Townspeople buy and eat prepared food. City dwellers and farmers alike are at the mercy of the all powerful supermarkets.
- Supermarkets actively discourage the link between animals and food. Even the link between food and crops is fuzzy.
- Farmers' markets are growing in popularity but they are small time.
- Country people are held to eat better, fresher, tastier food than city people.
- People don't realise how vulnerable the world food situation is.
Only 22 days supply of wheat globally
Being able to feed our own country in time of war (WWII)

STRONG IDEAS • EXPERIENCING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD, CROPS AND ANIMALS.
 EATING AND ENJOYING FRESH HIGH QUALITY FOOD.
 • HOW WOULD WE FEED OURSELVES IN TIME OF WAR?

Farm Machinery, Physical Work And Scale Of Operations

Surprising And Dramatic

- Farmers, in the old days, were real men, putting in back breaking work and long hours which are unimaginable today. Heroes.

Up at 4am milk the cows, go to school.
Getting the harvest in, all weather.
Ploughing and planting, riddling and bailing

- This acts as a dramatic reality check for soft townies. If pushed, could you feed your family from the soil?
- Comfort was subjugated to the needs of the farm. Families worked together. It took a deep personal toll, but there was great intensity, tragedy, exultation, sense of community united by struggle.
- But how hard do farmers work today? You never see them. Sometimes a tractor blocking the road.
- Today's farm machinery is staggeringly different from the rusty old ironware on show in a rural museum.

Laser guided, electronic, sound proof cab
Huge, high £2,500 a tyre

These are power machines on a galactic scale, with powerful owners, chewing up the land. These are the monsters who can take on big business and succeed. There is no viable little family farm these days.

STRONG IDEA • **REALITY CHECK. COULD I WREST A LIVING OUT OF THE SOIL?**
AM I TOO SOFT? LASER GUIDED TECHNOLOGY AND MASSIVE POWER FOR TODAY'S
FARMER. NO WAY PITIFUL.

What's Going Wrong? The Tide Has Gone Out

- City people are buying up country properties and pricing out the locals.
- Prices are high, wages are low. Ducking and weaving for employment.
- Little respect for the countryside.

Unsympathetic building
Traffic
Dumping junk, chemicals etc

- Big businesses and bureaucracy squeezing the little man out of his way of life.

Rural shops going under. Local markets waning
Subsidised foreign imports stealing the supermarket trade
Sissy hygiene standards cutting out local produce
Farmland set aside
Women in paid jobs

- No jobs and training for young people.
- Country life is not understood or respected by townspeople.
Is the horse a symbol?

STRONG IDEA • TRADITIONAL COUNTRY LIVING IS UNDER THREAT. A ONE SIDED WAR.
BITTER FOR COUNTRY PEOPLE, UNNOTICED BY TOWNSPEOPLE.

Rich And Poor, Country Society • A New Class War

- Rich/poor has largely become Town/Country. Townspeople have the money. Country people have sold off their gardens, their farms, their land. They have taken short term windfall profits.

- There is mutual contempt, lack of understanding between the two. Townspeople convert barns and put up luxury developments and don't understand about horses. Farmers trample protected space, overload their land with chemicals, flaunt ugly buildings and machinery.
- A few big farmers are powerful but many others are ducking and weaving; admin jobs, house and garden design, stables, chip shop.

“My Clients are office workers.” **Norfolk born & bred**
- The old social certainties are sinking. Respected figures were once Doctor, Squire, big farmer. Now these people are as likely to be a service industry for rich townies.

STRONG IDEA • AFFLUENT TOWN PEOPLE ARE OUSTING THE COUNTRY PEOPLE, BUT WITH LITTLE IDEA OF COUNTRY LIFE OR COUNTRY VALUES.
 A CLASS WAR IS BUBBLING UNDER THE SURFACE.

The Idyllic Farm Of Yesteryear •

‘The Darling Buds Of May’

- This is acknowledged to be a myth

**Family smallholding, all encompassing
Community, everyone lends a hand, including children
Children free to wander wild, near to Nature
Home baking, fresh vegetables, eggs, milk**

- The myth is pleasant, but unsurprising. Boring even. What can be revealed that you didn't know already?
- People are more interested in today's realities (although would they want to visit them?)

**Farmers diversifying into B&B's, petting farms
Non PC arrogance of farmers
How to run a big cost-effective farm
Erosion of personal freedom through bureaucracy**

STRONG IDEA • THE RURAL IDEAL MIGHT BE NICE TO EXPERIENCE FOR A WEEKEND (AS AN 'AGRI TOURIST'?) BUT IT'S A DIVERTISSEMENT, EVEN A BIT DULL. MORE COMPELLING AND SURPRISING ARE THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN THEN AND NOW.

Markets, Market Towns, Economics • A Sad Story

- Market towns have a history but are flailing in the current economic climate.

**Farmers' markets are sporadic, on the increase but small time
Farmers have lost wealth and power to the supermarkets**

**Women are in jobs not coming into town for market day
It's not economic to pick the apples**

- City ways are taking over the market towns, which are not set up for it.

**Out of town supermarkets
Traffic and congestion
Unemployment, drunkenness
Retail outlets
Forms to fill in, bureaucracy**

- Market towns must work to attract visitor/tourist income, i.e. market their history and heritage. e.g. the Arthurian legend.

STRONG IDEA • MARKET TOWNS ARE CAUGHT IN A VICE. THE RURAL COMMUNITY THEY TRADITIONALLY SERVED ARE RESOURCE POOR AND THEIR BUSINESSES ARE TOO SMALL TO COMPETE WITH BIG BUSINESS. MAKE HERITAGE THE PRODUCT.

Craft Skills • Not Appreciated And No Great Loss

- Townspeople seem largely unaware of country craft skills e.g. laying a hedge, thatching, blacksmithing.

- Top of mind is pottery, wood carving, corn dollies, arty souvenirs which they can take or leave. Bordering on the tacky.
- It is implicit that these are cottage industries which are bound to find it difficult to survive, in the face of technology. Amateur, maybe even tacky.
- If people know about them to start with, they may be more reluctant to let them die, but crafts are essentially relics, curiosities.
- Trades, such as smithing, don't offer training and apprenticeships like in the old days. They want too many qualifications, bureaucracy.
- Even successful farmers can't justify the old skills (e.g. hedging) because they are too time inefficient for modern business.

STRONG IDEA • THE OLD SKILLS AREN'T TAKEN SERIOUSLY ANYMORE.
THEY ARE SLIPPING AWAY.

Which Of These Themes Has A Positive Force?

FOOD

- Where does it come from, how do you grow it? How does it get to us? What does it taste like? Tasting the best.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

- Reality check back to our roots.
Could we make a living from the soil if we had to?
Could we do the heroic things they did?

CONTRASTS THEN AND NOW

- Parallel worlds, the unknown, the surprising, changes, differences. The unexpected. Evolution.

ANIMALS, NATURE

- Close to animals and plants. Seeing and recognising them. Relationships and feelings.
Who depends on whom?

TOWN AND COUNTRY

- How do their ways of life compare? What does each assume? What don't they know about each other?
Wars, power struggles, success stories.

IMPLICATION

- THIS REPRESENTS THE TERRITORY FOR MAKING RURAL MUSEUMS MORE RELEVANT. EXISTING COLLECTIONS, PEOPLES' STORIES AND LOCAL HISTORY CAN ALL BE INCORPORATED UNDER THESE UMBRELLAS.

We Can Draw Maps Of The Terrain

Eg.

Becoming a big business
Driving a laser-guided tractor.
Keeping horses and holding down a job.

NOW

Selling the family farm
Launching a farmer's market
Finding a protected species
Funding farriery training
Heartbreak of Foot & Mouth

**VISITOR'S?
PERSONAL
CHALLENGE
HANDS-ON**

**PEOPLES'
STORIES**

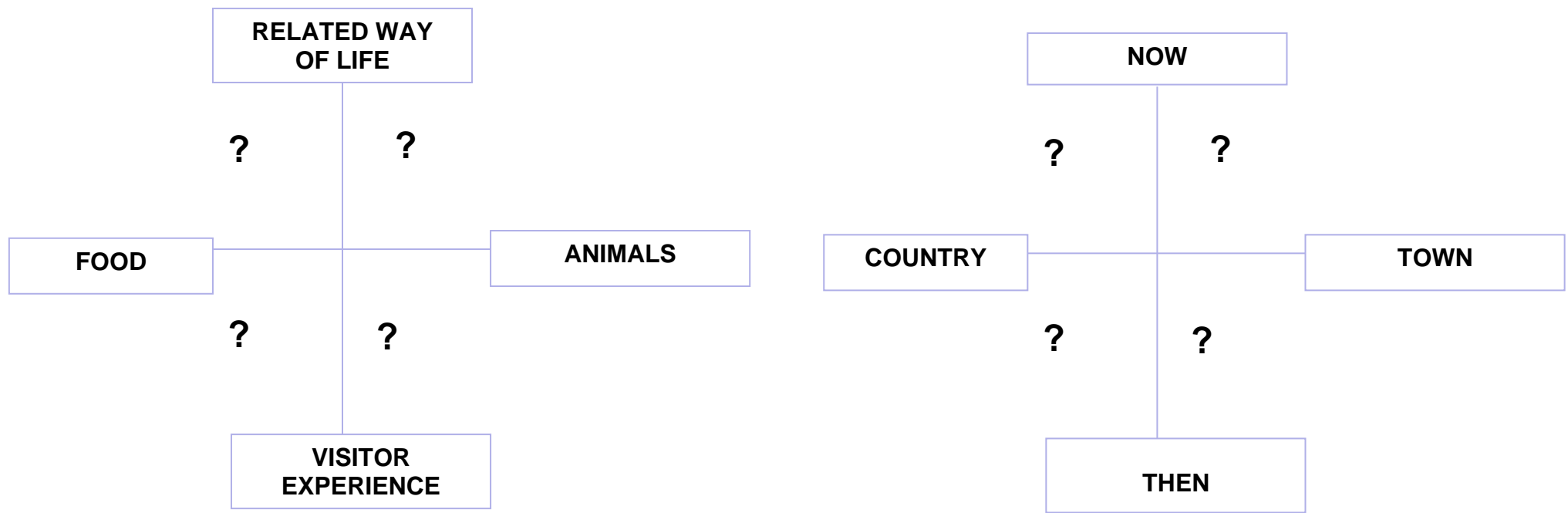
**Could I do this?
Hard physical work
Task skills
Ploughing
Planting
Laundry
Milking**

THEN

**When the kids got the harvest in.
A hard winter
The first milling machine
The great flood of 1933
A wedding**

IMPLICATION • **THE THEMES WHICH WE ALREADY KNOW ARE RELEVANT PROVIDE THE ORGANISING PRINCIPLES FOR THE COLLECTIONS.**

A Number Of Different Maps Can Be Drawn



Because the axes are taken from the list of relevant themes, any of these maps stands a good chance of being relevant to audiences. They can provide a number of alternative structures by which any particular museum could organise and theme its collections.

Rural Museums Of The Future • The Audience View

- The audience wants to see change.

The change which they see has as much to do with tone, style and confidence as with content.

- More fun, brighter, more tempting
 - More exciting, dangerous
 - More personal experience, hands on
 - More modern, market aware
 - More technology confident
- The idea is to present the past with all the expertise and perspective of the present. Left alone in an old fashioned backwater, the audience feels dejected, doesn't know what to make of it.
 - Think Eden Project or Beamish, as a guide.

IMPLICATION	• THE MODERN FRAME INCLUDES ADVERTISING, COMPUTERS, PROMOTIONAL DEALS, RESTAURANTS, COMFORT, ENTERTAINMENT, WELCOME.
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From What To What?

From	DULL		To	FUN	From	DATED		To	MODERN
	Glum	→		Smiling		Old fashioned	→		Modern
	Serious	→		Fun		Old	→		Young
	Dull	→		Bright		No technology	→		Technology Confident
	Arid	→		A treat		Yesteryear	→		Up to date
						Willow weaving	→		Talking to banks
						Myth	→		Reality
						Expensive	→		Hot deals
From	BLAND		To	EXCITING	From	PASSIVE		To	PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
	Staid	→		Edgy, shocking		Hands off	→		Hands on
	Old relics	→		More kick		Factual	→		Foody
	Bland	→		Contrasting		Inactive	→		Active, demonstrations
	Dull	→		Exciting, wow!		Looking	→		Experiencing
	Safe	→		Danger					
	Closed in	→		Fresh air					
	Anonymous	→		Celebrity					
	Poky	→		Spacious					
	Still	→		Moving					

IMPLICATION • THIS VISION RELIES MUCH MORE ON PRODUCTION VALUES THAN IS THE CASE FOR CURRENT RURAL MUSEUMS. THEY ARE BEING REGARDED AS A PRODUCT, WITH ATTENDANT QUESTIONS OF BRANDING, DIFFERENTIATION AND CONSUMER SATISFACTION.

What Do People Mean By The Ideas?

Images Give Us The Clue

Providing markets and retail opportunities

Choosing and buying plants.

Tasting and buying farm produced food.

e.g. milled flour, cheese, jam.

Sitting down for a restaurant meal, coffee shop.

e.g. fresh farm produce, traditional recipes, seasonal food

Buying craftworks made from natural materials, using traditional skills.

e.g. architectural and aesthetic

Key images

PINK WELLIES

RETAIL CATALOGUES

FAMILY SITTING DOWN TO EAT

COMMENT

- RETAIL OFFERS A FUNDAMENTAL NON GOODY GOODY ROUTE INTO THE QUALITY OF LIFE EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH LIFE ON A FARM.

Glamorising, Tempting, Welcoming

- Promoting the product through feel good advertising.

Colourful, happy, upbeat

- Creating a stylish prominent, inviting entrance.
Signs. Lamp standards leading up to it, a sense of design/investment.
- An acknowledgement of the hand of men in shaping and presenting Nature.
e.g. The Eden Project bubbles, a landscaped garden

Key Images

**JUMP FOR JOY
CADBURY'S WORLD OF CHOCOLATE
TOPIARY HEDGE
BRIGHT COLOURS**

COMMENT

- THIS PROVIDES REASSURANCE THAT THE SET UP REALLY IS MEANT FOR THE VISITOR AND DESIGNED TO DELIVER ENJOYMENT. THE URBAN ROLES OF DESIGN, MARKETING AND CONSUMER ARE EMBRACED NOT REJECTED.

Part Of A Larger Treat

- Capitalising on beautiful countryside, nature in the wild, which people crave.
Walking, out of the way places, untouched.
- Becoming a safe, indulgent element in a luxury weekend.
Romantic, champagne, country house stay, farmhouse stay.
- An absorbing relaxing place to linger. Adult, pleasurable.

COMMENT

- **THE MUSEUM NEEDS TO THINK OF ITSELF AS SUPPLEMENTING OTHER EXPERIENCES WHICH ARE BRINGING THE VISITOR CLOSE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE.**

Entertaining

Watching events and demonstrations which call on physical skills and knowledge, which might seem impossible to today's city person.

e.g.

**Smithing
Thatching**

**Ploughing with horses
Churning butter**

Curing ham

Taking part in costumed re-enactments, where children can dress up.

Riding on horses, tractors, hay carts, 4x4's, coping with mud, weather etc.

COMMENT

- THE ENTERTAINMENT LIES IN GIVING REALITY TO A PARALLEL UNIVERSE (FARMING) WHICH OTHERWISE IS UNKNOWN AND BEYOND THE IMAGINATION.

Accessible, Hands On

- Petting the animals and getting a taste of caring for them.

e.g. feeding and grooming, caring for tack, breeding?

- Planting, growing, preparing, tasting and eating food.
- Milking demonstrations, by hand and by machine.
- Driving a tractor, learning to use a plough, trying out farm tools.

COMMENT

- **HANDS ON YIELDS MOMENTS OF INTENSE EXPERIENCE, WHICH TRIGGER INSIGHT AND CHANGE PERCEPTIONS. THEY ARE ALSO INTERPRETED AS VALUE FOR MONEY.**

Confident With Modern Technology

Can communicate with you by text messaging.

Let's you close to heroic 21st Century agricultural machinery. Big kit.

Reveals the secrets of the laser cab, computer graphics, GPS guided

Master of hi tech interpretation tools.

Headphones, Google, PDA's, simulations

Key Images

**MOBILE PHONE
HI TECH CAR
HEADPHONES
BIG MACHINERY**

COMMENT

- THIS BANISHES THE IDEA THAT RURAL AFFAIRS ARE OUTDATED AND SECOND RATE. THEY ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO BE UNDERPINNED BY TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY.

Aware Of Money Matters

An industry, able to compete in ruthless world markets.

Able to change outdated practices in order to combat the cost of production.

Aware of the need to provide value for money for the consumer.

Key image



COMMENT

- FINANCIAL AWARENESS IS A 'SINE QUAE NON' OF RELEVANCE AND WORTH IN TODAY'S SOCIETY.
IT REASSURES THAT THERE WILL BE A WORTHWHILE CONTRACT BETWEEN PROVIDER AND CONSUMER.

Summing Up • Future Directions

Which styles of display have pulling power?

Based on personal experience.

Nature, soil, growing, tending, physically challenging yourself, eating.

Objects drenched in context

Animated by human stories, located in whole environments, involved in an ongoing task.

A sense of evolution, development, contrasts

This is the task, how did they do it then?
 how do they do it now?
 what changes, what doesn't?

Summing Up • Future Opportunities

- Identify a positive position as part of townspeople's visits to the country.
Engage with
 - Walking**
 - Country house weekends**
 - Afternoons out**
 - Preservation, sustainability, eco issues**
 - Nature**
 - Horse riding**

- Consider active partnerships with commercial organisations.

Retail
Restaurants

Agricultural
machinery
Garden centres

Farms
Riding stables

Hotels
Supermarkets?

Supplying depth and soul and heritage as part of what would otherwise be a straight commercial proposition. Benefit from their expertise in promotion.

- Consider how to bring alive the unique identity and heritage of the rural area which the museum embodies. Spreading beyond agriculture, farming and involving local geography, history, legend and tradition.
- Consider the balance between big national museums (popularity is on the increase) and smaller subject specific museums. Is the middle ground (rural museums in general) still tenable? How many rural museums can the market sustain?