Rural vs urban

The coloured light projected onto the building in the photo is part of Vivid, the annual night-time light festival held in Sydney, Australia. The festival lasts a month and the organisers aim to enthrall, and sometimes provoke, the thousands of people who flock to the city to see the lights.

This particular projection of trees and owls is a rural scene that contrasts with the traffic, roads and buildings of cities like Sydney. From our point of view as geographers it shows how artistic media — in this case colour and light used in a public location — can address important themes. The projection invites viewers to ponder the way humans degrade the natural world (the trees are denuded of leaves, with a strange purple growth in their place, the owls bearing witness to an unhealthy forest). It also reminds urban dwellers that life in cities is dependent on using resources from rural areas, such as timber and fresh water (many big cities take their water from rural reservoirs).

Looking at the image you might ask:
- Do cities grow at the expense of rural areas?
- Is the hubbub of urban life bought at the expense of the vitality of rural environments?

Vivid uses the illumination of public locations both to be artistic and, at times, to ask political questions about how modern people live.

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