



Royal Geographical Society
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Rural Geography
Research Group
(RGRG)

RGRG Newsletter * Winter 2015-16 (09.Feb.16): www.dur.ac.uk/geography/rgrg_newsletter/
[Http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Research+and+Higher+Education/ResearchGroups/Rural+Geography+Research+Group.htm](http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Research+and+Higher+Education/ResearchGroups/Rural+Geography+Research+Group.htm)

Please send articles, book reviews & photos to the editor: Bruce.Scholten@btopenworld.com

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1. RGRG Committee meeting in London

Happy 2016! On Jan. 22, the chilly Council Room in RGS-IBG HQ in London was hearth to RGRG's ambitious plans in 2016 and onwards. Our finances, and membership of about 250 scholars, are stable according to reports by Treasurer Gareth Enticott and Secretary Keith Halfacree.

Chair Nigel Walford asked members to suggest campuses for 1-to-2 day conferences in 2017; themes may include rural proofing, boundaries or the mysteries of nexus and transcendence. Nigel Walford and Sonja Rewhorn discussed workshops, writing retreats, grant applications and funding for postgraduates. **What are your ideas?**

2015 RGS Medals, Keith Halfacree noted, have been awarded for undergraduate dissertations: 1. Florence Write (Exeter), 2. Oliver Knight (Royal Holloway), and 3. Kate Breedon (Edinburgh). Monetary awards are now supplemented by organic food boxes from Riverford – much appreciated!

Migration of RGRG Newsletter archives from Durham to RGS-IBG London has begun. After meeting with Head of Research and Higher Education Catherine Souch, Bruce Scholten introduced Research Groups liaison Sarah Evans to our meeting. Evans welcomed RGRG Newsletter digital archives to London, and 'anything with the rubric of the RGRG' such as proceedings Anglo-German meetings, and perhaps meeting minutes. Evans has expertise with copyright, scanning and storage, and promised quick uploads of submitted material.



Facebook and Twitter will soon have greater RGRG presence. A sense of consolidation and growth, improving synergy with regional research groups, was expressed by Keith Halfacree.

CCRI Winter School at University of Gloucestershire, Jan. 13-14, 2016, was 'enjoyable', writes Damian Maye. Julie Ingram chaired talks on disease risk communication and management of cattle (likely applicable to Ebola outbreaks with humans). Matt Reed chaired talks on pesticides and soil. The global sweep of the CCRI meet was shown in talks chaired by Chris Short, from smallholders in Nigeria to edible landscapes of London and Beijing



The RGRG Committee's shivers in London (list below) were nothing compared to those of Ernest Shackleton and crew, 1914-17. Their trek to survival is recorded in an RGS-IBG exhibition of still and cinematic artefacts from Antarctica.

Reported by Bruce Scholten (Ship & room photos: RGS-IBG)

RGRG Committee Positions & Term Dates after the AGM vote at Exeter 2015:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/geography/rgrg/committee/>

<p>Professor Nigel Walford Chair 2013-16 n.walford@kingston.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Dr Keith Halfacree Secretary 2013-16 k.h.halfacree@swansea.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Dr Gareth Enticott Treasurer 2013-16 enticottg@cardiff.ac.uk</p> 
<p>Mr Rory Hill Postgraduate rep. 2015-16 rory.hill@ouce.ox.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Ms Hannah Brooking Postgraduate rep. 2015-16 hb110@le.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Dr Bruce Scholten Newsletter editor 2015-18 bruce.scholten@btopenworld.com and B.A.Scholten@durham.ac.uk</p> 
<p>Dr Fiona Williams Ordinary member 2015-18 fiona.williams@abdn.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Professor Michael Woods Ordinary member zpz@aber.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Ms Sonja Rewhorn C-Geog (netwkg) Ordinary member 2015-16 s.rewhorn@chester.ac.uk</p> 
<p>Professor Martin Phillips Ordinary member 2015-16 mpp2@le.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Mrs Megan Palmer-Abbs Ordinary member 2015-18 meganpalmerabbs@abdn.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Dr Richard Yarwood Ordinary member 2015-18 r.yarwood@plymouth.ac.uk</p> 

2. 2016 EVENTS.



2a. RGS-IBG 2016 conf & RGRG sessions

LONDON CALLING: The 2016 Annual International Conference. 30 Aug - Fri 2 Sep.
Chair: Peter Jackson, University of Sheffield. Theme: Nexus Thinking.

On Jan 26, Keith Halfacree sent Calls for Papers for sessions RGRG is (co-)sponsoring:
<http://www.rgs.org/WhatsOn/ConferencesAndSeminars/Annual+International+Conference/Annual+International+Conference+2016.htm>:

Rural Geography Research Group Sponsored sessions for 2016 RGS-IBG Annual International Conference (Call for Abstracts)

Convenors	Co-Sponsors	Title
Jen Dickie (University of Stirling) & Martin Phillips (University of Leicester)	EGRG	Nexus Thinking in an Energised Rural Geography
Max Kelly (Deakin University) & Sonja Rewhorn (University of Chester)	(DARG)[1]	Rural Equity of Policy Development in the Global South and the Global North
Keith Halfacree (Swansea University) & Andrew Maclaren (University of Aberdeen)		Everyday Ruralities: Nexus of Lives Lived
Hannah Brooking (University of Leicester) & Rory Hill (University of Oxford)		New and Emerging Rural Researchers
Loretta Lees (University of Leicester) & Martin Phillips (University of Leicester)	UGRG	Nexus Thinking in Gentrification Studies
Mark Boyle (Maynooth University), Guy Baeten (Malmo University) & Claire Mercer (LSE)		The City Hinterland Nexus in Global Context
Damian Maye (University of Gloucestershire) & James Kirwan (University of Gloucestershire)	FGWG	Connecting Food System Sustainability and Resilience through a Geographical Lens
Kerry Waylen (James Hutton Institute) & Chris Short (University of Gloucester)	PERG	Managing the Rural Nexus: Exploring If and How We Can Manage for Multiple Goals
Imogen Bellwood-Howard (Georg-August University)	FGWG	From Political Ecology to Political Technology in Agrofood Systems
Hannah Brooking (University of Leicester)	FGWG	The Food Rurality Nexus

Nexus Thinking in an Energised Rural Geography

Convenors: Jen Dickie (University of Stirling) & Martin Phillips (University of Leicester)

Energy has been a key, if often poorly recognised aspect of rurality. Rural areas, for example, have long been important sites of energy production, be this in the form of animal power and biomass, or mineral based hydrocarbons and nuclear power, or renewable forms of energy. Whilst much of this production flows in various ways to urban centres, rural life and activities also involves the

consumption of energy, with per capita levels of energy consumption being higher in rural areas than in urban ones within many countries, including the UK. Growing energy demands have seen many rural areas become spaces of social contestation, with conventional, renewable and unconventional energy production all becoming the focus of resistance and protest. Concerns over the impact of energy consumption on the world's climate have not only added to contestations over energy production but have also raised questions about the sustainability of current practices of energy consumption in the countryside. Rural areas, however, may also be important sites for the mitigation of the impacts of energy use, containing many forms of 'carbon sinks', although also being places impacted by some of the consequences of climate change. Such features suggest that there is a need to energise rural geography, developing a greater recognition of how energy acts to condition much of life in rural areas. To facilitate such development it is proposed to convene sessions jointly between the Rural Geography Research Group and the Energy Geographies Research Group.

Nexus thinking may well be a key aspect of an energised rural studies, because developments in energy production, distribution and consumption frequently connect in complex and often countervailing ways with many other constituents of rural space. Concerns, for example, have been expressed about the impacts of renewable energy production on the availability of land for food production, the quality of water supplies and the aesthetic value of rural landscapes, with the latter issues also being the focus of concern in relation to the extraction of unconventional hydrocarbons. Attempts to foster a transition to a low carbon economy may not only be difficult to implement, but also act to heighten transitions such as commuting and rural gentrification which further foster carbon energy dependencies. This proposed session seeks to explore the significance and value of such thinking, through inviting papers to explore issues such as:

- Relations, conflicts and trade-offs between energy and other forms of land-use
- The environmental and social impacts of systems of rural energy production, distribution and consumption
- Relations between energy security and the production of environmental and social insecurities (e.g. water insecurity, food insecurity, housing insecurity).
- The resource demands on the countryside of a low-carbon transition

Social awareness, acceptance and contestation of energy and its nexus relations.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Dr Jen Dickie (j.a.dickie@stir.ac.uk) & Prof Martin Phillips (mpp2@le.ac.uk).

Rural Equity of Policy Development in the Global South and the Global North

Convenors: Max Kelly (Deakin University) & Sonja Rewhorn (University of Chester)

Although rural geographers often consider the global north and south separately, in our ever shrinking world society these two paradigms are often coming together rather than extending the nexus dichotomy. Moreover there are lessons that can be shared from the notion of developing rural equity, particularly around trying to ensure effective and fair policy making that does not negatively impact the rural, whether access to services from the basic service of water and other utilities, to education and health and to recognising or otherwise the physical processes and natural resources that underpin the rural and often support agriculture which can and have been overlooked in policy decision making. Furthermore funding whether international, regional or central can impact and influence the development of fair policy decisions in the global rural. This session aims to bring research from both the global north and south to share lessons and examples of achieving equity within policy making considering the social, economic and environmental of the rurals.

This session welcomes both emerging researchers including PhD student's as well as established academics. The convenors particularly welcome papers on

- Rural equity in the rurals
- How rural equity supports both the global south and global north, for example in food or energy security
- Funding facilitating rural equity

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Ms Sonja Rewhorn (s.rewhorn@chester.ac.uk).

Everyday Ruralities: Nexus of Lives Lived

Convenors: Keith Halfacree (Swansea University) & Andrew Maclaren (University of Aberdeen)

Life happens; the everyday matters; people are living organisms not simply lumps of matter; the ordinary can be ordinary, the ordinary can be extraordinary... Academics are increasingly attending to these kinds of 'mundane matters' in scholarship, whether they feature as an explicit research aim or as a more secondary emergent feature of their original goal – the ubiquitous 'it wasn't what we were originally looking for but is clearly important'. This session seeks to address this overall concern in the context of the rural as a geographical nexus of the warp and weft of such everyday life.

Rurality is by definition a nexus place. It presents a space through which to think through linkages between environmental and social domains. It is represented, practiced and lived in numerous often diverse ways but, crucially, how well these aspects merge or converge is highly variable. The congruence often implied by the idea of nexus may be critically lacking, as conflicting and conflicted ruralities may be more apparent.

In the context of the conference's central theme of 'nexus thinking', this session looks to bring together scholarship that considers the everyday life of / in rural spaces and places, communities and landscapes. We welcome papers that engage with theoretical, methodological and empirical considerations, including but not limited to:

- Addressing the methodological demands of attempting to grasp the 'everydayness' of experiences and practices that constitute the experience of rural living;
- Everyday representations of rural life and lay understandings of rurality;
- Research looking to the neglected intensities of everyday knowing, notably engagements with non- / more-than-representational theory;
- How lives are grounded in the focal point of rural places;
- How lives are disrupted in rural places, where integration is not / no longer attained;
- Adaptations, evolutions and transformations rooted in the everyday experiences of rural places.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Dr Keith Halfacree (k.h.halfacree@swansea.ac.uk) & Mr Andrew Maclaren (andrew.maclaren@abdn.ac.uk).

New and Emerging Rural Research

Convenors: Hannah Brooking (University of Leicester) & Rory Hill (University of Oxford)

This annually held RGRG session wants to hear what is new and emerging within rural geography and offers an excellent opportunity for postgraduates and early career researchers to present their research proposals and research results in a friendly and constructive forum. This session each is always very well attended, conducted in a friendly, welcoming and constructive manner, and is widely appreciated by all those attending.

Papers are welcome from any area of rural research, from rural development, to culture, economy, farming, nature and policy.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Ms Hannah Brooking (hb110@leicester.ac.uk) & Mr Rory Hill (rory.hill@ouce.ox.ac.uk).

Nexus Thinking in Gentrification Studies

Convenors: Loretta Lees (University of Leicester) and Martin Phillips (University of Leicester)

Most scholars in gentrification studies, if not all, have long been open to and inclusive of different geographies of gentrification. Debates over time around different geographies of gentrification have triggered useful reflections on the process, theories of it, its key concepts, and the term itself. Those scholars who have been open and inclusive have sought to reconceptualise and re-theorise gentrification in light of different geographies, those who have not have often retrenched into older, classic ideas about gentrification or rejected the gentrification label itself.

This session seeks to foster new debate on both old and new geographies of gentrification - in the loosest sense – from rural gentrification to new-build gentrification, from Latin American gentrification to Anglo-American gentrification, from pioneer gentrification to creative gentrification, and so on. In particular we focus on the connections and disconnections, the inclusions and exclusions, around different geographies of gentrification. Indeed, one might say that we are looking for nexus thinking with respect to the geographies of gentrification: considering how gentrification emerges in contexts of growing interdependencies, irreconcilable demands and complex and contested trade-offs between different human and more-than-human actants located in differentiated and yet inter-connected places. In these sessions we will seek to re-evaluate where we are at in 21st Century gentrification studies and indeed where we need to be.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Prof Martin Phillips (mpp2@le.ac.uk).

The City Hinterland Nexus in Global Context

Convenors: Mark Boyle (Maynooth University), Guy Baeten (Malmo University) & Claire Mercer (LSE)

The dismantling of national based 'immediately adjacent' city-hinterland relationships has been long in gestation; colonization after all put the entire world and its 'natural resources' under the control of imperial cities. Nevertheless, mechanisms of globalisation would appear to be further undoing the traditional city-hinterland relationships, creating new deployments, withdrawals, and penetrations of global capital into hinterlands, and carving out new multi-scalar and multi-city-hinterland relations. At the same time, critical rural geographers postcolonial scholars, and urbanist proclaiming the arrival of the age of planetary urbanisation have, in their different ways, been trying to find appropriate lexicons and cartographies to apprehend these geographically variegated de-territorialisations and re-territorialisations of the city-hinterland nexus. Against the backdrop of these material and intellectual shifts, the purpose of this session is to consider anew the status, meaning and implications of continuing to think in terms of cities and hinterlands and to map out an agenda for a new tradition of hinterland studies.

Papers are invited which explore:

- Genealogies of hinterland studies and hinterlands
- The dynamics of rural-urban connections in different global contexts
- Globalisation, the rescaling of hinterlands and the fate of traditional local city-hinterland relations
- Geographical variegated theorisations of the city-hinterland nexus
- The penetration onto hinterlands of global capital and the politics of enclosure in hinterlands
- The stubborn survival within practitioner communities of the 'hinterland' as a productive economic, political, functional and cultural category.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Professor Mark Boyle (Mark.G.Boyle@nuim.ie).

Connecting Food System Sustainability and Resilience through a Geographical Lens

Convenors: Damian Maye (University of Gloucestershire) & James Kirwan (University of Gloucestershire)

The aim of this session is to connect thinking and theoretical perspectives from resilience theory with food system sustainability approaches, discourses and assessment methodologies. Contributions from human and physical geography are encouraged, including evaluating the role and application of geographical perspectives and concepts that emphasise and apply resilience thinking in relation to geographies of food production and consumption.

The external pressures driving the agri-food system are widely documented (e.g. climate change, price volatility, food insecurity, urbanisation), and procedures, processes and methods to evaluate food system sustainability well-known within agri-food geography (e.g. LCA, metabolic analysis, multi-criteria assessments, participatory analysis). However, critiques are emerging about the usefulness of sustainability as a framing concept for food system analysis. Missing within such assessments is an appreciation of the dynamic properties of sustainability performance and agri-food system transformation, and the need to link sustainability assessments to frameworks and approaches that capture change at a system level, as well as connect food provisioning with the use of key resources such as land, water and energy.

Resilience thinking has much to offer in this regard, particularly through its focus on systems as having dynamic properties and its emphasis on drivers of change. Taking this perspective enables, for example, connections to be made between coping/adaptation strategies and mechanisms, as well as ideas related to social and community resilience and resilience ethics. This session provides an opportunity to explore how resilience thinking can be applied to geographies of agri-food sustainability and transformation, thereby facilitating resilience and adaptation, across a range of geographical perspectives and scales.

Papers might address one or more of the following themes:

- Applying resilience thinking and related concepts to issues including vulnerability, transition, risk management, adaptation, and transformation
- Approaches to resilience, such as: socio-ecological resilience, system resilience, regional resilience, social resilience, community resilience, and farm-level resilience
- Sustainability science, post-normal science and resilience thinking
- Resilience perspectives as a means to 'open up' agri-food sustainability concepts
- Collective responsibility and resilience ethics
- Drivers of change and coping strategies
- Case studies and methodologies that examine resilience across the food chain at a range of geographical scales and spatial contexts, including the Global North and the Global South
- AFNs, civic food networks, urban agriculture and resilience
- Connections between food, other key resources and resilience framings
- The role of policy in promoting agri-food sustainability through resilience.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Dr Damian Maye (dmaye@glos.ac.uk).

Managing the Rural Nexus: Exploring If and How We Can Manage for Multiple Goals

Convenors: Kerry Waylen (James Hutton Institute) & Chris Short (University of Gloucester)

Rural spaces are often subject to multiple goals, and can potentially support multiple functions, benefits and/or services. How can such systems be managed and governed effectively? Recognising their potential to support multiple services and goals is not by itself sufficient. Managing the nexus requires collaboration to share knowledges, negotiate different values, agree priorities and implement management actions. Therefore, the aim of our session is to share ideas and experiences about these interconnected activities, in order to support 'nexus management'.

This session brings together those who are working with, are researching or developing tools and approaches intended to allow us manage for multiple goals. Our focus is on rural areas but represents

many sectors covering water, land, service industries, energy production and cultural landscapes, i.e. all those who depend on and manage our complex semi-natural systems which provide one or more services to society. In this sense they are complex social-ecological systems with various, sometimes conflicting decision-making processes and links between the State and local actors.

Relevant contributions can reflect on settings, interventions, and evaluations. Do certain tools or techniques seem helpful for supporting nexus management? Is advice on promoting inter- multi- or trans-disciplinarity helpful? Are certain institutional settings more amenable to nexus management than others? Do specific sectors offer transferable lessons to others? Finally, in order to support further learning, how can we evaluate nexus management? What tools or criteria might assist us in doing that evaluation? Overall, do we have everything we need for nexus management?

Thus, we invite contributions from academics, industry and/or practice groups with experiences of nexus management and any associated policy processes. These groups may include: those who have been charged with managing complex systems for multiple goals; those who have deliberately set out to co-construct research questions with those involved in managing the nexus; and those who have sought to research to nexus management to illustrate and understand their impact. We are particularly interested in contributions that critically assess how to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of projects that seek multiple outcomes/goals.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Dr Chris Short (cshort@glos.ac.uk).

From Political Ecology to Political Technology in Agrofood Systems

Convenor: Imogen Bellwood-Howard (Georg-August University)

Agrofood studies has evolved from a political economy to a networked perspective that addresses power in a relational fashion, allowing agency to emerge from constellations of social, economic, technological and natural components. Drawing on Actor Network Theory (ANT), this approach attempts to overcome separations between nature, culture and society. ANT emerged from Science and Technology Studies (STS), to which this session relates: it seeks to interrogate the role of technology in agrofood systems. Technologies are not merely material implements, but include interpretations of ways to use these and to perform agrofood systems without them. Issues of power and control are folded into physical objects such as seed, agrochemicals, vehicles and packaging. STS provides language that describes how such technologies are 're-scripted' in diverse social contexts, performing multiple tasks for different actors. This vocabulary permits examination of the recursive co-construction of technology, society and nature. More generally, food systems comprise complex nexuses between humans, animals, plants and technology; rural-urban and development gradients, and production, processing, marketing and consumption.

The session invites papers that consider the technology-politics nexus in agrofood systems. Of particular interest are STS, ANT, technoscience, assemblage and Political Ecology perspectives, but submissions that consider these themes from any theoretical standpoint are welcome.

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Dr Imogen Bellwood-Howard (ibellwoodh@gmail.com).

The Food Rurality Nexus

Convenors: Hannah Brooking (University of Leicester)

This session will explore nexus relations between food and rurality. In the 1980s and 1990s, rural geography was closely associated with the geographies of agricultural food production, although during the latter decade a series of new ingredients were stirred into the constitution of rural studies, including many that seemed to have little or no connection with agricultural geographies. Despite

some efforts to forge some lines of connection (e.g. Morris & Evan 1999; Cheshire 2012), the geographies of food and the geographies of rurality have often been examined in isolation from one another, particularly empirically where food geographies have increasingly focused on areas beyond the rural, and also in the theoretical registers being used. The emergence of nexus thinking, however, may provide an opportunity for recognising new connections, interdependencies, trade-offs and tensions between food and rurality. The demands of the globalised food-supply chains, for instance, may transform, create unsustainable demands on or detrimentally impact a range of human and more-than-human constituents of rural space, including water courses, soils, plants, wildlife, landscapes, and human communities. The rural, or images and imaginings of the rural, may be crucial in the marketing of food, travelling together to places that are far from their rural places of origin, as well as potentially attracting people into particular rural localities.

This session wants to hear from postgraduates and early career researchers who wish to present their research proposals and research results in a friendly and constructive forum.

Papers are welcome on any areas of research addressing food and rurality, including but not limited to studies of: rural agricultural production; rural food networks and marketing; the marketing of rural places through food; farming communities and the impact of changes in food production on rural communities, transformations of rural space through agri-food production; relations between agri-food and other forms of rural land users; the environmental demands of food production on rural areas; food and rural landscape transformations; food and the re-composition of rural identities, and the globalisation and/or localisation of rural space through food

Deadline for submitting abstracts is Monday 8th February 2016

Please send abstracts up to a maximum of 250 words and proposed titles (clearly stating name, institution, and contact details) to Ms Hannah Brooking (hb110@leicester.ac.uk).

2b. March 29 - April 2, 2016 - AAG SAN FRANCISCO



Join the Association of American Geographers at the AAG Annual Meeting in San Francisco, for the latest in research and applications in geography, sustainability, and GIScience. In 2016 [Judith Butler will give a plenary](#) on 'Demography in the Ethics of Non-Violence.' The last AAG in Frisco was 2007 when your editor co-organized a session called Comparing Organic Urban Places (COUP) on methodology in alternative food network studies.

The huge, intimidating AAG becomes warm and fuzzy when you identify colleagues in cognate research groups like the Rural Geography Specialty Group (<http://community.aag.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=53456f75-85be-4a77-ab5a-75f53536a9b6>).

AAG is in Boston, April 3 - 8, 2017. See you there!

3. 8th Quadrennial UK-US-Canadian Rural Geography Conference, based in Swansea, 6th-12th July 2015. By Keith Halfacree



The Quad Team in Aberystwyth (Photo: Michael Woods)

Quadrennial events. One tends to think of the Olympics perhaps, the football World Cup... but if you are a rural geographer in the UK, Canada and the US then it means a week where the only backhander involved is likely to be someone buying a drink out of turn! For about the last three decades, in a pattern now regularised to every four years, around 12-15 rural geographers from each of the UK, US and Canada – with the occasional extra guest – gather for around a week to discuss and often experience more directly ‘things rural’. Alternating between the three countries, this time it was the turn of the UK, and Wales specifically.

Co-organised by Aberystwyth University (Prof Michael Woods) and Swansea University (Dr Keith Halfacree), although mostly put together by the ever-helpful and efficient Dr Rachel Vaughan from Aberystwyth, around three dozen of us came together in Swansea on the afternoon of Monday 6th July. That afternoon and the next morning – with a fine ice-breaking curry after a walk along Swansea’s typically damp sea-front in between - were filled with paper sessions under the broad theme of *Global Challenges and Rural Responses*. However, what have now become nicknamed the Quads are not just about papers, so Tuesday afternoon saw us on a guided walk on Britain’s first AONB, Gower, led by Dr Geraint Owen (Swansea). This considered some land use issues but was unintentionally preceded by our North American visitors being introduced to the scenic delights but transport challenges of rural roads when our coach got stuck in traffic on the narrow roads!

Wednesday saw more direct experiences of rural Wales as we headed by coach across rural Wales to Aberystwyth, with stops at the National Wool Museum at Llandysul and at Aberaeron, where a councillor explained some of the housing and other problems facing the scenic small coastal town. A further paper session that afternoon in Aberystwyth led on to dinner ‘up the hill’ at Y Consti. Papers then filled much of the Thursday, with the exception of a short field trip examining some local themes of food security and development. Friday then took us to the Gregynog conference centre near Newtown via another fascinating field visit to the long-standing and innovative Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth and then to Newtown, where conference delegates became suitable guinea pigs for testing the ‘everyday globalization’ app being developed by Michael Woods and his team. Finally, most of Saturday and even Sunday morning made sure we did not explore the Gregynog area too much as it was more papers and rural discussions. Most of us then left the rural via Newtown’s railway station to encounter the notorious Sunday rail experience.

As ever, and I’ve been to a few now, I found the Quad to be an extremely enjoyable experience. Both intellectually and personally it was excellent both to renew old acquaintances, not least from Quads past, and make new friendships. The setting across rural Wales worked extremely well and was appreciated as quite a rural eye-opener by many of the North American visitors. Whilst the papers themselves were extremely diverse in subject matter, they were without exception of considerable interest and generated much discussion. In this respect, I perhaps detected something

of a convergence of styles, language and broad approaches across the three countries – a kind of academic globalisation? – even if the precise topics were often quite disparate. Moreover, as ever, the event was held in excellent spirit (even if were unable to find some excellent spirits in Newtown!), from the constructiveness of the sessions to the friendliness, positivity and amenability of the delegates, many of whom were happy to stay up late into the night to discuss... well, to discuss! Finally, the next Quad should be held in 2019 in the US and I, for one, very much hope to be there...

Reported by Keith Halfacree, Swansea University

P.S. For another account of the meeting, see Phil Mount's blog:

<http://nourishingontario.ca/blog/2015/07/23/global-challenges-and-rural-responses-probably-the-best-rural-geography-conference-in-wales/>

Editor: If proceedings are forthcoming from Swansea they will be welcome in the RGS-IBG London archive. And if the 2019 US Quad is half as good as Spokane 2007, count me in!



The Joys of Rural Roads on Gower
(Photo: Colleen Hiner)



Essential Rural Leisure Skills
(Photo: William Wetherholt)

4. Countryside in the City: 2015 photos by Sonja Rewhorn

Sonja Rewhorn



Bruce Scholten

Sonja Rewhorn



Jen Dickie & Hannah Brooking

Jen Dickie & Hannah Brooking



Jen Dickie & Hannah Brooking

Jen Dickie & Hannah Brooking



Jen Dickie & Hannah Brooking

Taking the phrase 'going back to the land' from our Secretary Keith Halfacree (2001: p. 161) the Rural Geography Research Group invited friends and colleagues to find a bit of the countryside in the city that maintains links to ruralscapes. 2015 was the second year of the competition, and this time RGRG members found examples of the rural within the hustle and bustle of Exeter.

The photographs in the montage above are varied. We were mesmerised when one of the group spotted a badger in Exeter, a rare sight at the best of times. Some of the other photographs may be more of what would be expected from looking for the countryside in the city. Across the United Kingdom, street names and pub names are often clues to the history of an urban settlement. It is unlikely that we have to look far to see road names such as Heath Lane, Abbeyfields, Great Titchfield Street or Oakfield, the latter being in Exeter. Similarly, the names of city pubs such as the Pied Bull, the Grosvenor Arms, which indicates the former landowner, the Black Horse or the Farmer's Union; the latter two were found in Exeter. As well as pub names, names of beverages can also be linked to rural areas, e.g. ale from the Dartmoor Brewery being sold in the city centre.

Although there are some obvious links to the countryside within a city, photographs in the 2015 competition show it is not always the norm that catches the eye. Mobile devices are now common in both town and country so it is not surprising that the Blackberry was presented as a link back to the rural, and in this case the hedgerows of more temperate climes. I am sure many of us remember picking wild food as children.

Street art is no longer confined to city squares - it can be found in suburbia as highlighted by the acorn. Large sculptures on gateposts are not that new; it is not that uncommon to see lions on gateposts within suburbia which, if spotted in the UK, link the city to the countryside far beyond local shores. The winning picture in the competition, the giraffe, did just that and reminded us that the rural is not just the *patchwork landscape* of Britain.

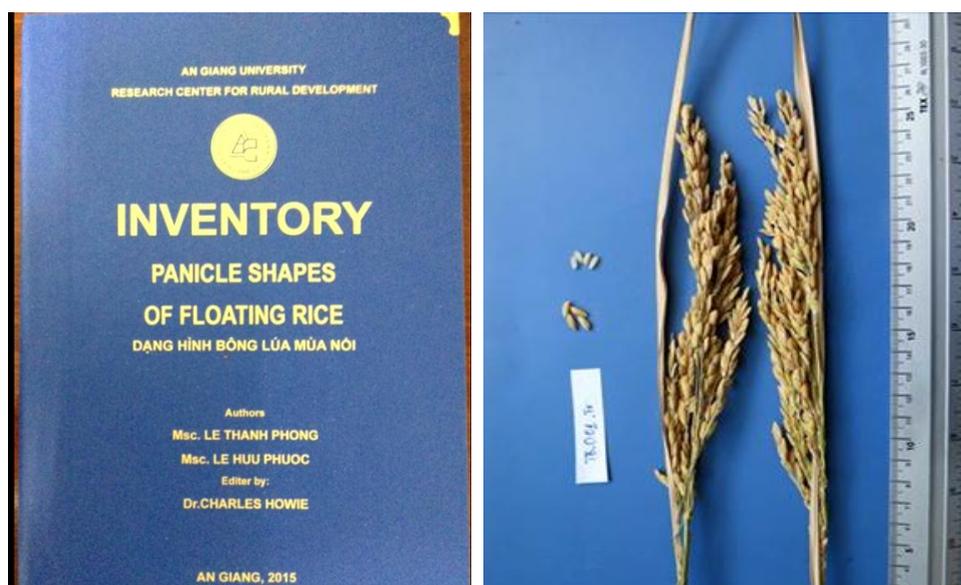
Thanks to all who took part in the competition! Congratulations to the winners Jen Dickie and Hannah Brooking. The RGRG anticipates more rural photos from the London conference in 2016.

References

Halfacree, K. (2001). Going 'back-to-the-land' again: extending the scope of counterurbanisation. *Espace, populations, sociétés*, 19(1-2), 161-170.

5. BOOKS: Rice Atlas or Rice Inventory?

Charles Howie edits Vietnamese colleagues' book, fascinating geographers & linguists.



A rice panicle is the structure of the fruiting head, as shown above. (Photos: An Giang University)

Inventory: Panicle Shapes of Floating Rice (2015) by Le Thanh Phong & Le Huu Phuoc. Edited by Charles Howie. Research Centre for Rural Development (RCRD). Vietnam: An Giang University. Contact: charles_a_howie@hotmail.com

Was it churlish of me? When I was asked to edit an *Atlas of Rice Panicles* I found it contained lists of names and descriptions of rice seeds and a few pictures of seed heads - but no maps - I suggested we name it [Inventory of Rice Panicles](#). That is its published title, but I still harbour doubts about my title change. Perhaps RGRG Newsletter readers can answer the question: Must an atlas contain maps? A panicle is the structure of the fruiting head, as shown above.

The intensification of rice growing in some parts of the Mekong Delta, in Vietnam, has led to a near 10-fold increase in annual harvests in the last 20 years. Modern, fast growing, high yielding varieties of rice have replaced slow growing, traditional varieties, increasing annual tonnage from 2 tonnes per hectare to nearer 20 tonnes per year. This has created food security for Vietnam and, in An Giang province, a significant surplus for export. Corporation taxes on exports have generated funds for new infrastructure and utilities, most notably a university and a teaching hospital.



Water lily collection in the foreground, floating rice in the background.

This sharp rise has been achieved by transforming much of the landscape from a flooding plain to a series of protected compartments, or polders, surrounded by walls high enough to exclude all flood water. Inside these walls rice may be grown up to three times per year. This development has had economic upsides and environmental downsides ([Howie 2005](#)). The upside has been in food security, income from exports, and an increased year round demand for labour, but downsides include the high level of chemical fertiliser needed to maintain yields and the use of significant amounts of pesticide.



Labourers spraying chemicals on modern varieties of rice.

Increased input costs considerably reduce farmers' incomes, and overproduction has kept prices low. Another downside has been the near complete elimination of the flood areas of the old 'floating rice system' and with it the last remains of the unique biota that exists in the floating rice system of agricultural. Just ten years ago there were around 800 hectares remaining, now there are less than 100. With encouragement from many sources, including the [Pesticide Action Network \(PAN\)](#), staff of

the [Research Centre for Rural Development \(RCRD\)](#) at An Giang University are now working with farmers and other partners to restore what remains of this slow-growing, low yielding system.



Students assist staff, preparing seeds for planting in trials.

Over the past three years public awareness of the existence of this rice, grown without the use of chemicals, has risen sharply, and buyers now arrive at the commune at harvest time willing to pay three to four times the price paid for conventional rice. The government of the Province is now recognising this area presents not only an asset for eco-tourism and education, but may also act as a 'sump' or overflow basin, for excess flood waters. With ever larger dykes, i.e. walls excluding nearly all flood waters areas from some parts of the province, should there be a sudden surge of water at times of maximum floods, low lying areas such as these will be invaluable as emergency storage areas for water with nowhere else to go. Without out these sumps excess flood waters, may reach up and over the tops of the high banks, flooding the polders and potentially causing immense physical and economic damage, even the loss of human life.

The scientific value of this location is now being recognised more widely, within and beyond Vietnam. For example, the UK's [Rufford Foundation](#) has recently awarded RCRD a small initial grant to [investigate biodiversity and physical parameters](#) in Vinh Phuoc Commune, where the largest remaining area is located. This area is a valuable resource for agricultural investigation, a base line against which to gauge the effects on the environment of practicing the high yielding, but more chemically intense, agriculture widely practiced in the delta. Since its foundation in 1843, [Rothamsted Research Station](#), Hertfordshire, England, certain fields have been mulched each year while others have been treated with chemical fertilisers and this ongoing experiment has served as the baseline for tracing changes in the UK soils and beyond since the introduction of artificial chemicals.

Over the past decade I have edited English versions of several publications and applications for my Vietnamese colleagues and I've found translating Vietnamese into English is a real challenge. One advantage of working in Vietnamese, as opposed to other SE Asia languages, is that it uses the Roman script. In the 17th Century, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary, Alexandra de Rhodes, wrote a Portuguese--Vietnamese—Latin dictionary, using Roman letters to make a phonetic representation of Vietnamese sounds. Vietnamese language needs more than five letters to represent vowels, so by adding small marks called diacritics, these five become ten vowel sounds and are extended further by combinations of them. Added to this the language has six tones, so the same spelling with a different tone may have a completely different and unrelated meaning. Vietnamese also has a very different word order (syntax) to English, so word for word translations are fraught with ambiguities, often creating 'word soup' with little logic! When I'm editing a piece of work I need to pay attention to small details and understand the context to work out a full meaning. Frequent discussions with the writer are needed to discern the intended meaning. After that has been reached the article may need to be rewritten from scratch.

Vietnamese has very few verb tenses, many pronouns (12+), and classifiers. Many words are double words, so the word for today is *hôm nay*. The choice of pronoun indicates the age, gender and status differences between the speakers. I am addressed as *ông* (grandfather) and I'm expected to address ladies of my own age as *bà*, and younger unmarried women as *cô*. In public I will be formally introduced as *tiên sĩ*, doctor of philosophy. Many nouns are preceded by classifiers which indicate the type of object referred to. The prefix *xe* indicates a wheeled vehicle, *xe đạp* is a bicycle and *xe lửa* a train- *lửa* meaning fire. *Cây lúa* is a rice plant and *cây Dưa leo* a cucumber.

The ESRC/NERC award for my doctorate included the option of funding for hard language training. I'm glad I spent 5 months studying it if, for no other reason, it's given me some understanding of the structure and lot of sympathy for those working across this barrier! My performance in Vietnamese is strictly limited. I make no claim to even elementary competence in the language ten years after my last lessons! So when Vietnamese friends struggle with translation, I do all I can to help them to make sense of their work, it's the least I can do to help them. An inventory of rice panicles documents details of seeds of rice varieties they have identified so far, an indication of 'work in progress'.

I want to thank Mr Phong Le Than, Deputy Director of the Research Centre for Rural Development at An Giang University for inviting me to edit the Rice Inventory, and for editing the few words of Vietnamese in this article as well! Our next challenge is to get an ISBN number for it so it can be published online, as well as in hardcopy.



RCRD research staff with householders in Vinh Phuoc Commune. Its 80+ hectares are the last major location for floating rice cultivation in An Giang Province (Photos courtesy An Giang University).

6. GEOrge: Newsletter tips by our Sub-editor (Humour)



Everyone has a past. Sub-editor George's secret is that he taught freelance journalism for the Workers' Educational Association. George's decade with WEA left him bursting with advice for scribblers. Please humour him:

- * Email MS Word files in Arial 10 point font. Add 1 space between sentences.
- * Brevity is admirable. 250-400 word limit (unless agreed with editor).
- * Articles, book reviews, etc. should show name, institution & contact details on top.
- * Photos should be JPGs with filenames like: RGRGnews-Surname-Article-1sep16.jpg
- * Observe copyright. Credit sources for images you have permission to use.
- * Public domain & freely-licensed content (images, sound & video) available here: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Welcome>



The [Ecumene](#) (1482) by Johannes Schnitzer, drawn after Ptolemy's [Geography](#).
 Credit:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claudius_Ptolemy-The_World.jpg

Online reviews or conference reports can sell books, boost impact & build morale with colleagues.

RGRG Newsletter invites contributions to the Summer 2016 edition. **Deadline is 11th July.**
 With subject line **'RGRG News'** please email reports & photos from AAG or RGRG events, awards, book reviews & features to Editor: bruce.scholten@btopenworld.com

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Thanks! to Steven Allan, Web Coordinator at Durham University Geography Dept.



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