

# NEWSLETTER

## Winter 2007

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### 1. CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING RURAL CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Date	Event	Contact
15-19 April 2008	AAG 2007, Boston.	<a href="http://www.aag.org/annualmeetings/2008/index.htm">http://www.aag.org/annualmeetings/2008/index.htm</a>
26-30 June 2008	3 <sup>rd</sup> Anglo-German Rural Geographers meeting	<a href="mailto:geoff.wilson@plymouth.ac.uk">geoff.wilson@plymouth.ac.uk</a>
14 -18 July 2008	The 12th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons; University of Gloucestershire (Cheltenham),	<a href="http://www.iascp.org/iascp08/iascp08.html">http://www.iascp.org/iascp08/iascp08.html</a>
28-31 July , 2008	Rural Sociology Society Annual Conference, Manchester, New Hampshire.	<a href="http://www.ruralsociology.org/">http://www.ruralsociology.org/</a>
27-29 August, 2008	RGS-IBG Annual Conference 'Geographies that matter', RGS-IBG, London.	<a href="http://www.rgs.org">http://www.rgs.org</a>

### 2. A welcome from the new RGRG chair

I am delighted to have this opportunity of introducing myself to the membership of the RGRG as its new Chair. I was elected at the recent AGM of the Group, succeeding Henry Buller, and I look forward to continuing the high standards set by Henry and the previous Committee in terms of the nature of the conferences organised on behalf of the Group and in the contribution it makes to the academic life of the RGS-IBG, especially to the field of rural geography.

First of all, just a few words about myself: I have served for many years on the Committee of both the RGRG and its predecessor, the RGSG, having first

joined the Committee in 1985 following the inaugural meeting of the Anglo-American-Canadian Rural Geography Conference in Guelph. I started as an 'ordinary' Committee Member before acting as Treasurer in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With the exception of a short break in the late 90s I have remained on the Committee for over 20 years and have had the pleasure of working under a succession of excellent Chairs – including Ian Bowler, Richard Munton, Brian Ilbery, Gordon Clark, Keith Hoggart, Charles Watkins and Henry Buller. I have regularly presented papers in the Group's sessions at the Annual RGS-IBG Conferences, and have especially enjoyed the chance to participate in the various bilateral and trilateral RGRG conferences organised regularly in Spring/Summer – with Dutch, French, German and Spanish rural geographers. I am particularly proud of the fact that I am the only person to have participated in all six of the Anglo-American-Canadian Rural Geography Conferences, the last of which was held just this summer in Spokane, Washington State.

As Chair I want to help the RGRG remain one of the most vibrant research groups within the RGS-IBG. I aim to maintain the large and active membership, which has been at the forefront of advancing new ideas and pioneering research that has had impacts well beyond the bounds of rural geography. In seeking to maintain this dynamism I am conscious that we need to be replenished by a steady flow of postgraduates into the discipline. In the past we have had some very successful postgraduate sessions at the Annual Conference. The new Committee intends to see these sessions reinstated at the 2008 Conference. A couple of years ago Charles Watkins helped to initiate an excellent postgraduate training session in Italy. He has offered to organise a similar event in September 2008 (details to follow) and I think that this will help reinforce our commitment to 'training the next generation'.

In terms of other forthcoming events, Geoff Wilson is collaborating with German colleagues to organise another Anglo-German Rural Conference, details of which can be found below, whilst an Anglo-Spanish Conference is being planned for June 2009, probably in Canterbury. I am hoping that we can organise more one-day events on particular themes in coming years and also that some flavour of the former collaborations with the Rural Economy and Society Group can be revised in inter-disciplinary ventures with sociologists, economists, resource managers and planners. Naturally the Committee will need the support of the membership in advancing these plans and we would welcome suggestions for other events. In particular, we would like to receive suggestions for sessions to be held at the 2009 Annual RGS-IBG Conference in London.

I am greatly looking forward to serving as Chair of the RGRG and welcome suggestions from the membership as to how we best develop the Group.

Guy M Robinson  
Chair, RGRG.  
[g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk)

### **3. RECENT CONFERENCE REPORTS**

#### **3.1 SESSIONS AT ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY WITH THE INSTITUTE OF BRITISH GEOGRAPHERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, LONDON, 2007 “Sustainability and Quality of Life”**

##### **3.1.1 RGRG Sponsored Session: Ethical food-scapes: the premises, promises and possibilities of alternative food networks**

**Convenors: Mike Goodman, Damian Maye and Lewis Holloway**

The 2007 RGS/IBG had three sessions dedicated to ‘ethical food-scapes’: two paper sessions and a panel discussion. The sessions aimed to unpack some of the ethical issues associated with alternative food networks (AFNs) and to encourage engagement with the ‘moral turn’ in critical theory with a view towards critically evaluating the spatial, philosophical and political aspects of ‘ethical foods’.

The first session comprised four papers. Mike Goodman (King’s College, London), Damian Maye (CCRI, University of Gloucestershire) and Lewis Holloway (University of Hull) opened the session with a contextual paper that situated the arguments and instances of ethical foods in popular and academic discourses, challenging assumptions that unproblematically conflate ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ with certain food practices, favouring instead a more situated research framework. The second paper by Ben Coles (Royal Holloway) offered a fascinating account of London’s Borough Market, to show how consumers meet producers and engage in seemingly ethical consumption practices based on material cultures found within the market itself. The next paper by Rebecca Sims (Lancaster University) examined the relationship between tourism and local foods. Reporting on findings with tourists in Cumbria and Exmoor, she showed how tourist understandings of ‘local food’ stretch beyond geographical proximity, including questions about how and why these foods were produced. The fourth paper, by Bill Pritchard and Jeffrey Neilson (both from the University of Sydney) shifted geographical focus to the tea and coffee plantation districts of South India. Examined through the lens of a ‘hybridized Global Value Chain-institutional perspective’, the paper revealed the negotiations and struggles that are created as local production systems interact with global governance systems.

Tim Lang (Centre for Food Policy, City University) kicked-off the second paper session. His paper examined whether the food supply chain was undergoing a transition from a ‘value-for-money’ to a ‘values-for-money’ framework. Summarising findings from a variety of projects, the paper showed how ethical values are now central issues for the food sector. Moya Kneafsey (Coventry University), Rosie Cox (Birkbeck), Lewis Holloway, Helena Tuomainen and Elizabeth Dowler (both from the University of Warwick) next examined the

consumption practices of consumers involved in AFNs, revealing an 'ethics of care' for people, places, plants and animals involved in specific local food schemes. The third paper by Ruth Little (Coventry University) turned to examine collective strategies to bulk buy items through food buying groups and food co-ops. Drawing on a survey of schemes in North America, Europe and Japan, Ruth argued these initiatives enable local and organic food to move beyond the niche. The final paper in the session, by Bruce Scholten (Durham University), examined some ethical tensions tied up with grazing rules for organic farms in the US, including recent USDA rulings on organic marketing in the context of support for animal welfare standards.

The sessions were drawn to a close via a panel discussion which aimed to facilitate debate about AFNs and ethics between academic researchers and representatives from non-academic food policy organisations, as well as practitioners. The panel was chaired by Lewis Holloway and comprised six members: David Goodman (University of California, Santa Cruz), James Cleeton (Soil Association), Tom MacMillan (Food Ethics Council), Leo Hickman (The Guardian), Guy Watson (Riverford Organics) and Ella Heeks (Abel and Cole). Panellists were asked firstly to provide an opening statement to introduce themselves and to identify what they consider to be the most important food ethics issues. A number of panellists talked about 'ethical dilemmas', especially the trade-off between environment and development, including difficult questions about the impacts of scaling up, as well as the food miles issue. David Goodman added some excellent comments about the politics of ethical food, the invisibility of production standards and mainstreaming. Lewis Holloway then asked the panel to identify what ethical principles should inform how we produce and buy food. As well as fairness, accessibility was a common theme. Leo Hickman noted that the sophistication of these debates is not always what consumers want to hear, preferring to be told what is right and wrong. Panellists were then asked whether they felt ethical consumerism was simply the latest fad, followed up by a question from Moya Kneafsey about how high prices can limit access to 'good food'. Panellists noted the progress made in the UK foodscape in recent years, now seen by some as a 'beacon of green', with institutional mechanisms (especially procurement schemes) helping to improve access and breakdown price/access barriers. Another excellent question from the audience (by Carol Morris) asked whether 'sustainable' was a more instructive description than 'ethical'. Panellists favoured 'ethical food-scapes' because 'sustainable' was often seen as a tired term, too closely aligned with the green movement and less targeted in terms of who certain food systems benefit and why.

The chair closed the session by thanking panel members and the audience for their excellent inputs and for supporting all three sessions so well. The convenors are currently developing the sessions into a special issue of a journal.

Damian, Mike & Lewis

### **3.1.2 - RGRG Sponsored Session Reconceptualising multifunctionality: neoliberalism, agricultural transitions and agendas for future research**

## **Session convenors: Geoff A. Wilson and Clive Potter**

The last twenty years have seen the emergence of challenging theoretical debates about the nature, changes and future trajectories of modern agricultural and rural systems from a variety of economic, social, political and environmental viewpoints. For many commentators, the concept of 'agricultural multifunctionality' has gained particular significance as a shorthand for exploring the links between neo-liberalism, rural development, culture, the consumption countryside, societal needs, agency-led patterns and processes of agricultural and rural change, as well as environmental issues. These wide-ranging debates provided the basis for two paper sessions held at the 2007 RGS/IBG Conference ('Sustainability and Quality of Life') entitled 'Reconceptualising multifunctionality: neoliberalism, agricultural transitions and agendas for future research' that aimed at discussing key contemporary issues surrounding neoliberalism and the conceptualisation, geography and methodology of multifunctionality.

The following papers were presented in sessions:

### **Session 1:**

McCarthy, J.: 'Neoliberal natures and multifunctionality: necessary or contingent?'

Pritchard, B.: 'Fitting round pegs in square holes: free trade visions, multifunctional landscapes and the contradictions of the Doha round'.

Dibden, J., Potter, C. and C. Cocklin: 'Resisting the neoliberal project for agriculture? Comparative perspectives from Australia and the UK'.

### **Session 2:**

Wilson, G.A.: 'Towards a normative concept of multifunctional agriculture: transition theory and the multifunctional spectrum of decision-making.'

Marsden, T., Miele, M. and S. Morgan: 'Creating agricultural multifunctionality: ecological entrepreneurship and the eco-economy in comparative perspective.'

Clark, J.: 'Assessing regional-level multifunctionality and actor interests'.

Holmes, J.: 'The multifunctionality transition in Australia's northern tropical savannas: complexity in land tenures, property rights, actors, agendas and decision processes.'

Two key themes emerged. First, the growing importance of neoliberalism as a state discourse, particularly in international circles. Second, the varied interpretation of multifunctionality, both as part of a discourse of resistance to neoliberalisation and as a free-standing concept with prescriptive content. Indeed, multifunctionality is currently often simultaneously used to describe a *concept*, a *process*, or a *state* in contemporary agricultural and rural systems, frequently without clarification in individual studies about the context within which multifunctionality is used. The result has been an understanding of multifunctionality that has not yet gelled into a coherent workable framework for fully understanding contemporary agricultural and rural change (e.g. Clark; Wilson; Dibden et al.).

The reasons for this conceptual confusion are related to a variety of intertwined issues. First, some have argued that the continuing predominance of structuralist interpretations of multifunctionality have led to *discursive insularity* that has confused rather than clarified what multifunctionality could be about (Holmes). Second, the notion of multifunctionality has been appropriated by agricultural economists who see it largely as an *economic concept* based around notions of commodity and non-commodity production on agricultural land. Agricultural economists view the principal problem of multifunctionality as how to remunerate farmers for providing non-market goods. Third, multifunctionality has been interpreted as a form of *resistance* to the neoliberal project for agriculture (McCarthy; Pritchard, Dibden et al.). This latter interpretation implies that multifunctionality is a countervailing force to what is often termed 'conventional' agricultural/rural systems. This suggests that multifunctionality is a *new* process, i.e. something that did not exist before popularisation of the term by policy-makers, and that this process is characterised by new attributes of agricultural and rural systems typically associated with diversification, changes towards more inclusive governance structures, a shift towards environmental sustainability in the countryside and changing attitudes opposing the ethos underlying conventional industrial agricultural ideologies (Marsden et al.; Clark; Dibden et al.). Recently, a fourth view has emerged that attempts to bring the various strands of the multifunctionality debates together by calling for a *normative interpretation* of multifunctionality (Wilson). In this view, multifunctionality is seen as a transitional process in which different agricultural and rural systems are positioned at different points along what Wilson referred to as the 'multifunctionality spectrum'. The notion of such a spectrum implies – contrary to the view of multifunctionality as resistance – that all agricultural and rural systems have *always* been multifunctional, albeit with different multifunctional quality ranging from weak (productivist) to strong multifunctionality (non-productivist). Wilson argued that the advantage of such a conceptualisation is that it allows researchers to leave the realm of Euro-centric policy-based concepts of multifunctionality behind and to also analyse agricultural trajectories in every rural area of the globe.

The varying interpretations and differing spatial levels of multifunctionality research have resulted in a varied set of methodologies used by researchers to assess multifunctionality (e.g. Pritchard; Holmes; Marsden et al.). The result has been a kaleidoscope of research results on multifunctionality, making comparisons about 'levels' of multifunctionality difficult at the international and even local levels (Clark; Dibden et al.). However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of human geography and the wide variety of methods used by geographers, the latter are in a particularly powerful position to contribute and coordinate this proposed exchange of ideas and concepts, as well as helping in the development of more sophisticated methodologies how to assess multifunctionality processes.

Geoff Wilson and Clive Potter

### **3.1.3 Rural Housing, Sustainability and Spatial Planning**

## **Session convenor – Nick Gallent**

The 'rural housing, sustainability and spatial planning' session comprised five papers looking at what are essentially new agendas for rural housing and the planning systems of the UK. Set in the context of ongoing debates over the need for additional land-release for rural housing - in the light of the 2004 Barker Review of Housing Supply - and the efficacy of existing mechanisms for procuring affordable housing through the planning system, this session followed a line through these debates starting with the nature of rural housing problems (including the social exclusions and quality of life issues that emerge as a result of market 'inequities' and planning) before considering possible responses, paying particular attention to spatial planning and emergent market-led versus community-led approaches to rural housing supply. The session began with a contribution from Glen Bramley (Heriot Watt) who outlined the degree of housing un-affordability currently being experienced across rural England, and the role that a new approach to planning might have in addressing this challenge, or what possible solutions it might point to. The next two papers - from Tony Champion and Mike Coombes (both at Newcastle) - explored the demographic and economic processes underpinning the current crisis in rural housing, expressed in terms of low levels of affordability (relative to local wages in many rural economies) and rates of house price inflation sometimes exceeding those experienced in towns and cities or in rural areas elsewhere in Europe. Tony Champion's focus was the population movements and commuting patterns that are currently underpinning market change in rural England and generating persistent pressures on rural households and the planning system. In this context, Mike Coombes sought to isolate the peculiarities of rural housing markets, arguing that the generalised policy mechanism of monitoring 'price signals' at the housing market scale (following on from the Barker Review) leads to an important debate over the geography of the price signal mechanism (viz the way in which rural areas are allocated or partitioned within the sub-regional housing market areas defined for the required house price analysis), and ultimately to questions over the sensitivity of strategic solutions to localised housing difficulties.

The question of localised, sensitive solutions - dealing with aspects of this broader rural debate - was addressed by both Mark Bevan (York) and Madhu Satsangi (Stirling). Mark Bevan warned that, in the context of government's housing supply debate, there is a real danger that the complexity of rural housing problems will be overlooked. Spatial planning - with its concern for co-ordinating policy areas and responses - provides a means of tackling a range of special needs in rural areas. Mark looked, briefly, at planning's response to ageing, its direction of land policies that ensure the right sort of housing is provided, and its co-ordination of different areas of public policy, including health services. Finally, Madhu Satsangi focused on an area of growing interest in rural housing debate: the use of community-led schemes to tackle local housing (and service) deprivation. His paper took the example of Community Land Trusts (CLT) in Scotland, and it was suggested that CLT has emerged as a sustainable model for tackling the question of land

availability in rural areas, though it is, as yet, unclear whether future planning and housing policy frameworks will facilitate the model's wider application. This was a topical note on which to end the session, given that government's recent housing green paper (DCLG, 2007) lauds the potential of community action and CLT, and calls on the development of further pilot schemes.

The papers from this session are currently being revised and will form part of a special edition of the journal *Planning Practice and Research* in 2008. This will explore new agendas for planning and rural housing.

Note: DCLG (2007) *Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable*, DCLG:London

Nick Gallent, UCL

### **3.1.4 - 'Lively non-human temporalities: towards rhythm analysis of hybrid nature-society time-spaces'**

More people than ever live in cities, to speeds and rhythms set by the clock, driven by schedules of work, family, leisure, and electronic media/information. Much is made of how social processes are speeding up and smoothing out (24/7) floating free of nature. But despite this many forms of natural rhythms remain profoundly influential in shaping our lives. Obvious examples are diurnal and seasonal rhythms and organism body-clocks which respond to them. Within these pervasive natural rhythms can be all manner of other velocities and pulses such as that of tides and the specific temporalities in the *umwelten* (lifeworlds) of animals, plants and trees. All these orchestrate into the complex timescapes of cities, countrysides, buildings and other forms of hybrid, relationally generated spaces. How social systems interact with, shape and are shaped by, these natural rhythms are questions of profound importance for understanding ecological, economic and cultural systems (inc identity), human/non-human health and quality of life, ecological planning and governance, and sustainable development. This session will explore; the presence of differing natural temporalities in socio-ecological formations; how to approach the rhythm analysis of such formations; temporality and ecological planning and governance; hybrid temporalities in ecologies of place, landscape and dwelling.

Latour (1997) argues that space and time are 'the consequences of the ways in which bodies relate to each other [ ] instead of a single space-time, we will generate as many spaces and times as there are types of relations'. Socio-ecological processes/spaces/places are thus not only the result of 'a multiplicity of differing agents [ ], human and non-human, technological and textual, organic and (geo)physical, which hold each other in position' (Whatmore 1999) but also of the intermeshing temporal signatures of those entities/processes.

The aim of the session was to explore, amongst other things,

- the functioning of differing 'natural' temporalities in socio-ecological formations
- how to approach the rhythmanalysis of such formations
- temporality and 'ecological planning' and governance
- hybrid temporalities in ecologies of place, landscape and dwelling

12 papers were submitted, 9 of which were selected to make up two sessions. As it turned out 3 papers pulled out relatively close to the conference date, so two sessions of three papers were eventually held. This made the sessions relaxed and 'roomy' for each paper. A certain amount of speculation went round that this was in fact a good way to organise sessions in order to give papers a decent amount of time.

Session one started – not with a bang – but with two presenters asleep on the floor!!! Their paper was entirely presented in a film, with the presenters latterly waking up and enhancing the film with comment and dance. The paper offered a fascinating series of examples of how non-human rhythms are present in the urban and wider environment. These aural and visual articulations open up ways of beginning to 'read' non-human rhythms and, importantly, incorporating them in to new formations of ecological planning. The presentation ended with a musical representation of the rise of CO2 levels in the atmosphere over recent decades (or maybe longer) a chilling crescendo to a dramatic opening paper.

*Title: Sensing rhythms: science, art and ecological planning*

*Presenters: James Evans; University of Manchester  
Phil Jones; University of Birmingham*

The non-human world is integral to urban existence and academics have highlighted the density of non-human urban infrastructure, and the nonsensicality of epistemologies that have blinded us to them. While patently 'there', non-humans have resisted the planning logic of substitution that attempts to re-format them within the spatial and temporal constraints of capitalist development. As Hinchliffe argues, there is a need to accommodate non-human temporalities 'carefully', as ways of being in their own right; doing so will create more ecologically sustainable cities for us all to live in. The question is: how to plan this?

Much groundwork has already been done by scientists and artists, whose *raison d'être* is to make non-human rhythms palpable. This paper critically analyses different modes of sensing rhythms deployed by these groups. Using aural and visual media we suggest that the human and non-human world are indistinct at a sensory level, and that the creation of preferable sensory worlds can be used as a basis for proactive ecological planning. Recent work in the environmental and health sciences has attempted to reconnect our sensory preferences with the world of non-humans, for instance odour and tranquillity mapping. Through these examples we explore the

potential of the sensory encounter to bring non-human rhythms into planning practice.

The second paper in the session took us to a very differing environment and a very different set of natural velocities and rhythms. The paper considered the 'invasion' of New Zealand by imported gorse species. The paper offered a fascinating account of how invading gorse interacted with native ecologies in time space rhythms and how biosecurity monitoring, mappings and management of this, not only has to grapple with the velocities and rhythms of plant growth and interaction, but also has its own temp[oral patterns/rhythms – thus what is formed in a highly complex, hybrid, nature-culture process of ecology, science and governance which has a whole range of intersecting time space patternings, with all actants, human and non-human, bringing agencies with their own distinct rhythm/velocity signatures.

*Title: Gorse and the Spatio-temporal Sensitivity of Biosecurity Approaches in Aotearoa New Zealand*

*Presenter: Kezia Barker, Department of Geography, UCL.*

Invasive plants create complex entanglements between nature/society/space/time. Biosecurity responses to invasive species have been represented as the control of space and of the movement of bodies and entities across space, through the imposition of conceptual and material boundaries (Donaldson and Wood 2004). In this paper I will enlarge this understanding through a discussion of the ways in which sensitivity to the *spatio-temporalities* of invasive plants has been incorporated into New Zealand's biosecurity approaches.

Gorse (*Ulex spp.*), a woody, perennial shrub, was imported to New Zealand during the early stages of European settlement, and has been the subject of shifting biosecurity-related management practices for close to 150 years. Classified as a 'pest plant,' gorse is currently subject to the biosecurity rationalities of Internal Pest Management. The 'Infestation-Curve Model,' a representation of the stages of plant invasion over time and space, is drawn on in the placement of gorse in a hierarchy of control strategies within Regional Pest Management Strategies (RPMS). Institutional attention has shifted from extensively distributed plants at later temporal stages of invasion, to newly naturalised plants at early or 'lag' stages. The resulting classification of gorse and the control response this produces is negotiated and can lead to conflicts between institutional and public values. Through this governing logic, gorse also plays an active role in the decision-making process, as its spatio-temporality informs the allocation of control responses, and through its controversial role in the temporal stages of native species' regeneration.

The third paper in the session turned to another form of natural rhythm – that of tides. Firstly tidal processes were briefly set out, stressing the complexity and the sheer physical presence in some places of tide space-time rhythms.

Then some general examples of how tides are interwoven into the fabric of (urban) social space were given. Lastly, more detailed examples from the Severn Estuary were offered, again showing the influence of tides on ecologies of place around the estuary and how these have changes over time as technologies such as sea wall, bridges and deep water ports have been developed.

*Title: "The Breath of the Moon"; Vignettes of the 'lively temporalities' of tides in the Severn Estuary.*

*Presenter: Owain Jones, CCRI.*

There is a growing interest in the relational 'patterning' of ground where all manner of things come together to make formations, sites, and places. All manners of trajectories – of people, non-humans, economies, technologies, ideas, and more – are brought or thrown together to assemble enduring, by also shifting, formations which combine to settle out into distinctive patterns of place. Both the social and the natural are on the move, but in very different ways and forms, and sometimes at very differing velocities and over very different time/space scales. Natural processes and their temporalities have so far only been gestured at in these kinds of approaches. This paper will begin to ground them through the example of the tidal flows which bring hybrid rhythms to the social, economic and ecological life of the Severn estuary and its communities.

Session two opened with a paper which looked in close detail at the temporal spatial rhythms of a square in London where regular street performance occurs. This was participant observation based research with an affective, ethological emphasis, which studied the inter-materiality and inter-bodily construction of the event, supported by the extensive use of photographs. A very useful account of the linear rhythms and cyclical rhythms of the events (and how they interact) was offered; these drawing on Lefebvre's notions of Rhythmanalysis. The paper developed a partial critique of Lefebvre's approach and stressed the performative, non-representational, always unfolding in place, aspect of the event (not least through rhythms of weather and the 'flow of the day').

*Title: Chronic Everyday Life: Rhythmanalysing Street Performance*

*Presenter: Paul Simpson, School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol.*

The aim of this paper is to examine the complex hybrid temporalities of street performance through the gaze of Henri Lefebvre's 'Rhythmanalyst' as the performer is choreographed into being in the admixture of pre-personal affects and non-human forces of nature (anxiety and frustration, sun and rain). Following an elaboration of the basic tenants of Lefebvre's 'Rhythmanalytical Project', I use Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis to think through the contentious, yet

positive inter-relation of, timetabling/temporal prescriptions placed on street performances in Covent Garden, London (linear rhythms), and the natural temporalities of bodies (both performers' and audiences'), the outdoor environment (sun, rain and day), and the performances themselves (cyclical rhythms). This is pursued with particular reference to three events arising in my research: (1) trying to perform when a crowd will not form; (2) a performance's encounter with rain; (3) the affects of performing in the July afternoon sun when no one else wants to. I conclude by problematizing some fundamental assumptions of Lefebvre's theory and I consequently speculate on the usefulness of the 'Rhythmanalytical Project' and what it does and does not bring to the elaboration and understanding of the small details of 'chronic' everyday life.

The second paper stayed in the city, and offered a very interesting account of the rhythms of the seasons, inter-cut with an account of movement between, and life within, indoor space and outdoor space (e.g. the growth of large scale indoor sports arena). The paper then drew upon case study material of office working in London and the movement between and within in-door and out-door spaces as part of everyday working life. The extent to which some people lead predominantly in-door lives was stressed, along with how rhythms of seasons still somehow remain culturally *and materially* present, for example in changing dress habits. The paper linked this material to wider questions about human-environment interactions in the context of sustainable – or unsustainable futures.

*Title: Seasonal change and the city office worker*

*Presenter: Dr Russell Hitchings, Department of Geography, University of Hull*

People now collectively spend over ninety per cent of their time within buildings in the west. In terms of everyday cultures, we could therefore easily argue that experiences with local outdoor atmospheres are becoming increasingly unimportant for those who have gradually come to prefer a more predictable form of indoor ambient experience. This is troubling when one corollary is that many people may easily come to no longer care about the climatic changes that are taking place outside the buildings they no longer seem to want to leave. It is with this in mind that this paper reports on some early work for a project that tracks a sample of professional office workers as they pass through the changing conditions presented by one calendar year in London. If they have come to retreat indoors, these seasons could easily pass by with little in the way of personal comment or physical adaptation. Yet, if they are still routinely inclined to organise outdoor experiences, we might expect them to have much more to say on this subject. It is by investigating exactly these sorts of mundane material issues that this paper argues for a geographically sensitive examination of the everyday outdoors as a means of documenting changing cultural relations with climate and encouraging different cities to become more sustainable.

The final paper offered a visually and rhythmically rich account of a tourist bus trip around the Ring of Kerry in the West of Ireland. The sequence of images which formed the backdrop to the paper, helped stress the embodied process of the bus trip, and also the material rhythms of encounter the trip offers in terms of sites (and sounds and other senses). This rhythm analysis opened up not only the iconic performances of a classic tourist landscape, but also other less obvious processes such as economic decay, rebuilding, encounters with nature and culture in oddly juxtaposed relations. The affective, the contingent and the processual aspects of tourist become were stressed. .

*Title: The bus tour: the intersection of tourist and rural rhythms*

*Dr Tim Edensor  
Reader in Cultural Geography  
Department of Geography  
Manchester Metropolitan University*

This presentation will examine the multiple, intersecting and changing rhythms produced by a well-worn tourist bus excursion around the highly symbolic Ring of Kerry in the West of Ireland. The aim of the paper is threefold. Firstly we investigate the numerous embodied and sensual, technological and representational rhythms that occur and recur through immersion in a particular form of mobility across and within a particular space. In so doing we emphasise that landscape, rather than an inert and visually apprehended entity should be conceived as a volatile space of rhythms, pulsing with intersecting trajectories and temporalities. Secondly, we argue that in investigating temporalities, geographers can highlight how humans are 'rhythm-makers as much as place-makers' (Mels, 2004: 3). Thirdly, and more specifically, the paper deconstructs the over-determined depictions and reifications of tourism and replaces them with tourism as processual, ever-changing, replete with planned and unplanned happenings, always and inevitably embodied, sensual, affective and informed by the dynamic characteristics and processes of the space within which it occurs.

Final comments. I was very impressed with the quality of the papers (apart from mine of course) and the extent to which they all highlighted the breath and depth of non-human rhythms embedded in 'social' space, and the potential for further work in this area. Thanks to the presenters.

I make two final points. 1. These papers were generally very rich in visual material and this points to the potentials of 'visual ethnographies' and related methods, in this and other areas. 2. In these papers, and in other papers and sessions throughout the conference, at least the ones I attended, Lefebvre's notion of Rhythmanalysis was very much to the fore – one to watch I suspect.

Owain Jones

#### 4. - CALLS FOR PAPERS

**4.1 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Anglo-German Rural Geographers Meeting - “Globalisation and rural transitions in Germany and the UK”, Universität Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany, 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.**

***Organised by: Geoff Wilson (University of Plymouth) on behalf of the RGS/IBG Rural Geography Research Group AND Ingo Mose (University of Oldenburg) on behalf of the German Rural Geographers Network***

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Anglo-German Rural Geographers Meeting will be held at the University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany (near Bremen in NW Germany) from Thu 26<sup>th</sup> June to Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June. We invite research papers addressing research themes related to the theme ‘Globalisation and rural transitions in Germany and the UK’.

**Deadline for submission of abstracts: 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008** (please submit abstracts via e-mail to both [geoff.wilson@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:geoff.wilson@plymouth.ac.uk) and [g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk))

**Programme:**

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June: arrival

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June: Paper sessions (12 papers; 4 sessions with 3 papers each)

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June: Paper sessions (12 papers; 4 sessions with 3 papers each)

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June: fieldtrip to rural areas around Oldenburg

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June: departure

**Fee:** €100 (£70) per participant

**Accommodation:** Arrangements will be made with local guesthouses and hotels at reduced price

**Travel:** There are connections to Bremen (nearest city and airport) via budget airlines from UK airports

**4.2. Call for Papers for a special session which will be part of “The 12th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons”**

"Governing shared resources: connecting local experience to global

challenges"

University of Gloucestershire (Cheltenham), 14th -18th July 2008

Session Title: "Opening Space: Approaching commons through new conceptualisations of places and landscapes"

Session outline:

"In my view, an adequate theory of the commons must be rooted in critical understanding of the symbolic dimensions of the commons as well as its history as a concrete referent for that symbolism" (Kenneth R. Olwig, "Commons & Landscape", 2003).

Much of the commons research agenda is understandably focused upon a range of aspects clustered around, and linking between, notions of sustainability, equity, governance, ecology, economy and justice (Laerhoven and Ostrom 2007). This focus is in part driven by the distinctive character of common space in terms of nature, use, risk, loss and potential. The fate of the commons (of whatever form) throws into sharp relief wider, often troubling dynamics of nature-society-economy.

However, As Olwig, suggests, commons also need to be read as places and landscapes (of one kind or another) outside, or alongside, these key 'material concerns'. The very fact that they are commons brings particular factors into their unfolding as living (cultural and ecological) spatial entities. In this session we seek to consider commons through the more unusual lenses of thinking them as places and landscapes. To venture out onto one of the many commons remaining in the UK (for example) is to venture into places which have a very different FEEL to them - different atmosphere, different sense of space, history and politics, in part, from the literal openness to be found.

Enclosure, so often taken for granted, and the inevitable norm, is ex places and landscapes in the last decade or so. These have in part been driven by some notably geographers, sociologists and anthropologists (e.g. David Harvey, Nigel Thrift, Doreen Massey, John Law, Bruno Latour, Tim Ingold, Barbra Bender). These developments seek to deepen understandings of place and landscape (and life within them) in the light of a whole raft of important intellectual/theoretical trajectories often infused by broadly poststructuralist and (related) science and technology studies, phenomenologies, ideas of affect/embodiment, and so on. The preoccupations of these approaches include embodiment, practice, process, hybridity, performativity, topology (networks), complexity and the blurring of a whole set of dualisms such as social-natural, agency-structure, and symbolic-concrete. (Thus there is a need to heed, but also develop Olwig's call for symbolic-concrete analysis of commons).

These developments intermesh with new understandings of nature and nature-society relations (e.g. Whatmore 2002, Hinchcliffe, 2007) which focus on hybridity, difference and becoming. Some of the richness of these ideas

can also be found in innovative literatures of place and landscape as in the work of W. G. Sebald, Iain Sinclair, and others, which also deal in history, memory, loss, longing of being-in-place. In these 'ecologies of place' Thrift (1999) there is a deep interest in alternative spatial becomings (e.g. Deleuzian notions of nomadism). Commons also offer great potential in terms of thinking and doing space differently.

In these new approaches places/landscapes are;

temporal processes with spatial implications (rather than easily fixed, bounded spaces).

(thus) outcomes of topological connection rather than topographical process (although there are moves to combine these approaches (Wylie and Rose 2007)).

always contingent, on the move, and uncertain.

sites of human practice which are complex interplays of culture, economy, politics and also emotive, affective, collective and individual processes.

sites of nature-culture hybridity in which multiple agencies, temporalities (velocity and rhythm) and relational couplings constantly rework in restless dynamism, yet which also produce stabilities around which identities, cultures affective (dwelt) habits can 'gather'.

the sites of reinterpreted understandings of Heideggerian dwelling (as in the key work of Tim Ingold).

The session seeks to explore commons in these kinds of ways. Themes could include;

Common as other space

Psychogeography of commons

The emotional/affective geographies of commons

Topologies of commons

Commons as networks

Commons life in practice

Commons as hybrid processes of culture-nature

Commons as places

Commons as landscapes

Ethnographies and ethologies of common life

Alternative practices of research and narrative

This session will be part of -

The 12th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons

Governing shared resources: connecting local experience to global challenges

University of Gloucestershire (Cheltenham), 14th -18th July 2008

See <http://www.iascp.org/iasc08/iasc08.html> for more details

Deadline for abstracts THIS SESSION is 25 January 2008

Please circulate this CFP if you think you know of other who will be interested

Please send abstracts or questions to

[ojones@glos.ac.uk](mailto:ojones@glos.ac.uk) <<mailto:ojones@glos.ac.uk>>

### **4.3 – Sessions at the RGS-IBG Annual conference 2008**

#### **4.3.1 - Call for Papers from Rural Geography Research Group in association with the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU)**

##### **Rural Geography and Public Policy Engagement**

Session Convenors: Carol Morris, University of Nottingham and Clive Potter, Imperial College London

The debate concerning the nature, extent and desirability of engagement by geographers in the policy process shows few signs of abating, as evidenced in the recent series of reports on 'public geographies' in Progress in Human Geography.(2005-7) However, an emphasis on the social and economic aspects of the public policy agenda means that rural geography and its contribution in relation to increasingly prominent debates about agriculture, food and rural nature has arguably not received the attention it deserves. This is surprising to an extent given the 'statist' nature of rural policy and its experience of rapid change.

Rural geographers are confronted with the same challenges as those from other parts of the discipline when they reflect on the merits and drawbacks of

engaging with the policy process, either as advocates for reform or contributors to the evidence base surrounding policy change. For instance, they face the same dilemma identified by Peck in his TIBG editorial in 1999 concerning how far to engage in shallow (policy evaluation) or deep (theorising and critiquing policy) modes of policy research. At the same time, familiar (and often unflattering) comparisons are drawn with the privileged status of academic agricultural and, more recently, environmental economists in terms of policy influence.

Yet rural geographers arguably have made and continue to make a highly significant contribution to both the evidence base on which rural policy draws (through RELU and other research programmes) and the larger debates surrounding its future development. In this session we aim to explore both dimensions, as well as offering an opportunity to explore the tensions and limitations of that engagement.

We invite papers which:

- 1 Explore personal experiences of becoming involved in the rural policy process as advocates and critics and how these processes have shaped career and research trajectories within the discipline;
- 2 Report research that contributes to the evidence base and / or the analysis of policy options;
- 3 Reflect and comment on rural policy debates more widely and that theorise their development.

Offers of papers – with title and abstract - should be made to either of the session convenors before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008: [Carol.Morris@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Carol.Morris@nottingham.ac.uk)/  
[c.potter@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:c.potter@imperial.ac.uk)

#### **4.3.2 - Towards Transformative Knowledges/Practices for Sustainable Rural Futures - Sponsored by the Rural Geography Research Group Convened by the Countryside and Community Research Institute**

Within human geography and the social sciences more broadly there is a move to break up settled, and narrowly drawn, institutional, pedagogic, theoretical, disciplinary and methodological boundaries as we come to realize that addressing the intensely complex, hybrid, unstable (yet intransigent) nature of reality calls for new knowledge formations/practices. New views of knowledge are exploring/practicing integrations of theory, practice, politics and methods into new 'non-representational' assemblages of creative movement.

Related to this there is also what Latour calls a 'pixelisation of politics', where progressive actions can take place at many sites, in many forms, and at different scales and in different networks. These actions are (can be) pragmatics of knowledge/practice created within competency groups

clustered around situations of concern and/or potential. Academic attention focuses on action already in process within communities, socio-techno-ecological networks, and processes of governance and economics.

Can rural academics identify, join and add value to these? Can rural academics initiate these?

This session seeks to explore these new terrains of theory/practice "which matter", in relation to sustainable rural futures. In particular we invite papers which report upon work where academics (perhaps in interdisciplinary alliances) are actively working with (rather than on) rural actants (which may include non-humans) in ways which seek to be transformative in some way

- not least in terms of sustainable socio-ecological formations.

Possible themes (amongst many)

Action research and rural sustainability

Participatory research and rural sustainability

Interdisciplinary research and rural sustainability

Innovative stakeholder engagement strategies

Working with humans and non-humans

Case studies of rural projects working toward sustainable socio-ecological sustainability in the developed and developing world

Putting non-representational theory into practise (and other theoretical methodological trajectories)

The ethics and politics of non-representational research

Titles and Abstracts of up to 200 words to be sent to [HYPERLINK "mailto:\[log in to unmask\]" \[log in to unmask\]](#) by 12 Jan 2008

Owain Jones

mobile: 07871 572969

office: 01242 715315

home: 01761 472908

Senior Research Fellow

Countryside and Community Research Institute

Dunholme Villa, Park Campus

Cheltenham, GL50 2RH

#### **4.3.3 - "The Lie of the Land": Rural Lies, Myths and Realities**

Convenors:

Gareth Enticott (Cardiff University)

Keith Halfacree (Swansea University)

In May 2006, Channel 4 screened “The Lie of the Land”, a documentary by Molly Dineen. Originally intended to be about hunting, the documentary ended up focusing on traditional productive agriculture in marginal South-west England. In doing so it provoked equal amounts of outrage, praise, anger and shock. It showed in graphic detail some of the less attractive realities of rural living: from the routine slaughter of healthy yet unprofitable new-born calves on dairy farms, to the acute poverty of many farmers’ day-to-day lives, to the harsh impacts of reforms to agricultural subsidies. In the agricultural press, farmers were equally pleased and angered: pleased because the film served to highlight the plight of productive agriculture but also angered because some felt that it undermined those seeking to develop quality products.

The title of the documentary – “The Lie of the Land” – resonates powerfully in more general ways too. It signifies a set of long held ‘lies’ about the English countryside – from the ‘lie’ of a bucolic rural idyll and the (unseen) ‘lies’ of modern agriculture. These lies, though, are not necessarily told by farmers but arguably more commonly by governments and the urban population.

For this session, therefore, we are calling for papers that deal with the implications for rural geography raised by the “Lie of the Land”. In particular, papers are invited that deal with the following themes: 1) Rural Lies and Myths. The title of Molly Dineen’s documentary brings to the surface wide-ranging questions about rural lies, myths and realities. Who lies about the rural and who is aware of those untruths? What rural myths exist? How do they circulate around rural populations? What impact do they have? How are lies manifested and by whom or what: humans, nonhumans, topographies/geomorphologies?

2) The practice of agriculture in (marginal) rural areas. How have recent reforms to agricultural policy affected rural livelihoods? For example, how has the management of the Rural Payments Agency impacted upon farmers? How have changes to the management of agri-environment schemes, animal health policies and the Common Agricultural Policy generally altered the practice of farming today?

3) Methodological Lies. Dineen’s documentary is situated as a journey of discovery and accidental realisation of a set of rural problems. What other methodological journeys have researchers experienced that has awakened them to rural lies and truths? To what extent are the truths researchers say about the rural based on purposive or accidental journeys? The documentary also raises the question of how geographers should deal with lying. Which methods are best suited for exploring and capturing lies? Does it matter if research participants lie? What untruths do researchers themselves tell?

Please submit abstracts of not more than 250 words by January 31st 2008 to either:

Dr Keith Halfacree  
Swansea University

K.H.Halfacree@swansea.ac.uk

Dr Gareth Enticott  
Cardiff University  
[EnticottG@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:EnticottG@cardiff.ac.uk)

#### 4.3.4 – “New and Emerging Rural Researchers”

This session is targeted at postgraduates and early stage researchers working on themes and issues relating to rural geography. The aim of the session is to provide a friendly and supportive environment in which to disseminate findings and receive constructive feedback from fellow new/emerging researchers and more established academics within the field. Papers are encouraged from a diverse range of methodologies and research topics relating to rural geography, and may be drawn from either completed research or research-in-progress

Please submit abstracts of not more than 200 words by January 31st 2008 to  
Ruth Little ([ruth.little@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.little@coventry.ac.uk) <<mailto:ruth.little@coventry.ac.uk>> )

#### 5. NEW BOOKS

Maye, D., Holloway, L. and Kneafsey, M. (eds.) (2007) *Alternative Food Geographies: Representation and Practice*. Elsevier, Oxford.

Since the late 1990s, agro-food researchers have identified attempts to re-configure food provision around more ethically sound, economically and ecologically sustainable relationships between food producers, processors and consumers. Largely in the context of developed market economies, notions of ‘relocalization’ and the ‘quality turn’ have figured prominently in discussions about these ‘alternative’ food geographies. Emerging empirical research, however, is now challenging some of the assumptions embedded within such discussions. This book critically reflects on the great diversity of debates and practices surrounding efforts to reform contemporary food provision in different places and spaces. The book is organized into three parts. Following a contextual introduction written by the editors, Part One focuses on theoretical and conceptual issues/debates, especially in relation to power, representations and discourses of the ‘alternative’. In other words, how, where and why is the term ‘alternative’ deployed? Part Two considers the relationship between public policy and alternative food projects, with case studies that examine some of the ways institutions enroll, represent, support and, in some instances, impede the development of certain forms of alternative food provision. Part Three addresses perspectives and practices from different actors and spaces in the food chain, including producers, retailers, consumers and local communities. Going beyond the usual focus on the global north, the book considers the relevance of debates about ‘alternative’ food networks to the global south. It includes empirically-rich

case studies from Europe, North and South America, Australia and Africa, which collectively emphasize the variety of representations and practices involved in constructing 'alternative' food geographies.

For further details visit:

[http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/bookdescription.cws\\_home/712396/description#description](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/bookdescription.cws_home/712396/description#description)

## **5 – Job Opportunity**

**Kingston University, Faculty of Science**

**School of Earth Sciences and Geography**

**Lecturer in Human Geography (One Year Fixed-Term)**

**£31,984 - £34,768 pa inc.**

The School of Earth Sciences and Geography at Kingston University is seeking to appoint a Lecturer in Human Geography for one year from March 2008 as cover for Dr. A.L. Hughes who will be on maternity leave.

The successful candidate will contribute to teaching on the BA/BSc Honours degree in Geography and will be a member of the Agriculture, Environment and People research group within the Centre of Earth and Environmental Sciences Research (CEESR).

Preference will be given to candidates with expertise in the cultural and social geography of the countryside.

For further details please contact Professor Guy M Robinson on 020 854 7501 or email

[g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk) before Jan 25<sup>th</sup>.

## **6. ITEMS FOR SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER**

Articles, letters and comments and other items for inclusion in the Spring Newsletter should be sent to: Mark Riley, RGRG Newsletter Editor, Department of Geography, University of Portsmouth, Buckingham Building, Lion Terrace, Portsmouth, PO1 3HE. by 30 March, 2008; Tel: +44(0)23 9284 2493; email: [mark.riley@ports.ac.uk](mailto:mark.riley@ports.ac.uk).

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

The RGRG, like many other research groups, is making increasing use of electronic means of communication.

**Please update your email address!**

Email is increasingly used to distribute the bi-annual Newsletter and urgent items of news throughout the year. Although email addresses are now available for about half of RGRG members, several appear to be out-of-date. If you have changed your email over the past few months or have recently gone 'on-line', please send your new address to Mark Riley, Department of Geography, University of Portsmouth, Buckingham Building, Lion Terrace, Portsmouth, PO1 3HE; email: [mark.riley@ports.ac.uk](mailto:mark.riley@ports.ac.uk).

The RGRG Web site (<http://www.geog.plym.ac.uk/ruralgeography/default.htm>) has been up and running for a few years. If you have any items that you wish to have posted on the RGRG web site, please contact Mark Riley (University of Portsmouth) preferably by email: [mark.riley@ports.ac.uk](mailto:mark.riley@ports.ac.uk).