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1. CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING RURAL CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Date	Event	Contact
27-29 August, 2008	RGS-IBG Annual Conference 'Geographies that matter', RGS- IBG, London.	http://www.rgs.org
8-11 Sept 2008	The Practice of Rural Geography – Postgraduate conference, Varese Ligure, Genoa, NW Italy	Charles.wakins@nottingham.ac.uk
29 th June – 3 rd July 2009	Anglo-Spanish Rural Geography Conference, Canterbury Christ Church University – "Changing Rural and Agricultural Landscapes'@	Prof Guy Robinson

2. RGRG Sponsored sessions at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference

2.1 - "The Lie of the Land": Rural Lies, Myths and Realities

Session Convenors: Gareth Enticott (Cardiff University), Keith Halfacree (University of Wales, Swansea)

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 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. The title 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 are more commonly expressed by governments and the urban population. For this session, therefore, we called for papers that dealt with the implications for rural geography raised by "The Lie of the Land". In particular, papers were invited that dealt with the following themes: rural lies and myths, the practice of agriculture in (marginal) rural areas, and methodological lies

Papers:

Introducing 'the lie of the land': from idiom to critique, and back again? – Gareth Enticott (Cardiff University), Keith Halfacree (University of Wales, Swansea)

This introduction to the whole session focuses on the powerful and what we show is the amazingly resonant idea of the 'lie of the land' that informs it. Specifically, we trace the origin of the term as an idiom of expressing how we get information about a situation before making a decision or taking some form of action, though to it increasingly being seen as a critical term of intervention with some aspect of the rural that is predominantly regarded as being interpreted 'erroneously'. However, with most people's ever-increasing dislocation from day-to-day rurality, and the 'nature' it fronts up, and an increasing academic and popular appreciation of diverse and fundamentally heterogeneous interpretations of rurality, 'erroneous' (sic.) interpretation and understanding of the rural becomes so commonplace that, arguably, 'lie of the land' can be seen to be reasserting a predominantly idiomatic role.

Consuming rural myths: exploring consumer knowledges about food, farming and animal welfare – Adrian Evans & Mara Miele (Cardiff University)

This paper draws on focus group research carried out across seven European countries to shed light upon consumers' understandings of farming and farm animal welfare. In particular, we highlight the character of consumers' knowledge about these issues and illustrate how it differs from other forms of knowing (e.g. scientific understandings). Furthermore, we explore how consumers' knowledge of farm animal welfare is grounded in (and shaped by) specific social practices (such as shopping for food, preparing meals, looking after pets and visiting farms) and we examine the role of the mass media and food labelling/packaging in informing lay farming mythologies. Our results show that certain focus group participants appeared to be in a state of wilful denial about the origins of their foods and many were particularly keen to avoid making any associations between the meat on their plate and the lives *and deaths* of the animals from which it originated, for example one Italian consumer stated: "Let's say that I eat without thinking. So I don't face a problem with information". However, other focus group participants were more reflexive about their food purchases and tended to read food labels and make explicit connections between the quality and animal welfare credentials of their foods and the types of farming systems from which they originated.

They shoot calves don't they? The unintended consequences of conflicts over animal welfare - Matt Reed (Countryside & Community Research Institute, Cheltenham)

In the past decade a competition over farm animal welfare has appeared around the rearing of calves in the UK. A confluence of circumstances has arisen that has pitted consumer abhorrence of veal, a continuous downward push on farm gate prices and the natural 'surplus' of bull calves has created an ethical contest in dairy farming. Animal rights protests in the mid-1990s saw the banning of calves for export to continental Europe, on the grounds that the methods of veal production were essentially abusive. Yet, due to the demands of market efficiency, the domestic market price of bull calves collapse. Rather than face economic loss, many bull calves were destroyed shortly after birth, a practice originally supported by government subsidy but increasingly seen as a normal part of dairy 'husbandry'. The shooting of male calves has been reported by many farmers as being the most distressing aspect of the combination of animal disease culls, economic hardship and political controversy they have experienced. This conflict brings into focus the conflicts and partial public discussion over the ends of agriculture. Animal rights protestors have rarely focussed on the conditions of farmed animals, with their campaigns generally targeting wild or laboratory animals, yet their intervention has led to the early and often unregulated death of millions of young animals. Farming systems and the drive for quality in both dairy farming and beef production has seen a group of animals once considered productive becoming a 'waste' product. Alongside the bull calves, those most affected are the farmers who negotiate the distressing outcome of having to balance what might be argued is one aspect of the contemporary inability to reconcile the reality of contemporary agriculture with ethical aspirations.

Lying or framing? A speech act theory perspective on rural myths and BSE - Peter Feindt (Cardiff University)

This paper seeks to explore theoretical foundations of meaningful inquiries into "the lie of the land". It starts with the notion that any concept of "lying" implies a concept of "truth". While common sense notions of "lying" hold that words do not match reality, both philosophy after the "linguistic turn" and constructivist social science question the notion of "reality" as a reliable point of reference and the reference theory of truth underlying it. Instead, 'truth' and 'evidence' are understood as functions in 'linguistic games' (Wittgenstein). Speech act theory (Searle) links concepts of truth to theories of action, introducing a consensus theory of truth (Habermas). The basic idea is that speech acts determine their own conditions of success (framing) but the latter's fulfilment depends on contextual institutions, intentions, perceptions, resources and skills. The paper goes on to use speech act theory to consider recent efforts to contest established frames on farm and rural policy and the images of land and farming implied. I discuss how re-framing of "the land" changes the conditions of success of speech acts and interpreted practices. The German BSE crisis serves as an illustrative empirical case, drawing on media analysis and in-depth interviews with policy-makers. I address Merton's

concept of self-fulfilling and self-destroying prophecies, as well as recent work by German philosopher Simone Dietz, who proposes to consider lying as a practical skill.

Holy Cow! Shambo and the contested solutions to Bovine Tuberculosis - Gareth Enticott (Cardiff University)

In 2007, "Shambo" – a bullock from west Wales – received international media attention after he failed a routine test for bovine Tuberculosis. His owners – monks from the Hindu Community of the Many Names of God – launched an appeal against the subsequent slaughter order issued by the Welsh Assembly Government. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the appeal sparked a debate between the farming community, government officials and Shambo's owners on the importance of public health, animal health and human rights in managing zoonotic diseases. Using perspectives from the sociologies of health and science, and data from documentary sources and interviews, the paper deconstructs the farming community's discursive framing of Shambo and the problem of bovine Tuberculosis. Firstly, in publicly framing the problem as a public and human health issue, the event can be read as an attempt to manage difference within the countryside by processes of in/exclusion which stress the importance of equity and uniformity. However, secondly, the paper shows how this framing masked farmers' own private understandings of the cause of bovine Tuberculosis contained within a system of 'candidacy'. Whilst the tensions between these discourses reveal an implicit (and explicit) desire to exclude 'rural others' from the countryside, they also highlight the importance of tracing the multiple identities and public/private discourses inherent within disputes over animal disease and processes of rural exclusion.

Lies on the milk label: consumer boycotts in the USDA organic pasture war - Bruce Scholten (Durham University)

In the US in 2006, the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) began a boycott against organic-industrial milk from confined cows who seldom munch daisies like their pastured sisters shown on milk labels. The OCA, joined by the Cornucopia Institute and consumers in cities such as Seattle, won battles in 2007 when the USDA decertified Vander Eyck organic farm, and threatened the same against Aurora for violations of 'access to pasture rules'. Later in 2007, consumers mounted a class action suit against these suppliers and leading supermarkets, claiming the integrity of the national organic programme is at stake. Yet, veterans confide that all actors *skirt the truth*, competing for market share before the USDA issues final calendar and content rules on grazing. This presentation will update these organic pasture wars, which could soon take surprising turns as the Bush administration's support for large-scale agribusiness and the bio-fuel boom (dedicated to energy independence) pressure family-scale dairies with skyrocketing grain prices in US, UK

The myth of egalitarianism in rural Australia - Kerri Whittenbury (Charles Sturt University)

Australians have historically espoused an egalitarian ethos that considers 'Jack to be equal to his master'. This is particularly pervasive in rural Australia and conjures up images of rugged farmers, drovers and bushmen – bosses and workers sharing work tasks then relaxing together over the campfire at the end of a hard day. This ideology of egalitarianism both masks and legitimates considerable levels of social inequality. It masks inequality by overlooking social and economic differences in favour of broader shared values and attributes. It legitimates inequality by advocating equality of opportunity and not equality of outcome. This ideology views differential outcomes as legitimate because they are deemed to be deserved. During research undertaken in an Australian country town, the overwhelming majority of interviewees described themselves as 'middle-class', despite marked differences between them in many social and economic indicators such as employment, education, income and wealth. Interviewees overlooked considerable economic disparity and used normative criteria to determine class membership, with middle-class people considered to behave respectably and to subscribe to 'appropriate' shared values. These 'appropriate' behaviours and values reflect the values espoused by the dominant ideology indicative of hegemonic masculinity. Those who differ from the hegemonic ideal are not considered equal, they are regarded as 'other' and are often excluded from mainstream social participation. Despite being a widely held belief in rural Australia, the ethos of egalitarianism is a myth that serves to reinforce inequality and justifies the existing unequal social and economic relations.

Giving voice to unspoken realities: exploding the myth of the contented farm wife - Jan Allan (Griffith University, Australia/Ikawai, New Zealand)

This research explores the life experiences of selected farm women/wives who, as both workers and lifepartners on New Zealand farms, negotiate complex sets of relationships in learning to 'become' and to 'belong' to a culture and workplace adopted through marriage to a farmer. For women entering farming through marriage, learning to be a farm woman/wife requires knowing 'how to be' and 'who to be', as well as 'how to do' and 'what to do'. It requires learning a new set of cultural beliefs and expectations with very different sets of knowledge, skills and abilities. Accommodating their 'self', into the often unknown culture, can be confusing and challenging as the expectations historically have been that farm wives will be fulfilled by becoming an intrinsic yet secondary part of their husband's world. In effect, this assumes more often achieving vicariously through their life-partner e.g. their husband. Even for those who work off-farm, the prevailing attitude is that the farm comes first thereby limiting other possibilities. It emerges that patriarchal farm women 'silence' other women thereby perpetuating and protecting mythical notions. From the research it is clear that the reality of the women's lives seldom consistently matches that of the myths and propaganda of the rural idyll. It exposes well-hidden conflicts and tensions where many farm women learn to exist in a more temporary state, which unless challenged by the woman, then becomes permanent. Often, the result is a fragmented,

confused and incongruent self that manifests as tension and conflict borne of a sense of alienation.

Myth and reality in the experiences of migrants working in British horticulture - Donna Simpson (University of Sussex)

This paper, based on ethnographic research undertaken in the summer of 2007, will share the experience of migrants whose rural work-place regime includes long hours, hard work, injury and tight living arrangements. These experiences lie uncomfortably and contest notions of rural areas and rural work as romantic, healthy and imbuing a sense of space that projects openness and freedom. Worker interviews and stories also reveal how experiences on the farm counter the discourse that holds migrant workers to benefit overwhelmingly from coming to the UK. Yet such interviews and stories do not concede to another powerful discourse around migrants in which victimhood and exploitation dominate the representation of migrants. In all, ethnography is posed as a useful tool in which to counter discourses that obscure the truths and reality of migrants' experiences of working on farms in the UK.

Reflexive social geography: mindscapes and cultural competence - Christopher Irons (Griffith University)

The ontological basis for this paper is that a lie is a false statement made deliberately to deceive somebody. My methodological position is that understanding a common reason for lying may enable researchers to protect themselves from deception through cultural competence. The paper draws on data from 230 interviews in three research projects in rural Australia and explores a common reason for lying among the respondents. The paper starts by referring to empirical research showing that the risks and realities of life on a low-lying island in the Pacific appear quite different to climate change experts in Canberra than they are for the people that live in the islands. For the islanders, sea-level rise is a minor issue. The paper goes on to show that similar differences exist closer to home, among the farmers, government agency staff and their scientific advisers, and other stakeholders in the health of a large catchment in Victoria. Consequences include the misaligned priorities, frustration, misunderstandings and mistrust made manifest in environmental degradation and unsustainable practices. I addressed criticism that the analytical framework used to reach these conclusions relies on relatively untested cultural theory, by validating it against responses during further research. The research explores the mindscapes, or lifestyle values, surrounding some of the healthiest coastal water-bodies in rural New South Wales. The test shows that responses are overwhelmingly consistent with the mindscapes outlined in the theory. The majority of respondents did not lie in their interviews and the few that did became plainly visible.

Myth, mobilization and the framing of rural protest - Michael Woods (Aberystwyth University), Jon Anderson (Cardiff University), Suzie Warkins (Aberystwyth University) & Steven Guilbert (Sheffield University).

Large-scale rural protests were a new and distinctive feature of politics in Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century. In this paper we examine the 'framing' of these rural protests, exploring the discursive structures that enabled the mass mobilization of participants and collected together a diverse range of issues from hunting to village school closures under a rubric of a threatened countryside. We suggest that the frames employed relied heavily on three 'myths' – not untruths necessarily, but embellished narratives that have created their own 'reality' through repetition and dissemination. These include the notion of an urban-rural divide in British society, the belief in the attachment of rural people to the land, and the positioning of contemporary rural campaigns in an historical tradition of libertarian protest. The paper investigates the construction and reproduction of these 'myths' and their reception and articulation by grassroots participants in rural protest activities.

The politics and ethics of school closure: a school at the heart of the community - Marion Walker (Lancaster University)

This paper explores the norms and principles in practice that create conflict for the actors within a rural community threatened with the closure of their local primary school. Using ethnographic data collected through interviews and observations, the study shows the high level of resistance the 'notice to close' incurs and the resultant backlash the Local Authority experiences, as the threat is presented by the school as an attack by outside officials on their rural community. Understanding what 'rural community' means to people when they apply it to school choice is therefore relevant to the discussion about how schools and parents operate within the rural educational market place. The policy of school choice enables parents to choose a school either in or out of their catchment area. Crucially, the extent to which rural schools respond successfully to market demands is dependent not only upon their ability to retain the support of local parents but also the ease with which parents from outside the catchment can engage in the daily migration to the school. The study shows that the relationship between the school and its local community is both fluid and complex and that the metaphor of the school at the heart of the community begs the question '*which* rural community is the local school serving'?

A tainted countryside? Young people, rurality and health in County Durham, North-East England - Natalie Beale (Durham University)

This paper is part of a journey. It emerges from a specific research encounter with a group of young people, living in small villages surrounded by fields and hills, who did not consider their local area to be 'countryside'. This encounter led to obvious questions about how 'the countryside' is viewed and understood, and what happens when the countryside is in some way 'not

quite' countryside. This paper is based on my PhD research which seeks to explore young people's perceptions of health in selected areas of County Durham. This is a predominantly rural county in North-East England which, following the collapse of the coal-mining industry in the 1980s, is now characterised by stark socio-economic and health inequalities and contains some areas of marked deprivation. I consider ways in which dominant stereotypes and representations of the countryside, rurality, health and young people are shaped and expressed. The notion, dominant in the health sector, of a 'healthy', 'wealthy' rurality will be contested. My work has sought to take a youth-centred approach, forefronting young people's views and experiences as far as possible. As such, the paper will draw upon young people's own understandings of health and their local area in its analysis. At the same time, it has inevitably been shaped (at least in part) by my own positioning, gaze and priorities. Furthermore, it is grounded in the sometimes contradictory stories and accounts given by the young people themselves, and the information they have chosen to give or withhold.

No getting 'back to the garden': the myth of the 1970s countercultural (re)turn to the rural - Keith Halfacree (University of Wales, Swansea), Lewis Holloway (University of Hull) & Larch Maxey (University of Wales, Swansea)

An abiding impression of the 1970s counterculture is of the supposed 'hippy', either in a communal group or more individually, abandoning the compromised life of urban 'straight' society and seeking a new beginning in the countryside, living off the land as self-sufficiently as possible. From the post-Haight-Ashbury exodus, through 'Swinging London' moving to west Wales, to Barbara and Tom in *The Good Life*, the image is of a dramatic lifestyle change that saw everyday engagement with the land as the foundation for a new identity. This paper challenges such an imagination, arguing that whilst many countercultural people did move to rural areas, often with dreams of self-sufficiency, actual evidence of intense and sustained engagement with the land is sparse. This is, on the one hand, because other everyday lifestyle issues typically predominated, especially within communes, and, on the other hand, because of the sheer challenges posed by trying to live off the land. Furthermore, there seems to have been little (self-)reflection on how spatial relocation is not enough in itself to bring about substantial lifestyle change. The paper ends by reflecting on these observations in the context of a present-day revival in what may loosely be termed back-to-the-land experiments.

The 'other' dimensions of contemporary rural gentrification - Darren Smith & Rebecca Higley (University of Brighton).

Academic studies of rural gentrification have tended to conceptualise gentrifiers in prototypical ways. In a similar vein, rural gentrifiers are often portrayed in media and policy discourses as affluent, new middle class, nuclear families, drawn to exclusive rural locations by the allure of idyllic appeals of rurality and counterurban motives. In this paper, we disrupt this narrow conceptualisation of rural gentrifiers. Drawing upon recent studies of rural gentrification in the North Weald, Kent, and Hebden Bridge, West

Yorkshire, we show that there is an increasing socio-cultural diversity between rural gentrifiers, and a complex and complicated set of appeals, which underpin the residential, location and migration-decision making of rural gentrifiers. We therefore call for a deeper knowledge of the significant economic, social and cultural geographies of rural gentrifiers to inform rural policy formulation and understandings of rural population change in the UK.

2.2 – Rural Geography and Public Policy Engagement

Session Convenors: Carol Morris (University of Nottingham) & 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.

Rural Geographers and Public Policy: Analysis, advocacy and engagement in the rural sphere - Carol Morris (University of Nottingham) & Clive Potter (Imperial College London)

Geographers have debated at some length the need for, and desirability of, becoming more involved in the public policy process, both as disinterested analysts and advocates for reform and alternative policy futures. In the case of rural geography (and rural studies more generally), however, there is already a long tradition of involvement - and in a specific field of public policy where ideas, and the advocacy coalitions and discourses that form around them, have been important in bringing about policy change. The uneven retreat from a Fordist regulatory regime in relation to agriculture has had profound socio-environmental consequences, while the emergence of alternative approaches to rural development and the management of land has

offered rich opportunities for policy engagement at the level of ideas. In this paper we assess the contribution made by rural geographers as commentators on the process and nature of policy change and as participants in marshalling an evidence base and developing public interest justifications for long range policy reform. The nature of this involvement is not unproblematic, however, and we identify various tensions which rural geographers typically encounter when they venture into the policy realm. We compare the contribution made by geographers and agricultural and environmental economists in a field where neoclassical framings have been dominant and hard to challenge. The paper explores both the research requirements of the rural policy community and the 'supply' of policy research in rural geography before going on to examine some of the conflicts and trade offs that must be faced on a personal level when geographers decide to engage in policy research and/or enter the policy domain.

Geography and policy again: blurring the boundaries between citizenship and research through civility and subversion - Michael Winter (University of Exeter)

This paper contributes to the debate on geography and policy. A brief overview of the 'geography and policy' agenda, leads me to suggest that the debate has, hitherto, ignored a very important aspect of academia's role not so much in providing research to assist policy (the usual expectation) but in the (potential) provision of a human resource for 'engaged citizenship'. Through a case study of engaged citizenship – based on my own experiences in Foot & Mouth - I consider how engagement can lead to both 'unintended' research insights and contribute to policy developments. In so doing, I make a plea for a blurring of the boundaries between expert and lay knowledge in a manner than can be empowering both to the discipline and to citizenship, and I link this with some closing comments on "the decline of the public" (Marquand 2004).

Policy engagement and critical rural geographies: lessons from research on parish, town and community councils in England and Wales - Graham Gardner & Mike Woods (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

This paper discusses the relationship between engagement with rural policy-makers and the development and maintenance of critical rural geographies. Recent debates on geography and public policy suggest that rural geographers seeking to engage with public policy face a stark choice between critical activism outside formal policy-making arenas or uncritical incorporation by the state. We argue, in contrast, that the unsettled hinterland of policy research permits rural geographers to steer a middle route that can produce both policy and academic outcomes whilst maintaining critical integrity, but that this route requires the careful negotiation of complex political relations and ethical issues. The paper draws on our experience of undertaking contract research for the Welsh Assembly Government and Defra on parish, town and community councils. We emphasise the importance of negotiation and compromise between academic researchers, clients and stakeholders,

the mediating role played by the 'evidence base', and the opportunities and pitfalls represented by the internal differentiation of the state. The paper concludes by outlining a tentative model of critical policy engagement for rural geography.

From linear to exchange models of knowledge transfer - Jeremy Phillipson & Phillip Lowe (University of Newcastle)

Though efforts to enhance the relevance or uptake of the results of research are by no means a new phenomenon, over the past decade aspirations for evidence-based policy and the knowledge economy have reached fever pitch and are being used more and more to guide investment in research and higher education. What is less clear is how, if these aspirations are to be realised in the wider economy and society, they are to be pursued through into the conduct of research and its interaction with fields of application, whether in public policy, business or industrial development, or wider society.

Improving both the relevance of scientific knowledge and the scientific basis of policy and practice depend crucially upon effective means of knowledge transfer. In the UK the research councils, higher education funding councils and other key funders of research are therefore giving more and more attention to approaches and mechanisms. However there continues to be criticism concerning the track record, with the research community continuing to face the charge of giving too little attention to questions of relevance and impact, or to end-user requirements, and the research funding bodies reproached for lacking a strategic perspective on this matter. Researchers are accused of adopting linear approaches to knowledge transfer, where knowledge transfer is embarked upon as an "add on", rather than an integral part of the research process.

In the paper we review the gathering critique of Research Council knowledge transfer strategy in the UK. We contend that prevailing approaches and criticisms remain locked into a conventional, narrow and linear model of knowledge *transfer*. We open up a normative discussion of processes of knowledge *exchange*. We reflect on the experience of how a research programme on rural economy and land use is grappling with knowledge transfer with a view to maximising its relevance and impact in public policy and rural development practice.

Rural studies, e-Social Science and Evidence Based Policy Assessment: reflections from the PolicyGrid project - Lorna Phillip, John Farrington, Alison Chorley, Pete Edwards and Feikje Hielkema (University of Aberdeen).

Evidence-based policy and its assessment have become central themes in UK policy-making. The EBPA agenda requires there to be: *sufficient evidence* to support conclusions and recommendations; an easy *audit trail* to allow decision makers to understand the assumptions underlying conclusions and recommendations; and sufficient information to support any *later*

evaluation (UK Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2003-5). The UK government recently reported that evidence trails in policy-related research are not clearly expressed and that policy recommendations are often not clearly supported by evidence. This paper will draw upon the ongoing work of the PolicyGrid project, an interdisciplinary node in the ESRC's NCeSS s-Social Science programme (www.policygrid.org), whose project aims include *to facilitate evidence-based rural, social and land-use policy-making through integrated analysis of mixed data types*. Aspects of the Semantic Grid and Web 2.0 most useful and relevant to rural social science research will be reviewed with the aim of demonstrating how, and to what extent, e-Social Science can support the development of a rural policy evidence base and the assessment of rural policy options.

2.3 - New and Emerging Researchers in Rural Geography

Session Chair - Ruth Little (Coventry University)

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

The Changing Place of Traditional Food Retailing: Local Food, Sustainable Regeneration and the Future of English Retail Markets - Julie Smith (CCRI)

Changes in food retailing have affected the development of traditional English retail markets. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many have closed or are facing closure, although some appear more dynamic, re-inventing themselves to focus, for instance, on 'traditional'/ local foods which, often, are not available in supermarkets. Markets also act as important community focal points, especially for some ethnic minority groups. Despite their economic and cultural significance, the academic literature, especially within human geography and food studies more broadly, has largely ignored traditional retail markets as a research topic, favouring instead to focus on the emergence of 'alternative' outlets, especially farmers' markets. This research aims to fill this void, by determining the current nature of traditional retail markets, including their geographical distribution, links with the local food economy and food hubs, and opportunities / barriers to development. The paper provides a contextual review of the local foods, food retailing and regeneration literatures and reports initial findings from a national survey of retail markets in England. The findings reveal a diversity of food activities across retail markets as a sector. The paper concludes by outlining further stages of research which will help to tease out the links between traditional retail markets and the local food economy.

Rural Market Towns and Gentrification? Socio-Spatial Expansion of Gentrification - Craig Whewey (University of Leicester)

Gentrification has been seen to be a predominantly urban process, characterised by wholesale replacement of working class communities by a mobile middle-class population (Glass, 1964). More recently, contributions have acknowledged that gentrification is taking place further down the hierarchy of urban settlements with Neil Smith (2002) noting that gentrification is expanding both vertically, upwards and downwards through the settlement hierarchy (from cities to provincial cities, Dutton 2003; 2005 to smaller towns) and horizontally across the globe.

Rural market towns, it is argued here, have become part of what Hackworth and Smith (2001) term the thirdwave of gentrification where privatised agents such as large corporations and the state become enmeshed in the process of gentrification. This can be seen through the encouragement of regeneration in market towns, initiated through the 2001 Market Towns Initiative that sought to regenerate ailing market towns within England. The service role of these rural towns has been seen as crucial to anchoring key services that service the wider rural hinterlands in which market towns serve (Powe and Shaw, 2003; 2004)

The central argument of this paper is that gentrification should be considered outside the traditional confines of inner cities and proposes that rural market towns are not divorced from the wider settlement hierarchy.

Defining Discourses of Rural Policy in England - Sally Hewitt (University of Newcastle and Lincolnshire County Council)

Rural policy is not a simple, universally understood concept but is multi-dimensional, has unclear edges and involves many different fields of expertise. As a rural development practitioner with many years experience at the local level now undertaking a PhD and seeking to understand academic perspectives, I found divergent views of what comprises rural policy. Using discourse analysis, based on Foucault's concepts of knowledge, power and discourse, I suggest that two overarching discourses of rural policy can be discerned. The first discourse relates to the land, the dominant use of which, in England at least, is agriculture. The policies of the second discourse seek to solve problems the character of which is influenced by rurality, though the policy issue (such as housing, health or economic development) is not unique to rural geographies. I argue that there are a range of discourses within each overarching discourse, and that the discourses can be traced through the last four or five decades. The paper discusses the relevance of discourse theory to the policy making process, and how discourse analysis can assist our critical understanding of rural policy.

Why is Rural Policy Dis-integrating? - Christopher Elton (Sheffield Hallam University)

The response of the European Commission to the budgetary problems created by the Common Agricultural Policy in the late 1980s was to develop what has come to be recognised as the European Rural Development Model. The Model which has been widely endorsed throughout Europe has been conceptualised as the New Rural Paradigm by the OECD (2006). The paradigm emphasises a 'multi-sectoral, place based approach' for which broadly based governance arrangements including the involvement of local communities are a key requirement.

From the early 1990s, an integrated approach to rural development was widely recognised and supported. In the UK, it was reflected in the Rural White Papers of 1995/6 and 2000 and in many research reports and academic analyses. The creation of Defra in 2001 appeared to be a positive step towards better integration of rural policy matters. In 2005, in a final report, the Countryside Agency (2005) advocated the concept of Integrated Rural Development as an effective means of delivering sustainable rural development.

This paper argues that the structures and institutions of government established since 2001 have only fostered fragmentation of rural policy and its sub-systems. As a result, land management policy supporting agriculture and conservation has become dominant to the exclusion of rural social and economic policy issues.

"Out of Place in the Country? Music Festivals, Rurality, and the English Country Village: Fairport's Cropredy Convention" - Chris Anderton (Southampton Solent University)

In the early twentieth century, Vaughan Cornish and others sought to develop an aural aesthetic for town and country planning that categorized sounds as 'in place' or 'out of place'. Implicit to this was the creation of a moral geography of landscape, nation and citizen which portrayed an 'ideal' of rurality that deemed loud music to be out of place in the countryside. Debates over the appropriateness of music (and of popular music in particular) in rural environments have continued, with particular emphasis on open-air popular music festivals and raves held on greenfield sites. Such festivals have often been regarded as invasive; as attracting local fears and distrust. However, it is argued here that this is not necessarily the case, and that music festivals can instead come to form an integral part of the cultural economy of rural locations. In the process, 'traditional' ideas of the rural ideal and its concomitant Englishness may become repositioned. A case study of the folk rock band Fairport Convention's annual Cropredy event, which began in the late 1970s and now attracts up to twenty thousand visitors a year, will be used as the base for discussing these issues and ideas.

2.4 - Where Species Meet and Mingle: Remaking and Tracing Biogeographies

Session Organisers - Gail Davies (University College London) & Jamie Lorimer (University of Oxford)

Session Chairs - Gail Davies (University College London), Jamie Lorimer (University of Oxford), Jennifer Hill (University of West England) & Henry Buller (University of Exeter)

This session explores the geographical dimensions to our multispecies world. Space is critically intertwined with the emergence and definition of species. Spatial parameters of proximity and distance influence species evolution; geographical relationships shape plant and animal distributions; whilst certain spaces, such as museums, zoos, field centres and laboratories have been central to understanding the relations between species and the spatial. As cultural, economic and political processes reconfigure environments, organisms and the spaces that link them, these biogeographies and the techniques that produce and understand them are shifting. On the one hand, new connections are accompanied by a loss of diversity, to be countered through spatial technologies like biosecurity and conservation. Yet on the other, the production and opening up of new spaces is revealing and producing new organisms and relations between species, new understandings and forms of life, whether in the wild, field, city, laboratory or body. Bringing these strands together, we explore the intersection of humans, animals and other organisms, landscapes, and technologies in producing novel biogeographies. We reflect on what these processes mean for our understandings of the 'bio', biodiversity and biogeography; our concepts of species and species integrity, including our own (posthuman) species being; and the spatial processes involved in remaking and tracing biogeographies.

Forces of Nature: Re-calibrating Ethnology and Geography - Hayden Lorimer (University of Glasgow)

What can we humans discover of ourselves amid the lives of other creatures? How do other creatures inform our sense of what it is to be alive? What cues might we take from those many "kinds" inhabiting the world around us? This paper considers the lore of likeness between humans, beasts and birds. It offers a selective history of ethology as an experimental fringe science enabling consideration of habits of living, or the shared "ways" we otherwise understand as performance, play, curiosity, custom and generosity. Classically, ethological studies extend out from immediate families as relating subjects to forms of association in colonies, flocks and herds. The paper shadows this approach, making situated observations of family life and shared space in pioneering field practice focusing on Atlantic grey seals. What comes under scrutiny are staple geographical concerns, home making, personhood, community and territoriality, and, the acquisition of complex characteristics centring on courtship, parenthood, companionship, togetherness and loss. These accounts of animality from earlier empirical science offer the means to think anew on theoretical postures being struck in current disciplinary debate, on the possibilities for creativity in research conduct and of the generative consolations of narrative.

Dead biogeographies – and how to make them live - Merle Patchett (University of Glasgow) & Kate Foster (Glasgow Sculpture studios)

“Apparently this section had been devoted to natural history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition... I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patient readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained.” H. G. Wells., *The Time Machine*.

Considerable attention has been paid to the ‘finished’ form and display of taxidermy specimens inside cabinets, behind glass – in other words, to their representation. By way of contrast, our co-enquiry has sought to recover the practices and relationships that brought specimens to their state of enclosure, inertness and seeming fixity. These efforts are aligned with work in cultural geography seeking to counteract ‘deadening effects’ in an active world (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000), and stay alive to the ‘more-than-representational’ aspects of life (Lorimer 2005). Attempting to bring life to taxidermy specimens is, we contend, not a matter sprinkling them with “magical agency dust”, rather, it is to view them as objects ‘in life’ (Ingold 2006). Following Ingold, we consider specimens as active assemblages of the movements, materials and practices which brought them into existence (and thus seek to scramble their integrity as symbols of human conquest over animated nature). Furthermore, we show how attention to the deteriorating materials of taxidermy specimens not only reveals the secrets of their assembly, but exposes the clever artifice and ambiguity of representation. As substances and specimens start to unravel, so too do the bio-geographical stories of their making, showing up tangles of beings, practices and places.

Pests, Pets and Prey: Uncertainty in the City - Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir, Mark Wilson (Snæbjörnsdóttir / Wilson)

Long ago, settlements and therefore latterly, cities were predicated on the concept of refuge and a physical division of culture and nature. Clearly such division has proved increasingly porous as more and more animals and birds consider concentrations of human population an attraction rather than a deterrent because of the opportunities such culture provides in terms of habitat and feeding. For some, the presence of these creatures – pigeons, starlings, rats, mice, foxes, and all manner of insects is a threat of some kind, a kind of leakage and therefore a representation of the fragility of our insulation from the ‘wild’, the unpredictability and ‘chaos’ of ‘nature’. This art project explores specific perceptions and limits of tolerance and ‘animal infringement’ in the city of Lancaster building a picture of local human behaviour towards animals and the environment – of tolerance and intolerance, of fear and loathing, affection, conflict, pathos and admiration. What is conspicuously at play is a continual conflict over territory. During our research we’ve observed ambivalence and contradictory vested interests in relation to a wide range of creatures. Most significant is the mixture of responses, the paradoxical nature of human attitudes towards agents of ‘the wild’ and the implicit cohesion-in-tension of the human/nature paradigm.

Enacting Species in Zoos: Performative practices and emotional engagements in zoo spaces Chris Wilbert (Anglia Ruskin University)

Zoos are spaces that have attracted much attention in animal geographies and wider animal studies. Attention has been drawn to the politics of zoo histories, production of spaces and species orderings, as well as the ways particular zoo animals may be relationally enacted within spatial networks that leads to them becoming very different from wilder animals of the same species. Yet, some of this work on zoos and zoo animals has also drawn criticism in terms of the loss of a sense of fleshiness of animal bodies and embodied emotional entanglements in the miasma of technonatural practices invoked. Here, through empirical engagement in a zoo I focus on some performative practices around some animals, and how these involve wider zoo networks in terms of how attempts are made by zoo workers and others to enact some animals as good representative members of their species both for viewing publics as part of tourism/leisure and wider conservation aims. As an aspect of this I also point to ways animals may be doing things that co-produce these ordering practices, as well as how performative practices of behaviour management can lead to often highly emotionalised encounters. Through interviews with zoo staff and others, and by watching and listening to actors in the field of study, I seek to further reflect on some of the relational theories invoked in and around animal geographies.

Emotional Biogeographies: barbarian forests and enchanted woods - Stephen Trudgill (University of Cambridge)

Rationally, it might be said that a locational shift of species with climate change does not matter as long as the species survives. However, there can be a 'geography' problem in biogeography: species do seem to have a right to exist - but not just anywhere. Such a cultural valuation of species location is inevitably emotionally contextualised. The emotions have already been seen as "a key set of relationships through which our lives are lived" which is "spectacularly unacknowledged" (Anderson & Smith, *IBG Transactions* 2001). Thus, we explore the emotional underpinning in biogeography with reference to emotional attachments to flora and fauna as revealed in poetry, literature and art. Human metaphors abound together with value judgements. We might call for a more clinical, rational approach but this might be unwelcome because the emotive attachments often under-pin the motivations for conservation, losing us a conservation constituency. Better would be to acknowledge the importance of the emotions and to re-examine the nature of our attachments. We could then become to attached to species for their own sake and celebrate their survival in a non-locational way. However, the evidence might tend to indicate that our emotional judgements are strongly entrenched and not readily changed.

Eating Well, Surviving Humanism: Biophilosophy's Filthy Lesson - Myra J Hird (Queen's University, Kingston, Canada)

When Species Meet reflects upon what it means for species to 'eat well' (2007: 287). I am interested in the literal meaning of Haraway's concept: how organisms ingest, use or otherwise transform living/nonliving matter. All

animals are, by definition, consumers (heterotrophs must use ready-made organic compounds). Bacteria, by contrast, do not 'eat' (they 'fix' or otherwise convert the elements on which all living organisms depend). Bacteria are producers, engaging in a different economy of eating and relating with the world. This difference invokes a metaphoric sense of 'eating well' – an ethics through which 'care, respect, and difference can flourish in the open' (Haraway 2007: 287), at the same time that humans confront what Pollan (2007) acerbically calls 'the omnivore's dilemma'. The irony of Haraway's post-human epistemology is that 'eating well' obscures production as the most prevalent relational economy on Earth. While appreciating the 'filthy lesson' (Pearson 1997) of our complex interdependencies within-and-between living and nonliving matter, Haraway's 'species meeting' excludes bacteria (bacteria are not species) and the abiotic figures only as 'land' (Lovelock 2000). Indeed, bacteria – the original organisms on Earth, creators of all species, and on which the biosphere intimately depends – are typically excluded from the burgeoning interest in human-animal relations (Margulis 1981). Put another way, 'eating well' with bacteria requires an ethics absent from current formulations. By fore fronting the majority of organisms on Earth, I invite critical reflection upon the serious limitations we create by eclipsing the much more significant relations all animals enjoy with the microcosmos – how our eating (well with) bacteria requires a different relational economy.

Who gets bitten? First reflections on malaria control in Ghana - Uli Beisel (Open University)

Malaria is a disease that emerges out of an encounter of three species – the plasmodium parasite, the anopheles mosquito and humans. The object of scholarly attention hence has to be the meeting in itself – the fragile but potentially destructive moment when the lives of three distinct and very much alive species intersect. But this intersection is not only the place where the disease evolves, but also offers medical technologies several points to intervene and interrupt the flow of blood and parasites. This paper will look at different ways to prevent, treat and diminish malaria in Ghana, a country where malaria is hyperendemic and accounts for approximately 40% of hospital visits. More concretely, malaria control in Ghana happens in a space where lively mosquitoes meet gold mining companies, fast evolving parasites encounter enthusiastic vaccine developers and where poor people still struggle to pay for antimalarial drugs. The paper will tease out some of the complex intertwinings of mosquito-parasite-human interactions, health policies and political economy around malaria control in Ghana and will be informed by a preliminary analysis of six months of fieldwork in Ghana in 2007/2008.

Where species meet and mingle: The Common Cold Unit 1946-1990 – Beth Greenhough (Queen Mary, University of London)

In thinking through the relations between humans and other species geographers have become interested in how we reach particular kinds of settlements or accommodations, or the question of 'how can we live together?' (Bingham 2006). At the same time we might all possibly agree

that viruses are something we would rather live without, and for at least some something we cannot live with. Such vital geographies, which have formed the focus of recent geographical attention, show how viruses such as HIV/AIDS and H5N1 provide compelling arguments for restricting the meeting and mingling of certain species. In contrast to these event-driven analyses of epidemic spaces (van Loon 2005) and the bio(in)securities they raise, this paper explores what might be called the more everyday ecologies of human-virus interactions. It focuses on the Common Cold Research Unit (CCU), based near Salisbury in the UK, as a different moment in the co-evolution of 'humans, pigs, fowls and viruses' (Haraway 2003). At the CCU humans and viruses were encouraged to meet and mingle so that scientists could study the common cold. The paper argues that the CCU's active promotion of human-virus interactions might be seen as a kind of geographical experiment in how humans and viruses might live together and explores some of the structures and agencies enrolled in order to make such biogeographies possible.

Food for thought: cows, grass, omega 3 and the human mind: - Henry Buller Exeter

Recent years have seen a growth in interest in certain naturally occurring polyunsaturated fatty acids, notably the Omega 3 group of docosahexaenoic acid, eicosapentaenoic acid and alpha-linolenic acid. These are increasingly held to provide a number of health benefits to humans including reducing the risk of heart disease, combating inflammation (including headaches) and arteriosclerosis. More controversially, some studies have claimed that increased intakes of Omega 3 can improve human intelligence or, at least, improve the abilities of children with learning difficulties (for example, the controversial 'Durham Trials' of 2005/2006). One potentially significant source of Omega 3 (alpha-linolenic acid) can be found in natural grass and consequently in the meat of grass-fed stock animals. Although not as significant a source as certain fish-oils, the presence of Omega 3 in grass-fed beef is seen by some as a further element in the endorsement of extensive, grass-based husbandry systems, many of which, in Northern Europe, operate in what might be described as an 'alternative', less-corporate food regime than intensive livestock production.

The starting point for this paper is the connectivity that Omega 3 offers between human and stock animal bodies and the sense that the quality and benefits of that connectivity are themselves linked to notions of grassland biodiversity and natural richness. The paper explores the nature of the 'claim building' associated with Omega 3 in grass fed animal products as a bridging device whereby the 'intermediate object' (linolenic acid) is transited from grass, to cow to food to a potential contributory factor in human 'intelligence'. It is argued that the evidential requirements of such claims reveal an increasingly contested ontological politics in the definition and accounting of 'quality' and the emerging biogeographies of human/animal intersections.

Colonies in Motion: The Ethics of Encountering the Other as an Unfamiliar Ecology – Nigel Clark (open University)

Who we are, it has been said, is an outcome of borrowings, absorptions and ingestions - of and from others. Others, that is, of our own species, and of other species. When we encounter a stranger, it could be said, what we meet is an unfamiliar ecology, a kind of mobile colony which we cannot assume to be the same, or even a safe approximation of our own composite body. In this paper I want to ask what it means for the colonial and post-colonial encounter to conceive of our selves and other selves as already more-than-human 'colonies'; as compendia of prior microbiological, zoological and botanical meetings and mergers. What might this mean for the modes of address and forms of welcome we offer each other: for the questions of hospitality, receptivity and responsibility that are currently back on the ethical and political agenda? In particular, I want to consider the issue of encountering others as unfamiliar ecologies under conditions of rapid environmental change - conditions that are likely to result in perturbations of local ecologies as well as increasing displacement of human populations. I ask what we might make of the ideal of welcoming strangers if we were to take into consideration our mutual vulnerabilities, resiliences and potentialities - as at once social and biological beings.

Geopolitics, Bio-Revolutions, and the Emerging Science of Defense - Elizabeth R. Johnson (CUNY Graduate Center)

Over the past ten years, the US Department of Defense has increasingly turned toward biological research as a source of inspiration for re-animating military strategy and technological development. Through "biomimicry" and "combat zoology", fields of political force resonate in the unlikely places of university laboratories, temperate forests, bee hives, and bodies as scientists and government officials explore how evolutionary traits generated in one environment might be applied to another: that of the battlefield. This paper explores the political implications of these trends that work at the intersection of security and 'life,' interrogating what it means for geopolitics to be engaged with bio-geographies that blur the boundaries between humans, animals, and things. Here, politically hopeful concepts—hybrids, cyborgs, and becomings-animal—are challenged: as clearly as borders are eroded and crossed in experimental practices, conceptual boundaries and subsequent hierarchies remain. Military hybrids commingle and (re)produce animal and human bodies in order to draw them into the service of the state. The resulting processes and forms serve as a means of controlling the emergent potentials of life itself in the hope of achieving "full spectrum dominance" in battlespaces at home and abroad. I ultimately ask how political struggle for an optimistic "post-human" future might engage with these military trends.

The return of the wild? Biogeographies of immanence in wildlife conservation - Jamie Lorimer (University of Oxford)

Post-war conservation has obsessed with managing extinction; with preserving an extant set of documented species against the ravages of

modernisation – form has been primary to process. In recent years however a shift appears to be underway. Impelled by new thinking within conservation practice (towards biodiversity, disequilibrium and rewilding) and in reaction to broader trends within global political ecology ('invading' species, a changing climate and the threat and promise of biotechnology) processes are returning to the centre ground of conservation. This shift interweaves with the recent vitalist turn within strands of social theory. This paper draws on this work to explore two contrasting manifestations of the return of the wild – the self-willed 'global swarming' (Fall 2008) of invasive species versus the ambitious attempts by conservationists at landscape-scale 'Pleistocene rewilding' (Donlan et al. 2006). It examines their different implications for understandings of evolution and difference – here dubbed 'modern' or 'amodern' – and the biogeographies of their unruly species mixings and minglings. It identifies their common desire for networks and immanence, and their contrasting consequences for future ecologies. The paper reflects on what this wild shift implies for the place of conservation in environmental governance in the 21st century.

Leap Frog: Pregnancy Testing and the Market Biogeography of the African Clawed Frog (Xenopus laevis) c. 1940-1970 - Lance van Sittert (University of Cape Town)

The development of the frog pregnancy test by researchers in South Africa in the 1930s created a global demand for their experimental animal, the African Clawed Frog (*Xenopus laevis*). The Cape provincial trout hatchery at Jonkershoek near Cape Town was a major supplier of this market despatching more than 400,000 frogs in the thirty years 1940-69. The hatchery both cultured *Xenopus* and harvested an annual wild crop from private and public dams across the south western Cape to meet the burgeoning demand from tertiary institutions, pathologists and researchers nationally, regionally and internationally. The hatchery's surviving frog order records enable this amphibian commerce to be comprehensively reconstructed to reveal the outlines of a new artificial market biogeography of *Xenopus* as it first broke out of its natural range through commodification; established breeding populations in laboratories across the world and, particularly once the frog pregnancy test was superseded by a chemical test in 1963, escaped these institutional incubators to found self-sustaining wild populations in new home ranges around the world.

Marine bio(geo)raphies: tracing transgenic mice origins and ontologies - Gail Davies (University College London)

This paper uses the figure of the experimental laboratory mouse to reflect upon the production of contemporary transgenic biogeographies. Through the concept of biogeography, the paper seeks to connect practices concerned with the production and management of biological life in contemporary biotechnology – characterised through concepts of biocapital or biopolitics – with the emergent and stochastic qualities of life. Specifically, it identifies a tension between two forms of narrating the development of transgenic mouse strains. Firstly, it explores the documentation of new strain development,

which through accounts of personal biography and chance discovery, attest to the contingent and situated moments of biotechnological production. Secondly, it reflects on subsequent efforts to standardise mouse ontologies and disease phenotypes in developing, stabilising and globalising murine strains. The co-existence of these two narratives within the same database draws attention to the oscillation between chance and control, determination and emergence in the development and implications of these new forms of life.

Global swarming: cosmopolitan natures, 'alien' species and the politics of barbarian plants - Juliet Fall (Université de Genève)

In a context of accelerated world travel and increased global trade, the policing of living matter and the focus on good and bad circulations are part and parcel of globalisation. Terms such as invasive, exotic, non-native, non-indigenous and alien are used to describe a global swarming of plants and animals, a term creatively coined with reference to climate change. These are seen to be out-of-place and out-of-control, beyond their native habitats. This global problem is increasingly framed as a problem of security: the survival of native species versus the swarming success of new arrivals, of uninvited guests. These tales of swarming, invading, foreign, and out-of-control natures, with concurrent stories of a global homogenization of biodiversity that reduces local diversity and distinctiveness the McDonaldization of nature. In this context, plants are unusually scripted as dynamic, marching across the world, crossing boundaries, setting forth outside the spaces set aside for them, and beyond the spaces they were thought to belong to. Global Black Lists and Watch lists are selecting what are seen as the worst offenders across the entire globe. The focus of this paper is on the mobilisation of specific ecological and botanical knowledge by scientists to construct certain species as native or foreign, as out-of-place, as weeds. We focus on who assigns native locales, nationalities and invasive agendas to plants, and how and where does this happen? What processes of categorisation underpin these approaches? How do the subsequent securitising discourses reflect anxieties about a rapidly globalising world? We examine tales of plant transgressions and hybridity (Whatmore 2002; Fall 2005), plants escaping from gardens and becoming super-plants (Lambelet & Jeanmonod 2005), theorising the politicisation of feral geographies.

The Politics and Production of Sterility through Plant Biosecurity in New Zealand - Kezia Barker (University of Southampton)

Biosecurity, involving the selective management or control of biological movement, has witnessed a growth in social scientific attention in recent years (Braun 2007; Donaldson and Wood 2004; Hinchliffe and Bingham forthcoming). New Zealand has engaged in over 150 years of native and alien species' control, currently consolidated in the most extensive, integrated biosecurity regime in the world. During this time the spatial and temporal points of biosecurity intervention into the process of species naturalisation, or invasion, have shifted. Spatial points of intervention have included the

national border, the wider landscape, the garden, the nursery shelf, and the pre-border point of departure from exporting countries. Biosecurity-related scientific and economic rationalities have also justified earlier and earlier points of biosecurity intervention. This has brought with it an emphasis on risk assessment methodologies and the prevention of risk. In this climate of preventative action, plant biosecurity is increasingly being enacted through explicit and implicit support for the production of sterile plants. Against this backdrop, this paper will consider the significance of plant liveliness and reproduction in different contexts of plant biosecurity practice in New Zealand: in the scientific representations of plant naturalisation processes, in nursery propagation for gardening markets, in the practices of plant sharing and exchange between gardeners, in the use of plants as educative objects within public communication campaigns, and in the practical control of invasive plants in the wider landscape. I will use this discussion to suggest the potential consequences of sterile plants for both the biosecurity regime itself, and for wider contexts of the making and remaking of ecological attachments.

Drawing and contesting human-animal boundaries in discourses surrounding genetic interventions in the life of farm animals - Lewis Holloway (University of Hull), Carol Morris (University of Nottingham), David Gibbs (University of Hull) and Ben Gilna (University of Hull)

The meeting of humans and nonhumans in agricultural spaces and processes, and the resulting co-production of species, bodies and subjectivities, has a long history. New forms of genetic intervention in the breeding and management of livestock animals, associated with particular knowledge-practices concerning the life itself of those animals, promise to transform livestock agriculture in line with agendas including increasing agricultural productivity and efficiency, improving the 'quality' of animal products, reducing agriculture's environmental impact, contributing to human health, and improving animal welfare. Drawing on primary and secondary empirical sources, this paper seeks to explore some of the debates surrounding the circulation of genetic knowledge-practices in livestock agriculture, focusing on the negotiated representation of human and nonhuman bodies and identities. The paper argues that genetic interventions are associated with the production of particular truth discourses which rest on ontological assumptions or debates regarding the boundaries between humans and animals. The evident multiplicity of truth discourses and associated ontologies in turn means that processes of network-building and enrolment are important as certain truths and modes of intervention become predominant, even if temporarily and in a contested manner. As such, the biogeography of genetic interventions in livestock agriculture produces 'life', and understandings of life, in different ways, at different scales, and in different spaces - e.g. the gene/genome, the body, the breed, the population, the species, the farm and the nation. The paper argues, then, that an important reconfiguring of human-animal relationships is associated with genetic interventions in the biogeography of livestock agriculture.

Hybrid Bio-Geographies of Disease: Technologies of Species Boundary Maintenance in the Late Victorian Milk Industry - Richie Nimmo (University of Aberdeen)

This paper traces the spatial political technologies through which the human-nonhuman hybridity inscribed by zoonotic tuberculosis transmitted through dairy milk was contained and made invisible as condition of 'social' modernity. This is examined in the context of a historical analysis of emergent forms of sanitary regulation and expertise in the late nineteenth century British milk industry. At the centre of this is a genealogy worked through milk itself, which posed deep spatial problems for modernisation, being a particularly fertile environment for the growth of bacteria, so that it could not be transported any distance from cow to consumer without becoming inedible. Thus the commodification of milk was dependent upon technologies of refrigeration and railway transportation. But these technologies were replete with unintended consequences, for they became conduits for the flow of hybrid materiality in the form of tubercular bacilli from rural 'nature' into the urban centres of 'culture' and consumption. This new bio-geography of inter-species infection, contamination and risk, precipitated the growth of a network of milk testing regimes and disciplinary knowledges, which sought to contain this 'ontological disorder' within the natural and to police the human/animal boundary rendered permeable by these flows of zoonotic disease. This paper seeks to understand these forms of organisation as humanist technologies for re-inscribing the human/animal divide at the heart of the modern constitution.

Human and farm animal relations in China: negotiating the relevance of the Western cultural concept of animal welfare in different sites - Emma Roe (University of Southampton)

'Animal welfare' is a term with little or no popular understanding in mainland China (Li 2006). Yet western animal welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are investing resources in the introduction of this concept to a country producing nearly half of all the livestock on the planet. This paper presents research studying some of these current initiatives and addresses the complaint that this practice is an example of the west telling the east what to think and do. I refrain from supporting this argument by considering how NGOs are working in sites where Chinese farm animals are enrolled in cross-cultural practices whether inspired through networks of capital flow or the modern consumer concern for safe food from an industrialised agro-food network. Whichever, how animal welfare or its surrogates rural sustainability, animal health or meat quality and hygiene are deployed indicates how human/farm animal relations are adapting and changing in the current era.

By considering the sites where these initiatives are located - the abattoir, the farm, universities and the body of the Chinese food consumer who desires safe food, I consider how and why these sites enable cross-cultural negotiations on human/farm animal relations whilst attending to the notably different political and governmental framing prevalent in Communist China. The suitability of these sites speaks to how Chinese farm animals are mobilised geopolitically at various scales, and in which spaces they come to

matter and for whom. These spaces also enable the possibility for interrogating practical and discursive comprehension of this new concept 'animal welfare' as it works to try to create a new biogeography for Chinese farm animals..

Discussant - Steve Hinchliffe (Open University)

2.5 - Towards Transformative Knowledges/Practices for Sustainable Rural Futures

Session organizers - Owain Jones (CCRI); Matt Reed (CCRI)

Within geography/social sciences 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 practices of knowledge are exploring integrations of theory, ethics, politics and methods into new 'non-representational' assemblages of creative inquiry. Related to this there is also what Latour calls a 'pixelisation of politics', where actions can take place at many sites/scales, and in many forms/networks. These actions are 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. We introduce papers which report upon work (perhaps in interdisciplinary alliances) is 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.

Tranquillity matters – mapping tranquillity - Duncan Fuller, Helen Dunsford (University of Northumbria) & Claire Haggett (University of Newcastle)

Tranquillity matters. This presentation reports on a new approach to mapping 'tranquillity', a robust methodology that has been developed over the last three years by an interdisciplinary team based at Northumbria and Newcastle universities. Our approach fuses together multifarious perceptions and experiences of tranquillity and GIS mapping to produce maps of 'relative tranquillity'. In this presentation we focus on responses received from, and issues that arose during the innovative participatory consultation exercises we have undertaken, and highlight that while tranquillity is essentially highly subjective, personal and experiential, it is underlain by common themes, which allow for the development of both a more in-depth understanding of the concept, but also potential use in thinking about, constructing and planning rural futures.

Waste, wildness and the question of will in the performance of politics.' - Sophie Wynne-Jones (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)

As the tensions of uncertainty mount for the future of farming in the least favoured areas of Europe, the sight of acid-scorched fields on the south-western tip of Wales are a confusing, but perhaps promising sign. Trehills farm on the Marloes peninsula of Pembrokeshire bears the marks of some peculiar management strategies over the last ten years. Where, kicking through the top-soil, lumps of sulphur surface to reveal the cause of arable denudation and explain a more recent emergence of once-ancient heathlands. This paper is intended to outline how this new landscape has been produced through a combination of various stakeholder negotiations, some surprising inputs from Texaco, and the audacity of individuals to achieve the unexpected. Looking beyond the field boundaries, this paper is situated in relation to wider changes occurring within UK conservation and agriculture, increasingly identifiable with the discourses of 'future-natural' (Adams, 2003) and re-wilding (Taylor, 2005; Parkes, 2006). However, the primary focus of this paper is to explore the nuanced assemblages brought together in the transformation of this previously agricultural space. Unravelling the often messy negotiations of actors and actants, the paper charts the emergence of an unlikely outcome in this performance of Welsh conservation politics.

Wind Power, Capacity Building and Rural Development from a Collaborative Perspective Mikael Jonasson (Halmstad University College, Sweden)

This paper will report findings from the ongoing exploration and planning of up to 100 large wind power plants in the rural parts of Laholm municipality, in the south west of Sweden. The study involves participatory and intervening research and engagement strategies, as well as analysis of the relation between humans and landscapes in time and space. The preliminary results from this study shows the importance of a developed process leading that involve and engage local agents and networks and handle conflicts and opposing interests; the importance of developing a national strategic toolbox for handling processes that involve man, nature and local societies. The results also show that that the relation between humans and landscapes are not reducible to "nimby" explanations and that these relations must be taken seriously before capacity building processes can start.

Working (organic) utopias - organic farms as places of experimentation in the development of the organic farming and food movement - Matt Reed (CCRI)

Crossley has persuasively argued that most social movements develop places of experimentation and retreat, which allow the movement to reproduce itself. His specific examples applied to the mental health survivors' movement in a generally urban context. Yet by extending his insights to the rural milieu of the organic movement as it has developed through the past seventy years, it becomes evident of the central role of some farms as both sites of experimentation but also iconic interventions in broader arguments. This picture is complicated by the rapid growth in scale in the number of these

farms during the late 1990s, when the aggregation of these experiments became more important than their individual contribution. Simultaneously this presents a challenge to the social scientific understanding of these interventions, which have ceased to be isolated counter-examples but cannot yet be incorporated into the generalised circuits of agri-business. This paper considers the historic role of these farms as experiments and the challenges to social science of considering their role in the present.

Participatory research methods and rural studies - Owain Jones, Julie Ingram, Chris Short & Matt Reed (CCRI)

This paper responds to Pain's (2006) call for a more coherent exploration of participatory research methods (PRMs) particularly in relation to policy research. We explore key aspects of PRMs and also consider their practice in rural settings. PRMs have a long history but are growing in visibility in rural studies. This is to be welcome as they seem to offer hope of more ethical, democratic, and effective forms of knowledge creation in relation to complex socio-ecological issues/problems. However, when considered closely, a whole range of questions and challenges are thrown up about what PRMs are, and how and where they (should) function. This paper aims to raise and begin to discuss at least some of these questions. We consider the 'continuum of participation' within a spectrum of methodologies, and ask at what point, and by what means, do methods become worthy of the heading 'participatory'. What is the precise relationship between 'stakeholder' based research and PRMs. Secondly we suggest (as Pain 2006 hints at) that the kind of applied and/or empirically heavy and/or policy related research that PRMs can be associated with, can be very close to, rather than remote from, 'high theory' ideas of non-representation. This is because 'non-representation' sees theory as a 'modest extension of practice' which is interested in creative intervention rather than representation. This is in effect what PRMs aim for. Lastly, we consider the question of practicing PRMs in rural contexts – do the differing densities and articulations of socio-ecological formations in rural setting call for differing PRM strategies?

Insights from Sikles, Nepal - the complexities of action oriented research - Sara Parker (Liverpool John Moores University), Kiran Bohara (Tribhuvan University and freelance consultants) & Laxmi Dhital (Tribhuvan University and freelance consultants)

This paper draws on over fifteen years of engagement with a remote mountainous community. It arise out of participatory research into the successes and challenges of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in promoting its goals of conservation for development. Through feeding back research finding to the 'field' and by discussing Actionaid's innovative approach to literacy entitled REFLECT, Sara became involved in a process of action-oriented research with local people in Sikles. Mindful of Sidaway's advice to not make promises you can't keep and set within the context of a participatory discourse of participation as the 'new tyranny' (Cooke & Kothari Hickey & Mohan), the research process led to Sara facilitating the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP to

meet the demand there for non-formal education. Kiran and Laxmi, studying for their Masters in Nepal at the time, played an integral part in the training and evaluation process. Whilst the outcomes of this engagement have been well documented (Parker 2005/6, Bohara et al 2005, Parker et al 2006) this paper enables us to explore our experiences of engaging in action research, working with and for people, and the benefits and challenges this has presented to us. Reflection is provided on the importance of considering issues such as class, gender, caste, ethnicity, age and essentially power inequalities in the research process and the means by which these can be addressed if not fully overcome. It also enables us to reflect on the joys as well as the tensions presented by being both activists and academics.

'I help you to develop a curriculum for Integrated Rural Development and you help me to get access to farmers for my postgraduate research': a fair exchange of academic gifts in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam - Charles Howie (Royal Holloway, University of London)

One challenge for a postgraduate student wishing to do fieldwork in a developing country is to devise a way to repay your host for the gifts they bestow on you when they give you access to aspects of their lives and answer your questions. Without benefits flowing in both directions the research can be characterised as extractive and exploitative. These limitations have been discussed by Hursh-Cesar and Roy (1976), Chambers (1983), Hanlon (1991), Sidaway (1992), Madge (1997) and others. This paper will describe a series of actions which may have led to a more equitable model of exchange. Before any postgraduate research was undertaken the writer undertook several months of voluntary work at a fledgling university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, including leading a group of young teachers to write Vietnam's first undergraduate curriculum for Integrated Rural Development, teaching English to teachers of agriculture and helping to write the university's development plan. It also led to a Higher Education link programme, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and a Darwin project, funded by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The information gleaned while doing these tasks also provided valuable insights both for how to carry out research in this country and contextual information to be used at later date. Research was conducted with farmers, officials and traders in several communes and this will result in a PhD thesis with the title: Farmer Decision making in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Some of the benefits and limitations of this model of co-operation will be described.

Participatory Action Research and Alternative Food Networks: Creating 'Useful' Knowledges and Practical Outcomes - Ruth Little (Coventry University)

This paper will reflect upon the employment of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodological tool for researching alternative food networks. PAR has received significant attention in human geography in recent years (see Pain 2004 for a review), but its application in agro-food studies has been less significant. The paper argues that PAR research may offer useful tools to

academics working on alternative food systems. Empirically, the paper reflects on recent work conducted as part of an ESRC (CASE) collaborative studentship which examined the transformative potential of buying groups as mechanisms to 'scale-up' local and organic food systems beyond their current niche market status. Working in collaboration with the Soil Association, the research has been 'co-created' in order to both critically assess current buying group models and to pro-actively create 'useful knowledges' and practical outcomes in the form of examples of best practice and workable strategies to create more sustainable systems of food provision. The paper outlines the nature of the collaboration with the CASE partner and also reflects upon the notion of 'putting research into practice' by drawing reference to specific practical outcomes that have come from the research. This includes, in particular, case study research which involved working closely and actively with one local action group in Stroud, Gloucestershire who are currently attempting to set up a local organic buying group.

Clinging to, or captaining, the action research juggernaut? (Trying to) research partnership working in the Cairngorms National Park, Scotland - Kirsty Blackstock (Macaulay Institute) & Rachel Dilley (Macaulay Institute)

This paper will discuss the tensions felt when undertaking an evaluation of the Strategic Planning process for the Cairngorms National Park. The paper will briefly explain the rationale for the evaluation and its methodology but it can be broadly summarised as transformative in intent, with the aim of challenging the participants with alternative analyses of their practices and encouraging them to question their taken for granted assumptions about the 'best' way to proceed. As such, we recognise that research is a set of negotiated social relationships. Drawing on the traditions of social constructionism, critical postmodernism and participatory evaluation, we try to position ourselves within the research, to be concerned with multiple interpretations, to focus on power relationships within the research and within wider societal processes, to recognise the co-construction of knowledge and to negotiate both what the results of such research might mean and how these insights could be utilized. By reducing, or at least recognising, the disparities in social relationships involved in doing research, we hope to open up a more complex and democratic approach to both what is known, and how such knowledge can be used in policy processes. This simplification, however, glosses over the uncomfortable situations we have experienced, such as when participants in the research actively used Kirsty's identity as an 'expert' to promote or validate their own knowledge claims; or when the ethics of reciprocity and critical perspective proved difficult to reconcile. The paper also highlights the participants' multiple constructions of the research objectives, research practice and desired outcomes. These are to some extent commonplace themes regarding the challenges of doing reflexive action research. However, they are played out in particular ways when engaging in a complex governance arena, focusing on a specific policy implementation process and engaging with (relatively) powerful and privileged actors. The most troubling juxtaposition is the obligation to enact ethical research practice leading to policy relevant solutions when much of the time we are struggling to keep up

with, and respond to, the continually shifting, multi-faceted complexities of the real-time, real-life process.

3. The Practice of Rural Geography – Postgraduate Conference, Varese Ligure, Italy 8-11th Sept 2008.

The second RGRG residential course for research students and supervisors with interests in rural geography will be held in the small medieval hill town of Varese Ligure, Liguria NW Italy 8-11 September 2008. There will be one-and-a-half days of paper sessions and a day-long field visit. The idea of the meeting is for research students and their supervisors to discuss informally a broad range of methodological, theoretical and practical issues in undertaking research within different types of rural geography.

Accommodation will be at the Albergo Amici, Varese Ligure http://www.albergoamici.com/index_en.htm. Bookings should be made directly with the hotel. The charge is around £35-40 per night for dinner, bed and breakfast. The hotel has a range of single and double rooms, but is small, so early booking is advisable. Other accommodation is available in a range of local agroturismo enterprises and small hotels.

The closest airports with cheap flights are Pisa and Genoa. It is possible to hire cars at both airports, and it is recommended that groups of four or five people may wish to share their local travel arrangements. Varese Ligure is about an hour's drive from both Genoa and Pisa. It is also possible to travel by rail to Genoa and on to Sestri Levante and travel by bus from the coast up to the town of Varese Ligure.

Programme

Monday 8th September

Arrival (Note some are arriving at the weekend)

1pm lunch

Introduction to Programme (Charles Watkins)

Graham Riminton, Geography, University of Nottingham *Wild Food' networks and sustainable rural development in England*

Kirstie O'Neill, Geography, University of Hull
Effective policy interventions for establishing sustainable local food networks

Lucy Veale, School of Geography, University of Nottingham, *Cultivating the Drugs of Empire: Cinchona Plantations in Ootacamund, South India*

Discussion

Welcome Reception: 7pm

Dinner 8pm

Tuesday 9th September

Field visit (Professor Diego Moreno and Dr Roberta Cevasco)

Visit to field sites in Liguria to examine contrasting approaches to the study of cultural landscapes. Issues include food cultures; landscape conservation; the role of EU, state and regional government; protection of local practices.

Wednesday 10th September

9am Introduction

Charles Howie, Geography Department, Royal Holloway University of London *Farmer Decision Making in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam*

Bo Ren, School of Geography, University of Nottingham, *Environmental history in China*

Justin Pollard, Centre for Rural Policy Research, University of Exeter; *Towards Sustainable Communities: Building on Social Capital to Facilitate Regeneration*

Kathryn Arblaster, Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London

Discussion

Lunch

Writing the PhD, publishing and working with external agencies
Panel Discussion led by Mark Riley, University of Portsmouth

Evening: Conference Dinner

Thursday 11th September

Depart

4. RECENT CONFERENCE REPORT

4.1 Third Anglo-German Rural Geographers Meeting, Universität Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany, 26th – 30th June 2008

A successful third meeting of British and German rural geographers took place in Germany at the end of June. Hosted by Prof. Ingo Mose at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg in northern Germany, the conference consisted of two days of paper sessions under the umbrella theme of 'Globalisation and Rural Transitions in Germany and the UK' followed by an excellent field-trip to the area of Wesermarsch County, along the North Sea coast between Bremen and Oldenburg. There was also a guided tour of the old part of Oldenburg and the requisite sampling of north German cuisine (extending to the conference dinner in a Mexican restaurant!). The conference was attended by 28 delegates, eleven of whom were from the RGRG, including three postgraduates.

Paper sessions were diverse, with six different themes covered: multifunctional agricultural pathways, farming alternatives, rural communities and actors, rural policy, rural development, and migration, demographic change and rural protest. One significant feature of the excellent hospitality from our German hosts was that all papers were delivered in English. This greatly encouraged the debates in each session as did the well managed timing of sessions. How fortunate for us that English becomes ever more the language of academic discourse, though no doubt we will have different experiences to report following the forthcoming Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-French Rural Geography conferences!

The conference provided further opportunity to observe differences in approach to rural issues in Britain and Germany. The greater reference to theory and to an extant body of literature was apparent in most of the British contributions whereas the German research tended to be more policy orientated and with a regional development focus. These differences appear not only to reflect the different institutional contexts within which rural geographers in the two countries operate, but also the different influences on research. The impact of the dreaded RAE may be discerned in much of the research in Britain, with the primary focus on publication in peer-reviewed academic journals, in contrast to more applied work in Germany funded by regional organisations including the various *lände*. These contrasts will be addressed as one aspect of the proposed publication to be produced from the conference. This will be a book edited by Ingo Mose, Doris Schmied, Geoff Wilson and Guy Robinson to be published by a German academic publisher in 2009.

The British delegation comprised Keith Halfacree, Brian Ilbery, Claire Kelly, Ruth Little, Damian Maye, Guy Robinson, Afraa Sallowm, Bruce Scholten, Geoff Wilson, Michael Woods and Richard Yarwood.

The papers presented were as follows:

Agricultural pathways, actors and rural communities

Geoff Wilson and Florian Dünckmann 'Multifunctional agricultural pathways in the UK and German countryside: actors, policies and the environment'

Guy Robinson and Annabelle Boulay 'Dairying under attack! Farm survival strategies on Dorset dairy farms during the "dairying crisis"'

Doris Schmied 'Globalization the salmon way and regionalization the carp way: Experiences with aquaculture in Scotland and Bavaria'

Brian Ilbery and Damian Maye 'The changing dynamics of organic farming in England and Wales'

Ruth Little "'Scaling-up" local and organic food in the UK: *collective* purchase and the possibilities for moving beyond the niche'

Bruce Scholten 'UK and German pasture in the bio-fuel boom: rapeseed and maize versus cows?'

Peter Sedlacek 'Changing places: rural communities in Eastern Germany'

Richard Yarwood "'Country life": rurality, folk music and "show of hands"'

Claire Kelly 'Evaluating the effectiveness of partnerships in complex environments: an analysis of marine nature-based tourism partnerships'

Rural issues and processes in a globalising world

Ulrike Grabski-Kieron 'Integrated rural development in Germany: experiences from the ILEK Vechtetal project'

Ortwin Peithmann 'Planning problems in areas of intensive change of landscape'

Christian Krajewski 'Prospering regions in rural North Rhine Westfalia'

Afraa Sallowm 'ICT for rural development: the case of Hatherleigh in the United Kingdom'

Birte Nienaber 'Regional currencies – an instrument for a sustainable and integrated rural development in a globalised world?'

Keith Halfacree 'International labour migrants in rural areas: implications for counterurbanisation and rural restructuring'

Anja Reichert "'Dying villages?" – the effects of demographic change on rural settlements in Vorpommern'

Michael Woods 'Rural protests and the enigmatic importance of globalisation'

The day-long field-trip pursued the theme of 'Rural restructuring, regional innovation, and local project work'. This took the delegates into an area rarely traversed by British visitors – the Wesermarsch, a distinctive low-lying area north of the main links between Oldenburg and Bremen. Reminiscent of some

of the Dutch polderlands, the field-trip included a visit to an active peat production business (using labour from eastern Europe), cultural adaptation of a windmill, development of tourism on the North Sea coast, functional change of coastal harbour settlements (including a visit to the museum and national park centre for the Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony), and the dairy farm of the Cornelius family (including the sampling of farm produce and discussion with the manager of a local LEADER group). The excellent day concluded with the watching of the final of Euro 2008. This showed that the Germans have much to learn from the English regarding appropriate behaviour where were the public displays of drunkenness, mindless vandalism, brawling in the streets and abuse directed at the opposition, referee and assistant referees?! The British visitors' lack of knowledge of this major footballing contest (containing no British teams) was generously tolerated.

In addition to the intended publication of a collection of papers presented at the conference, there are proposals in the pipeline for future Anglo-German rural research collaboration, a joint training course for rural postgraduates, and a fourth conference to be hosted by the RGRG (perhaps in 2011 or 2012?). Hence the future of Anglo-German rural geography links looks secure, and Ingo Mose and his assistants are to be congratulated on organising a very successful and most enjoyable conference.

Guy M Robinson
August 2008

5. RGRG Dissertation Prize Winners 2007

1st: Stephen Whitfield (Cambridge) "The good old days? Community, common property and post-communism in Russia: A south central Siberia case study" £50

2nd: Amanda Trow (University of Wales, Aberystwyth) "Young people and farming in Montgomeryshire" £40

joint 3rd: Emily Bobinski (UCL) "'If you picked the heart out of something it would die'. The effect of the common Fisheries Policy on fishing identity and community on the island of Whalsay" £15

joint 3rd: Kirstie Bowden (Exeter) "How are the process of counterurbanisation and institutional gentrification implicated in the Iter Park Housing Development in bow, Devon?" £15

Masters Dissertation Prize, 2008

The deadline for the submission of dissertations for the RGRG Masters Dissertation Prize is 31 January, 2009. The prize is available to students who have completed a taught Masters degree and produced a dissertation in a

subject area related to rural geography in the year 2007-2008. The relevant examination board for the degree may nominate one candidate each year and should arrange for one copy of the dissertation to be sent to the dissertation prizes officer of the Rural Geography Research Group (as below), together with full contact details of the nominee and the nominating institution. Submitted dissertations will be considered by a panel of assessors comprising members of the RGRG committee. The winner of the prize and the institution will be notified by September 2009, when submitted dissertations will be returned. The award is £50.

Please submit dissertations to:

Dr. Lewis Holloway, Department of Geography,
Membership/Prizes Secretary,
Rural Geography Research Group
University of Hull,
Cottingham Rd,
Hull HU6 7RX.

E-mail l.holloway@hull.ac.uk

6. New Books

ROBINSON, G.M. (Ed.) (2008) *Sustainable Rural Systems: Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Communities*, Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, Vt.. [from the IGU-RGS-IBG Conference, Glasgow, 2004]

In a neo-liberal era where society in the Developed World is reliant on mass-produced cheap foods, and living standards are based on high consumption of non-renewable energy and materials, this book investigates the growing significance of sustainable systems in rural areas. Drawing on a wide range of topical case studies, primarily in the UK, it provides an in-depth analysis of the progress made towards sustainability within rural systems, focusing specifically upon sustainable agriculture and sustainable rural communities. The authors provide an overview of the various systems of sustainability currently being applied in the Developed World. They highlight key environmental, economic and social issues, including post-productivism, 'alternative' food networks, organic farming, GM foods, conservation, rural development programmes, sustainable tourism, local training schemes and community participation. The various studies provide important lessons in the ongoing search for greater sustainability and suggest positive directions for future policy practice.

DIRY, J-P (Ed.) (2008) *Les étrangers dans les campagnes* (CERAMAC/Press Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Clermont Ferrand) - proceedings of the Anglo-French Rural Geography Conference, May 2007

7. ITEMS FOR WINTER 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 November, 2008; Tel: +44(0)23 9284 2493; email: mark.riley@port.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@port.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@port.ac.uk.