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1. CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING RURAL CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Date	Event	Contact
15-19 March, 2004	Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Philadelphia Rural session: Dark Ruralities	J.K.Little@exeter.ac.uk m.woods@aber.ac.uk.
13-17 May, 2004	Rural Geography Research Group Postgraduate Conference, <i>The Practice of Rural Geography</i> , Varese Ligure, Genoa, NW Italy.	charles.watkins@nottingham.ac.uk , susanne.seymour@nottingham.ac.uk and marknicholasriley@hotmail.com
3 – 6 July, 2004	Rural Geography Research Group: Second Meeting of Anglo-German Rural Geographers <i>Rural Multi-functionality: perspectives from policy-making, implementation and practice</i> , Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle.	johanne.allinson@ncl.ac.uk ojwilson@dmu.ac.uk
15-20 August, 2004	RGS-IBG Annual conference held in conjunction with the World International Geographic Union (IGU) conference, Glasgow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable rural systems (Guy Robinson) • Critical reflections on theory in Rural Geography (Keith Halfacree) • New and Emerging Researchers in Rural Geography (Matthew Offord and Jessica Sellick) 	g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk K.H.Halfacree@swansea.ac.uk matthew.offord@bbc.co.uk , or js0820@bristol.ac.uk .
2005	RGRG British-Spanish Rural Conference, UK venue	

2. RGRG MASTERS DISSERTATION PRIZE, 2003

The deadline for the submission of dissertations for the RGRG Masters Dissertation Prize is 31 January 2004. 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 2002-2003. 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, 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 the end of the academic year 2004, when submitted dissertations will be returned. The award has been increased to £100.

Dissertations should be sent to Dr Carol Morris, RGRG Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dissertation Prizes Co-ordinator, CCRU, University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL50 4AZ.

The RGRG Masters dissertation prize winner for 2002 was awarded to Rebecca Pollock (University College London) for a dissertation entitled 'Community based ecological monitoring: sustaining citizen engagement'. The dissertation examined the

emergent field of community based ecological monitoring to consider factors that contribute to sustained citizen engagement. A Canadian case study enabled consideration of how community based monitoring (CBM) initiatives can effectively establish citizen involvement, enhance participation and sustain long-term engagement. Twelve interviews with CBM facilitators revealed a range of themes including the importance of partnerships and capacity building, the need for local champions and a context-specific organisational structure, and the challenge of transferring leadership from outside facilitators to community members.

Factors were then identified for sustaining engagement which were applied to the creation of a strategic framework for community based monitoring programmes. Acting as a practical and conceptual tool, the framework summarised principles from the literature review and combined them with findings from this study to advance the understanding of sustainable citizen participation in ecological monitoring.

Carol Morris, University of Gloucestershire.

3. RECENT CONFERENCE REPORTS

3.1 RESSG Workshop Young Rural Researchers' Meeting, University of Gloucestershire, 21 May, 2003.

The RESSG held its annual postgraduate session at the University of Gloucestershire in May, 2003. The idea behind this event was, as in other years, to encourage rural postgraduate students, from any stage in their PhD, to present a paper on their research treating either methodological, conceptual or analytical matters. The event does not follow a specific theme. Rather it provides a postgraduate forum for debate and exchange. This year, seven postgraduates gave papers to an audience of around 25 people. The topics included social exclusion and the elderly in rural areas, society-nature relations, local sustainability and the role of action research. A similar event is planned for 2004.

Henry Buller, University of Gloucestershire

3.2 International Rural Network Conference and Exchange of Experience, Taking Charge: Rural Community Empowerment in Rural Development, Rural Health and Rural Education, The Arkleton Centre and UHI Millennium Institute, Inverness, 23-27 June, 2003.

In June, a major conference was held in Inverness, Scotland, called "*Taking Charge: community empowerment in rural health, rural education and community development*". It was sponsored by the International Rural Network and the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research. The International Rural Network (IRN) is an existing network of academics, community actors and policy makers from Australia, Canada, the UK, and other countries who have held two previous conferences – one in Townsville, Australia, and one in Nanaimo, BC, Canada. The IRN focuses on bottom-up development and in the importance of local knowledges and local identities in rural places. Initially expressed in the need to educate rural teachers and doctors in Australia, Canada, and the USA, the network's concerns have naturally encompassed rural identities, rural development, and rural advantage and disadvantage.

Over 400 people from over 30 countries attended the conference. It was structured with small group (10-20) workshops (approx. 120 of them over five days!) designed to allow participants to share similar experiences of things as diverse as community schools, training rural GPs, utilising non-timber forest products as a rural development tool, community theatre as education and capacity-building. The list goes on and on. The workshops lasted one and a half hours, giving plenty of time for exchange and learning.

It was organised this way to equalise participation from community actors and academics and policy makers. Although academic papers were accepted, the emphasis was on more intimate ways of communicating ideas. There also were plenary speakers including the Hon. Alun Michael, UK; the Deputy Secretary for Rural Development, Canada; the Chief Medical Officer of Scotland and a representative from Brussels.

Conference facilities and events included the presence of the Screen Machine (HIE's mobile cinema lorry for the Western Isles) showing an international rural development film festival; an informal ceilidh and more formal one with band and Scottish Country Dancing; examples of Canadian native smudging ceremonies used to develop community spirit; and a day of Field Visits to exemplars of exciting new Scottish community development projects including bio- and other alternative energy projects, community schools, remote health facilities, community woodlands, Village Halls, etc.

The conference maintains a website at www.takingcharge.co.uk and will be producing a CD of Conference proceedings. This will include workshop reports, powerpoint presentations, papers, conference programme and other documents, pictures, and radio interviews. The website will announce when it becomes available.

The format was intended to be a 'Learning not just Listening' experience and feedback indicates that the format worked fairly well. With such a diverse array of workshops and round-tables there was a lot to learn, and perhaps more importantly, time for new relationships and networks to be built between rural development experts, whether in academic, government, or community spheres, from around the world. The next IRN conference is scheduled to be held in the USA in two years, with the possibility of the subsequent one to be held in China.

Rhys Evans, Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, UHI Millennium Institute

3.3 Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems - IGU - XI Annual Conference, The Regional Dimension and Contemporary Challenges to Rural Sustainability, A conference held at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-10 July, 2003

The CSRS XI Annual Conference was hosted by the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in Brazil with the collaboration of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais and the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora. Each year the CSRS conference is held in a different country and the 2003 meeting in Brazil was the first in Latin America. Seventy-three participants from fifteen different countries were present at this year's conference. Paper presentations were interspaced with technical visits to a variety of different cases of sustainable rural development between Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. Forty-four papers were presented in eleven sessions and three invited speakers treated issues of regional sustainability in Brazil.

The annual conferences are organised around themes which explore and develop the long-term research tasks of the commission: interpreting 'rural sustainability'; regulation of rural sustainability; sustainability and the rural business enterprise; sustainability in the interaction between rural and urban systems; rural community dynamics and sustainability; and land use cover and change. This year the conference theme *The Regional Dimension and Contemporary Challenges to Rural Sustainability* focused on rethinking sustainability in terms of bridging the divide between the natural and social sciences and in terms of recovering the regional dimension in sustainability studies. Both issues represent two distinctive ways in which geographers can contribute to sustainability theory and practice. Guided by these two broad themes papers and general discussions reflected on how the great experience that geographers have with interdisciplinary research could be mobilised in order to overcome the natural-social sciences divide as well as how expertise in

articulating of spatial scales of analysis helps geographers overcome the local-global dualism present in sustainability studies.

The two initial sessions, Rethinking rural sustainability and Geographic research methods on rural sustainability, were chaired by Ian Bowler (University of Leicester, England) and dealt with the state of the art theoretical and methodological issues in rural sustainability. Papers presented by Georg Kluczka (Free University of Berlin, Germany), Christopher Bryant (Université de Montreal, Canada), Tony Sorensen (University of New England, Australia), Lucette Laurens (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier, France) and Roland Goetgeluk (OTB Research Institute, Holland) reflected on how, over the last fifteen years, the concept of sustainability has shifted from an ecological emphasis to cultural issues of decentralised development taking into account local knowledge, identity, ideology; community organisation and citizen participation as well as economic conflict and accommodation between different scales of political power.

The session, Governance and regional rural sustainability, chaired by Zhixiang She (Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, China) treated the interplay of political scales in regional rural sustainability. Papers presented by Ian Bowler (University of Leicester, UK), Eugenio Ruiz Urrestarazu (University of Basque Country, Spain), Edward Makhanya (University of Zululand, South Africa) and Lucka Lorber (University of Maribor, Slovenia) analysed changing political and regulatory relationships between local, regional and national actors in the adaptation of farm policy to meet global environmental agreements as well as the amalgamation of territorial units for farm policy in response to supra-national pressures bearing on countries from Western and Eastern Europe and for South Africa coming from wholly different economic and political backgrounds.

The political dimension was also stressed in the session Community organisation and political participation chaired by Christopher Bryant (Université de Montreal, Canada) although the focus was on the local level. Papers presented by William Pardy (The Community Table of Quebec, Canada), Davis Sansolo (Universidade de Morumbi-Anhembi, Brazil), Doo-Chul Kim (Okayama University, Japan), Steve Plante (Université du Quebec à Rimouski, Canada) and Doralice Pereira (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil) looked at how small farmers organise themselves and enhance community participation and how the presence or absence of community organisation is crucial for building common strategies of productive resource management, for searching for viable rural activities and for improving quality of life.

The session, Alternative rural activities for small-scale enterprises, chaired by Georg Kluczka (Free University of Berlin, Germany) further explored alternative productive strategies for small farmers. Papers presented by Rosario Galdos Urrutia (University of Basque Country, Spain), Ana Maria Firmino (Universidade Nova Lisboa, Portugal), Renata Fraga (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Vanice Santiago Selva (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brazil) and Scott Hoefle (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) treated case studies of alternative rural activities and farming methods in which special market niches are occupied in order to overcome environmental problems, to increase income, to improve lifestyles and to retain rural population in the countryside.

The session, Place, community, identity and the countryside image, chaired by Scott Hoefle (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) focused on cultural issues in rural identity. Papers presented by Sashia Heins (Utrecht University, Holland), Keisuke Matsui (University of Tsukuba, Japan), Vicente Pinto (UFJF, Brazil) and Toshio Kikuchi (Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan) examined the refashioning and revitalising of rural traditions and practices of community participation and cooperation which are mobilised in an attempt to integrate people from different backgrounds in countrysides which have received an influx of non-farm population. The increased rural-urban interaction can stimulate previously stagnated rural areas but also can cause competitive pressures over land use and tensions concerning differing lifestyles.

Three sessions focussed on specific topic in rural-urban relationships. The session Land use diversity in peri-urban areas chaired by Lucette Laurens (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier, France) examined land use planning policies and agricultural and non-agricultural activities on the urban fringe. Papers presented by Claudia Kraemer and Martina Huelz (both from University of Dortmund, Germany) and Steven Henderson (King's College London, England) showed two opposite trends in land use planning in peri-urban areas, one favouring urban sprawl and another containing the growth of cities through rural land uses. Conflict between urban and rural land use was seen in paper presented by Claudia Silva (Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Brazil) that showed how the arrogant behaviour of local officials in placing waste disposal sites in rural areas can give rise to urban-rural political alliances with an environmental emphasis. Christian Clément (Université de Montreal, Canada) focussed on how peri-urban farmers perceive their location as an advantage or not in order to resist conversion of rural areas.

The session on the multi-functionality of the countryside chaired by Doo-Chul Kim (Okayama University, Japan) explored the complimentary and conflicting nature of pluriactivities in rural areas. Papers presented by Mitsuru Yamamoto (Saitama University, Japan), Femke Daalhuizen (University of Utrecht, Holland), Zhixiang She and Daoqi Shen (both from Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, China) looked at how small farmer families engage in new non-agricultural activities and employment and how ex-urbanite entrepreneurs relocate their activities in rural areas. Alexander Mather (University of Aberdeen, Scotland) explored the conflict between farmer private ownership rights and new public rights for environmental conservation and public recreation in the countryside.

The session on rural residence in the changing countryside, chaired by Edward Makhanya (University of Zululand, South Africa), dealt with similar issues of agricultural and non-agricultural functions of the countryside, but with an emphasis on the transformation of farmer communities and towns. Papers presented by Roy Jones (Curtin University of Technology, Australia), Irit Amit-Cohen (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and Akira Tabayashi (University of Tsukuba, Japan) treated the challenges to rural village identity in the face of aging rural populations, changing farm policy, new economic activities and the arrival of ex-urbanites, which results in a shock between local values and cultural heritage with new introduced urban behaviors and tastes.

The session on sustainable management of productive resources, chaired by Ana Maria Firmino (Universidade Nova Lisboa, Portugal) dealt with mobilising cultural traditions to manage the use of natural resources. Papers presented by Frans Thissen (University of Amsterdam, Holland), David Grossman (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and Mariana Miranda (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) focussed on positive and negative experiences with common resource management with regard to how cultural traditions have been changed by market forces as well as by governmental and non-governmental actions meant to promote sustainable practices. Regina Barros (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Allain Oliveira (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil) treated specifically questions of river water pollution and soil erosion provoked by modern agriculture practised in mountainous areas and the search for alternative farming methods that avoid this.

Finally, the session on Global markets, production policy and restructuring of rural regions, chaired by Tony Sorensen (University of New England, Australia), examined how different production areas have reacted to trade liberalisation and global competition. Papers presented by Timothy Rickard (Central Connecticut State University, United States), Hiroshi Sasaki (Mejiro University, Japan), Michael Broadway (Northern Michigan University, United States) and Ana Paula Araujo (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) looked at the new opportunities as well as problems created by productive restructuring in key cropping and livestock activities for the national farm economies of Canada, Japan, Jamaica and Brazil which previously had been subject to protective farm policy.

The technical visits in the field were an integral part of the overall conference organisation. Days of paper presentations were followed by days on technical visits as the conference moved from Rio de Janeiro to Belo Horizonte. Conference

participants had direct contact with farmers, extension agents, mayors, councillors and other municipal officials in town and in the countryside. The technical visits were planned to include a variety of trends in alternative paths to rural sustainability involving mainly small farmers in an industrialised zone located between the second and third largest metropolitan areas of Brazil. This region was chosen because it displays the contradictions present in the Brazilian model of development in which rural poverty co-exists with a dynamic urban-industrial sector and great social disparity exists within the countryside itself.

Two different areas of Minas Gerais state were visited. The first area was the old coffee producing zone which today is the hinterland of the industrial city of Juiz de Fora. Two visits were made. The first visit on the urban fringe of Juiz de Fora treated the struggle between environmental groups and municipal government over the location of the city dump. The second visit, in a typical rural village, looked at a craft association and gender issues. The second area was the old colonial mining zone and the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte, which became heavily industrialized during the 20th Century. Four visits were made. The visit in Ouro Branco examined how an old farming area is resisting the encroachment of industrial expansion and how new high-payoff crops are being promoted by local government as a way to get steel workers who lost their jobs to plant automation to return to the countryside. The visit in Ouro Preto dealt with quality craft cane spirits production, which combines traditional knowledge with modern technical quality control. The visit in Moeda looked at a small family-owned sweet industry, which has articulated small milk farmers who were marginalised by the large local dairy industry. The visit to Capim Branco examined peri-urban organic farming with regard to the great diversity of farmer origin, size of operations and marketing strategies for supplying the metropolitan market of Belo Horizonte.

The three eminent Brazilian rural and regional geographers, Bertha Becker, Maria do Carmo Galvão (both from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) and Oswaldo Amorim Filho (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais) presented papers at the beginning and at the end of the conference on trends and diversity in Brazilian regional development. The conference participants were able to grasp the national context of the field trip area as well as understand the country in which the conference was being held.

Ana Maria S.M. Bicalho, Departamento de Geografia, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

3.4 Fifth British-American-Canadian Conference on Rural Geography, 'Contrasting Ruralities: Changing Rural Economies, Societies and Landscapes', University of Plymouth and University of Exeter, 14-19 July, 2003.

The Fifth British-American-Canadian Conference on Rural Geography, convened under the auspices of the of the Rural Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), the Rural Geography Speciality Group of the Association of American Geographers and the Rural Geography Study Group of the Canadian Association of Geographers, was hosted by the University of Plymouth and University of Exeter, 14-19 July, 2003. The theme of the conference was 'Contrasting Ruralities: Changing Rural Economies, Societies and Landscapes'. The six-day meeting was attended by about 50 academics from the three countries and included 41 papers with two full-day field excursions in Devon and Cornwall. It was organised by Stephen Essex, Richard Yarwood (University of Plymouth) and Andrew Gilg (University of Exeter).

The conference opened at the University of Exeter on Monday, 14 July, 2003 with a recollection by Charles Watkins (University of Nottingham and Chairman of the RGS-IBG Rural Geography Research Group) of the previous four events at Guelph (1985), London, Leicester and Cirencester (1989), Charlotte (1991), and Nova Scotia (1999). Andrew Gilg (University of Exeter) introduced the conference theme by outlining the rural issues affecting the South West of England.

The first main session of the conference was on the theme of 'Conceptualising rural space', chaired by Charles Watkins (University of Nottingham). Verdie Craig (University of Alaska Anchorage) reviewed the different trajectories of rural geography in America and the United Kingdom. While the subject has strong traditions in the UK, and had been transformed by theoretical approaches, the field was not common amongst the work of US geographers, which was usually dominated by more realist perspectives. Part of the reason for this difference was the recent inter-disciplinary emphasis of book and journal publishers in the UK, while the tradition form of rural publication in the US remained University monographs written predominantly by senior scholars. Ann Deakin (SUNY College at Fredonia) followed this presentation with a paper on the emergence of a new regional geography based around the development of rural governance networks in Chautauqua County, New York. These new regions and identities were not necessarily synonymous with the existing administrative units. Preliminary results from a survey of local identity, affiliations and boundaries as perceived by residents indicated at least two main regions within the county.

The second session focused on 'Agricultural Restructuring', chaired by Guy Robinson (Kingston University). Tom Johnston (University of Lethbridge) provided a review of the regulatory control exercised by local governments and, more recently, provincial agencies over the siting, construction and operation of intensive livestock operations in Alberta. The adequacy of the system was evaluated, together with the role of special interest groups in the process. Ian MacLachlan (University of Lethbridge) explained the agro-industrialisation of cattle feedlots in Southern Alberta. The decline in beef consumption in Canada had forced producers to become much more flexible in their methods, to develop export markets and to seek alternative sources of grain feed. These processes have decoupled the agricultural base from its local rural society. Douglas Ramsey (Brandon University) considered the emergence of Intensive Livestock Operations in hog production in Manitoba, which had been part of a rural development programme to offset the decline in wheat production. Local communities had raised a range of concerns about the growth, which led to the establishment of a Livestock Stewardship Panel in 2000 to make recommendations about the emerging conflicts. The issues raised went beyond the traditional nuisance complaints of non-farm residents about farming activities into planning controls over the location of units, the adequacy of roads and water supply and the working conditions operated in such units. Verdie Craig (Morehead State University) considered the restructuring of the tobacco industry in Kentucky created by the introduction of production quotas resulting from the National Tobacco Settlement. Producers now sold their tobacco directly to companies under contract rather than using the traditional local auction warehouses, which have been forced to close with significant implications for small rural towns.

On Monday evening, Andrew Gilg (University of Exeter) led the group on a guided walk of Exeter city. Points of historical, architectural and planning interest were noted. The tour concluded at the Quayside, with groups dispersing into various restaurants around the Cathedral Close.

Tuesday was a full day of papers based around four themes. The first session of the morning was entitled 'Countryside, Development and Alternative Futures', chaired by Dick Winchell (Eastern Washington University). Hugh Gayler (Brock University) explored the failings of policies designed to protect agricultural and natural resources from urban sprawl and development in Ontario. The development pressures created by a booming wine industry in the Niagara Wine Region were used to illustrate the issues. Gerald Walker (York University) examined the implications of long-term planning policies implemented in Caledon, south-central Ontario, which have tended to protect the visual appearance of the countryside from encroachment from Greater Toronto, but have thus created a highly desirable zone of residence for an exurban population. Keith Halfacree (University of Wales, Swansea) focused on the emergence of low impact developments in the British countryside over the past decade and how the planning system had, in general, sought to provide them with formal legitimacy. Opportunities for this form of development to contribute to the shaping of a post-productivist countryside existed, yet there were significant barriers to the future growth of this phenomena. Steven Henderson (Kings' College London)

argued that the prominence of the principles of sustainability in planning, together with long-established planning restrictions over development in the countryside, might severely restrict new development in some rural areas. A case study of the commuter belt around Norwich illustrated the problems of creating rural employment opportunities and the potential for social exclusion in rural housing markets.

The second session on Tuesday morning focused on 'Social Inclusion and Exclusion' and was chaired by Keith Halfacree (University of Wales, Swansea). David Bruce (Mount Allison University) reviewed the supply of affordable housing in rural Canada and the differing capacity at the local level to develop solutions, such as self-build and manufactured buildings. The number of low income households accommodated by family or friends was disguising the problem and contributing to the retrenchment of other support services. Robert Gant (Kingston University) assessed the role of 'Shopmobility' services in the UK in securing access to shopping facilities and 'barrier-free' movement within shopping centres for disabled people from rural areas. The nationwide millennium audit undertaken by the National Federation of Shopmobility and Kingston University was used as the basis for the discussion. The case for government support to develop the delivery of an 'inclusionary' and integrated transport policy for disabled people, as well as further research, was made. Una Casey (University of Ulster) reviewed the ability of young people in rural areas to participate in and consume modern 'youth cultures' given the limitations of mobility and accessibility in the countryside. A case study of school children in rural Northern Ireland indicated that young people established their own networks to attend leisure and social venues and perceived the religious identity of places as a stronger barrier than geography. Cross-community rural youth forums were needed to overcome some of these barriers. Chris Corcoran (University College Worcester) also focused on rural youth and particularly partnerships that had been established for their benefit, albeit without providing a direct input from young people themselves. The paper highlighted the methodological issues created by action research into this topic and the potential problems and benefits of academic involvement in such projects.

After lunch, the presentations resumed with two papers based around the theme of 'Environmental Values', chaired by Michael Bunce (University of Toronto). Valentine Cadieux (University of Toronto) considered the landscape and aesthetic implications associated with the rise of residential developments for exurbanites. The landscapes of the residential countryside are dominated by gardens rather than productive spaces, which might be termed 'amenitised productivity' or 'residential tourism'. The trend adds a new dimension of 'ruralisation' in the North American context. Randall Wilson (Gettysburg College) evaluated the emergence of community-based collaborative approaches to resource management using a case study of the Four Corners Sustainable Forest Partnership in Southwest Colorado. A typology of a range of partnership was identified based on the place-based context (urbanisation, economic diversification, economic dependency on the forest), the goals of the partnership (ecological, fire prevention, economic development, social/community capacity) and the form and structure of the collaboration (size and diversity of membership).

The final session on Tuesday was based broadly around 'Agri-cultures', chaired by Lisa Butler Harrington (Kansas State University). Diane Martz (Saskatoon) analysed the farm work of Canadian women, men and youth based on the results of a national study involving 2,000 farm families between 1982 and 2002. The analysis indicated the work strategies adopted by Canadian family farms in a period of rapid change in the agricultural system. Gender roles had become less rigid over the twenty years with women undertaking more farm work, although livestock care remained a largely male activity. John Smithers (University of Guelph) provided a review of the interdependency between family farms and rural communities in North Huron County, Ontario on the basis of the farm development trajectory (expanding, stable, contracting). Each type had a different linkage with the local community based on participation in organisations, purchasing strategies and perceived support for farming. The farming family now looked to the community for additional or alternative employment rather than the other way round. Ken Beesley (Brandon University) gave an overview of the main types, the economic and social significance and the geography of the equine sector in rural Canada. Its rapid growth and complexity was

demonstrated, together with the challenges facing the industry, such as the control of West Nile Virus and the development of national standards for the management of riding stables. Lewis Holloway (Coventry University) reviewed the role of the agricultural show in re-imagining the agricultural sector in the UK by attempting to influence public perceptions of farming through 'education' and 'infotainment'. Such messages were often partial or incomplete, often focusing upon a particular vision of farming, such as expertise in food production, conservation and/or organic farming, or more mundane communications, such as children's competitions and commentaries. The role of show societies has thus shifted from furthering agricultural progress to providing a platform for public relations.

On Tuesday evening, a three-course meal was enjoyed at the University of Exeter's Staff Club at Reed Hall. On Wednesday, a field excursion to various places of interest in mid-Devon was led by Michael Winter (University of Exeter). One of the main themes for the excursion was to monitor progress with the South West Forest, which had been established in 1997. The project was explained at the Forest Centre on Cookworthy Moor by the Director of the South West Forest, followed by visits to two participants in the planting at Northcombe Farm and South West Water land at Roadford Reservoir. The Fishleigh Estate near Hatherleigh on the Culm Measures was also visited, which demonstrated how a previously intensively farmed unit had adopted a range of environmental practices. The enthusiasm of the estate manager for his newly found environmentalism was obvious. The delegates then transferred to the University of Plymouth for the second part of the conference.



Delegates on the Fishleigh Estate near Hatherleigh.

On Thursday morning at the University of Plymouth, the first set of four papers focused on 'Agro-Food Networks', chaired by Douglas Ramsey (Brandon University). Joan Marshall (McGill School of Environment) explored the tensions associated with the introduction of salmon aquaculture in the small traditional fishing community of Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick over the last 25 years or so. While this development may be viewed as a component of local foods, the reality of the situation was that production techniques were industrial, that ownership was not local and that working conditions were poor. It is unlikely that the activity would become embedded in the local culture. Diane Powell (Louisiana State University) described the restoration and preservation of ancient watermills in the Sousa Valley of Northwest Portugal together with the resurgence in interest in traditional regional food production, such as corn bread (or broa) using these structures. Brian Ilbery and Damian Maye (Coventry University) presented a critical examination of alternative

food chains based on interviews with producers of specialist livestock products in Northumberland, using supply chain diagrams. The results indicated the very individualised and customised nature of these 'alternative' supply chains, which were often characterised both by their social embeddedness and ideals, as well as economic imperatives. A blurring of the terms 'alternative' and 'conventional' was apparent, not least because many of these 'alternative' producers are forced to use conventional nodes in the food supply system. Deborah Che (Western Michigan University) assessed the emergence of agri-tourism as a consequence of agricultural restructuring in Michigan. On the basis of focus groups with agri-tourism operators in the area, a diversity of American traditions were being sold to visitors, of which local food production, family traditions, and rural landscapes and values were the most common.

The second set of papers on Thursday morning focused on 'Agri-Environment Schemes', and was chaired by Brian Ilbery (Coventry University). The paper by Miriam Renner (University of Newcastle) used the framework of 'moments of translation' to explain the success or failure of Countryside Stewardship Scheme applications made by family farm businesses in Rutland, England. Seven of these case studies had been successful in interesting, enrolling and mobilising the administrators, the countryside features on their farms and their landlords at the critical stages in the application process. In contrast, the remaining six farms had not been sufficiently interested in the scheme to ensure the success of their application. Guy Robinson (Kingston University) presented a comparison of agri-environment schemes in Canada (particularly Ontario's Environmental Farm Plans) and the European Union. The context for the EU scheme was much 'harder green', linked to decoupling, cross-compliance and modulation, while the Canadian scheme was 'softer green'. The final presentation of the morning was a rescheduled paper from later in the week. Alison Gill (Simon Fraser University) evaluated corporate-community relations in the North American mountain resort tourism sector using a case study of Intrawest Corporation's community development activities in Whistler, British Columbia. Stakeholder relations were place-specific and depended upon past relationships, trust and individuals. A key driver for Intrawest's involvement in the local community was the need for innovation and leadership in an increasingly competitive and globalised market place. These influences had resulted in a convergence of community and corporate visions in Whistler.

Thursday afternoon began with a session on 'Environment and People', chaired by Owen Furuseth (University of North Carolina at Charlotte). Lisa Butler Harrington (Kansas State University) considered the sustainability and vulnerability of human systems on the High Plains in response to environmental pressures, such as drought, tornadoes, 'furnace winds' and severe winter weather. These concerns were shown to be accentuated by socially-based stresses, such as changes in the organisation of the agricultural sector, depopulation from small rural towns and the depletion of natural resources. Marla Emery (US Forest Service) focused on the extent of subsistence activity in contemporary US forests, which had previously been under-estimated and neglected in forest policy. Further research and new policy was beginning to be formulated to support subsistence activities, and represented important economic and social forms.

The final session on Thursday afternoon drew together four papers on the theme of 'Revitalisation of Rural Towns', chaired by Kenneth Beesley (Brandon University). Chris Mayla (Eastern Michigan University) gave an innovative presentation using video clips to illustrate the decline of three small towns in Newfoundland. The closure of key employers in each town had created significant economic and environmental implications. Greg Halseth (University of Northern British Columbia) examined a number of resource dependent communities in northern British Columbia which had faced the closure of a major industry and the response of three levels of participants in the revitalisation debate: the provincial government, local government and local civil society organisations. In many instances, both levels of government as well as some community groups remained committed to traditional resource dependent development, whereas other community groups were advocates of alternative strategies, creating conflicts and barriers to revitalisation. Paul Courtney (University of Gloucestershire) and Andrew Errington (University of Plymouth) provided a European perspective on the economic development of small towns, which had only

recently attracted policy attention after many years of neglect. The potential effectiveness of the 'sub-pole' strategy was likely to be dependent on the types of firm involved as well as the relative accessibility of the towns to larger urban centres. Dick Winchell (Eastern Washington University) explained the role of his own university in the small town revitalisation of Cheney, Washington using the 'Mainstreet Model' created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Landscape and street improvements, together with a new university hall of residence and commercial premises, have been created following a 'Downtown Plan' formulated partly by students and staff from a range of faculties.

On Thursday evening, Stephen Essex, Richard Yarwood and Mark Wise (University of Plymouth) led the group on a guided walk of Plymouth city. The reconstruction of the city centre following the Abercrombie Plan of 1943 was considered in some detail, together with aspects of military history and waterfront redevelopment viewed from Plymouth Hoe. The tour managed to dodge the showers and concluded at the Mayflower Steps, with groups dispersing into various restaurants around the Barbican.



The delegates at the Mayflower Steps in Plymouth.

On Friday, Stephen Essex, Richard Yarwood, Clive Charlton and Mark Brayshay (University of Plymouth) led a field excursion into Cornwall. The first visit was to Tredethick Farm, where the owner, Tim Reed, had almost completely diversified away from traditional farming into high quality farm tourist accommodation. He outlined his original motivations for the change, which was well before the current crisis in farming, together with his experience of managing tourists rather than animals or crops. A short tour of the facilities provided for tourists on the 'farm' provided a clear indication of the dynamism of the venture. The group then moved on to Luxulyan Village Hall, where the Cornwall Rural Community Council had laid on displays of local community projects and a lunch of local produce, including pasties, ham, cheese, cakes and strawberries. The delegates were also treated to a Cornish song by one of the hosts at the hall. The afternoon was then spent at the Eden Project, an environmental education centre based in huge greenhouses or biomes in a former China Clay pit at Boldelva near St. Austell. Since its opening in 2001, the Project has attracted much interest and has acted as a catalyst of rural development in the local area. An evening meal was taken at Carminowe Barn Restaurant, Strickstenton Farm, Par. The owners continue to operate a working family farm (as they have done for about seven generations), but had decided to diversify into the restaurant business using a restored barn on their property in 1999. At the end of the

meal, speeches were made by the Chairs of each of the three national delegations, before a later than anticipated return to Plymouth.

The final two sessions of the conference took place on Saturday morning. The first focused on issues of 'Population Change', and was chaired by Richard Yarwood (University of Plymouth). Hugh Millward (Saint Mary's University, Nova Scotia) illustrated the demographic decline in rural Nova Scotia and identified the key causal variables: resource depletion, economic restructuring, loss of protected markets and global competition. All rural areas beyond the 'central triangle' continued to depopulate, which posed the question of whether government interventions were appropriate and if so, at what spatial scale and level of subsidy was relevant. Owen Furuseth (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) reviewed the growth of the Hispanic ethnic group in rural North Carolina over the last decade. Results from the 2000 Census provided dramatic evidence of the demographic transformation and geography of the Hispanic ethnic group, which was explained by the declining importance of traditional 'gateway' cities, the suburbanisation of Latino settlement and the development of businesses owned by the ethnic group in rural communities. The impacts of Hispanic immigration on rural life have included stresses in the labour market, social service provision, housing, education, criminal justice, health care and community relations. Holly Barcus (Morehead State University) explored the issues of access to housing for lower socio-economic groups in six rural growth and decline communities in the Great Plains, Upper Great Lakes and Appalachia between 1980 and 2000, especially in light of the in-migration of retirees and amenity seekers to many settlements. Local agency responses to the changing housing demand were also investigated, which clearly illustrated that policies were often framed under the implicit assumption that rural communities faced very similar problems and circumstances.

The final session of the conference was on the theme of 'Rural Tourism' and was chaired by Stephen Essex (University of Plymouth). John Everitt (Brandon University) reviewed the development of route-based tourism in the Westman region of Manitoba through collaboration between a number of communities across a large area, together with the social, spatial and economic outcomes. This innovation has been born of the fact that, in the Canadian prairies at least, potential tourist attractions are perceived as few and far between, and are better viewed in a regional context rather than as separate destinations in themselves. The promotion of attractions has involved 're-imagining' or 'rediscovering' existing places as well as establishing 'new commodities' for the consumption of tourists. Katie Algeo (Western Kentucky University) assessed whether the original predictions for regional economic growth from the designation of the Mammoth Cave National Park (in 1941) had been realised. Using archive sources and contemporary issues, the main conclusion was that the national park had not become an engine of growth. In fact, poverty rates were high and some communities were on the decline. Significant economic challenges remained, but 'gateway' tourism using inter-state road junctions represented an opportunity in the future. Michael Bunce (University of Toronto) discussed the transformation of rural space from productivist to consumptive uses (or amenitisation), usually associated with advanced industrialised countries, in less industrialised parts of the world through the development of tourism. A case study of two golf courses and luxury residential developments on Barbados was used to illustrate the conversion of rural land to lifestyle residential and recreational uses. It demonstrated the effects of these transformations on the appearance, control and meaning of rural spaces. Betsy Pyle (West Virginia University) assessed the establishment of manufacturing enterprises that had emerged as a spin-off of the growth of whitewater rafting in Central Appalachia over the last 25 years. The entrepreneurs were drawn from enthusiasts who had developed innovative ideas for high performance products and were often willing to take business risks. The enterprises received minimal support from local authorities and were initially considered as marginal within the local business community. Their success, nevertheless, challenged conventional views and models relating to rural development.

The conference represented an intensive programme of papers and field visits, and one that was hugely rewarding for the ideas shared and contacts established. Preparations are underway for the publication of the papers from this conference in

at least one or more volumes. The next meeting of this particular group of rural geographers will be held in about four years time in America – perhaps Kentucky in 2007?

Stephen Essex and Richard Yarwood, University of Plymouth.

3.5 20th Conference of the European Society for Rural Sociology, Geographies of work and employment in Rural Europe, Sligo, Ireland, 18 – 22 August, 2003.

The Institute of Technology Sligo was the venue for the 20th European Society for Rural Sociology Conference in August 2003. Over a period of four days, 266 delegates from across Europe and the rest of the world took part in a conference on 'Work, Leisure and Development in Rural Europe today'. Papers were presented in working groups organised into four broad themes: 'Farming and food', 'Heritage, globalisation, leisure and tourism', 'Environment and rural geography' and 'Rural society, social structures and development policies'. Within these broad themes, there were 22 working groups with 194 papers presented in total. Large plenary sessions covered the topics of 'Science and practice in rural development', 'Rural Ireland: past, present and future' and 'The enlargement of the EU'.

It was a truly international event, with research presented on rural issues in all parts of Europe, west and east, including for example, papers on the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Russia, Austria, Wales, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Hungary, Scotland, England, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Finland and Sweden. There were also speakers from outside Europe, for example, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Mozambique and Australia.

On Day 3 of the conference, day tours were organised to different parts of the northwest region of Ireland, encompassing conference themes such as the production of alternative and organic food, women and rural development, local archaeology and rural history, and traditional music and rural development.

Rural geography was well represented at this sociological conference, with a strong delegation of rural geographers from the UK and Ireland. A whole working group was devoted to topics in 'Environment and rural geography', including sessions on 'Environment-induced rural restructuring', 'Rural areas as new sites of consumption', 'Geographies of work and employment in rural Europe', and 'Social natures in the European countryside'. However, the conference in general was extremely interdisciplinary with sociologists, geographers and others presenting research and taking part in discussions on all aspects of work, leisure and development in rural Europe.

In the working group on 'Work and employment in rural Europe', convened by Judith Timár and Caitríona Ní Laoire, research from six different countries was presented on different aspects of work and employment at a variety of scales from the household to the international labour market. The papers and discussions covered themes such as gendered work practices, through household survival strategies, to the difficulties involved in matching workers and jobs in rural areas. An overarching concern with understanding the complexity of relationships between macro-level processes of rural restructuring and micro-level work experiences and identities of individuals and households emerged in the subgroup. In another subgroup, convened by Bettina Brock and Sally Shortall, 15 papers were presented in sessions dealing with 'New realities of gender relations'. There was a particular focus here on women and farming, with papers dealing with for example, women as off-farm breadwinners in Ireland (Sally Shortall), and the influence of farm enterprise type on farm women's work choices in Canada (Susan Machum). Unfortunately with as many as 15 parallel sessions running at times, it was impossible to attend anything more than a sample of the many fascinating papers being presented. Congratulations go to Perry Share and the conference committee for organising an excellent conference.

3.6 Rural Geography sessions at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, London, 3-5 September, 2003

RGRG/PERG Session: Sustainable development and the governance of rural and urban areas

The joint session between RGRG and PERG stretched over the Wednesday and Thursday of the Annual Conference and covered a wide range of issues relating to sustainability and governance in urban and rural contexts. Specifically, the session was divided into three main themes, focusing on planning and sustainability, community and participatory mechanisms and multi-level and strategic approaches to governance issues in rural and urban areas. Although as might have been anticipated with such a conference, the emphasis was mainly on the United Kingdom, papers were also given that covered an international scene, from Germany to Australia. Indeed, as well as geographers, we were delighted to welcome those from other disciplines, especially the PERG Research Group Guest, Dr Gill Seyfang from the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE) at the University of East Anglia. The session acted as a productive exchange of concepts and ideas about sustainability in different spatial contexts and a number of new alliances and contacts were established.

The three main themes ranged a variety of subjects. The module on sustainability planning provided a forum for debate concerning the implementation of sustainability principles into different local contexts. These ranged from a discussion of multi-functionality on the urban fringe (Gallent, Oates and Tudor) to the institutional challenges of implementing renewable energy in Wales (Stevenson).

The second module dealt with issues concerning community involvement and environmental citizenship. Papers ranged a variety of themes and focused on different levels of community involvement from entire rural communities (O'Regan, Ryan and Moles) to individual citizens (Barr and Gilg). This variety was also replicated with regard to the approaches taken by different researchers, with both cultural (Seyfang) and social-psychological (Retter) concepts being used to examine the plethora of factors that determined citizen participation in a range of environmental practices, from recycling to sustainable consumption.

Finally, presentations on the Thursday turned to broader strategic and governance-related issues, focusing on how sustainability had (or had not) become embedded in national and local government policy making. This ranged both diverse sets of issues (from Harrison and Munton's example of sustainability and the Greater London Authority to Seymour's example of community governance in Australia) and levels, with both post-devolution Wales (Scott and Whitehead) and an example from local authorities (Smith) included.

Overall, the session provided an opportunity for researchers in the key fields of planning and rural geography to meet and share research ideas. The session served to demonstrate how the goal of sustainability will be achieved only through integrating sustainability concepts holistically at a range of levels and in a variety of institutions.

Stewart Barr, University of Exeter

RGRG/MRG Session: Sustaining Upland Landscapes

Martin Price and Rhys Evans of the Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, UHI Millennium Institute, Scotland, convened two sessions jointly on behalf of the two research groups. What resulted was one of the most international sessions at the conference. Papers covered locations from the UK to Nepal and Sri Lanka, and

topics from hay meadows through human impacts on forest succession on Polish mountains to cash-crop interventions in Burma.

Sustainable upland environments imply sustainable human development which takes place within them. These sessions acknowledged that in both the Call, and the presentations. These places require interdisciplinary approaches on the part of the people who are tasked with 'managing' them, and thus offer a great opportunity to practise interdisciplinary research, particularly regarding the impact of political, economic and cultural geographies on the bio-physical environments where they are set.

These sessions built on a similar set held in Belfast in 2002, and took the discussions forward a considerable distance. Sustainable development means sustainable societies as well as other ecological communities. Without making a big deal of it, these papers were about human ecologies in the best empirical sense, and represent one strong path from Development Studies and single-strand biological and physical sciences to more integrated and interdisciplinary understandings of upland rural places.

Rhys Evans and Martin Price, Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, UHI Millennium Institute

RGRG/BRG Session: People and soil: understanding soil within its social context.

The Rural Geography Research Group and the Biogeography Research Group organised jointly a session focusing on people and soil. The aim of this session was to bring together researchers from within Geography and related subjects who have been studying soils from a variety of different perspectives and approaches. In particular, the main focus of the session was to draw attention to the interaction between people and soil and more specifically to examine the theoretical and empirical aspects of the attitudes of people working with soil. The session provided an opportunity for researchers working on quantitative and qualitative aspects of soils to come together and facilitate a greater understanding of the social context of soils through an interdisciplinary approach. Twelve delegates from 10 institutions presented papers with an audience of more than 20, participating in lively discussion and stimulating debate.

The morning session opened with Brian Chambers (ADAS) discussing the effects of farm manure and fertiliser N additions on "key" soil physical, chemical and biological properties. Sacha Mooney (Nottingham) offered insights on the benefits associated with the method of 3-D visualisation of the soil structure of soils. Richard Moore-Colyer (Wales) explored the origins and the people that influenced the movement that led in the emergence of alternative agricultural practices (organic, biodynamic) and the foundation of Soil Association. Mark Shepherd (ADAS) offered a comparison between the organic and conventional farming systems regarding soil organic matter and soil microbial numbers. Julie Ingram (Gloucestershire) concentrated on farmers and their knowledge regarding soil management and the extent to which they practice "best management practices" for soils. Kostas Baginetas (Nottingham) closed the morning module of the session with a presentation addressing the need for farmer participation in the development of indicators for assessing the sustainability of agricultural ecosystems and in particular soil quality. The morning session concluded with a lively discussion.

The afternoon module opened with D. A. Davidson (Stirling) discussing the cultural or human modification of soils and the nature and formation of Anthrosols in NW Europe. Meri Juntti's (King's College) presentation focused on the link between agricultural, environmental and social policies and desertification in Europe. Anna

Nikolaidou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) presented a paper comparing organic and conventional farming practices as related to the sustainable management of an agro-ecosystem, through the assessment of a number of soil quality indices. Stephen Morse (Reading) explored the differences between the indigenous visions of sustainable agriculture of farmers in Nigeria in comparison to the commonly expressed views of Northern-based researchers. Margaret Pasquini (Durham) talked about the use of urban waste ash as a medium of soil fertility management in urban agricultural ecosystems in Nigeria. The afternoon module concluded with Stephen Trudgill's (Cambridge) presentation on the cultural constructs of soil and the way that we treat it. The afternoon module closed with a concluding discussion of issues emerging from the whole session. The researchers participating in the session, through their diverse presentations, highlighted the depth and diversity of current research regarding soil and provided a forum for social scientists and soil scientists to share views and ideas and to reflect on the inter-disciplinary nature of research topics related to soils. The session convenors Charles Watkins (Nottingham), Richard Field (Nottingham) and Kostas Baginetas (Nottingham) wish to thank all the delegates and speakers participating in a very successful event.

Kostas Baginetas, University of Nottingham

RGRG Session: Young and Emerging Researchers in Rural Geography

This RGRG session was designed to provide postgraduates and other researchers at an early stage in their careers with an opportunity to present papers on their research. The session attracted a broad range of papers from researchers working in the UK, USA and Australia. The session was jointly convened by Nicola Thompson (Leeds) and Mark Riley (Nottingham) and was chaired by Andrew Donaldson (Leeds).

The session began with a paper from Bruce Scholten (Durham) entitled 'FEWER CHIPS for ChiPS & SEATTLEITES than GEORDIES' which examined attitudes to food consumption and risk through comparing the results of research with academics, clergy and motorcyclists in Seattle (USA) and Newcastle (UK). Bruce presented material from the Seattle research, analysing the 'organic renaissance' in this area. This paper was followed by Hilary Talbot (Newcastle) who presented on 'Providing ICTs in Non-urban Areas of Deprivation: A Local Authority Case Study'. Hilary reported on introduction of ICTs by an 'industrial rural' local authority in County Durham, examining the both the technological and social challenges associated with their usage.

The session was then addressed by Debra Pearce from Curtin University in Australia who presented some of the results of her Ph.D. research in a paper entitled 'Lifestyle, lunacy or livelihood?: Rural change and the development of Western Australia's southern wildflower industry'. In this paper, Deborah analysed the impacts of rural restructuring on both the production of wild flowers and the individuals involved in picking to argue that involvement in the industry is fundamentally a lifestyle choice. Alistair Geddes (Penn State) then presented a paper entitled 'Tainted visibility? Implications of publishing address data during the 2001 Foot and Mouth outbreak'. This paper analysed the government's strategy of publishing information on farms affected by the FMD outbreak of 2001 raising a series of issues concerning the idea of the 'public interest' and the rationale for the disclosure of data into the public domain. The session then ended with a paper from Nicola Thompson (Leeds) entitled 'A re-assertion of the centre? The central-local power relationship in the governance of England's National Parks'. This paper argued that, despite administrative regionalisation in England, the powers of the central state to regulate the activities of National Park Authorities have increased rather than decreased since 1997.

The session ended with a full, and at times lively, debate on a series of issues raised in the papers. In particular, debate focused on government policy in rural areas and its impacts on the lives and livelihoods of rural residents. The discussion also

highlighted methodological issues of working with both individuals and public agencies to complete research and the problems faced by researchers in presenting themselves to potential research subjects. Thanks to all those who presented in, and otherwise contributed to, this very diverse session.

Nicola Thompson, University of Leeds.

3.7 RESSG Annual Conference, Cultural Turns, Rural Turns: Critical (re)appraisals, University of Newcastle, 16-18 September, 2003.

The 2003 RESSG Annual conference took as its theme an assessment of the cultural turn and rural studies. Taking place over three days and organised by Katy Bennett and the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle, the conference combined both overviews of the cultural turn and its impact on rural studies over the last ten or so years with a number of more specific culturally informed studies of rural issues. Paul Cloke, Mike Woods and Jo Little provided insightful reviews drawing attention to the strengths, but also the weaknesses and missed opportunities of the 'turn' notably in our understanding of the flows and operation of power, neglected or cast aside in the move away from the 'meta' towards to the more individualistic and differentiated (Woods, Cloke), and in the materiality of disadvantage and exclusion, sometimes glossed over in the celebration of identity (Cloke). And yet, the cultural turn has been an enormous source of intellectual strength and innovation, taking gender studies towards notions of embodiment and a greater understanding of the multidimensionality of sexuality and its construction in a rural setting (Little) and in permitting a more refined appreciation of the differentiated cultural factors that define and create poverty and exclusion, the subject of a paper by Paul Milbourne. The hybridity of the countryside, and its co-construction as first a national and then a local construct was explored by Jon Murdoch while the limits of co-constructionism were returned to in Henry Buller's paper on 'Big Nature'. Employing the methodological fecundity of the cultural turn, papers by Katy Bennett, Rachel Woodward, Nick Wright amongst others, explored new ways of seeing and understanding rural identities, landscapes and landownership roles. 'Others' have become one of the leitmotifs of the cultural turns's appropriation by rural geographers and a group of papers explored processes of 'othering' through age (Wesley Key), financial mechanisms (Jane Midgely) and perceptions of rural idyll (Kye Askins). A further take on 'otherness' was offered by two Danish colleagues. Owain Jones' paper took a rather different perspective by considering the growing, yet problematic, inclusion of animals into our shifting concept of society, while Mike Leyshom, drawing on field work undertaken amongst the rural youth of the South West, explored the world-views and embodied geographies of rural young women. This was a fascinating and wide ranging few days that combined the theory and practice of the cultural turn with a set of insightful critiques. The challenge for rural geographers is, as Paul Cloke stated at the outset, is to bring our own innovative and distinctive voice to cultural studies. This was surely a step in that direction.

Henry Buller, University of Gloucestershire

4. FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS: CALLS FOR PAPERS

4.1 Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, *Dark Ruralities*, Philadelphia, 15 – 19 March, 2004.

In recent years, rural geographers have drawn extensively on the notion of the rural as an idyllic space, showing how the rural community and society are experienced and imagined as positive, supportive, caring and healthy. Although it has been recognised that such constructions and discourses are not universally experienced, there has rarely been any sustained discussion of the rural as anti-idyll. Individual experiences of poverty and exclusion are consistently set within a framework which serves to downplay and marginalise its existence, denying views of rurality that contest or destabilise the idyllic.

This session focuses on non-idyllic and strange ruralities. It seeks to examine not only specific experiences of the rural, which may be far from idyllic, but also how these inform broader, darker, constructions of rurality. The session will discuss how dominant imaginings of contemporary rural society are unsettled and disturbed by individual, household and community experiences. It will argue that such anti-idyllic imaginings should not be ignored or hidden. Additionally, they should not be separated from mainstream experiences, but should be seen as informing, reinforcing and contesting wider understandings of the rural.

Papers are invited that address any aspect of these themes.

Expressions of interest (with a brief indication of the paper's topic) should be sent to either of the organisers (below) by 15 September 2003. Full abstracts and notification of participant registration numbers will be required by 30 September 2003. Further details of the conference and online registration are available at www.aag.org. Session sponsored by the Rural Economy and Society Study Group.

Jo Little, Department of Geography, Amory Building, University of Exeter, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ., UK. J.K.Little@exeter.ac.uk and Michael Woods, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Wales-Aberystwyth, Aberystwyth, SY23 3DB, UK., m.woods@aber.ac.uk.

4.2 Rural Geography Research Group Postgraduate Conference, *The Practice of Rural Geography*, Varese Ligure, Genoa, NW Italy, 13 -17 May, 2004.

This meeting is a research workshop and fieldwork meeting to allow research students and supervisors to discuss the practice of rural geography. The meeting will consider research training, methodological issues, theoretical approaches and practical problems and issues of researching and writing a PhD in rural geography. The conference will also consider issues involved in trans-disciplinary research.

The meeting will consist of a mixture of paper sessions and field visits. Papers are invited from postgraduates at any stage in their research. We are also keen to have offers from staff and postgraduates who wish to be discussants. Presentations will be 20 minutes. Offers of papers should be sent to one of the organisers by 12 December, 2003. The emails of the organisers are: charles.watkins@nottingham.ac.uk, susanne.seymour@nottingham.ac.uk and marknicholasriley@hotmail.com

Programme

Thursday 13 May, 2003: Arrive at Varese Ligure late afternoon with Welcome Reception at 7pm.

Friday 14 May, 2003:

9.00am	Introduction
9.30am-12.30pm	Workshop: The benefits and problems of research training: Three papers from current postgraduates on their experience of research training. Issues to be covered include the 1+3 model of research training; general university training courses; specialist training sessions; supervisions. Discussion.
12.30pm	Lunch
3.00pm –6.00pm:	Workshop: Theory in rural geography. Three papers from current postgraduates on their connection with theory in the developments of the theses. Issues to be covered include theory and interdisciplinary research; actor network theory; links between theory and methods; fashions in theory; writing theory into the thesis. Discussion.

8.30-9.30 pm Evening lecture: Cultural geography and landscape history

Saturday 15th May

Field visit (Professor Diego Moreno + Dr Roberta Cevasco)
Visit to National Park to consider 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.

Sunday 16th May

9.30am-12.30pm Workshop: Research methods.
Three papers from postgraduates. Subjects that could be included are participant observation, oral history, Internet research, archive research, other fieldwork techniques. Discussion.

12.30pm Lunch

3.00pm – 6.00pm Workshop and discussion: Rural geography and public policy
This session will be on the general theme of the relationship between rural geography and policy. The following topics will be covered: The RELU Programme; post-doctoral research; working in a research team; EU Research Projects; getting a job with a rural geography PhD. Discussion

Evening: Conference Dinner

Monday 17th May: Depart

Accommodation: Note the conference will be held at the Hotel Albergo Amici, Varese Ligure, Genoa. A rate of €37 per night including dinner, bed and breakfast has been agreed. The four days will therefore be €148.

Travel: There are flights from Stansted-Genoa by Ryanair. Currently return flights for the dates concerned can be booked for about £30. Closer to the date flights may reach as much as £130. Alternatively, you can fly to Pisa and go by rail to Sestri Levante.

Local Travel: It is possible to get a train from Genoa to Sestri Levante, and then a bus to Varese Ligure. The total cost is about £20. It is also possible to hire cars at Genoa Airport. Local travel details can be confirmed closer to the date.

Charles Watkins, Susanne Seymour (Nottingham) and Mark Riley (Exeter).

4.3 Rural Geography Research Group: Second Meeting of Anglo-German Rural Geographers *Rural Multi-functionality: perspectives from policy-making, implementation and practice*, Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle, 3– 6 July, 2004.

Following on from the successful first meeting of Anglo-German rural geographers at the University of Bayreuth in September 2002, the Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle is hosting a second meeting next summer.

The meeting will focus on rural geography research into the multi-functionality of rural areas from policy-making, implementation and practice perspectives. It will comprise paper sessions; a workshop session aimed at developing relationships and opportunities for future collaborative research in Britain, Germany and the wider EU; and, a one day fieldtrip that provides a chance to view and experience rural development in the most remote rural area in England. Like the first meeting, this meeting provides an informal forum for debating and sharing ideas. Papers from

postgraduates and researchers beginning their academic careers are particularly welcome.

Papers that relate to one or a number of the following areas (specifically with regard to Britain and / or Germany, or other EU countries in comparison with Britain and / or Germany) are sought.

- The rural economy
- The rural environment and amenity
- Rural policy, governance and regulation
- Rural actors, networks and agency.

For further information and to express interest in submitting a paper, please contact one of the conference convenors:

Johanne Allinson, Centre for Rural Economy, Department of Agricultural Economics and Food Marketing, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. Tel: 0191 2228888. Email johanne.allinson@ncl.ac.uk

Olivia Wilson, De Montfort University Bedford, 37 Lansdowne Road, Bedford MK40 2BZ. Tel: 01234 793409. Email ojwilson@dmu.ac.uk

Deadline for offers of papers: 30 April, 2004.

4.4 International Geographic Union, 15 – 20 August, 2004, Glasgow

Sustainable Rural Systems

Economy, society and environment comprise the three main dimensions of sustainable development, but too often they are considered separately. This Conference Session will include papers relating to the interaction of the three dimensions in the context of rural systems, and thereby will embrace a wide range of topics. These will include:

- globalisation and re-regulation in sustainable food production
- conservation and sustainability
- the development of sustainable rural communities
- sustainable rural-urban interactions
- examinations of sustainability relating to issues of social welfare, exclusion, employment and provision of rural services.

There will be opportunities for papers to address the basis for both sustainable and unsustainable development with respect to these topics, the remedial policies being pursued, and evaluations of these policies. Both general and case studies from a variety of rural systems in Developed and Developing Countries will be welcomed.

Deadline for submission of papers is 15 November, 2003.

Organiser: Prof Guy M. Robinson, School of Geography, Kingston University, Surrey UK. (g.robinson@kingston.ac.uk).

Critical Reflections on Theory in Rural Geography

In a review paper in 1980, Paul Cloke described rural geography as having a 'Cinderella complex', feeling dowdy and unloved since it had fallen from its erstwhile central place within the discipline of geography. However, as perhaps Cloke anticipated, Cinderella did eventually go to the ball and she lived happily ever after. Is this the story of rural geography over the past quarter century? More specifically, has the marriage of rural geography to Prince Theory been a successful one? The aim of this session is to explore critically and reflectively the place of 'theory' within rural studies today. How has theoretical insight been deployed within rural geography? Where has this been successful and where has it been more

problematic? What is the legacy of such pivotal theory-led movements as postmodernism and the cultural turn to rural geography?

Exploring some of these questions is the theme of this session. Please send potential paper titles and abstracts of up to 150 words, preferably by email, to:
Dr Keith Halfacree, Department of Geography, University of Wales Swansea, Swansea SA2 8PP (K.H.Halfacree@swansea.ac.uk).

Deadline: 10 November, 2003.

New and Emerging Researchers in Rural Geography

Organised by the Rural Geography Research Group / Postgraduate Forum

This session offers new and emerging researchers the opportunity to present their research in a non-threatening and supportive environment. The session is open to postgraduate students presenting initial findings from their first research projects. Papers are therefore invited on any aspect of rural geography.

For further information please contact Matthew Offord matthew.offord@bbc.co.uk, or Jessica Sellick js0820@bristol.ac.uk. Please submit an abstract to Matthew and Jessica by 15 November, 2003.

5. RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Beesley, K.B., Millward, H., Ilbery, B. and Harrington, L. (Eds.) (2003) *The New Countryside: Geographic Perspectives on Rural Change*, Rural Development Institute: Brandon University, Manitoba and Saint Mary's University, Canada.

Throughout the developed world, rural areas are in economic, social and visible transition. Resource industries are typically in decline, while in the orbit of large towns and cities, the countryside is increasingly a functional extension of the city: hamlets and villages mushroom into bedroom suburbs, back roads suffer a rash of 'exurban' housing, golf-courses take over farmland, and trailer parks or industry blight the landscape. Even beyond commuting range, the countryside is increasingly in thrall to the cities, as land is valued more highly for recreation, tourism, retirement, or natural processes, and less highly for the production of food or fibre.

The 31 papers in this volume were written by leading rural geographers from the United States, Britain and Canada. They address a wide range of "New Countryside" issues, of interest to planners, policy makers, land managers and researchers. The focus is primarily on socio-economic change, but environmental and technological issues are also considered. As the contributors frequently suggest, there are few easy solutions to the problems and crises affecting the marginal fringe, the urban fringe, and the agricultural heartland. Nevertheless, many policy options are available, and there is a great deal of experience to draw on. The challenge is to balance competing needs and visions, and fashion countrysides which are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Contents in brief: Issues, Opportunities and Production: threats and opportunities in the new countryside, the changing macro-geography of American agriculture, restructuring and change in the resource industries, productivism and post-productivism, agricultural specialisation and diversification, forest policy.

Re-orienting Production and Services: quality products and services, development in lagging regions, cultural and agri-tourism, commodification of the countryside.

Dimensions of Social Change: rural labour markets, new and old rural economies, internet access in rural areas, 'back-to-the-land' resettlement, impacts of modernity in traditional communities.

Policy, Programs and Social Issues: perceptions versus reality of economic and social conditions, governance, gender relations, exclusion and the young, sex and teens in small towns, rural crime and policing, transport for the elderly and disabled.

The Evolving Rural-Urban Fringe: the new residential frontier, impacts of suburbanisation on the landscape, scenic protection, the drivers of exurban development, farmland preservation strategies.

The volume costs \$59.39 (1-4 units) or \$46.01 (5 or more units), including shipping and handling and GST Canadian Federal Tax.

To order: Please send your order to Bev Lischka, Rural development Institute, Lower Concourse, McMaster Hall, 270 – 18th Street, Brandon University, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, R7A 6A9. Fax: 204-725-0364. Email: lischkab@brandonu.ca

Gallent, N., Shucksmith, M and Tewdwr-Jones, M. (Eds) (2003) *Housing in the European Countryside: Rural Pressure and Policy in Western Europe*, Routledge: London.

There are many facets of housing pressure in rural areas, not all of which are the consequences of economic or market forces. Changing demographics and migration; cultural and societal attitudes towards rural and urban living and property acquisition; land use planning regulatory controls; the difficulty of securing affordable housing provision; a desirability for urban containment and countryside protection; the decline of traditional rural employment; the closure or absence of rural services; community uncertainty and social exclusion; and the constant environmental and social pressure placed on rural areas by tourism and economic development, will each affect the prosperity of rural dwellers and affect rural space and residential property. Many of these issues will be evident in most countries; other countries may experience one set of pressure problems.

Housing in the European Countryside provides an overview of the housing pressures and policy challenges facing Europe, while highlighting critical differences. By drawing on contemporary research work of leading authors in the fields of housing studies, rural geography and planning, the book offers an introduction to housing issues across the European countryside for those who have hitherto been unexposed to such concerns, and who wish to gain some basic insight.

This in-depth review of housing pressure in the European countryside will reveal both the form, nature and variety of problems now being experienced in different parts of Europe, in addition to outlining policy solutions that are being provided by member states and other agencies in meeting the rural housing challenge at this time and in the years ahead.

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. Theories and levels of comparative analysis. Part 1. Cohesive Cultures, Regulatory Regimes. 3. Norway. 4. Sweden. 5. The Netherlands. 6. France. Part 2. Atomistic Cultures, Laissez-Faire Regimes. 7. Italy. 8. Spain. 9. Ireland. Part 3. Devisive Cultures, Unstable Regimes. 10. England. 11. Scotland. 12. Wales. 13. Housing Pressure and Policy in Europe: A Power Regime Perspective. 14. Conclusions. References. Index.

Full Contributors: Chris Allen, Elizabeth Auclair, Ed Conway, Bill Edwards, Joe Finnerty, Gard Folkesdotter, Donal Guerin, Lars Gulbrandsen, Keith Hoggart, Saskia Heins, Cathal O'Connell, Liliana Padovani, Maneul Valenxuela, Didier Vanoni, Luciano Vettoreto.

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Dr Nick Gallent, Senior Lecturer in Planning, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, Wates House, 22 Gordon Street, London, WC1H 0QB

6. NEW GRANTS AWARDED

6.1

Title: Learning Tourism (a project for knowledge transfer to SMEs in the tourism and leisure sectors in North West England).

Recipient: Dr Gordon Clark (Lancaster University)

Value: £495,000 (European Regional Development Fund)

Duration: 33 months (1 June 2002 to 31 March 2005).

6.2

Title: International Centre for the Uplands - Cumbria

Recipients: Dr Gordon Clark and Jacqueline Whiteside (Lancaster University)

Value: £736,500 (Cumbria County Council, Rural Regeneration Company (Cumbria) and Lake District National Park Authority)

Duration: 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2007.

7. GARDEN HISTORY SEMINARS

An interdisciplinary MA in Garden History has been taught at Birkbeck since 2000. There are many overlaps with geography - especially historical geography. They have just been given the green light to hold seminars at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and would be grateful to hear from anyone in the Rural Geography Research Group who may be interested in giving a paper or in suggesting themes they would like to be explored. Please contact the Garden History Convenor: Dr Janet Waymark, 01689 824542 or email janetwaymark@yahoo.co.uk.

8. RGRG DATABASE ON PhD PROJECTS ON RURAL TOPICS

The RGRG would like to compile a database of PhD projects currently being undertaken or recently completed on rural issues to add to its web site. If you are, or have been, a student or an advisor of a PhD project on a rural topic, please could you send brief details of each project to Stephen Essex (sessex@plymouth.ac.uk). Please could you send the following details:

- Name of postgraduate
- Institution/contact address/email
- Dates (of funding/completion)
- Funding body
- Advisors
- Summary of research (one paragraph only - 300 to 500 words)

9. THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE RGRG COMMITTEE

Following the AGM at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in London (3-5 September, 2003), the membership of the RGRG Committee is:

Chair	Prof Henry Buller, University of Gloucestershire (2006).
Secretary	Dr Annie Hughes, Kingston University (2005).
Treasurer	Dr Richard Yarwood, University of Plymouth (2004).
Ordinary Members	
Membership and Prizes Officer	Dr Carol Morris, University of Gloucs. (2005).

Newsletter Website Officer Dr Stephen Essex, University of Plymouth (2005).
Professor Guy Robinson, Kingston University (2006).
Dr Keith Halfacree, University of Wales, Swansea. (2004).
Dr Darren Smith, University of Brighton. (2005).
Dr Nigel Walford, Kingston University. (2004).

Postgraduate Members

Matthew Offord, BBC Television Centre (2006).
Jessica Sellick, University of Bristol (2006).

10. ITEMS FOR SPRING 2004 NEWSLETTER

Articles, letters and comments and other items for inclusion in the Autumn Newsletter should be sent to: Stephen Essex, RGRG Newsletter Editor, School of Geography, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, PL4 8AA by 30 March 2004; Tel. +44 (0)1752 233080; Fax: +44 (0)1752 233054; e-mail: s.essex@plymouth.ac.uk.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

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

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 Stephen Essex, School of Geography, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AA. email: sessex@plymouth.ac.uk

The **RGRG Web site** (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/rqsg>) 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 Stephen Essex (University of Plymouth) preferably by email: s.essex@plymouth.ac.uk.

STOP PRESS!!
ESRC Transdisciplinary Seminars
Competition: Approaches to Sustainable Farmland Management (2004-2005)

Call for Participants

The School of Geography at the University of Nottingham in conjunction with Nottingham Institute for Rural Research (NIRR), is co-ordinating an ESRC transdisciplinary seminar programme, aimed at broadening and deepening discussion about the idea of sustainability as it relates to processes of farmland management. The series is running between 2004 and 2005. We would encourage those interested in participating to contact the Seminar Series co-ordinator (see below).

As the major land use of Britain, how farmland is managed remains critical to the biosphere, landscape, culture and economy of the country. This transdisciplinary Seminar Series aims to allow researchers and practitioners from diverse backgrounds to explore different interpretations of sustainability and their implications for different forms of farmland management. The seminars will contribute to debates in the rural policy arena concerning measuring and monitoring sustainable development, evaluating technologies and management approaches in relation to different aspects and scales of sustainability, approaches to 'multi-functional' agricultural landscapes and targeting state support.

The Seminar Series aims to draw in a wide range of participants from scientific and social science backgrounds, including postgraduates, established research scientists, and key policymakers from relevant NGOs (including businesses) and Government departments. The findings from the Seminar Series will be published in both policy-relevant and academic journals. Seminars will be held in a range of institutions to enhance the Series' transdisciplinary nature and context-specific sensitivity. A special website is under development which will include details of the Series programme and outputs.

Seminar Programme

- 1. Sustainability and Farmland Management** (School of Geography University of Nottingham) 13-14 January 2004.
- 2. Information and Knowledge for Sustainable Farmland Management** (Silsoe College) March 2004.
- 3. European Perspectives on Sustainable Farmland Management** (Scottish venue to be announced) August 2004.
- 4. Ethical Production and Protection** (Royal Geographical Society) Dec 2004.
- 5. Farmland Management Systems** (Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester) Spring 2005.
- 6. New Directions in Sustainable Farmland Management** (University of Nottingham) Summer 2005.

For further information contact: Dr Susanne Seymour, Seminar Series Co-ordinator, School of Geography, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD. Tel: 0115 9515453; email: susanne.seymour@nottingham.ac.uk