

*Looking at the rural, thinking about the global: New challenges and opportunities for rural studies and rural agency*

Whereas European society is now believed to be mostly urban and differences between rural and urban spaces and lifestyles are said by some to be dissolved, many academics have nevertheless rejected the idea of 'doing away with rural (and rurality)'. In fact, the scope of rural studies has expanded at the same time that society has become more and more complex and *the local* and *the global* have been acknowledged as intrinsically intertwined frames of action. This new conception of society (and the consequent underlying social processes) leads to new conceptions of rurality and the topics entitled to be tackled by rural studies, giving birth to a wide diversity of research topics for rural sociology. These research topics give evidence of the intrinsic relationship between that observed in rural space and global processes.

For instance, when we look at the emergence of new systems of values in postmodern societies, we may observe their crystallization into aspects such as rural tourism, neo-ruralism, environmentalism, back-to-the-land movements, new identities in rural spaces, countrified lifestyles, consumption of organic products, and so forth. Closely related, if we direct our attention to the new economic demands and the search for a new model of development, issues such as the agro-energy farming and the production of green energies, environmental sustainability and development, rural housing, new agricultural paradigms, and agro-food industry and production system may arise. Similarly, if we emphasize the administration and political systems, issues related to rural governance, the increasing power of experts in rural planning and agricultural policy, etc., become aspects of paramount academic interest.

The aim of the summer school will be to reflect on these aspects in a friendly and constructive atmosphere, having as the starting point students' projects and experiences. In order to do this, students are expected to submit in advance a working paper based either on their doctoral or postdoctoral research. Papers should reflect, as much as possible, the stage of the research: objectives, methodology, data, and discussion (depending on the stage of the project). Students will present their papers for general discussion with the rest of participants, and take an active part in the discussion of other students' projects.

The overall debate around the students' papers will have three objectives:

- To contribute new points of view on the students' projects;

- To delineate the links between the local expression of students' research and intertwined global processes;
- To explore the issues of rural agency and whether any dividing line between rural and urban is apparent from the students' projects.

Overall, the summer school will provide students with a broader perspective on the diversity of issues tackled by contemporary European rural studies and consequently place their own work within this wider context.

Please, send abstracts c. 500 words and CV by 15 May 2010 to [mjrivera@iesa.csic.es](mailto:mjrivera@iesa.csic.es) (María Jesús Rivera-Escribano).

Further information will be available at [www.iesa.csic.es](http://www.iesa.csic.es) in mid-February.