

Session title: Rurality in the eye of the (urban) beholder? (Re)constructing rurality through urban imaginaries

Session code: IRSA_28

Session abstract: From a cultural point of view, the rural is increasingly conceived as dependent on the urban. The cultural images of rurality and the representations and discourses of the rural are increasingly produced by urban institutions and not by rural inhabitants themselves. Many rural areas around Europe are open to a diverse set of urban (often tourism- and leisure related) consumptions which are strongly based on stereotypes of rurality. These aspects have a growing influence on the ways rural areas are presenting themselves as attractive spaces for urban consumptions and competing for the attention and selection of urban dwellers particularly by making their rural 'brands' commercially attractive.

This session seeks contributions dealing with urban representations and imageries of rural areas and rurality. This addresses a broad field which includes cultural and social representations, political representations, idylls and counter-idylls, visual images and artistic representations and ways of rural marketing and self-marketing. The contributions may also discuss relations to rural politics and to the problem of power and expert knowledge: who is entitled and to produce culturally valid images of the rural?

The session seeks to invite contributions including – but not limited to – the following topics:

- what images of the rural are produced by urban-based actors and institutions?
- what are the conflicting images and representations of rurality and how do these conflicts manifest themselves?
- what values and urban expectations towards the rural are implied in rural-oriented policies?
- what are the visual images associated with rurality and what functions do they serve for their producers?
- how is the rural reflected and presented to urban populations in art?
- what images of the rural are produced by rural marketing and self-marketing?
- what are the power structures concealed in the imageries and representations of the rural?

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