

The Rural Geography Conference 2020, Montpellier, France

organised by the French National Committee of Geography (CNFG), commissions on "Rural Geography" and "Geography of Commerce", and the International Geographical Union (IGU), commission on "Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering" (AGLE)

June 3rd-5th, 2020

Call for Sessions

Rethinking rural-urban interactions through food and land use issues

Historically, trade has shaped rural-urban interactions. Specifically, since the Medieval times, food trade has played a key role in these interactions: cities combine short and long-distance supply chains (Marin & Virloulet, 2003), and they often exert their domination over the countryside (Steel, 2008, Daviron et al., 2017). While rural exodus is still relevant in the Global South (Liu, et al, 2010), in the North it accompanied industrialization until the middle of the 20th century. Urbanization has also reorganized food supply chains (regional specializations, national markets and exportation), while promoting regional gastronomies (de Planhol, 1987).

However, for a century, the countryside has no longer been considered primarily as a resource for the city, although this conception has declined at various rates across the world. The end of rural depopulation in some countries, industrialization of agriculture, and urban growth have fostered a growing disconnection between the agrifood sector and globalized urban economies. Cities are sprawling over peri-urban and rural areas. As rural areas provide residential amenities, allowed by increased commuting, teleworking, recreational development and rural tourism (Perrier-Cornet, 2002), cities have built new interactions with the countryside. Rural areas are also more and more recognized as natural reserves and for the ecosystems services they provide to urban society (Kroll et al., 2012).

More recently, food has come back on the urban agenda, both in Global North and Global South cities. Social movements advocate for more local, environmental-friendly, and healthy agri-food systems (Morgan & Soninno, 2010) in response to crises leading to food insecurity and health issues (Heynen et al., 2012). Demographic forecasts, migrations, and climate change will further impact the food system (Schmidhuber & Tubiello, 2007), compelling us to adopt a prospective approach on food security issues and on the resilience of territories (HLPE, 2017). This food concern is not limited to megacities, but also applies to medium and small cities, rural and periurban areas, in the Global South as well as in the Global North (Rymarsky, Thirion, 1997).

By considering urban-rural linkages as a scientific and political field (Mathieu, 2017, Westlund, 2018), geographers can make an original contribution to the food field. The goal of this call for sessions is to identify and shape geographical thematic tracks linking city-countryside studies and the food issue.

These thematic sessions may address (but are not limited to):

* **The access to natural resources needed for food production**, especially land, soils, and water, in the context of climate change. These resources are coveted for urban use as well as for agricultural use, for both food and non-food production. Sessions are therefore expected to address the issue on how land and water use is regulated, through the lens of urban-rural relations, particularly for nourishing agriculture reconnected to the urban market. Contributions will focus on how land, soils, and water, which are non-renewable resources, are coveted by antithetical demands, hence generating **conflicts of uses** between housing, industry, service activities, transport infrastructures, food raw materials and energy production, and natural lands. Contributions on how to implement **public policies** and coherent actions that can improve resource usage and ensure food security will be also appreciated.

* **Spatial interactions between cities and countryside, between food production and consumption areas**. Sessions are expected on the new spatial dynamics of food that emerge from the “**geographies of flows**“: for example, short food supply chains linking rural and urban areas, or food hubs dedicated to alternative food networks. Contributions are also expected on how the **geography of migration** influences food supply and production spaces as well as food practices. Sessions may deal with the geography of diasporas, the dynamics of markets related to the migrations of farmers, collectors and foodstuffs sellers, or the back-to-the-land movement, with urban dwellers moving to the countryside to become farmers or new rural entrepreneurs. **Urban metabolism** approaches may shed light on circularity of nutrient flows, the spatial footprint of food systems, and on what historical transformations of nutrient flows tell us about the interactions between cities and their rural hinterlands (Billen et al., 2009).

* **Spatial inequalities of food access**. Sessions will address the uneven access to food and agriculture for vulnerable groups, including those affected by the poverty-malnutrition-disease cycle. These **inequalities of access** may affect urban, rural, agricultural or non-agricultural populations. Geographers analyze food inequalities by situating them within the urban dynamics of gentrification and segregation and linking them to food production regimes. They can also characterize the diversity of **food environments or ‘foodscapes’**, especially those which provide access to healthy food through physical and economic access to food retailing (either for consumption at home or outside), or through home food production (urban gardening and breeding) and other informal food practices such as donations, self-picking or scavenging. Inaccessibility may also relate to rural settlements’ decline, to urban neighborhoods’ marginalization, or to the poor working conditions of agrifood workers. All these approaches open up a reflection on **spatial inequalities**, as well as on the specific role of agriculture in food justice issues. The factors explaining these inequalities and the solutions that can be implemented to reduce them will be examined.

* **Social movements, public actions and local food governance**. The concern around the relocalization of food leads to new relationships among the food system’s actors. Sessions are expected to analyze the process by which these actors re-territorialize the food system, knowing that there is a wide range of actors operating at several scales in various spheres (private, public, associative) so as to foster local food chains. Implicitly, these emerging **new forms of local governance** are supposed to promote more sustainable food systems. More broadly, this new

food governance may result in a reorganization of local public action. In this context, the food question can be considered as a **territorial policy**, the objective of which is to build linkages among local food actors (farmers, processors, consumers, public and associative actors) and to advocate for their participation in public decisions.

* **The representations of what is urban and what is rural as reframed by food.** Food also changes the values associated with urban and rural areas. Sessions will shed light on these **cultural geography questions**, dealing both with the values and representations of cities and the countryside, and with the values of food, gastronomy and land. The re-localization of food blurs borders, because while the countryside is urbanizing, the city is witnessing the redevelopment of urban agriculture. Besides, the public valorization of "healthy and local" food modifies the representations of traditional "good food", while responding to cosmopolitan consumers' demand for various "ethnic" products. Political actors also embed these food trends into territorial marketing. Sessions may explore how to rethink the spatial and food categories in face of these re-localization dynamics, within the context of globalization.

Proposals must be sent by September 30, 2019

at the following address: jrm2020@inra.fr

Instructions

- The proposal, in word format, will not exceed 500 words and will include a dozen key bibliographic references.
- It must include your first and last names, position, institution.
- You will specify if this session must be run in French, English, or both.
- The steering committee will make a selection. The selected sessions will be included in the conference's single call for abstracts (to be launched in October 2019).

Steering committee (also members of the Scientific committee)

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