



RURAL SOCIOLOGY GROUP

2011-2012



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

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Preface

In May 2007 the earth's population became more urban than rural. This process of urbanization will accelerate in the decades to come: most of the growth in the world population – to 9 billion people in 2050 – will occur in urban areas. However, this does not mean that urban areas are or will become more important than rural areas. On the contrary, they have always relied heavily on each other, and will become even more mutually reliant during an era of rapid urban population growth. Cities will continue to need resources such as food, fibre, clean water, nature, biodiversity and recreational space, as well as the people and communities that produce and provide these products and services. Hence, key questions for the coming decades are how, where and by whom these products and services for the urban area will be produced and provided, and if and how this can be done in manner that is considered to be socially, economically and ecologically sustainable and ethically sound.

Rural areas will play an increasingly important role in resource provision for urban areas, which is already reflected by the rapid growth of a multitude of rural development initiatives aimed at reconnecting city and countryside: short food supply chains, community supported agriculture, green care, nature and landscape management, farm and countryside education, rural tourism, et cetera. Although rural initiatives in these domains are flourishing, we are simultaneously witnessing processes of

industrialization, standardization and concentration in global food supply chains. Characteristic for the beginning of the 21st century is also the growing involvement of cities and metropolitan regions in the development and implementation of urban agricultural and food policies; especially towards food-related health, social and environmental problems.

Rural sociologists face the challenging task of making sense of these processes and its drivers and consequences; how individuals relate to each other and their environment in the context of the food, energy, climate and health crises the world is currently facing. Given the daunting task of achieving adequate welfare and resource security levels for all 9 billion earthlings by 2050, rural sociology will remain an important field for a substantial time to come.

Prof.dr. Han Wiskerke
Chair and Professor of Rural Sociology at Wageningen University



Rural Sociology Group

Mission

The Rural Sociology Group focuses on the complex whole of transformation processes in rural and metropolitan regions and in the food supply chain. We investigate 'place-making' as the coordination of processes by actors and institutions in time and space, at local to supra-national level. Our staff members study and analyse these transformation processes from an interpretative (constructivist) and predominantly micro-sociological perspective, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods. A common denominator in empirical research, analysis and theoretical development is the focus on differential dynamics and processes of institutionalization. Our research is based on a variety of theories, such as endogenous development, actor-network theory and political sociology. Our research projects are often of a multi- or interdisciplinary nature, embody an international and comparative dimension and typically are carried out in close collaboration with stakeholders.

Research

Our research programme can be characterised as follows:

- **A strong connection with the field.** Our research is a combination of

theoretically inspired empirical research and empirically grounded theory building.

- **Comparative, diverse and holistic.** Distinguishing between the contextual and the more general factors exerting influence on rural and regional development practices and processes.
- **Dynamic.** Linking the present to the past, since contemporary phenomena and their robustness or fragility can only be understood by tracing their development over the course of time.
- **A threefold relevance.** Our research should (i) Contribute to the scientific development of our field and our scientific discipline(s), (ii) Be relevant to rural and regional policy and iii) Provide support for people and organizations whose day-to-day work is to implement rural and regional development.

Changing focus

Throughout the 1990's our research programme investigated the diversity, dynamics, impact and potentials of agricultural and rural development practices in Europe by means of a multidisciplinary comparative approach. In recent years the Rural Sociology Group is gradually changing its focus from agrarian based rural development to include non-agricul-

The story of...



Wiebke Wellbrock

PhD candidate Regional learning and Innovation

Wiebke turned to sociology during her MSc thesis in Animal Production Systems when she discovered that animal welfare is predominantly a social problem:

"Coming from the natural sciences, the sociological perspective is in itself a new intellectual challenge for me. At the same time I can see that being able to take multiple perspectives and delving into a topic by reading literature across the range of disciplines is a benefit in my work. My PhD is part of a European project that looks at the design and effectiveness of accessibility and support systems that connect people, policy and knowledge experts. I have learnt that it is important that people know how to access support mechanisms available to them if they are not to be left out! It can be challenging to work within the dynamics of a large and international team, but this also allows you to develop all-round skills at personal, scientific and professional level. The best thing about this department is that if you have a good idea and a plan as to how to realize it, I have experienced people as only ever being very encouraging."

tural issues and actors, thereby encompassing rural and regional development in a broader sense. This change was inspired first of all by new theoretical interests and emerging themes in the social sciences:

- A resurgence of interest in the region, with specific attention for 'regions of knowledge' and 'learning regions';
- Socio-economic inequalities and socio-spatial stratification;
- Urban-rural relations and interactions;
- Social movements, with specific attention for regionalisation as a countertendency;
- Social capital, and
- Food as an integrated domain, linking food to public concerns such as public health, environmental quality, employment, social inclusion and quality of life.

Secondly, our changing focus was driven by changes in the socio-political context of our research domain, including

- the regionalization of rural policies in Europe;
- the evanescence of the urban-rural distinction in contemporary Western societies and the associated transition from rural to regional development policies, and
- the growing involvement of cities and metropolitan regions in the development and implementation of food and rural development policies, in particular relating to food-related health, social and environmental problems.

Education

MSc programmes with Rural Sociology

The Rural Sociology Group offers courses at Bachelor level, as well as courses, minors, theses and internships at Masters level. There are four MSc programmes at Wageningen University within which various Rural Sociology courses are offered, and students following these programmes can also do a Master thesis and internship with the Rural Sociology Group:

- Sociology of Development in the MSc International Development Studies
- Health & Society in the MSc Management, Economics and Consumer Studies
- Gastronomy in the MSc Food Technology
- Consumer & Market in the MSc Organic Agriculture

Minor with Rural Sociology

Apart from following one of these four MSc programmes, there is ample possibility to study Rural Sociology themes in other ways. We have students from a range of MSc programmes, including more technical or economic programmes, pursuing interesting links with the educational programme on offer at the Rural Sociology Group. Some students - especially short-stay foreign students such as Erasmus students -

follow single elective courses with Rural Sociology. A combination of specific courses and for instance a minor thesis enables you to design a personalised minor on a theme of your choice. Here we lay out 3 examples of thematic minors with rural sociology (note that these are only examples; you can create your own minor consisting of any set of RSO courses!).

Examples of major and minor themes that can be pursued with rural sociology, according to Master programmes at Wageningen University.

Themes	Major				Minor					
	MFT	MID	MHS	MOA	MNH	MDR	MLP	MLE	MAS	MES
Sustainable Food Networks	•	•	•	•	•					•
Regional Development		•		•		•	•	•		•
Multifunctional Agriculture		•	•	•					•	

MFT: Food Technology
MID: International Development Studies
MHS: Health and Society
MOA: Organic Agriculture
MNH: Nutrition and Health

MDR: Development and Rural Innovation
MLP: Landscape architecture and Planning
MLE: Leisure, Tourism and Environment
MAS: Animal Sciences
MES: Environmental Sciences

THEME 1 Sustainable Food Networks

Food is a basic human need. Since 2007, the world has seen recurring food riots over food prices. We are dependent on a centralised and global food system over which we have little influence. Fluctuating food and fuel prices and the increase in urban food-related health and environmental problems are raising an urgent need to devise more effective agro-food policies and cultural practices around food. Because food is so culturally embedded in the routines and values of people, the Rural Sociology group is especially interested in the territoriality of food and its socio-cultural meaning for regional economies, as well as how food production and consumption is framed by agriculture, health, environment and spatial planning policies.

Several RSO courses touch on the questions: What are the sustainable foodscapes of the future? What can we learn from the emergence of new initiatives and ideas? A foodscape describes the social construction that captures and constitutes cultural ideals and the social organisation of how food relates to places, people and food systems (Johnston et al, 2009). The study of alternative foodscapes reveals new ideologies, such as a re-thinking economic growth. It also investigates practices such as direct producer-consumer relations or urban agriculture and methodologies such as using public purchase power for sustainability. Food serves as a lens to understand the forefront of wider ideational shifts and value orientations in society where the neoliberal market doctrine is losing credibility.

Examples MSc-theses Food networks

Past MSc theses within this theme have included the following topics:

- Food movements striving for social change
- The cultural processes and social organisation in allotment gardens
- The network formation and policy process of an emerging urban food strategy

Example Minor Sustainable Food Networks

RSO-33306	Food, Health & Society: an integrated socio-political perspective
ENP-31806	Globalization and Sustainability of Food Production and Consumption
RSO-22306	Food Culture and Customs
RSO-33806	Social Dimensions of Health & Bodily Care
RSO-54806	Capita Selecta Advanced Reading in Food Culture
RSO-70427	Minor thesis

THEME 2 Regional development

People have a ‘sense of place’ and are attached to places, such that places are not just objects for policy planning but have meaning, identities and stories. Although patterns of work, consumption, communication and recreation are becoming ‘more placeless’ and globalised, places are important as meeting points where people interact socially or business related. In this way places can be seen as social arenas where people defend the identity or autonomy of their place. Examples are groups protesting against large wind power parks, citizens organizing communal gardens, or communities making their own sustainable development plan. At different levels of governance we can witness an increasing emphasis on place-based policy that builds on identity, cultural history and natural assets of places as a development strategy. Examples are local products to add value in the food production chain, branding strategies to increase regional competitiveness and the EU Cohesion policy.

The Rural Sociology Group is especially interested in how people contribute to, construct, participate and perceive place-making, and how these social processes relate to food, energy, climate, migration or poverty issues that unfold in places. The group teaches and conducts research on themes such as the role of leadership, values, identities and strategies in place-based development, public-private arrangements, capacity-building in communities and self-organization of rural initiatives.

The story of...



Lise Alix

MSc International Development Studies (MID)
Lise tells us about the lessons and challenges of her internship:

“Initially I wanted a practical internship in which I could understand how and why people set up community gardens by participating in the process. I applied to an internship opening with the Brabantse Environmental Federation who needed someone to set up a neighbourhood vegetable garden in what was considered to be a problematic neighbourhood in Tilburg. The aim was to contribute to neighbourhood social cohesion, reduce environmental impacts of food transport and make people less dependent on supermarkets. There were so many challenges; I had to lead neighbourhood meetings, had to allocate tasks and resolve disputes among members; and I didn’t know anything about technical aspects of vegetable gardens. The most exciting part of the internship will be to see whether the neighbourhood will manage the garden without me being there to lead the project. For my thesis I hope to embed my experience in theory, reflect on the wider societal relevance of such projects, and deal with the apparent paradox that while there is huge demand for participating in neighbourhood gardens, there is no money to implement these schemes.”

The story of...



Venelin Simeonov

MSc Development and Rural Innovation (MDR)

Shortly after taking a Rural Sociology course, Venelin told us about the relevance of rural sociology and his

motivation to enrol in MDR:

"In Bulgaria we have six big cities and the rest is empty; there is very little by the way of facilities and amenities for people in the country-side. The idea of adding value to origin food does not exist in Bulgaria despite the fact that there is vast potential. It would be an excellent way to connect the rural and urban areas, by bringing regulation, spurring development and connecting urban consumers to rural localities. Currently people in Bulgarian rural areas are not proud because they don't realize what an asset local products are.

Exposure to sociology courses has made me far more critical than I used to be. Before I came here, I saw everything in black and white. I had the natural science approach: I thought if something is not good it is not accepted, while if it is good, it will be accepted. Now I know that it depends on presentation, history, culture, context; I can see good and bad in everything."

Examples MSc-theses Regional Development

Students interested in regional development can think of MSc thesis topics such as:

- Place-branding; the marketing of regions and development of markets
- Capacity-building and community-development in depopulated places and shrinking economies.
- Agricultural nature and landscape associations maintaining environmental qualities

Example Minor Regional Development

RSO-31806	Understanding Rural Development: Theories, Practices and Methodologies
RDS-30306	Sociological Theories of Rural Transformation
RDS-32806	Sociology in Development: towards a critical perspective
RSO-50806	Capita Selecta Sustainable Place-Based Development
RSO-70427	Minor thesis

For more examples of theses and student experiences, visit our blog
www.ruralsociologywageningen.wordpress.com

THEME 3 Multifunctional Agriculture

Nature and landscape management, care-provision, educational services, high quality food processing, agri-tourism, farm-shops, sustainable energy production; these and many other activities are increasingly emerging from farm enterprises and representative of recent trends towards multifunctional agriculture. The rise of multifunctional agriculture (MFA) can be understood as a response to changing societal demands with respect to agricultural activities. It is an alternative to the agricultural modernisation model that is characterised by a focus on an increase of productivity through specialisation, intensification, scale-enlargement and standardisation of food qualities, which increasingly goes along with environmental degradation, loss of rural amenities and cultural distinctiveness as well as dropping farm-incomes. In contrast, multifunctional agriculture symbolises a more integrated and sustainable valorisation of rural resources (natural, cultural, social, human), grounded upon alternative structuring principles such as economies of scope and synergies, new rural and urban-rural relationships and changing professional identities in agriculture. Research learns that these activities contribute significantly to farm incomes and further agricultural development, in particular in cases where various activities are combined and are mutually reinforcing.

Examples MSc-theses Multifunctional Agriculture

The Rural Sociology Group perceives multifunctional agriculture as a key aspect of transition pathways towards more sustainable rural development which requires further analysis at different levels.

Students interested in this theme can think of master thesis topics that take the following perspectives:

- Rural-urban interaction. The role of rural newcomers, commuters, urban dwellers, administrations, etc.
- Territory-based collective action. Collaborations between farmers, rural entrepreneurs and other stakeholders
- New forms of business organization. How do family farms transition to more diverse business organizations?

Example Minor Multifunctional Agriculture

RSO-30806	The Sociology of Farming and Rural Life
RDS-30306	Sociological Theories of Rural Transformation
RSO-31806	Understanding Rural Development: Theories, Practices and Methodologies
ENP-31806	Globalization and Sustainability of Food Production and Consumption
YPS-30306	Analysis and Management of Sustainable Organic Production Chains
RSO-50806	Capita Selecta Rural Development
RSO-70427	Minor thesis

The story of...



Ignacio Lopez Moreno

PhD candidate in Food Labelling Strategies
Ignacio holds an MSc in Anthropology of Development of the University of Essex. He lives and breathes sociology:

"In my work I get totally involved, I become another actor in the system that I am analysing. It is totally subjective in that by asking questions, I promote my own values for regional development. It is a way for me to do something for my land; you have to give something back! My research compares responses and dynamics of local food production and labelling systems in the Netherlands and Spain, but ultimately my aim is to recreate opportunities for a future for agriculture. Farmers tend to see farming as obvious, but my position as researcher allows me to show them the uniqueness of their innovations. It is challenging socially as well as intellectually: you have to speak two different languages, you have to become a human being rather than an outsider to people, and at the same time you have to imagine the territory of a product in social rather than physical space. This perspective is important because without the social side of reality, science would be incomplete."

MSc internship with the Rural Sociology Group

There are various possibilities for doing an internship with RSO. We have many contacts with people in public and private bodies, as well as with people in the field and non-profit organisations. For inspiration, visit our blog (www.ruralsociologywageningen.wordpress.com) where past students have written about their experiences. For more information on current possibilities, admission criteria and procedures contact the education co-ordinators (education.rso@wur.nl).

IP's and Joint MSc degrees

Yearly the Rural Sociology Group participates in two Intensive Programs on Rural Development and Interdisciplinary approach to food. The location of these IPs varies year by year and takes place somewhere in Europe. Participation in these IPs is open to all rural sociology students. Besides these short European adventures, we also participate in the European Master programme of Rural Development. For more information on these programmes, contact the education co-ordinators (education.rso@wur.nl).

PhD opportunities

We currently have around fifteen PhD students whose nature of appointment varies between project-based research and pure research. We have PhD students pursuing sandwich PhD's in collaboration with foreign research institutions, such as the University for Development Studies (Ghana). Others are more loosely affiliated with a university overseas, such as the China Agricultural University (China). Should you be interested in pursuing a PhD with the Rural Sociology Group, our PhD openings are listed at: www.rso.wur.nl/uk/vacancies.





Courses

Regular courses offered by RSO

Sociology RSO 10306

This course is an introduction to fundamental sociological questions and concepts, as well as a primer in writing, presentation and debating within the field of sociology. Specific attention is devoted to classical sociologists, the influence of their work on modern sociology and its relevance for contemporary societal issues. A written assignment allows students to delve into selected theories covered during lectures, while practical sessions and class presentations allow students to apply basic sociological concepts to social phenomena in an interactive setting.

Animal Science in Society RSO 11303

This course focuses on the relationship and mutual influences between animal science, technology and society. Students will be able to reflect critically on ethical and societal issues surrounding animal science, including the relationship between humans and animals. The course deals with themes and topics on the intersection between society and science, such as objectivity, context dependency, values and the social and cultural meaning of animals. These themes are illustrated with current case studies in the domains of animal welfare and biotechnology. Students acquire insight into basic principles of ethical and moral dilemmas, as well as the

responsibilities of animal scientists in dealing with normative questions in a scientific and societal context.

Biosystems Engineering and Society RSO 12306

This course looks to the relationship between agriculture and technology throughout history to frame and inform current debates in agro-technology. Students gain an understanding of the drivers and consequences of developments in agro-technology, bio- resource engineering in society over time, touching on the interaction between science, technology and ethics. Through case studies, an excursion and group essay, students are asked to analyse normative aspects of science and technology by means of ethical tools and to position themselves vis-à-vis the different claims on science and technology.

Science, Technology and Society RSO 13303

This course investigates the relationship and mutual influences between (agricultural) science, technology and society in an international context. Students are asked to analyze and motivate arguments in complex societal questions in the broader field of agricultural and technical sciences, with an emphasis on the socio-technical sciences. How to deal with normative questions in a scientific and technological context, as well as the responsibilities of scientists are central themes in this respect. In

addition, students gain insight in and experience with basic principles of ethics and will practice several methods with which to deal with ethical dilemmas.

Agricultural and Rural Development: Sociological Perspectives RSO 20806

In this course, students become acquainted with the most important theories and analytical concepts to understand the dynamics of development in agriculture, food and rural areas across the globe. Ample attention is paid to the relations between agrarian and rural development on the one hand and urban development on the other, as well as natural resource use in agricultural and rural development. By means of field trips, assignments, documentaries, literature and working group sessions, sociological and anthropological aspects of agricultural and rural development processes are compared in case studies from Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Policy, People and Resources in Comparative Perspective RSO 21306

Working in international development settings will confront you with the politics of projects, the unexpected ways in which people mobilize resources, and the inventive translation of opaque policies. This course touches on these topics by investigating discourses and theories on the use and abuse of participatory approaches, all within the current context of the 'crisis in legitimacy' of both political systems and development aid across the globe. Theoretically, this course introduces students to a number of key concepts in political sociology and anthropology, such as

power, legitimacy, governance, conflict and solidarity, patron-client relations, gender politics, and governmentality.

Origin Food: a Market for Identity RSO 21806

Food products with a Geographic Indication are becoming more important worldwide in both economic as well cultural terms. The course deals with a range of questions on Origin Food Products (OFP's) organised around five weekly themes: 1) Originality factors; 2) Regulation and legislation; 3) Marketing and branding; 4) Sustainability impact; and 5) Consumers' appreciation, regional gastronomy and food tourism. Next to lectures, group assignments are used to explore, analyse, assess and compare two different OFP's in parallel with the weekly themes. The highlight of the course is undoubtedly a gastronomic excursion.

Food Culture and Customs RSO 22306

Culture and custom play a large role in food production and consumption. This course investigates the symbolic, religious, cultural and social meanings of food, as well as ethical dilemmas in food production and consumption. Students will draw on the diversity of cultural and social meanings of food over time and space to analyse changing relationships between technology and society underlying different food trends, as well as historical changes in specific foods. By means of lectures, guest lectures, an excursion, tutorials debating literature and fieldwork research assignments, students become familiar with socially constructed concepts such as taboo, authenticity, taste, lifestyle, gastronomy and social script.

The Sociology of Farming and Rural Life RSO 30806

This course focuses on primary production processes in the countryside and on the social relations in which production is embedded. The aim is to provide students with the relevant methodologies to analyse the heterogeneity and complexities of agricultural and rural development processes, including new notions and forms of rurality and 'multifunctionality'. The relevance of different types of resources and the associated prospects of endogenous development will be discussed in detail. From a theoretical point of view, the course draws on the following social science traditions and perspectives: a) the sociology and anthropology of the labour process; b) the commoditisation perspective; c) farming styles analysis and d) social constructivism.

Understanding Rural Development: Theories, Practices and Methodologies RSO 31806

The course aims to provide students with a theoretical, empirical and methodological understanding of rural and regional development processes in Europe, with emphasis on agro-food, rural and regional dynamics in metropolitan landscapes. By presenting and discussing current research projects a wide range of research methodologies will be introduced, preparing students to conduct research for their MSc thesis in Rural Sociology. Besides integrating themes, theoretical concepts and perspectives of less advanced RSO courses, this course elaborates on topics such as multifunctional rural entrepreneurship in metropolitan regions, urban-rural relations, urban food production and provision, regional differentiation processes and the relation between mobility, sustainability and vulnerability of regions.

The story of...



Alberto Giani

Freelance Consultant in Rural Development

Alberto explains how his exposure to rural sociology at Wageningen University has

shaped his personal and professional life:

"A two month course for professionals on livestock in developing countries in Wageningen changed my professional life and exposed me for the first time to the wider systems approach adopted at Wageningen University. I was captivated by the sociologists' perspective: how people and social processes are embedded in production, who is producing and consuming. Reading my supervisors work was an amazing experience; it was like reading something that I had known intuitively but had no idea how to describe or analyze in a structured manner. It is difficult to imagine that when I was a veterinarian I was a purely technical person, not really interested in listening to farmers to better understand their world in the assumption that I already knew enough. I couldn't work in the same way now. Since graduation, my work as project manager for CARE International in peri-urban agriculture in Liberia has shown me that very few people take this broader systems-perspective, which can be frustrating."

The story of...



Basjan Bax

MSc Food Technology

As a natural science student, Basjan tells us about his experiences with the sociological perspective:

"I had an elective course option for this term, and chose to take 'Origin Food' to get a totally different and broader perspective of the food sector than the one we usually adopt in my Food Technology programme. Rather than focussing on optimisation of processes and profits for commercial production and processing of food, I wanted to go back to where food products actually come from, and investigate what smaller-scale production has to offer to society. The course essentially focuses on social, regulatory, communication, environmental and logistic issues surrounding the production of traditional foods, which by and large is increasingly overshadowed by production of convenient goods. I had no idea there was so much scientific material in local food production. I am likely to end up in a commercial setting and imagine that this course will help to remind me of the wider societal and environmental consequences of what I do; these are aspects that are receiving more and more attention in the food sector. I think courses like this should be obligatory for Food Technology students."

Advanced Social Theory RSO 32806

As an advanced course that is part of the Research Master Variant in the MSc in International Development (MID, Specializations A and C) and MSc in Management, Economics and Consumers studies (MME, Specialization B), this course guides students in their selection of an inspiring theoretical framework for social scientific research. By way of lectures, discussion groups, a presentation and a written assignment on influential approaches and issues in social scientific theorizing, students practice drawing on different theoretical perspectives to analyse a specific social scientific problem. Specific attention is given to the usefulness and limitations of these approaches to contribute to our understanding of specific societal issues.

Food Health and Society: an Integrated Socio-political Perspective RSO 33306

This course looks into the relation between food, health and well-being from a sociological and political point of view. It discusses how (un) healthy eating is embedded in social structures and framed through political choices made in various policy domains such as agriculture, health, environment and spatial planning. Students are encouraged to critically evaluate the political context of food security and the accessibility of good foods, and its relationship with income inequality and inequality of public expenditure in both developed as developing countries. Students are tasked with investigating new institutional forms and policy developments that are arising as a result of recent awareness on the interrelation between food, health and the environment.

Social Dimensions of Health and Bodily Care RSO 33806

This course focuses on the different ways in which sociological theories conceptualise body, health and bodily care. Departing from classical sociological theory, we read and discuss how modern theoretical thinking approaches body and health from the perspective of stratification, social cohesion and modernisation. The aim of the course is to develop the critical understanding and analytic competencies that will equip students with the tools they need to investigate the interrelationships between health, society and health care. Students are asked to apply this knowledge in the form of an individual essay.

Food Culture RSO 54806

We eat every day, and food and eating are highly culturally charged. A famous saying by Brillat-Savarin reads: 'You are what you eat'. The symbolic, cultural and social meaning of food has been the topic of many anthropological and sociological studies as well as fictional and non-fictional works. This course shows students how fictional and non-fictional literature can be used in combination with scientific studies in order to elucidate the deeply culturally embedded nature of our daily food customs. Class discussions will draw on self-study of key classical and contemporary works, fiction and non-fiction. The course finishes with an oral examination in which students are asked to critically assess the insights gained from literature and tutorials on the cultural meaning of food.

RSO contributions to other courses

Sociological Theories of Rural Transformation RDS 30306

Sociological Theories of Rural Transformation provides an insight into the key sociological and anthropological theories of the last decades that are instrumental in analysing and understanding social transformation processes. The course critically discusses social theories and concepts on the basis of case studies from western Europe and the developing world. What kind of social, cultural, economic and political changes are rural people involved in, what institutions are relevant, and how do they interact at multiple levels of society? By receiving feedback on weekly assignments, students learn how to interpret and analyse transformations, development, institutions, social and symbolic capital, identity, participation and migration and to apply theory to case studies.

Integrated Natural Resource Management in Organic Agriculture SOQ 33306

This course is about judicious management of resources for sustainable organic agriculture, involving different stakeholders, institutional environments and agro-ecological regions of the world. It asks how farming decisions impact ecological processes, social phenomena, conservation of landscape, nature as well as animal, human health and welfare at both farm and regional scales. Through practicals and project work, students gain insight into the available methods for integrated assessment of these different dimensions.

Analysis and Management of Sustainable Organic Production Chains YPS 30306

Organic production chains are increasingly complicated as a result of the need to balance people, planet, prosperity and profit. This course focuses on the multidisciplinary impacts of the transition from conventional to organic production chains. Conventional and organic agricultural chains are compared in terms of institutional organization, consumer acceptance, ecological impact, social impact and economic feasibility. In each of these domains the student is introduced to key theoretical concepts and basic research methodology. The goal of the course is to provide tools to analyse and manage the transition of conventional agricultural chains towards organic and sustainable chains.

Globalization and Sustainability of Food Production and Consumption ENP 31806

Global patterns in food production and consumption are shifting. In this course, students investigate the central environmental aspects of food networks and the concepts and theories emerging from sociology and political science in order to understand these shifts, their consequences and possible responses. Concepts include globalization and regionalization, global flows of goods, values of food and agro-food networks. The course draws on concrete cases to discuss the transition from supply-side (productivist) to demand-side (consumption) orientation in food provision, as well as the growing importance of consumption styles, trends in consumer involvement, food risks and consumer trust. Finally, students discuss the globalization of trade and regulatory regimes and the increasing attention given to monitoring, certification and labelling. In order to

provide additional insight into the role of alternative supply chains, this course takes students on a half-day field visit to observe farms involved in organic food production.

Sociology in Development: Towards a Critical Perspective RDS 32806

This course sets out to discuss critically the concepts of modernity and modernization by focusing on what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman calls the production of 'wasted lives'. The rationalization of global ordering and economic progress leads to a worldwide exclusion of particular categories of people, such as migrants, refugees and the poor. The (threat of) exclusion triggers alternative, often local, forms of social organisation in ways that disrupt existing categories of modernization and challenge researchers' conceptual frameworks. The course critically discusses Bauman's key concepts by examining responses of excluded categories of people, communities and regions. It also pays attention to the role of social scientists in such political processes and how their participation can influence outcomes.

Major Works in Contemporary Social Theory ENP 51306

This course offers a confrontation with and exploration of the major works of a selected number of contemporary authors in social theory at an advanced level. The course consists of a series of group sessions prepared by students themselves, each centred on an influential monograph of a relevant contemporary author. In this way the course will increase and deepen students understanding of sociological theory and enable students to analyse and evaluate major developments in contemporary societies from a sociological perspective. Relevant issues include globalization,

growing mobility, network-society, fluidization of lifestyles, modernization, interaction, state formation, power and multi-cultural society. The course prepares students for the proper use, selection and operationalization of social theory in the context of doing further empirical research.

Field Research Practical RDS 22306

This course is a learning exercise to develop basic skills required to conduct field research in sociology. Students individually carry out exploratory research outside the Netherlands, and engage in practical as well as theoretical challenges of real-life i) data collection ii) data analysis, and iii) presentation of research findings. During the first week, students prepare their research proposal and study relevant secondary literature. The following two weeks, they conduct individual, primary research, staying with a host family in the UK or Ireland. The research focuses on primary field data collection using for instance different interview methods, participatory observations, genealogies, life histories and mapping from both anthropological and micro-economic perspectives. The fourth week introduces students to four modes of data analysis: i) situational analysis of a conversation or event, ii) case study of a series of events, iii) network analysis, and iv) quantitative analysis. Finally, students are required to write a research report which links data and modes of analysis.

Capita Selecta

Capita Selecta on sustainable place-based development RSO 50806
European regions face urgent and interconnected challenges on cli-

The story of...



Ching Chiu

MSc Environmental Economics (MME)

When asked about her experiences with an RSO course and how a sociological perspective fits in her MSc, Ching Chiu told us:

"I hope to combine environmental economics with sociological approaches in my thesis. The sociological perspective was the most impressive part of the course for me. In Taiwan education puts less emphasis on critical thinking, especially in technical sciences where students are generally looking for that one correct answer. Since I've been exposed to sociology at Wageningen I know that there is no single answer; there is always a debate. I'm also learning how to question myself, which is a good thing. This type of educational approach allows me to learn from the different perspectives taken by my fellow classmates."

More information about our education programme

education.rso@wur.nl

The story of...



Marianna Markantoni

PhD candidate at RU Groningen

Three months from completing her PhD, Marianna looks back on how the rural sociology perspective has contributed to her

professional and personal life:

"My background was in Agricultural studies; I studied plants and conservation, but the MDR programme in Wageningen really opened up a whole new world for me. It allowed me to combine development of the country side with social aspects, and my PhD at RUG was very much a logical extension of my MSc thesis at Wageningen University. While the sociological perspective was new to me, it came quite naturally to me, and in a sense I carried this perspective of the world in me already. Here in Groningen I am investigating how side activities by non-farmers impact rural communities both economically and socially. What is people's motivation to pursue side-activities? How does it contribute to regional resilience? I am charmed by small-scale production and consumption because while it may look like it has small impact, for the individuals involved it has an enormous impact on their lives, needs and identities, and also has a large impact on village level. I love the Netherlands, and it has really become my second home."

mate, energy, food, migration and poverty. While these are global issues, they unfold in places. The ability to deal with issues such as effective adaptation to environmental and resource vulnerabilities demands inherently 'place based' approaches that can accommodate the particular heterogeneity and diversity of place. This Capita Selecta is an introduction into social analysis of development from a spatial perspective, with an emphasis on social constructivist approaches. Students will get acquainted with various contemporary thinkers and their approaches towards the production of place, and will be able to apply these in the study of cases.

Capita Selecta in Agricultural and Rural Innovation Processes and Capita Selecta in Rural Development RSO 51303

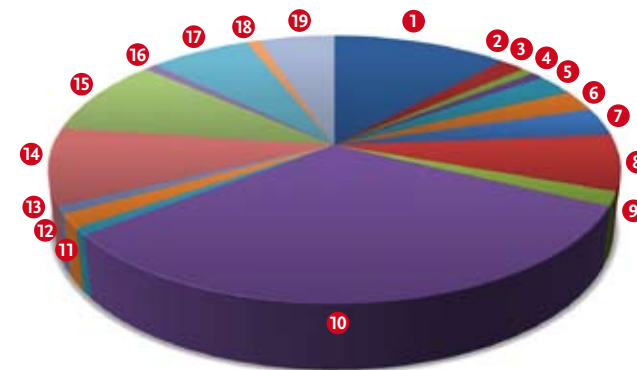
Besides our regular courses, we offer students the possibility of focussing in depth on a particular topic, this upon agreement with a staff member of choice. Students should contact the educational co-ordinators.

After graduation

In today's society, information about people is crucial. Given the broad scope of a sociology education, rural sociology graduates go into a wide range of jobs, ranging from social work, human resource management, project co-ordination and consultancy, marketing research, management training, journalism to research and teaching.

What do our graduates do?

2000-2010 graduates from International Development and Development and Rural Innovation MSc programmes at Wageningen University enter a wide range of professions.



1 PhD: 14

2 Technical engineer: 2

3 IT specialist: 1

4 System designer, modeller: 1

5 Commercial staff: 3

6 Business Manager, Director: 3

7 Policy: 4

8 Projectleader: 8

9 General Director: 2

10 Research function: 38

11 Diplomacy, political functions: 1

12 Freelance entrepreneur: 2

13 Senior researcher: 1

14 Teacher, Trainer: 11

15 Consultant, Advisor: 11

16 Journalist, Communications Expert: 1

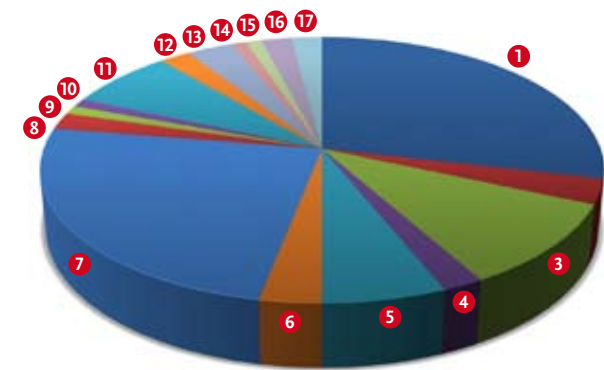
17 Development Aid Specialist: 8

18 Plant Breeding Expert: 1

19 Other : 6

Where are our graduates now?

2000-2010 graduates from International Development and Development and Rural Innovation MSc programmes at Wageningen University are employed in a wide range of sectors.



1 Universities: 28

2 Other educational institutions: 3

3 Research Institutions: 10

4 Dutch government: 2

5 Foreign government: 6

6 Organisations and Associations in Netherlands: 3

7 International organizations: 24

8 Agrarian businesses, plant breeding businesses: 2

9 Feed industry and trade: 1

10 Other industry and trade: 1

11 Engineering and advisory bureaux: 7

12 Agrarian Service companies: 2

13 PR, marketing, communications: 3

14 Recreation, Nature conservation, Sport and Culture: 1

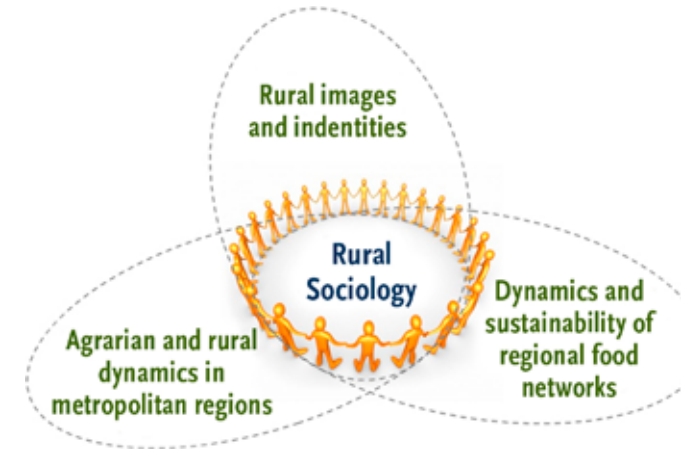
15 Computer and Software Bureaus: 1

16 Financial services: 2

17 Other services: 2



Research



Our research programme is divided into three research themes:

THEME 1 Agrarian and rural dynamics in metropolitan regions

Many countries are facing processes of urban sprawl and counter-urbanization. One implication of these processes is that traditional divisions and distinctions between urban and rural are disappearing. The notion

of metropolitan landscape, that is, the spatial interweaving of densely populated urban centres and green open spaces, is used to conceptualise the emergence of this new spatial setting. The rise and growth of metropolitan regions has a range of implications for the agricultural and rural sector in these regions: it can create all sorts of constraints for agricultural and rural development, but new opportunities may also arise. Research within this theme focuses on the role of agricultural and rural activities, products and services in metropolitan and peri-urban regions. It asks how agriculture and the rural can fulfil emerging urban needs and the growing demand for public goods such as health care, leisure, education, nature & landscape and food quality. At a broader level, it investigates the ways in which different forms of agriculture and other rural business activities contribute to sustainable regional development, with specific attention for quality of life issues.

THEME 2 Dynamics and sustainability of regional food networks

Fluctuating food and fuel prices and the increase in urban food-related health and environmental problems are raising an urgent need to devise more effective and sustainable agri-food policies and development

strategies. By focusing on food industrialization, standardization and globalization, many contemporary socio-economic food studies tend to neglect the emergence of an alternative food geography. Characteristic for this alternative geography is the creation of 'alterity' (otherness) in the food system and the modification of the modes of connectivity between the production and consumption of food, generally through reconnecting food to the social, cultural and environmental context of its production. This theme addresses the dynamics underlying this alternative food geography by focussing on the socio-cultural, economic, political and spatial dynamics and impacts of food (re-) localization as well as its multidimensionality and territoriality. That is, food is multidimensional as it is related to many policy domains such as public health, education, quality of life and environmental quality and it is territorial as the food sector has a significant impact on the regional economy and as food-related problems and solutions are characterized by regional specificity. With this research theme we aim to address the enormous knowledge and skills deficit that is currently reducing the capacity to design and deliver appropriate political and developmental solutions in the crucial fields of food security, food democracy, public food procurement, public health and sustainable urban and regional development.

THEME 3 Rural images and identities

The countryside as an ideal is deeply rooted in the imagination of Western societies. For most people in an urbanised society the 'countryside' is spatially and symbolically distanced from everyday life. It represents a real

or imagined different world that inspires the attribution of specific identities to rural places. These images are becoming increasingly important to the production and consumption of rural places. In order to attract tourists, investors or sell farmers' products, rural entrepreneurs and governments promote urban-rural differences by employing symbols that draw upon such rural ideals as natural beauty, authenticity and quality of life. This conversion of symbolic and cultural capital into employment and economic growth constitutes the basis for the commoditisation of rurality. The dynamics of the post-productivist or consumption countryside differ fundamentally from those structured by the spatial code that defined the rural uniquely as a medium for maximising agricultural production. The integration of agriculture in national and global production-consumption chains created abstract, distance links between urban and rural areas, which were further strengthened by a planning policy based on spatial separation. The rediscovery and subsequent renaissance of the countryside show that this dominant spatial code has not resulted in an image of the countryside as an empty, neutral milieu. The present discourses on agriculture and the countryside demonstrate a powerful narrative of values and ideals that promise a reappropriation of space through practices that reflect both rural-urban difference and symbiosis. This theme aims to study and analyse the implications these trends towards the creation of new ruralities have for people living, working and/or recreating in rural areas. How new ruralities affect people's sense of belonging and identity, how it alters urban and rural practices, and how it engenders new conflicts and forces urban and rural people to think and act in creative and active manners will be the main topics studied in this theme.

Project examples

RSO has been involved in many national and international (research) projects over the years. For a full overview of our projects please visit www.rso.wur.nl. Below we present some examples of recent projects.

ETUDE (2007 - 2009)

ETUDE used 65 case studies across Europe to develop an integrated conceptual model of regional/rural constellations characterized by emerging trends in multifunctionality and intra-sectoral entwinement. It then set out to investigate how interrelations between domains in this model (social capital, government of markets, new institutional frameworks, to name a few) affect the competitiveness of a region.

Dynamics and robustness of multifunctional agriculture (2009-2011)

Funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, this project investigates how multifunctional agriculture differs from traditional agriculture in terms of new markets, supply chains, collaborations, entrepreneurial competencies, and how it is affected by policy, regulation and risk management. It asks whether MFA provides real perspectives for farmers in the Netherlands, and how this would impact farming activities.

DERREG (2009 - 2012)

Developing Europe's Rural Regions in the Era of Globalization (DERREG) is funded by the European Union 7th Framework Programme (FP7). Based on an overarching integrative analysis of 10 case study regions across Europe, it aims to develop an interpretative model for better anticipating and responding to challenges for regional development in an evolving international context.

PUREFOOD (2010 - 2014)

PUREFOOD is a Marie Curie Initial Training Network and aims to train a pool of early-stage researchers in the socio-economic and socio-spatial dynamics of the (peri-) urban and regional foodscape. The projects focus on 3 key aspects of the new food geography: sustainable food supply chains, public sector food procurement practices and (peri-) urban food strategies.

FOODLINKS (2011 - 2013)

Central to FOODLINKS is sustainable food production and consumption. FOODLINKS aims to exploit the existing food research reservoir in novel and innovative ways in cooperation with researchers, policy makers and civil society organizations in order to engender collective learning.



Staff



Han Wiskerke

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Han was originally trained as an agronomist and obtained a PhD degree in Rural Sociology at Wageningen University in 1997. He has since worked as a rural development consultant, as project manager with the Centre of Agriculture and Environment, and held a postdoctoral research position at the Centre for Studies of Science, Technology & Society, Twente University. In 2004 Han was appointed as Chair and Professor of Rural Sociology at Wageningen University. He has ample international research experience in the fields of agricultural and rural development, rural innovation and short food supply chains. Han is currently scientific co-ordinator for the European FOODLINKS project and overall co-ordinator for the PUREFOOD project. These two projects reflect his current research interests: understanding the social practices and dynamics of urban food provisioning and urban-rural relations.

Bettina Bock

bettina.bock@wur.nl

Bettina is research co-ordinator and associate professor in rural sociology. At the moment she is teaching in food policy and sociology and anthropology of health. Her research includes many subjects, including



food, animal welfare, green care, rural livelihoods, gender - maybe to be summarized under 'rural-urban development and change'. She has a specific interest in social diversity, comparative and cross-disciplinary research. She is driven by the wish to understand how people differ in their perception and experience of 'realities' and how that is influenced by socio-economic, cultural and political structures and inequalities.



Jan Schakel

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With a background in agronomy, Jan Schakel's focus has always been on the interrelations between the agricultural sciences and its wider setting: practice, policies and perspectives. With a long history as an assistant professor at the Applied Philosophy Group of Wageningen University, his main interest within RSO is 'reflections on science and technology' from a sociological and philosophical point of view. Besides being a lecturer, he is education co-ordinator, representative of the International Master of Science in Rural Development (IMRD) and (among others) BSc-thesis coordinator for International Development Studies (BIN).



Els Hegger

els.hegger@wur.nl

Els studied International Development Studies at Wageningen University with a specialisation in rural sociology and sustainable tourism development. After graduation Els worked as a consultant

in environmental spatial planning issues. However, the academic way of looking at things drew her back to Wageningen University. At the Rural Sociology Group Els is education co-ordinator and daily project coordinator of PUREFOOD.



Coby Aanhaanen-Van Duijn

secretariaat.rso@wur.nl

Coby is secretary for the chairgroup as well as assisting Han Wiskerke.

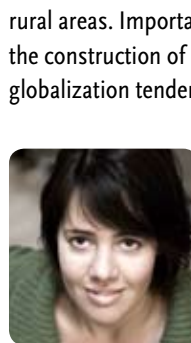


Rudolf van Broekhuizen

rudolf.vanbroekhuizen@wur.nl

Rudolf studied physical planning. Besides working as a researcher in rural sociology he worked as rural planner and programme manager of the Government Service for Land and Water of the Ministry of

Agriculture. He is interested in a great many subjects surrounding agriculture and the countryside, including farming styles, rural development, multifunctional agriculture, rural estates, dairy breeding, quality of life in



Petra Derkzen

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Petra's PhD was about rural governance but during this time, she discovered her food passion. A research visit to the 'good food movement' in the US in 2009 was very inspiring. On return as a new teacher

she could develop a new master course 'Food Culture and Customs' and also helped set up another course in Food Policy. In June 2011 the EU project PUREFOOD started with 12 new researchers in which she participates. For the coming years, she is dedicated furthering practices of sustainable food with the partners and researchers in PUREFOOD and with students in class.



Ina Horlings

lummina.horlings@wur.nl

Ina Horlings currently works as a researcher and lecturer at the Rural Sociology Group. She co-coordinates a new research program on 'Place-based development' and has developed the course

'A global sense of place; a Capita Selecta on place-based development'. She is interested in the role of people in sustainable rural place-based development, which covers research on place-making, leadership, values, self-organisation, social capital and coalition-building. She is also interested in regional strategies (bio-based versus eco-economy) and in



place-branding. She is a member of 2 research networks on leadership within the Rural Studies Association and is co-editor of a book (in prep.) on leadership and regional development.



Joost Jongerden

joost.jongerden@wur.nl

Joost Jongerden is a rural sociologist by training and obtained his PhD at Wageningen University in 2006. He has a research interest in socio-spatial and socio-technical aspects of development, with a strong focus on how spatial (e.g. settlement and resettlement projects) and technological practices (e.g. dam construction, biotechnologies) are related to particular political and cultural constructions of society. His inquiry into the socio-spatial and socio-technical construction of society takes into account both state and corporate led practices, and also to those of peasants and villagers. Geographically, his work has a strong focus on Turkey and Kurdistan, while he is also involved in research in the Netherlands, India, Ecuador and Ghana.



Henk Oostindie

henk.oostindie@wur.nl

Henk is a rural sociologist and senior researcher with following fields of interests: farming strategies; sustaining food chains; rural governance, rural-urban relationships and differentiating rural spaces. Drawing on the rural development paradigm, he is currently especially interested in transition pathways towards multifunctional agriculture.



Jan-Douwe van der Ploeg

JanDouwe.vanderPloeg@wur.nl

Originally specialized in agrarian sociology of non-western countries, development economics and methods and techniques of social research, Jan Douwe has worked as a consultant across the globe.

He holds a PhD from Leiden University entitled 'Labour, Markets and Agricultural Production'. Since his return to Wageningen University he has worked on uncovering the impressive and multi-dimensional heterogeneity of European agriculture. His work includes labour process analysis, differential degrees of commoditization, differential responses to technology development, cultural repertoire and farmers' strategies together with reconceptualized notions of structure, actor and agency. Jan Douwe was Chair of Rural Sociology at Wageningen University (1992 - 2003), chief editor of the Dutch series Studies van Landbouw en Samenleving and of the English language collection European Perspectives on Rural Development, and involved in several research initiatives. Currently he is professor of Transition Studies in Wageningen and professor in agrarian sociology in China Agricultural University in Beijing.



Dirk Roep

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After completing his study Rural Sociology in 1988 Dirk got involved in what is known as the 'styles of farming' research and subsequently engaged in various farmers initiated collective development activities such as regional typical products and nature and landscape

management. His PhD reflects on this bottom-up innovative work from an innovation studies perspective. He continued on this theme by studying the relevance of farmer's innovations in the transition towards a more sustainable agriculture. Next to joint learning and innovation in agriculture and alternative modes of food provision, Dirk is now involved in research and lecturing on regional development and sustainable place making. Dirk is assistant professor.



Guido Ruivenkamp

guido.ruivenkamp@wur.nl

Guido is associate professor of Critical Technology Construction. He is sociologist and member of several governmental advisory committees on social aspects of biotechnology. He is doing research on the politics of life science technologies, particularly biotechnology and genomics, and supervises several PhD research projects and MSc theses. The research projects and theses focus on the production of commons in biotechnologies and genomics and investigates opportunities for supporting food networks through the reconstruction of biotechnological artefacts. Key concepts of the CTC research program are politicizing products, biopower, technical code, democratization and reconstruction of biotechnologies, open source and commons.

More information about our staff

www.rso.wur.nl/uk/staff



Jan-Willem van der Schans

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Jan Willem was educated at Rotterdam School of Management and London School of Economics as a student of business administration. For his PhD research he focused on social and economic

theories of the self-organization of natural resource users. His research interests include strategic decision making of farmers and fishermen, supply chain management, the transition towards a sustainable agrifood system. Currently Jan Willem is interested also in urban agriculture and the way in which metropolitan areas feed themselves. Jan Willem has also co-founded Edible Rotterdam and works at the Agriculture Economics Research Institute.



Don Weenink

don.weenink@wur.nl

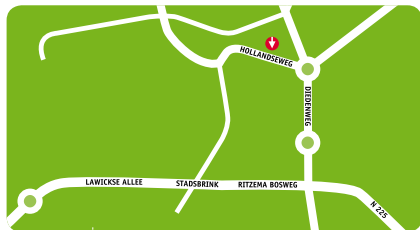
Don's interest in sociology started at the University of Amsterdam with research on globalization and elite formation in the education sector. Since then, it has extended to ethnic inequality in the juvenile justice system as well as social cohesion and violence in rural and urban areas. At a more fundamental level, he is interested in social interactions and emotions underlying social phenomena. Don is assistant professor.

Where to find us



Visiting address

De Leeuwenborch (WUR Building 201)
Hollandsseweg 1 6706 KN Wageningen
The Netherlands



Route descriptions

www.rso.wur.nl/uk/contact/how_to_get_there/

More information

www.rso.wur.nl

Questions relating to RSO courses, theses, internships

Els Hegger and Jan Schakel (education co-ordinators)
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Administrative questions

Coby Aanhaanen-Van Duijn (secretariat)
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Information, registration or enrolment for degree programmes

www.wageningenuniversity.nl/uk/education

Colofon

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Moonlight farmers and Lump suckers; The ICRPS Summer School in Norway

Posted on July 14, 2011 by Iris Horlings



This Summer School about policies for rural development took place from June 25th to July 9th 2011 on 2 locations in Norway, in Oslo and in Sogndal. The course involved a variety of lectures, discussions and group work on issues such as natural resources, community development, rural services, renewable energy, food & agriculture, policy and climate change. The diverse group of students (some of them already working in rural development), faculty members and two OECD researchers included mainly people from Europe and the US (especially Canada) and discussed not only rural development in Norway, but compared this with interesting cases in their own countries. I only attended

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