



The International Society of Ethnology & Folklore (SIEF) Working Group "Space-lore and Place-lore" announces a *Call for Proposals* for the conference:

Rural and small-town communities

Local heritage and identities in an urbanising world

November 5-6, 2020
Södertörn University, Stockholm



CBEES
CENTRE FOR BALTIC AND
EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES



**Institute of Ethnology
and Cultural Anthropology**
University of Warsaw



Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences

Conference Summary

In today's rapidly urbanising world, rural and small-town communities are often wrongly considered as peripheral to dominant urban centres, where the most meaningful activities in social, political, and economic life are considered to occur. This is nothing new in light of the trend towards so called 'global cities', strategic locales whose concentration of political, cultural, and financial capital have direct and tangible effect on global cultural, political, and economic activities. However, the impacts of such trends are not a closed loop, constrained within a global network of urban centres. What happens in urban centres also visibly – and in a no-simple way – affects local ways of life in still vibrant rural and small-town societies.

In many countries across the world, we see this in particular through the effects of a steady corrosion of social welfare – a phenomenon driven by an observable shift towards neoliberal policies preoccupied with entrepreneurship, the drift from small-scale rural economies to industrial agriculture, and the move from manufacturing-based economies to tourism and service-based ones. Although these shifts have stimulated local economies to a certain degree, they have also exposed local communities to increasing wealth gaps and socio-economic stress. In a world where a majority of resources are being concentrated in growing urban landscapes, a wave of protests is rising in these “peripheral” localities. As we have observed in recent years, these social turbulences are often directly related to – or exploited by – current national-conservative populist movements spreading across Europe and beyond. However, we believe that contemporary transformations in rural and small-town areas also establish a range of new possibilities, including locally-grounded social enterprises, activism and many other creative responses to global pressures such as climate change. Further, these complex grassroot processes bring a new energy to local communities that powers the re-imagination of local history, heritage and identities.

Such changes are rich in meaning and open for complex analyses deserving of increased scholarly attention. We therefore invite contributions ready to shed more light on the contemporary changes underway in rural and small-town communities. We are especially open for field-based investigations that explore how rural and small-town societies are responding to challenges brought by various policies, economies and shifting social values being constituted mainly in urban centres. Additionally, we welcome research that addresses concerns of, and conditions for, sustainable development in these communities. In what ways are solutions proposed or sought through investments in tourism, agriculture, and landscape protection? How do new social movements such as 'circular economy' or 'green wave' migrations play a role in these developments?

As particular areas of interest, we welcome proposals that explore the following issues:

Changing roles of rural and small-town cultural heritages

How are they conserved, and how do contemporary representations of rural and small-town communities manifest in public discourses?

Experiences and interpretations of contemporary social change

How do rural and small-town residents experience and interpret recent and ongoing trends in their communities? How do they invent roles and place themselves within these transformative processes and events?

Community and institutional engagements in sustainability discourses and practices

What visions or solutions for sustainability – whether environmental, social, or economic – are promoted by residents, civil society organisations, and political and religious institutions? How are these proposals met by other actors in the local community and what social fantasies are imagined in these visions?

While priority will be given to proposals concerning Baltic and Central European contexts, examples from other regions are also welcomed.

Proposed Themes

We invite scholars to share their research on the following, and related, themes:

- *constructions and transformations of rural and small-town identities*
- *local mobilisations during crises, particularly those caused or exacerbated by climate change*
- *representing, erasing, and reinterpreting past and future in rural and small-towns landscapes*
- *various faces and meanings of tourism in rural and small-town locations*
- *preservation and transformation of rural areas: 'rewilding', gentrification, de- or re-industrialisation, and suburbanisation*
- *mobility and migration to/from rural and small-town communities*
- *political narratives of space and place*
- *place-based activism*
- *local adaptation via third-sector initiatives and social enterprises*
- *re-inventing rural and small-town traditions: new meanings and symbols*
- *reflections on advanced methodologies investigating contemporary concepts of locality and heritage exposed to global influences*

Submission Guidelines

The conference invites both paper and panel submissions. The length of oral presentations is expected to be 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of discussion.

Papers

1. 250-word abstract of the proposed paper.
2. Brief bio of the author(s).
3. Contact details of the author(s).

Panels (not exceeding four presentations)

1. 400-word abstract of the panel.
2. 150-word abstract for each of the papers on the panel, followed by a brief description of each panelist.
3. 75-word panel description for the conference program.
4. Contact details of the panel organiser.



Important Dates

Submission deadline	March 31
Notification of acceptance	April 30
Deadline for registration	June 15

Please use the conference website for the submission of paper and panel proposals.

The conference website can be found here: <https://rural2020.home.blog>



Registration

There is no registration fee, however the registration is required due to limitations (30 papers).

In order to be included in the conference program and receive materials at registration, please register via the conference website by 15 June 2020.

Conference Venue

Södertörn University
Alfred Nobels allé 7
141 52 Huddinge, Sweden

Södertörn University is located at Flemingsberg Station, a 20-minute journey from Stockholm Central via commuter rail.

Conference Details:

In addition to presentations and panels, the conference will also feature:

- Guest speakers
- Lunch and refreshments at the venue (free for registered participants)
- Conference dinner (Thurs., November 5, 2020; free for registered participants)

Questions?

For general inquiries, please contact the organising committee at Södertörn University:

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