

Shift- ing Rural- ities

Symposium Shifting ruralities

Brussels, July 3-4, 2025

PRESENTATION

After two years of exploring the diverse conditions of the rural world, the NERU consortium (New Ruralities, Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships 2022–2025), comprising six architecture and urban design units from ULB (Brussels), POLITO (Turin), UDC (La Coruña), UMinho (Guimarães), UACEG (Sofia), and ETH (Zürich), is organizing an international symposium on July 3rd–4th, 2025.

Titled “Shifting Ruralities: Reimagining Rural Spaces in Europe”, the symposium wishes to highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of European rural areas in a globalized world, gathering papers that reflect their diversity, examine the forces driving these changes, and explore new perspectives — without claiming authority over the many interpretations of rurality.

The symposium emphasizes the “re” in reimagining, focusing not on novelty but on revisiting notions of progress, innovation, and identity. Rural areas, shaped by over 8,000 years of interaction between human and non-human forces, resist complete homogenization, even as globalization embeds them in global economic and environmental networks. These spaces remain vital, evolving in interaction with urban, peri-urban, and global systems.

We received over 90 contributions, addressing in an original way the 6 panels defined at the outset. In order to guarantee a diverse representation, the final selection of papers has been organized in 8 parallel sessions.

Session 1, Back to rural. Exploring Migration and Emerging Lifestyles

Session 2, Rural Representations. How to Map a *Pluriversal* Rurality (split into 2a and 2b)

Session 3, Revitalizing Rural Territories. From Productivism to Care

Session 4, The Liveability of Rural Places. Design and Co-creation (split into 4a and 4b)

Session 5, Decolonizing the rural. A More-Than-Human Purview

Session 6, Beyond the Rural Frontier. Global Forces and Local Realities

GENERAL PROGRAM

Day #1 July 3 – Université Libre de Bruxelles /CIVA

8:15 - 8:45 Registration & Coffee (ULB, Flageyplein 19, 1050 Brussels)

8:45-9:15 Word of welcome

9:15-10:15 Keynote **Michael Woods**

10:15-10:30 Coffee

10:30-13:00 Parallel sessions

1. Back to rural. Exploring Migration and Emerging Lifestyles

2a. Rural representations: Nature as a subject

4a. The liveability of rural places: Practices of Rural Co-design

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-16:30 Parallel sessions

2b. Rural representations: Motion and performance

3. Revitalizing rural territories: From Productivism to Care

4b. The Liveability of Rural places: Space and Typology

16:30-17:00 Coffee & Posters

17:45-18:00 Word of welcome (CIVA, Ermitage street 55, 1050 Brussels)

18:00-19:00 Keynote **Fernando Garcia Dory**

19:00-20:00 Drink & Opening of the exhibition

Day #2 July 4 –CIVA/TRACK

9:00-9:30 Registration & Coffee (CIVA, Ermitage street 55, 1050 Brussels)

9:15-10:15 Keynote **Katy Fox**

10:15-10:30 Coffee & Posters

10:30-13:00 Parallel sessions

5. Decolonizing the rural: A More-Than-Human Purview

6. Beyond the Rural frontier: Global Forces and Local Realities

13:00-15:00 Lunch

15:30-16:30 Coffee & Preliminary conclusions

16:30-17:30 Whispering Books

18:15-19:15 Keynote **Guida Marques** (TRACK, Progrès street 76, 1030 Brussels)

19:30-21:00 Drink & Opening of the exhibition

PARALLEL SESSIONS

1. BACK TO RURAL. Exploring Migration and Emerging Lifestyles

Panel moderated by UACEG University of Architecture Civil Engineering and Geodesy (Bulgaria)

The impact of informal approaches in rural housing. Alternative ruralities in Romania, **Diana Andreea Pogacean**, Technical University Cluj-Napoca (Romania) & Center for Housing Research (France)

Inhabiting Inner and Mountainous Areas: Challenges and Prospects for Neopopulation Processes, **Mauro Fontana**, **Federica Serra**, **Silvia Cafora**, **Antonio De Rossi**, and **Loris Servillo**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

Criteria for Evaluating the Development Potential of Very Small Villages in the Sofia and Pernik Regions, Bulgaria, **Hristo Yordanov**, University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (Bulgaria)

Lessinia's Contrade Beyond Rural Tourism. Exploring the Architectural Project as a Trigger for New Models of Sustainable Development, **Gerardo Sempredon**, and **Giulia Cazzaniga**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Sikh Settlement in the Pontine Plain: Rewriting the Palimpsest, **Dipon Bose**, and **Cristina Pallini**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Inhabiting the Ruralities. New Spatial Practices in a Multifunctional Dimension of Agricultural Production, **Paolo Bianco**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

Vernacular Heritage Rediscovered: The neo-rural re-inhabitation of the depopulated settlement of Aineto, at the Spanish Central Pyrenees, **Ignacio Galan**, KU Leuven (Belgium).

2a. RURAL REPRESENTATIONS: Nature as a subject

Panel moderated by UM School of Architecture, Art and Design (Portugal)

Cultural and Territorial Practices to Reimagining Marginal Rural Areas, **Chiara Pisano**, La Sapienza Università di Roma (Italy) and **Giada Limongi**, Università di Bari Aldo Moro (Italy)

Lamia Santolina: Reconciling with the wild, **Cosimo Terlizzi**, and **Damien Modolo**, Association Lamia Santolina, (Italy)

Nature-citizen as a driving force to tackle capitalist advances in rural Europe, **Alexia Sera**, Universidade da Beira Interior (Portugal) & Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

From sacred trees to mechanized fields: Pictures of a disappearing landscape, **Lara Cattani**, Università di Bologna (Italy)

"Nascosta in piena vista»: Hydropower plants of Roveto Valley between obsolescence and regeneration, **Giulia Azzini**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

The Rural forms laboratory, **Vicente Blanco**, **Salvador Cidrás**, and **Estela Freire**, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

2b. RURAL REPRESENTATIONS: Motion and performance

Panel moderated by UM School of Architecture, Art and Design (Portugal)

Winter Nomads. Transhumance and territory, a survey in the Swiss Plateau, **Zoe Marraffa**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

Towards Alternative Readings of Rurality: Exploring Multiple Perspectives of Imerhev Valley, Turkey, **Emine Çiğdem Asrav**, Bilkent Üniversitesi (Turkey)

Space as a performer: representing space from multispecies perspective, **Anna Ryzhenkova**, and **Pablo Valenzuela-Astudillo**, Universität Wien (Austria)

Rurality, Infrastructure, and Cycling: Paris-Roubaix as a Territorial Phenomenon, **Miguel Fernandez**, Universidade do Minho (Portugal)

Rural dramaturgies: (re-)activating & (re-)imagining alternative stories of rural place, **Ewoud Vermote**, **Leontien Allemeersch**, and **Vincent Focquet**, Kunstenplatform PLAN B (Belgium)

How Things Come to Matter, **Mara Diavolova**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (United States of America).

3. REVITALIZING RURAL TERRITORIES: From Productivism to Care

Panel moderated by UDC Department of Architecture Projects, Urban Planning and Composition (Spain) & Fondation RIA (Spain)

Some urban planning issues and strategies against rural depopulation, **Jordi Franquesa Sánchez**, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain)

Rural Eutopia, **Federico Diodato**, École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Nancy (France)

Within and Against: On Swiss Rural Land Laws, **Pierre Menoud**, **Jack Self**, REAL Fondation (Switzerland and United Kingdom)

Territories in Transition: BelMondo as a Model for Adaptive Rural Inhabitation, **Elvira Adamo Rita**, La Rivoluzione delle Seppie (Italy)

The Revival of Rurality in the Biellese Region: Between Industrial Legacy and New Local Economies, **Maicol Negrello**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

Landscape as a focal space in New Ruralities, **Stefan Laxness**, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (Switzerland).

4a. THE LIVEABILITY OF RURAL PLACES: Practices of Rural Co-Design

Panel moderated by POLITO Department of Architecture and Design (Italy)

Reimagining Public Space in Rural China Transformation in the Emergence of Scenic Areas, **Monterano Giulia**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy) & Tsinghua University (China)

Alterarchitectures: transformations in rural areas from a collective approach, **Nicolas Sancho**, Estudio Langarita Navarro (Spain), **Jesús de los Ojos Moral**, Universidad de Valladolid (Spain) and **Jairo Andrés Rodríguez**, Universidad de Valladolid (Spain)

Rural Community Hubs as Places of Commoning, **Niklas Fanelisa**, Technische Universität München (Germany)

Rural Technical Heritage Contributes to the Liveability of the Countryside, **Xavier Rochel**, **Meplain Camille**, and **Mathis Denis**, Université de Lorraine (France)

Generic Houses: Reusing Invisible Ressources, **Pedro Duarte Bento**, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal)

Rural Practices of Resistance, **Christina Serifi**, TriLab (Morfi Greece).

4b. THE LIVEABILITY OF RURAL PLACES: Space and Typology

Panel moderated by POLITO Department of Architecture and Design (Italy)

The (re)definition of the peri-urban landscape of Santiago: Between hamlets and the "walled city", the case of the Colina commune, **Filipe Temtem**, and **Sebastián Correa**, Universidad San Sebastián (Chile)

Reimagining Mediterranean Ruralities: A Summer School Project, **Burcu Kütükçüoğlu**, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi (Turkey)

Transformative Collaboration for Culturally Grounded Creativity in Vila Soeiro, **Ghada Shaaban**, and **Sebastião Miranda**

Collective Properties as Design of Resistance: From Necessity to Awareness, **Roberta Agnifili**, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila (Italy)

Co-Autor, **Wojciech Mazan**, Prolog (Poland)

The inhabited productive landscape of the Dender region. The reciprocity of production and social reproduction in Denderwindeke, **Elke Dhaenens**, and **Michiel Dehaene**, Universiteit Gent (Belgium)

Learning from living milieus: developing eco-centered transformative practices in cooperation with farms in rural France, **Benoît Verjat**, Sciences Po (Paris, France) & Université Paris Nanterre (France) and **Patrick Degeorges**, Institut des Hautes Études pour les Pratiques et les Arts de Transformation (France) & Institut Michel Serres (France).

5. DECOLONIZING THE RURAL: A More-Than-Human Purview

Panel moderated by ETHZ Chair of Architecture and Urban Transformation (Switzerland)

Akee: Reimagining Rural Territories Through Artistic and Cultural Practices, **Vilius Vaitiekūnas**, Akee Space for Culture (Lithuania)

Meurneoba: Total Design of the Countryside, **Dimitri Eristavi**, **Lado Shonia**, and **Vogler Jesse**, Free University of Tbilisi (Georgia)

The Forgotten Landscape, **Maria Heinrich**, Nieuwe Instituut (Netherlands)

Techno-ruralities. Repositioning large-scale reclamation schemes between architecture and engineering, **Aleksa Korolija**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Rethinking the rural(s) through eco-social approach: artgriculture, rural residencies, and metabolic practices, **Alessandra Faccinoi**, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

Echoes of Coloniality: Extractivism and the Rurality of Tomorrow in Pupio Valley, Chile, **Álvaro Mercado Jara**, **Daniela Salgado**, **Leonardo Aravena**, **Pablo Mansilla**, and **Javiera Pavéz**, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile)

Let's meet the countryside, **Audrey Contesse**, Institut Culturel d'Architecture (Belgium).

6. BEYOND THE RURAL FRONTIER: Global Forces and Local Realities

Panel moderated by ULB Faculty of Architecture La Cambre-Horta

Re-envisioning farmstead infrastructures for commoning and entangled agricultural milieus: The case of Olive tree intercropping in Laconia, Greece, **Io Carydi**, National Technical University of Athens (Greece), and **Athanasios Koutsianas**, Brown University (United States of America)

Commons and Trans-local clacă at the TeRRRa Brezoi hub, **Silviu Medeşan**, University of Oradea (Romania), **Doina Petrescu**, University of Sheffield (United Kingdom), and **Constantin Petcou**, Atelier d'architecture autogérée (France)

Navigating doubt: Nature Park projects in rural mountain areas, **Susanne Hefti**, Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (Germany) & Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (Switzerland)

Questioning Participatory Design: Critical Reflections from a European Rural Initiative, **Marco Andrea Finardi**, **Annalinda De Rosa**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Käsesyndikat: Rethinking Urban-Rural Exchange Through the Dual Role of Cheese, **Nicolas Seiler**, and **Livni Holtz**, Harvest Salon (Switzerland)

Between Cultural Landscapes and Industrial Food Production: The Case of Italian Pasta Productive Landscapes, **Amerigo Ambrosi**, Università IUAV di Venezia (Italy) and **Melisa Pessoa**, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain)

The Blue Escape, **Tizian Büchi**, Association Territoires sensibles (Switzerland).

POSTERS

A Villa San Giuseppe: il parco virtuoso, **Luciana Cestari**, A Villa San Giuseppe, **Concetto Ficara**, architect Reggio Calabria, **Clara Bertolini**, POLITO, **Vittorio Marcianò**, A Villa San Giuseppe (Italy)

Becoming Human in a Dog Shelter in Crete, **Lisbeth Funck**, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (Norway)

Charting New Ruralities in Austria Through Teaching-led Research, **Lorenzo De Chiffre**, TU Wien, Institute of Architectural Design, Research Unit Design and Construction 1 (Austria)

Durations, **Lisbeth Funck**, **Matthew Dylan Anderson**, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (Norway)

Funkturm, **Werner Thäsler**, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (Germany)

House studies, Mafate, **Matthew Dylan Anderson**, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (Norway)

Redefining Rural Habitation, **Danai Geiton**, Crete (Greece)

Reinterpreting Rural Architecture: Integrating the biological cycle in ecological design, **Francesco Gugliotta**, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Revitalizing Kelmend: A Path Toward Sustainable and Equitable Rural Development, **Eltjana Shkreli**, University of Genoa (Italy), **Liridona Ura**, **Irhan Jubica**, GO2Albania (Albania)

Rural Depopulation in Bulgaria: Do new agricultural buildings have a future in abandoned territories?, **Stela Skrizhovska-Koleva**, UACEG (Bulgaria)

Rural Possibilities of the Imagining, **Giorgia Sormani**, **Arianna Pirazzi**, **David Egger**, inhabitants of Veglio of Montecrestese (Italy)

RuTra - Rural Transformation Organization, **Wilhelm Klauser**, Initial Design, **Daniel Almgren Recén**, Urban and Regional Futures, Berlin (Germany)

The Center of the Village, **Jan Michael Pleines**, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (Germany)

Transhumance, **Augustin Clément**, B-TU Cottbus (Germany), **Ariana Frascoli**, **Capucine Fouquin**, EPFL (Switzerland)

Uplifting the region through its cultural and natural potential, **Katarina Steul Zatkova**, **Ľubica Vitková**, **Zuzana Suchánková**, **Pavel Beták**, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava (Slovakia)

Wild Boars and Media Libraries: A Case Study of Negotiating Spaces of Conversation Through an Artistic Residency in Rural Brittany, **Hinfray Wendenburg Constance**, PTAC & EUR CAPS, Université Rennes 2 (France).

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Michael Woods

Michael Woods is Professor of Geography at Aberystwyth University in Wales, UK, and Co-Director of the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD). His research focuses on the global countryside, rural politics and spatial justice.

He has led several large projects including Rural-Spatial-Justice, on rural discontent and disruptive politics; GLOBAL-RURAL, on globalisation and the countryside; and the Rural Wales Local Policy Innovation Partnership. He was formerly editor of the Journal of Rural Studies and is author of Rural (2011) and Rural Geography (2005).

Fernando García-Dory

Fernando García-Dory's work engages the relationship between culture and nature, as manifested in multiple contexts, from landscape and the rural, to desires and expectations in relation to identity, crisis, utopia and social change. Interested in the harmonic complexity of biological forms and processes, his work addresses connections and cooperation, from microorganisms to social systems, and from traditional art languages drawing to collaborative agroecological projects and actions. He studied Fine Arts and Rural Sociology and is preparing his PhD on Art and Agroecology.

INLAND is a collaborative agency started in 2009 providing a platform for diverse actors engaged in agricultural, social, and cultural production. During its first stage (2010–2013) and taking Spain as an initial case study, INLAND was engaged with artistic production in twenty-two villages across the country, nationwide exhibitions and presentations, and an international conference. This was followed by a period of reflection and evaluation, launching study groups on art and ecology, and a series of publications. Today INLAND functions as a collective focused on land-based collaborations and economies, and communities-of-practice as a substrate for post-contemporary art and cultural forms.

Katy Fox

Dr Katy Fox is an anthropologist, ecosocial designer, and teacher with a strong interest in collapse, transformation and resilience. She has worked extensively at the intersection of rural and urban systems.

She has researched social change in rural Romania and contributed to initiatives such as the Äerdschëff project and the Ferme du Bout du Monde, promoting permaculture, low-tech solutions, and community resilience. Katy currently chairs Äerdschëff asbl and engages in applied research, training, and educational innovation to drive systemic change.

Guida Marques

Guida Marques (1986), a neo-rural since 2017, lives in the village of Relvas, in Serra do Açor, Arganil, in the middle of nowhere —which is the center of everything. She holds a master's degree in Multimedia Art - Performance/Installation from the Faculty of Fine Arts of Lisbon (2019), a master's degree in architecture from the University of Coimbra (2011), and Agriculture from the school of life. She is an activist in the defence of ecosystems, traditional architecture, and ancient traditions, and is actively involved in local politics, being part of the executive board of the Parish Council, the Baldios (Common Land Association), and the Village Committee. Additionally, she is a member of the Trust Collective Cultural Association, a space for artistic residencies and cultural mediation in Barril de Alva, Arganil, and is also part of Coletivo Barda, based in the village of Cepos, Arganil. This collective comprises both local and non-local artists working in mixed media.

She worked as an architect in Lisbon from 2012 to 2015, engaging in community projects in priority intervention neighbourhoods, and participated in the Portuguese representation at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2023. One of her main objectives has been fostering community bonds and building the future, creating performances/installations that focus on the relationship between body/place/memory. She participated in the MANIFESTA 12 Biennale of Contemporary Art. Highlights of her work include collaborations with Tiago Vieira at Latoaria from 2013 to 2016 and with Vânia Rovisco in Reacting to Time in 2014.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND COORDINATION

Scientific Committee

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ETHZ, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (Switzerland)

FAUP, Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade do Porto (Portugal)

POLITO, Politecnico di Torino (Italy)

UACEG, University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (Bulgaria)

UAL, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (Portugal)

UCLouvain, Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium)

UDC, Universidade da Coruña (Spain)

ULB, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)

UMinho / Lab2Pt Universidade do Minho, Laboratório de Paisagem, Património e Território (Portugal)

WBI, Wallonie Bruxelles International (Belgium)

MUP, Medical University Plovdiv (Bulgaria)

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For any question or enquiry please write an email to the following address:

symposium@newruralities.eu.