POLLEN 2022: CALL FOR PAPERS

Political Ecology of Rural-Urban Transformations and Transitions

Co-organizers: Shreya Sinha and Tanya Matthan

There is a large and growing scholarship on growing fluidity and interconnections between the rural and the urban, reflected in terms such as rural-urban complex, ruralities, agrarian urbanisations, extended urbanisations, recombinant urbanization, etc. Scholars have emphasized that the contemporary 'rural' encompasses far more than the agrarian and that neat binaries of rural/urban, city/country, and agrarian/industrial rarely hold up against empirical scrutiny. These conceptual shifts reflect not only the spatial reorganisation of the countryside but also flows of people, commodities, and capital across these landscapes. This panel session seeks to explore where and how questions of ecology feature in these rural-urban transitions and transformations.

As the fields of urban and agrarian studies are brought into deeper dialogue through work on 'agrarian urbanization', we see a critical role for political ecology in understanding rural-urban transformations owing to its emphasis on cross-scalar analysis. In particular, we ask how these landscape transformations shape and are shaped by ecologies, resources, and material flows - from water to minerals, forests to pastures, toxic waste to air pollution. Current scholarship has largely focused on processes of commodification, financialization and dispossession of land - we argue for specific and granular analyses of the diverse ecological shifts propelled by and implicated in these recent transformations and indeed, the historical connections between rural and urban landscapes. We consider this essential in order to place the urgent scholarship on environmental change in conversation with the grounded political economies across diverse geographies.

Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- The transformations in the use and contestations over resources (land, water, forests etc.) as a result of rural-urban transformations
- The shifting materiality, meanings, values and social relations attached to ecology/environmental resources in these transformations
- Forms of marketization, commodification and speculation that emerge in relation to resources beyond and tied to land
- How these changes reconstitute our understandings of the agrarian, the urban and the environmental
- What the political ecology of rural-urban transformations tells us about regional and global capitalisms, and the reproduction of uneven geographies

We welcome contributions from across disciplines and on studies based in the global South and North.

Please direct any inquiries and/or a 250-word abstract to Shreya Sinha (shreya.sinha@reading.ac.uk) and Tanya Matthan (tanyamatthan@berkeley.edu) by Wednesday, December 8. We will communicate our decision by December 10. Final panel proposals will be submitted by December 15.

Indicative references:

- Woods, Michael. 2009. Rural geography: blurring boundaries and making connections. *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(6): 849-858.
- Balakrishnan, Sai and Shubra Gururani. 2021. New terrains of agrarian-urban studies: Limits and Possibilities. *Urbanization*, 6(1): 7-15.
- Connolly, Creighton. 2018. Urban Political Ecology Beyond Methodological Cityism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 43(1): 63-75.
- Kay, Cristóbal. 2008. Reflections on Latin American Rural Studies in the Neoliberal Globalization Period: A New Rurality? *Development and Change*, 39(6): 915-943.