



## **The contemporary rural gentry and processes of rural gentrification in England and Scotland**

### **ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship**

#### **University of Leicester and James Hutton Institute**

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

The University of Leicester as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner the James Hutton Institute to commence in October 2018.

The student will work under the supervision of Professor Martin Phillips (University of Leicester), Professor Philip Lindley (Loughborough University) and Dr Lee-Ann Sutherland (James Hutton Institute) to study transformations in land-ownership dynamics and their impacts on processes of rural gentrification in England and Scotland.

Gentrification has clear connections to landownership, being coined to draw parallels between contemporary processes of physical and social change and processes of wealth accumulation and social display outlined in historical studies of the landed rural gentry. Subsequent studies have demonstrated how landowners play an important role within contemporary processes of rural gentrification, facilitating, or preventing, the release of properties and land for conversion and development. New dynamics in landownership and gentrification are, however, potentially emerging. The 'financialisation' of land and housing, for example, may encourage land retention and land accumulation (or land-grabbing), or, conversely, land-release for housing and other forms of gentrified development. Rural land use may also be gentrifying as existing users diversify to take advantage of emergent middle-class tastes and through the arrival of new entrants to rural land ownership, who having accumulated wealth and expertise in lives beyond the rural are now purchasing and investing in rural land. For example, one of the largest agricultural landowners in the UK is now James Dyson, who has both purchased land with income derived from his global manufacturing business and applied his technological expertise and political influence to agricultural production.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the arrival of such actors and dynamics, including land price inflation that prevents other new entrants and impacts on the acquisition of land by existing farmers; a rise of absentee landlords and associated decline in awareness of and activity in local communities; rising rental levels; and the eviction of tenant farmers. More positive impacts have also been identified, including heightened direct and indirect economic investment in

agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural localities, infusion of human technical and cultural capital into rural businesses, and a more ecologically diverse rural landscape. Such changes indicate that there is a need to consider relations between gentrification and agricultural transformation in ways that go beyond a 'post-productivist' release of properties and land to also potentially encompass various forms of 'neo-productivism' and 'non-productivist' forms of agriculture linked to environmentalism and counter-cultural living.

The student will investigate changes in landownership and how they connect to processes of rural gentrification through case studies in England and Scotland. They will explore the impacts of these changes and assess their novelty through comparisons with earlier transitions in landownership associated with the rural gentry in England and Scotland. The research will involve a mixture of archival research, academic and stakeholder workshops, in-depth interviews and surveys. The student will be based at the University of Leicester but will spend time at the James Hutton Institute where they will receive additional research training, supervision and support.

### **Application Process**

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#), a cover letter, CV, and email the documents to [PGRGeog@le.ac.uk](mailto:PGRGeog@le.ac.uk).

**Application deadline: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018, 12.00pm Midday**

Shortlisted applicants will be required to provide two references and attend an interview. We anticipate interviews for this studentship will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018.

### **Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP**

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit:

[www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/](http://www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/).

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Geography, Geology, and the Environment prior to application can be directed to Martin Phillips [mpp2@le.ac.uk](mailto:mpp2@le.ac.uk).