

## **Rural studies study group sponsored session**

### **The Changing Governance of Rural Society, Space and Place**

**Convener: Neil Argent (University of New England)**

The hegemony of neoliberalism and the associated dominance of ‘Third Way’ politics in Western advanced nations over the past two decades has greatly complicated relationships between different tiers of government. Additionally, and more importantly, perhaps, the disrupting of conventional politics has seen new interest groups assert themselves into the broader body politic. It is now customary to describe this structural change as a shift from relations of ‘government’ to relations of ‘governance’. Amongst other things, this shift has been accompanied by a vibrant, emergent literature and a sustained research agenda on the topic. Of course, the fundamentally altered relationships between citizens, communities, interest groups and the mainstream political system – centred on Parliament and its processes – over the past decade or so have profound spatial consequences, and no less so than for rural regions. Compared to the situation twenty decades ago, most aspects of rural land and natural resource use and social and economic development are now more or less closely governed, with a growing panoply of hitherto ignored or excluded interest groups involved in the public debate over the use of rural space and place.

The purpose of this special themed session is to bring together researchers working across the spectrum of geography and related social sciences to discuss, in a focused fashion, the changing governance of rural society, space and place.