Seminar: What If "Rural" Were an Ethnicity & Protected Class?

Presenter:
Martha Geores, Associate Professor of Geography, University of Maryland

Time of Event:
Tuesday, November 11, 2014 - 12:30

Location:
National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC)
1 Park Place Suite 300
Annapolis, MD 21401

Title:
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There is no doubt that rural areas are different from urban and suburban areas. Federal programs aimed at improving medical care and education and targeted programs for rural development are some examples of recognition of marked differences between rural and urban areas.

"Rural" is accepted as a place-based term; its definition depends on population density, and it is also considered a distinct place for the purpose of eligibility for federal development programs. Communities with population densities below 25,000 residents are considered rural, although larger communities isolated from urban areas may also be considered rural.

This seminar will present an argument that “rural” should be a person-based term, being both an ethnicity and a group eligible for protection under federal laws and statutes. Rural is a cultural term, including not just people living in sparsely populated places, but people who have emigrated from those areas. Under this theory, "rural people" would join other protected classes as not just protected from discrimination, but also beneficiaries of affirmation action.

Martha Geores is the adviser for ENSP-Land Use at the University of Maryland. Her area of interest and research is the sustainability of social and cultural systems in the face of local and global economic and environmental change. She is the author of Common Ground: The Struggle for Ownership of the Black Hills National Forest (1996) and chapters on common property and cultural geography. Her teaching focus is the relationship between people and the environment, and she is an affiliate faculty member of the Department of Women’s Studies.

Dr. Geores’ first career was as a public interest lawyer in Maine. It was in that capacity that she learned first-hand about common property from the Maine lobstermen and about the importance of landscape in social sustainability.

Dr. Geores received her B.A. in Sociology from Bates College, her JD from New York University School of Law, and her PhD in Geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
Event type: Seminar
Event Attendance: Open to the Public

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