

Making Homes, Making Rural

Dr Menelaos Gkartzios, Centre for Rural Economy

As an innovative knowledge exchange partnership, the Centre for Rural Economy hosts an annual artist-in-residence with Berwick Visual Arts. Last year an artist was selected against the theme: *'making homes, making rural'*. The ambition for the residency was to provide new perspectives on rural housing research, and to provide a space for engagement between the local community, artists and academics. Through ethnographic research and workshops, this project explored how this residency mediated social renewal goals such as: responding to community concerns regarding housing development; valuing the practice of rural art residencies; and working with



The project was a collaboration between Belgian artist Sander Van Raemdonck, art ethnographer Dr Julie Crawshaw, Director of Visual Arts James Lowther and Dr Menelaos Gkartzios. It involved three workshops: i) 'Guide the Guide tour' (12/3/16) in the case of Spittal Point with the local community (open invitation) and discussing the proposed housing development; ii) 'art and rural housing' workshop (16/3/16) exploring the artists' working practice as a response to housing development tensions; and iii) 'researching rural residencies' workshop (14/4/16) exploring the nature of rural artist-in-residence programmes as well as the role of the academy in supporting those. The results and experiences of these workshops were presented at the World Congress of Rural Sociology in Toronto, Canada (11/8/16) by Dr Gkartzios, and in a two-day event in Berwick-upon-Tweed called 'New Ways of Seeing: Creating Pathways To Confident Market Towns' (19-20/10/16), which was chaired by Dr Crawshaw.

Workshop participants, amongst others, included: Annette Reeves, Northumberland County Council Building Conservation Officer and Peter Rutherford, Northumberland County Council Planning Officer (North Area Development Team). In their own words, the NISR workshops engaged Annette and Peter in 'seeing' Berwick in a more holistic, thoughtful and sensory way. From this experience, attending the workshops expanded Annette and Peter's interest in exploring the role of art in the planning process, and the role of academics as a conduit to knowledge exchange partnerships.

"The models that Sander makes have produced enough tangible emotion, and that is the value: Getting those emotions out on the table. And then people can get to a much more rational discussion about change" (Peter Rutherford, Northumberland County Council Planning

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