TEAGASC PHD WALSH FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Title: Restructuring of the rural economy and farm and non-farm household vulnerability

Ref: 2013032

Background
Over the last two decades, there has been much debate in rural studies concerning (spatially uneven) processes of rural restructuring and its impact on redefining the role of rural areas and in underpinning different development trajectories across rural space. Within an Irish context, the ongoing restructuring of the core rural economy during the 1990s/2000s was eclipsed by overall national economic growth during the so-called Celtic Tiger era, particularly the increasing reliance on the construction sector for employment during the speculative housing boom from the late 1990s until 2007. However, the emergence of the economic crisis in 2007/08 has increasingly exposed rural localities to exogenous shocks and ruptures within the globalised economy in addition to exposing the risks of relying on construction related growth within a national context which had previously masked wider rural readjustment processes and the underlying fragility of many local rural economies.

Rather than economic growth, many commentators have shifted their focus to examining how regions and localities can cope with economic crises by enhancing place resilience and reducing the vulnerability of places to global economic uncertainty, i.e. drawing on endogenous resources to foster locally grounded economic development. However, scant attention has been given to assessing economic vulnerability at the household scale. This research aims to address this deficit by developing and applying a Rural Household Vulnerability Index (RHVI). The index will be developed using existing secondary data sources (e.g. CSO Census of Population and Agriculture, Household Budget Surveys and the National Farm Survey) and a customised household survey to develop both objective (e.g. household income) and subjective indicators (e.g. household perceptions of future job insecurity) to provide a nuanced account of living conditions and life satisfaction among rural households in Ireland. By adopting a vulnerability approach (rather than providing a 'snapshot'), the RHVI will enable an assessment of not only current conditions for households, but also the probability of continued declining living standards and the exposure of farm and non-farm households to further exogenous shocks. This will provide an important tool for assessing the potential impact of a range of public policies at the household level.

Requirements
Applicants should have an excellent primary degree (First Class Honours) and/or a Masters degree in a cognate discipline (e.g. Planning, Geography, Environmental Policy, Sociology, Economics, etc.). The successful candidate should be highly self-motivated and be prepared for extended periods of field work. They must also possess good quantitative methodological skills (or be willing to acquire them) and have a good capacity for critical thinking. The PhD will be undertaken within the disciplines of planning and environmental policy within the School of GPEP.

Award
The PhD Fellowship is a joint research project between Teagasc (Ashtown) and the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin. The student will be registered and based in UCD working under the supervision of Drs. Mark Scott and Enda Murphy in association with Teagasc supervisors (Drs. David Meredith and Cathal O'Donoghue). The Fellowship will start on September 1st when the most suitable candidate is appointed.

The fellowship provides a stipend of €21,000. University fees are paid by the student from the stipend which is tenable for 4 years.

Further Information/Applications

Dr. Mark Scott, School of Geography, Planning & Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, Ireland
Phone +353 1 7162789 email: mark.scott@ucd.ie Web: www.ucd.ie/gpep/people/dmarkscott/

Dr. Enda Murphy, School of Geography, Planning & Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, Ireland
Phone +353 1 7162716 email: enda.murphy@ucd.ie Web: www.ucd.ie/gpep/people/drendamurphy/

Application Procedure
Prospective candidates should submit an electronic copy of their Curriculum Vitae and a letter of interest describing their competencies for the position simultaneously to:

Dr. Mark Scott (mark.scott@ucd.ie) and
Dr. Enda Murphy(enda.murphy@ucd.ie)

Closing date
31st June 2013.