



**RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE**

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AGRO SCHOOL FOR LIFE

**université
Lumière
LYON 2**



USC1512

Laboratory for Rural Studies (LER)

Management

Claire Delfosse, Director
Carole Chazoule, Deputy Director

Research topics

- Action-oriented sciences, environment and society
- Politics, actors, representations
- Food production and systems
- Experiencing and reinventing rural life

Key figures

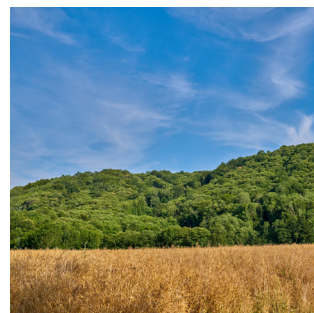
- 15 lecturer-researchers
- 1 senior lecturer
- 4 research areas

Mots clés

- Social sciences
- Environment
- Food
- Territorial governance
- Mobility

Mission and objectives

The Laboratory for Rural Studies (LER) is a multidisciplinary research unit which studies contemporary rural societies and how they're changing. Created in 2003, it is jointly supervised by Université Lumière Lyon 2 and Isara/Agrivia Group. Since 2024, it has been recognised as a contract-based unit (USC) of INRAE's ACT Division. It is also affiliated with the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH Lyon-Saint-Étienne).



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The LER's teaching and research staff are from several institutions and uses inductive methods focused on fieldwork. It studies rural dynamics and their links with the urban world through themes such as agriculture, food, public policy, culture and mobility.

Thanks to its transdisciplinary action research approach and strong regional roots, the LER interacts closely with local and national stakeholders. It operates in four cross-disciplinary research areas, rather than in teams.

Its approaches combine:

- Modern history: to understand current issues in light of the past;
- Geography: to analyse territorial dynamics and rural/urban relationships;
- Sociology: to study evolving practices in an uncertain world;
- Economics: to query and evaluate new organisational forms related to transitions
- Économie : pour questionner et évaluer les nouvelles formes organisationnelles liées aux transitions.



Regional centre
Lyon-Grenoble Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes



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Research

LER research focuses on four areas:

Area 1: Action-oriented sciences, environment and society from a diachronic and critical perspective

This area provides a cross-disciplinary analysis of agricultural, rural, environmental and technoscientific dynamics, analysing their links with political power and the market. It extends critical approaches to the agrarian question through a historical and interdisciplinary perspective, including contemporary thinking on agroecology and ecological agricultural practices.

Area 2: Politics, actors, representations

This section examines public policies and institutions, focusing on stakeholders (elected officials, professionals, citizens) and on the power and gender dynamics involved. It also explores the levels of political decision-making, ideologies and representations (including visual ones) related to agricultural, environmental and territorial policies.

Area 3: Food production and systems

This research area analyses food systems from a territorial, social and cultural perspective, including the concept of local food systems (SyAM). It also considers issues of food shortage and community initiatives to promote food justice. At the same time, it explores the rationale behind the relocation of food production and links with public policy.

Area 4: "Experiencing and reinventing rural life"

This area focuses on the diversity of rural lifestyles, from permanent residents to new arrivals, highlighting social, cultural and heritage innovations. It explores different ways of living in rural territories under various perspectives (mobility, food, culture). It also analyses new ways of promoting heritage in the era of leisure and tourism.

Collaboration and expertise

The Laboratory for Rural Studies is strongly involved in its local academic environment and maintains close ties with several laboratories at the Université Lyon 2, the MSH, the academic community of Lyon Saint-Étienne, as well as with the research units of INRAE's scientific division ACT, the BioEEnViS federation, the TRALIM Chair, the Center for Living Agroecology and Food Systems and the AGE unit (Agronomy and Environment) of ISARA (INRAE's contract-based unit).

Through these partnerships, the LER unit plays a part in developing multidisciplinary and innovative research focused on today's regional challenges: climate change, agroecological transitions, sustainable food, health, mobility and local development, from a rural perspective.

The unit is increasingly active internationally, publishing 28% of its work in foreign languages. It is involved in several European projects (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+) and collaborates with partners in Canada, Japan, Brazil and Vietnam. It participates in international scientific networks (European Rural History Organisation, Forum ODT) and maintains long-standing links with institutions such as UQAM and CIRAD. The laboratory also supports its PhD students' contributions to international projects, conferences and publications.

Teaching

The LER's members are both researchers and teachers, ensuring a strong link between teaching and research. Research-based training is central to their teaching approach, particularly through the supervision of internships at Master's and engineering school level. These enable students to be directly involved in projects rooted in local realities. These experiences enrich both the students' training and the laboratory's understanding of local dynamics. The Laboratory for Rural Studies is associated with a Master's degree "Etudes rurales" with a professional track and a doctoral school.



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