

CALL FOR DOCTORAL CONTRACT APPLICATIONS

Doctoral student (M/F) in contemporary History

“Moving Images and Representations of Rural Life in Europe from the 20th Century to the Present”

General information about the job offer

Publication date: 15/05/2026

Name of scientific manager: Lynch Edouard

Type of contract: Doctoral contract

Contract duration: 36 months

Thesis start date: 01/09/2026

Working hours: Full time

Remuneration: €2,300 gross per month

Workplace: Université Lumière Lyon 2 – Campus Berges du Rhône / 16 av Berthelot 69007

Laboratory of affiliation: Laboratoire d’Études Rurales

Doctoral school: ED 483

Languages spoken: English

Frequency of travel: frequent (national and international)

Driving license required: NO

Description of thesis topic

Scientific and Socio-Economic Stakes of the Doctoral Project

The doctoral project is embedded within the Horizon Europe project “Ruralitic”, led by INRAE (coordinated by Gilles Laferté at CESAER). This project adopts a multidisciplinary and comparative perspective to reassess contemporary transformations of rural spaces in Europe in an era marked by increasingly multilocalized household trajectories, both diachronically and synchronically. The core premise of the programme is that, under the effect of increased mobilities and circulations, Europe is evolving toward a new social geography that less sharply distinguishes rural from urban areas than it does spaces associated with upper social classes from those associated with working-class groups. Consequently, growing urban heterogeneity is increasingly mirrored by rural heterogeneity, whose social dynamics are no longer determined solely by endogenous logics but also by long-distance, exogenous dynamics—particularly the representations held by different social groups that reshape rural spaces according to their own imaginaries.

In line with Jean-Claude Chamboredon’s seminal work on nineteenth-century peasant painting (Chamboredon, 1977), this doctoral research aims to explore the breadth and historical depth of the

repertoire of dominant cultural representations of rural spaces that inform audiovisual productions. What positive or negative representations of rurality have been produced and disseminated in European audiovisual media since the Second World War, during a period characterized by accelerated urbanization, the tertiarization of society, and the productivist agricultural revolution? Particular attention will be paid to confronting the long durée of the construction of representations—at national and European scales (especially visible in cultural products that often depict stereotyped figures of rural spaces)—with more immediately contemporary perspectives, such as specific events (most recently the COVID-19 pandemic) that may have functioned either as moments objectifying social change or as amplified opportunities for the production of contradictory representations of rural worlds (ranging from the “noble savage” to the “brute,” from a place of rejection to a site of utopia).

Working Hypotheses

One of the main hypotheses is that the European history of rural representations does not simply multiply according to the number of nations, but is structured primarily around two poles. The first centres on industrialized nations that experienced an early decline in the primacy of agriculture; the second concerns countries in which agriculture remained dominant for a longer period and where peasant figures continued to occupy a central place in political and symbolic constructions. Similarly, productive versus landscape-oriented uses of rural spaces vary across countries, roughly opposing Northern and Southern Europe. In this regard, the development of tourism and recreational uses of European rural spaces appears as another decisive variable.

Two axes therefore seem crucial in structuring these representations. The first operates earlier in historical terms and crystallizes around the agriculture–industry tension, associated with highly differentiated urban histories and trajectories of rural exodus. The second emerges later, during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and revolves around the touristic potential of diverse rural areas, reversing earlier stigmas by transforming spaces once perceived as remote into some of the most highly valued locales today (mountains, coastlines, islands, etc.).

As already observed nearly half a century ago (Hubscher, 1983), certain representations display remarkable historical longevity, and multiple representational systems coexist and even compete with one another. The primary objective of the thesis is therefore to analyze the construction, circulation, and representation of rural spaces in audiovisual media through a diachronic and comparative approach. To what extent are the attractiveness or repulsiveness of rural areas socially and culturally constructed through what moving images convey?

While representations of rurality can be observed across multiple media, the hypothesis advanced here is that moving images constitute a particularly powerful vector—both through their capacity, combining image and sound, to intensify processes of identification or rejection, and through their role in facilitating circulation and appropriation. Ultimately, this research will make it possible to assess how images and discourses on rurality precede, accompany, and transform the relationships that individuals, social groups, and states maintain with rural spaces.

Methodology

The doctoral research will begin with a systematic review of the scientific literature devoted to representations of rural spaces at both national and European levels, with particular attention to audiovisual representations. This initial phase will draw on ongoing work conducted within the Ruralitic project, notably within Work Package 2, in which partners are engaged in extensive bibliographic collection.

The definition and construction of the corpus constitute the core of the research. For the historical dimension, the thesis may mobilise resources collected and made available by the European Rural History Film Association (EURHO) and its online research portal on rural cinema, as well as materials from various institutions dedicated to the collection and valorisation of archives, such as cinémathèques of ministries of

agriculture, networks of rural museums, and their European counterparts. For the more contemporary period, a large number of films, documentaries, and television programmes are accessible online, alongside textual resources such as critical journals that provide film listings or reviews.

The construction and analysis of the corpus will aim to generate results both in quantitative terms and through in-depth case studies, privileging opportunities for comparative approaches based on transnational productions.

Working environment

The doctoral student will be recruited by Université Lumière Lyon 2 for a period of 36 months. He/she will be enrolled in the doctoral program of the doctoral school ED 483.

This doctoral contract is conducted within the framework of the Ruralitic project, funded under the Horizon Europe programme for half of the doctoral research period. The other half is funded by INRAE. The doctoral candidate will be affiliated with the Laboratoire d'Études Rurales, which will cover research expenses through funding allocated within the Ruralitic project.

Candidate profile

- First thesis registration in **2026/2027**
- Not be enrolled in a doctoral program at another French or foreign higher education institution (excluding cotutelle)
- Hold a Master's degree or equivalent in Contemporary history with, if possible, skills in analyzing audiovisual sources and meet the eligibility requirements set by the doctoral school (<https://edsciencesociales.universite-lyon.fr/ecoles-doctorales/ed-483-sciences-sociales/site-francais/>)

How to apply

- Resume
- Covering letter (max. 2 pages) briefly explaining the applicant's background and its relevance to the thesis project, the analytical framework envisaged and the methodology proposed to answer the research question
- Applications must be sent to Edouard.lynch@univ-lyon2.fr before midnight 15/06/2026

Calendar

15/05/2026 : publication of call for applications

10/06/2026 : deadline for receipt of applications

20/06/2026 : eligibility

29/06/2026 : auditions

Composition of the selection committee

- M. Edouard Lynch (PU Lyon 2)
- Mme Laura Pettinaroli (PU Lyon 2)
- M. Gilles Laferté (DR, INRAE)