
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Dr. Gerard McElwee is a Reader in Rural Enterprise at Lincoln Business School. He has more than 15 years experience of research and teaching in the fields of farming and rural enterprise, rural diversification, entrepreneurship and management. His current research activity includes a three year study of the entrepreneurial skills of farmers across six regions in Europe. McElwee is founding Editor of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, and has presented at numerous conferences on topics related to entrepreneurship and rural enterprise. He holds a PhD entitled 'Farmers in an Entrepreneurial World', an MBA, and BSc(Hons) in Social Studies. He has published over 40 articles.

This collection of papers had its origins in the *5th Rural Entrepreneurship Conference* held at the University of Lincoln in February 2007 and the *European Rural Sociology Conference* held at the University of Wageningen in August 2007. The former was organised by myself, Professor David Deakins from the University of Paisley and Roger Turner of the Commission for Rural Communities in the UK. In the latter, a track on rural entrepreneurship, 'Rural entrepreneurs, business people and farmers? Problems of identification', ran for the first time and generated a good deal of interest. This collection represents a cross-section of those papers.

Rural Entrepreneurship is a growing subdiscipline of entrepreneurship and covers a range of issues as evidenced by the diversity of contributions in this special issue.

Despite the recognition that entrepreneurship is one of the primary facets through which rural economic development can be achieved, empirical research on rural entrepreneurship is relatively sparse and this concept remains largely unknown.

The pressures on rural entrepreneurs in all sectors are very different from their urban counterparts and moreover, rural entrepreneurship is a complex variable concept and phenomenon.

However, there is little discussion on what constitutes rural entrepreneurship. As Atherton and McElwee (2007) have argued, there have been broad descriptions and discussions of the 'enterprise economy' and an 'enterprise culture' as a whole (*e.g.*, Schram, 2004). These have typically taken the nation or region as the spatial unit of analysis, rather than differentiating between different types of geography, such as rural and urban (Atherton and Frith, 2006). Where enterprise and entrepreneurship is explored in a rural context, studies have tended to focus on the dynamics and behaviours of individuals, often focusing on farmers, as entrepreneurs within a rural setting (*e.g.*,

McElwee, 2006). Can then the methods used to analyse business entrepreneurs in other sectors be applied to rural businesses? Some of the articles in this special issue deal with this challenge.

I am particularly grateful to Leo Dana for encouraging me to compile this special issue and to David Deakins and Roger Turner for their work in organising and supporting the Rural Entrepreneurship conference in the UK. All errors of course remain my responsibility. I do hope you enjoy reading this collection.

References

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