

RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Harvesting Ideas and Sowing New Seeds

Edited by Gary Bosworth, Polly Chapman,
Robert Newbery, Artur Steiner and Don J. Webber

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

VOLUME 20

RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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RESEARCH VOLUME 20

RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: HARVESTING IDEAS AND SOWING NEW SEEDS

EDITED BY

GARY BOSWORTH

Northumbria University, UK

POLLY CHAPMAN

Impact Hub Inverness, UK

ROBERT NEWBERY

Northumbria University, UK

ARTUR STEINER

Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

AND

DON J. WEBBER

The University of Sheffield, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Gary Bosworth is the Research Lead in the Department of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Strategy and Director of the EPIC Research Centre at Northumbria University. As an active researcher in the fields of rural entrepreneurship and regional economic development, he serves on DEFRA's Rural Academic Advisory Panel and on the North East Rural Innovation Steering Group. He is also Co-chair of ISBE's Rural Entrepreneurship Network and a Fellow of the Regional Studies Association. He leads modules on Contemporary Issues in Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Policy and supports research methods teaching and dissertation supervision.

Polly Chapman is the CEO of HISEZ, who owns and operates Impact Hub Inverness, a coworking space that is part of the international network of Impact Hubs. She is also a business adviser working to support social enterprises and small and medium enterprises in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. She previously worked at Aberdeen University conducting research on aspects of rural life, including a major study on Rural Disadvantage in Scotland. She recently worked with colleagues at Newcastle University and Scotland's Rural College to revisit some of this work, exploring the experience of financial hardship in rural Britain.

Robert Newbery is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Head of the Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Strategy Department at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. He has worked extensively in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America, and has founded and run a number of entrepreneurial businesses. He is a Co-editor of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* and a member of the Board of Directors for the Institute of Small Business and Enterprise. His research interests are focussed on entrepreneurship in developing contexts.

Artur Steiner is a Professor in Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development. He leads the Community, Citizenship and Participation Research Group at the Yunus Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University. His research is about community disadvantage and actions to ameliorate isolation and, through entrepreneurship, co-production and participation, raise resilience and empowerment. His work is concerned with evidencing how, through social innovation, interventions, entities and policies tackle social inequalities and vulnerability including geographical disadvantage and frailty of specific groups in the society. He is a member of the Editorial Boards of *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, the *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* and the *Social Enterprise Journal*.

Don J. Webber is Chair of Managerial Economics and Head of the Entrepreneurship, Strategy, and International Business subject group at Sheffield University Management School, The University of Sheffield. He carries out policy-relevant, social science research with a multidisciplinary and applied focus on productivity and geography. Independently or as part of a team, he has won research grants totalling over £2.35m and has written over 100 academic articles and 2 books.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Nikolaos Apostolopoulos is an Assistant Professor in European Policies in Sustainability, Development and Entrepreneurship at the University of Peloponnese, and Director of the Laboratory of European Sustainable Development Policies. He is a Scientific Advisor at the Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Employees. He has participated in more than 20 European Union and national funding initiatives and programmes.

Sotiris Apostolopoulos is a Lecturer in Entrepreneurship and Development at the University of Neapolis where he is Coordinator of the Undergraduate Programmes in Business Administration & Digital Business. He holds a PhD from the School of Management of the University of the Peloponnese. He specialises in rural entrepreneurship, European policies and socio-economic development of the rural areas with an emphasis on private and social health enterprises.

Jo Bensemann is Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship and Head, School of Management at Massey University's Business School. Her academic background is in human resource management, tourism and entrepreneurship. She maintains research interests in entrepreneurship and innovation, agribusiness and family business, along with women and work.

Robert Bowen is an International Entrepreneurship Academic at Cardiff University and has held academic positions at Swansea and Aberystwyth Universities in Wales, and the University of Nantes, France. He is Visiting Professor at Audencia Business School in Nantes, France. He undertakes research in rural enterprise, regional development and small and medium enterprise internationalisation, having published in a range of international journals, and presented his research at the Welsh Parliament, House of Lords and European Commission.

Kathryn A. Burnett is a Senior Lecturer in Arts and Media at the University of the West of Scotland. With a background in social anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, her research interests include the mediation and representation of remote and island spaces; identity, place and 'commons' narratives of Scotland; arts policy, cultural work and Scottish cultural heritage contexts; and the sustainability ecologies and enterprise cultures of small island and 'remote rural' contexts.

Douglas Chalmers is a Senior Lecturer at Glasgow Caledonian University where he works in the field of Gaelic media. He is the co-author and author of numerous

book chapters on the connection between Gaelic arts and culture, the economy and the language; he has recently co-authored a report on the Impact of Gaelic in Glasgow, and with his colleague Kathryn A. Burnett, he has written a chapter on Leisure and Culture in the Pluto Press publication *A New Scotland – Building an Equal, Fair and Sustainable Society*.

David Charles is Professor of Enterprise and Innovation and was Founding Director of the Northumbria Centre for Innovation, Regional Transformation and Entrepreneurship. Prior to this, he held various professorial roles in Lincoln, Strathclyde, Curtin (Australia) and Newcastle (UK). His research interests include regional innovation policy, knowledge exchange and the regional role of universities.

Orla Collins is a Lecturer, Researcher and Associate Director for Education in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle University. She is a Principal Investigator on a Horizon Europe project on gender equality in rural and agricultural innovation systems across Europe through Newcastle University. She is also Co-investigator in Transforming UK Food Systems Strategic Priorities Fund, which aims to support a major transformation of the food system.

James A. Cunningham is Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Newcastle University Business School, Newcastle University, UK, and is an affiliated member of Centre for Innovation Research at Lund University, Sweden. His research interests are in the fields of entrepreneurship, innovation and strategic management.

Mike Danson is Professor Emeritus of Enterprise Policy, Heriot-Watt University, and Visiting Professor in the Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde, and Co-director of the Scottish Centre for Island Studies. He publishes widely on community, rural and island development for local, national and international organisations. He has served on the Scottish Government Just Transition Commission, the Tax Working Group of the Poverty and Inequality Commission and various governmental working groups; he has published more than 20 books, 120 book chapters and 500 papers.

David Deakins returned to the UK in 2014 after a full-time role at Massey University, New Zealand, holding a Chair in Small Business. He is the former Director of the New Zealand Centre for SME Research (NZSMERC). Whilst Director, he was Principal Investigator and led a number of research projects undertaken for the New Zealand Government on small and medium enterprises including regulation, internationalisation and innovation. He is co-editor of the second edition: *Entrepreneurship: A Contemporary & Global Approach* (2024).

Helen Farrell, an academic with expertise in spatial planning and environmental science, has added contributions to the fields of outdoor and rural tourism, community planning and geographical information systems. She holds a PhD in

Spatial Planning and an MSc in Environmental Science, complemented by a BSc in Natural Sciences with a focus on geography and biology. Her recent research delves into the value of outdoor activities and pedagogical approaches in tourism studies.

Andreas Giazitzoglu is a Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship at Newcastle University Business School. He researches the Sociology of Entrepreneurship. He has a secondary research stream looking at the Sociology of Organisations. His work is often founded on ethnographic research and phenomenological analysis.

Peter Gittins is a Lecturer in the Centre for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Studies within the management department at LUBS. He has a practical working background in farm management, helping to run his family-owned livestock farm in West Yorkshire. He has an inter-disciplinary research background exploring 'Constrained Entrepreneurship in the English Uplands' as part of his PhD at the University of Huddersfield. His research interests are centred around agricultural business management, specifically rural entrepreneurship.

Orlando Goodall is a Lecturer in Criminology and Social Science at the University of Plymouth. His ESRC PhD research produced the first intensive investigation into the relational crime script dynamics of deer poaching and illegal venison production processes in the UK. His research interests are in the illicit enterprise activity of corrupted rural authority figures engaged in formally legitimate business and their roles in the organisation of the criminal conspiracies of the countryside. He has published on rural-wildlife-food crime, security and justice.

Matthew Gorton is Professor of Marketing at Newcastle University Business School and Deputy Director of the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, UK. He is also a Visiting Research Professor at Corvinus University (Hungary). His work focusses on improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of food supply chains, and fostering rural enterprise. He has undertaken research for the European Union, Defra, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and World Bank, and is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Agricultural Economics*.

Danielle Hutcheon is a Research Fellow working as part of the communities, citizenship and participation research theme at the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, GCU. Her research focusses on community empowerment, sustainability, health and wellbeing at a policy and practice level. She is a mixed-methods researcher who holds an MA (Hons) in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh and PhD in Public Health from Liverpool John Moores University.

Paul Igwe is an Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation and the Pioneer Programme Leader of BA (Hons) Business with Entrepreneurship at Lincoln University, Department of Management. His research interests include

entrepreneurial behaviour, ethnic/indigenous entrepreneurship, small enterprises research, social enterprise, women entrepreneurship, business strategy, rural enterprises, climate change adaptation, sustainability approaches, higher education pedagogy and policies, digital platforms innovation, decolonising research approaches, and national/regional politics and policies.

Rebecca Jones is a Teaching Associate at Bangor University in Wales, where she teaches topics including food geography, place-making and qualitative research methods. Alongside this, she researches the impacts of food and drink systems on local communities, mainly within the North Wales foodscape. She has presented her research at both national and international conferences including the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, Rural Entrepreneurship Conference and the ESRS Congress.

Eifiona Thomas Lane is a Geography and Environmental Planning Lecturer. Her research interests focus on sustainable communities and include sustainable agriculture, green regeneration and entrepreneurship within local systems and responsible heritage interpretation. Working across disciplines and academic-practitioner boundaries, she is particularly interested in exploring the geographies and products of protected landscapes. A native Welsh speaker from Gwynedd, North Wales, she is committed to supporting rural community capacity building and local policy implementation.

Panagiotis Liargovas is Professor of Economics at the Department of Management Science and Technology of the University of Peloponnese. He received his BA degree from the University of Athens and his MA and PhD degrees in Economics from Clark University. For the period 2013–2018, he was the Head of the Parliamentary Budget Office at the Hellenic Parliament. He is currently Chairman of the Board of the Centre of Planning and Economic Research and of the National Productivity Board.

Amelia Magistrali is an Associate Extension Educator in Soil Health at the University of Connecticut, where she works directly with agricultural producers and service producers to encourage adoption of practices benefiting climate resilience through soil health prioritisation. Previously, she was a Research Associate at the Centre for Rural Economy in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, and with the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) at Newcastle University. With a PhD in Sustainable Agricultural Systems, her research focuses on place-based and participatory approaches, with an emphasis on engagement and collaboration with farmer networks.

Ilias Makris is Professor in Financial Analysis at the Department of Accounting and Finance, at the University of the Peloponnese, Greece. He received his PhD in Business Administration at the University of Patras, Greece. He has served as Scientific Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Unit of Technological Educational Institute of Peloponnese (2009–2015), Head of the Department of

Accounting and Finance, and Director of Postgraduate Programme in Finance, Department of Accounting and Finance.

Ian Merrell is Research Fellow at Scotland's Rural College, working on work packages around the rural economy, rural communities and land reform. He is a multidisciplinary qualitative researcher and has expertise in rural and regional development, rural sociology, governance, innovation and economic geography. He has worked at the Centre for Rural Economy, the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at Newcastle University and the Centre for Rural Policy Research Centre at the University of Exeter.

Ron Methorst is Professor in Environment-inclusive Farm Entrepreneurship at AERES University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands. With a base in Animal Production Systems in Wageningen and experience as advisor for environmental legislation, his PhD research (Wageningen) focussed on the perceived room for manoeuvre of farmers in farm strategies. A farmer's grandson, he is interested in diversity in farm development in relation to the social, physical and ecological context of the farm.

Abhishek Mukherjee is Faculty Member at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, specialising in Entrepreneurial Finance. With a PhD in Finance, his expertise lies in the realm of venture capital for early-stage innovations and the integration of financial technology (Fintech) to aid small and medium enterprises in New Zealand. His work primarily focusses on bridging theoretical finance concepts with practical financial solutions in the entrepreneurial sector.

Jeremy Phillipson is Professor of Rural Development at the Centre for Rural Economy in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Newcastle University. He has research interests in the development needs of rural economies and fishing communities, processes of expertise exchange within rural land management and in the integration of social and natural sciences in resource management. Jeremy is Director of the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, funded by Research England.

Koen Salemink is an Assistant Professor in Cultural Geography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen. He is a trained human geographer and planner (BSc) and a cultural geographer (MSc). Since his PhD is in rural digitalisation (2016), his objective has been to combine insights from economic, social and cultural geographies to better understand how communities deal with social and digital exclusion. In his research, he focusses on rural areas and non-metropolitan regions.

Jonathan M. Scott is a Senior Lecturer at Waikato Management School, Tauranga campus, University of Waikato, New Zealand, where he teaches on various innovation, entrepreneurship and strategy courses. His collaborative

research focusses on entrepreneurial finance, diversity, business support and policy.

Sally Shortall has a joint professorship: she is the Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Newcastle University, and Professor in the South East Technological University, Waterford. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and she was elected as an International Fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry in 2022. She has recently led research for the Scottish and English Government on women's role in agriculture and has carried out research for both the European Commission and Parliament.

Anne Smith is a Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship at Glasgow Caledonian University. Anne publishes in peer-reviewed, international entrepreneurship journals with articles on rural entrepreneurship and also publishes in educational and business journals on learning and enterprise education. Anne designs rural development projects with community organisations using an engaged scholarship approach; these are partnership projects delivered at grassroots level that co-create solutions to difficult community problems and support new thinking in community organisations. Anne is passionate about the socio-economic development of family farms.

Robert Smith is an Independent Scholar and Professor of Criminal Enterprise at The Institute For Policing, Staffordshire University. He is an internationally recognised heterodox entrepreneurship and policing scholar. He has published over 250 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and is a recognised expert on criminal entrepreneurship, particularly in rural locations. He is a member of both the British Society of Criminology and the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Pattanapong Tiwasing is an Assistant Professor in Sustainable Innovation at the Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham. He holds a PhD in Agricultural and Applied Economics from Newcastle University, UK. His research focusses on rural enterprise, rural innovation, small business economics, agricultural and food economics, food security, and edible insects as food and feed. Currently, he serves as an Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*.

Barbara Tocco is a Principal Research Associate at the Centre for Rural Economy, in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, and Centre Manager at the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, at Newcastle University. With a PhD in Economics, she is an applied social scientist with extensive experience in rural research. Her research interests relate to rural businesses and development strategies, alternative food networks and short food supply chains, sustainability and innovation in agri-food supply chains, agricultural and rural policy.

Leanne Townsend is Senior Social Scientist at the James Hutton Institute, Scotland. Over the last decade, she has developed and led research on the social impacts of digitalisation and new technologies in rural and international contexts. She currently leads two Horizon Europe projects, with work exploring the impacts of digitalisation in small farm settings, and the role of digital tools and platforms in more inclusive community development, including in nature-based settings.

Geoff Whittam is Emeritus Professor at Glasgow Caledonian University. He has published over 60 papers during his academic career with over a dozen within the field of rural entrepreneurship. He was a long-standing member of the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) serving on the Board for six years and was also a Board member of the Regional Studies Association. He is currently Chair of the Management Committee of the Scottish Community Development Association and Chair of the Management Committee of Sunny Govan Community radio.

Lavinia Wilson-Youlden is a Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University. Her specialist field is Tourism, Hospitality and Entrepreneurship. Recent research explores the challenges and opportunities for tourism enterprises in marginal rural destinations. Previous research has focussed upon the motivations driving women in tourism entrepreneurship, family farm diversification and challenges experienced by small and medium enterprises in constructing, delivering and managing the rural hospitality experience. Her research interests include entrepreneurship, the role of women within farm diversification and provision of hospitality and tourism in rural contexts.

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FOREWORD

Since the early 1970s, I have had the pleasure of working to enhance attention and support for rural land uses, environments, enterprises and communities across the United Kingdom (UK). During my 50-year career, I have worked with UK organisations including the Countryside Agency (CA), the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), the National Farmers' Union (NFU), the National Innovation Centre for Rural Economies and Scotland's Rural College, and international organisations such as the European Parliament, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (UN). Looking back, I recognise that regular access to academic evidence has underpinned my analysis, advice, advocacy, promotion and delivery of support programmes and policies. I am, therefore, writing this foreword with the expectation that this collection will offer those that continue my journey a commendable source of evidence.

The character, classifications and perceptions of 'rural' communities and economies are diverse. So are the 'entrepreneurs' who create or harness rural resources and opportunities. Over time, rural places and economies have witnessed many transformations. Accordingly, research, advocacy and support for rural enterprises benefit from a collective and diverse set of skills, outlooks and sources. The editors of this book have called upon such qualities from a broad group of centres within and beyond Britain.

Britain has a rich history and corpus of official inquiries, reports and regulations in which landowners and allied occupations are highly visible, for example, in England's Domesday Inquests, the medieval Welsh 'Law Book of Hywel Dda', and the First Statistical Account of Scotland 1790–1799. Such land-based enterprises – though they now form only 15% of England's rural businesses – continue to evolve, presenting new material, examples and questions, as evidenced in several chapters in this book. In contrast to the ever-present focus on land-based enterprises, the contributions of other rural industries gradually lost visibility, and learned enquiry, as Britain was converted into notably urban societies. Thankfully, early in the 20th century, interest in the breadth, opportunities and challenges of other rural enterprises and communities was led by the establishment of the Rural Development Commission (RDC). The foundations that the RDC built for sound systematic research into rural places and businesses, and strong relationships with social and economic research centres, were adopted after its closure by successor English, Welsh and Scottish agencies.

My teams at the CA and CRC continued to grow this focus, building relations with practitioners, universities and colleges, many of whom are represented by authors in this book. They provided us with a sound, broad and complementary evidence base, to inform, initiate or support programmes and policies at national

and regional levels. This collection includes and develops further a few of the many themes of such shared working, for example, the roles and challenges faced by women rural entrepreneurs and the value of rural's economic contribution. It is also refreshing to read here of newer features of rural enterprise or entrepreneurs, such as the nature of rural-organised criminality and the place of arts and culture in driving rural entrepreneurship and wellbeing.

These chapters offer new paths for today's academics and provide ideas and routes for future scholars, and decision-makers, to explore. I encourage the circulation of this book to encourage and stimulate would-be rural entrepreneurs of the future, at home and abroad. It has been my enjoyable experience to seek out, encourage, support and harness research, ideas and their forms of presentation, such as this book and the conferences that underpin it. Thus, I wish all similar enjoyable and beneficial reading.

I will add this book to my home library.

Roger M. Turner
Retired Rural Policy Advisor