



# **Rural Entrepreneurship Conference 2021**

**Swansea University, Wales**



## Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July

9.00 – 9.10

Welcome session	
Robert Bowen (University of Swansea)	Welcome from the Local Organising Committee “Putting Swansea on the rural map”

9.10 – 10.40

Session 1: Rural businesses performance evaluation	
Kenny Odunukan (University of Lincoln)	Evaluating firm level and societal impacts of rural SMEs’ internationalisation: a developing country perspective
Daniel Mahn (Universidad del Desarrollo)	Drivers of growth expectation in Latin American rural contexts
Pattanapong Tiwasing (Coventry University)	Do social media business networks enhance SME performance? A rural-urban analysis

11.00 – 12.30

Session 2: Spatial policies and rural areas	
Ian Merrell (Newcastle University)	Fostering the Creative Industry’s Role in Rural Development through the Mechanism of ‘Honey Pot’ Enterprise Hubs
Thomas Hastings (Queen’s University, Belfast)	The intersections between state energy policies and rural development
Robert Bowen (University of Swansea)	Do UK city-regions support their rural hinterlands?

## Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> July

9.00 – 10.30

Session 3: Rural renaissance and resilience	
Robert Smith (Independent scholar)	Illegal rural enterprise: developing a framework to help identify and investigate shadow infrastructures and illicit criminal networks
Don Webber (University of Sheffield)	Regional resilience, local context, and path dependency
Gary Bosworth (University of Northumbria)	Entrepreneurial opportunities and rural renaissance

11.00 – 1.00

Session 4: Local innovation and distinctiveness	
John Hughes (Cardiff Met. University)	Internationalisation of rural Welsh alcohol SMEs
Aleksandra Ćwik (University of Warsaw)	Heritage-inspired product innovation in rural areas and small towns of Eastern Poland
Earnestine Ning (Coventry University)	The supply chain and sustainability of rural small-scale commercial farmers in Cameroon: problems and prospects
David Smith (Nottingham Trent Uni.)	The 'pod shaving' revival: how rural entrepreneurship is leading to a re-birth of craft production in cricket bat manufacturing in England

# Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> July

## Special Session: Wales - Rural Structures, Rural Futures

Organised by the Wales Rural Research Network / Ymchwil Gwledig Cymru

2.00 – 3.15

Session A: Pictures of Rural Wales	
Calvin Jones (Cardiff Business School)	What's Rural Wales' Problem?
Julie Jones & Nerys Fuller-Love (Aberystwyth University)	Networking for equine complementary therapists in the rural economy
Maria Plotnikova (Aberystwyth University)	Out-of work benefit claims patterns and the sub-regional impact of the pandemic
Gary Walpole (Swansea University)	An Introduction to Circular Economy Innovation Communities

3.30 – 4.30

Session B: Futures for Rural Wales	
Judith Thornton (Aberystwyth University)	Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd – climate change, agriculture and how we can avoid becoming the County of Western England
Jyoti Bannerjee & Andy Middleton (North Star Transition)	The Wales Transition Lab
Andrew Henley (Cardiff Business School)	Post-Brexit rural policy in Wales - a road to 'hell' paved with good intentions?

4.35 – 5.00

Session C: Discussion Session	
<i>The Key Questions for Rural Wales.</i>	

## Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> July

9.00 – 10.30

Session 5: Social embeddedness and entrepreneurship	
Sebastián Barros (University of Desarrollo)	Indigenous entrepreneurship wellbeing: a research agenda
Peter Gintis (University of Huddersfield)	Constrained entrepreneurship: exploring the lived experiences of English upland farmers
Ian Merrell (Newcastle University)	How rural coworking hubs can facilitate wellbeing and overcome social isolation through the satisfaction of key psychological needs

11.00 – 12.30

Session 6: Our digital rural economy	
Barry Ardley (University of Lincoln)	‘A voice in the dark’: innovation in rural and agricultural shows
Dafydd Cotterell (Swansea University)	Crisis management: the role of ICT in the mitigation of fundamental crisis events such as COVID-19 in rural SMEs
Robert Newbery (Newcastle University)	Exploring rural affordances for entrepreneurial emergence

12.30 – 12.45

Gary Bosworth (University of Swansea)  and  Robert Newbery (Newcastle University)	Closing session REC news and looking to the future.
---	--

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Barry Ardley & Gary Bosworth
Position:	Visiting Senior Fellow
Institution:	University of Lincoln
Email address:	bardley@lincoln.ac.uk

Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

Title: "A voice in the Dark": Innovation in Rural and Agricultural Shows
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> During 2020, many rural Shows developed online events to maintain a presence among their supporters. This paper develops a model of an e-eventscape to assess the most effective means of translating the essence of an agriculture show into a virtual space. This is developed through a single case study where both the innovation process and the final online event are analysed.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> A mixed methods approach was taken including an interview with the Show organiser, participating in the "live" online Show, web-analytics and feedback provided by the organisers and written qualitative questionnaire feedback, from a sample of individuals viewing the online Show content.
<b>Findings:</b> The traditional elements of e-servicescapes and e-eventscapes were applicable to this new domain of online Shows. In addition to core features of aesthetics, layout and ease of navigation, the website needed to provide opportunities for visitors to interact with exhibitors and other visitors. This was the most challenging aspect of creating a modified e-eventscape. The e-eventscape in our case study successfully represented the County and the rural economy, highlighting the scope for online space to represent physical place identities. It also reached new audiences beyond the traditional geography of Show attendees thus creating more extensive marketing opportunities for the region and for sponsors and exhibitors at the Show. The innovation journey required local connections, even though the innovation itself occurred online.
<b>Practical implications:</b> The e-eventscape model has potential for future adaption into online events that supplement the offer of virtual Shows. The model can be refined through wider research with other rural Shows and Festivals.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> Creating the e-eventscape model, based on a rural case study, identifies that rural events can be at the forefront of innovation. The case also confirmed the important role of Shows as part of their wider rural economy.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Sebastián Barros
Position:	PhD student
Institution:	Universidad del Desarrollo, PhD in Business Economics. Ainauillo 456, Concepción, Chile. Postal code: 4030000
Email address:	sbarros@udd.cl

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Indigenous entrepreneurial well-being: A research agenda
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> The objective of this qualitative exploratory study is to tackle the causal relation between entrepreneurship and well-being within indigenous entrepreneurs. I specifically focus on the Andean indigenous peoples from South America, given their numbers, visibility and the creation, in some cases, of indigenous plurinational states. To accomplish this objective, a literary review is carried out on Andean indigenous ontology and indigenous entrepreneurial endeavors to set a new and insightful theoretical framework. This literary review is complemented with the conduction of 25 semi-structured interviews to indigenous peoples from South America. I finish this study by proposing a research agenda to advance both the fields of entrepreneurial well-being and indigenous entrepreneurship.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted to rural and urban Mapuche entrepreneurs from Chile and rural Colombian indigenous peoples from the Amazon. The transcriptions of these interviews were coded using the grounded theory qualitative methodology technique (Gioia et al., 2012). The main limitation from this study is that all interviews were conducted via Google Meet, given the limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, indigenous peoples without internet access were left out from this study.
<b>Findings:</b> Antecedents for entrepreneuring such as heritage, social reciprocity, attachment to the land and kinship ties are highly prevalent in the data structure, while determinants such as opportunity recognition and profit maximization are somewhat missing from the coding process. As such, social and ecological “embeddedness” seem to be stronger in Andean indigenous communities than individual utility drivers, the latter being common ground assumptions on most entrepreneurship research.
<b>Practical implications:</b> A research agenda is proposed on the link between well-being and indigenous entrepreneurship, through an Andean indigenous ontology lens.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Andean indigenous ontology is reframed as a catalyst for positive-impact value creation in organizations. Some insights are given on this matter both with practitioner and policy relevance.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> This research is one of the first empirical study to specifically examine the conditions under which well-being is achieved within Mapuche entrepreneurs. Hence, this study contributes by shedding new light into unexplored aspects of Mapuche entrepreneurship, gaining new insights with both policy and scholar relevance concerning future development of indigenous entrepreneurship from Chile and South America.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Robert Bowen, Don Webber
Position:	Lecturer in International Entrepreneurship, Professor in Managerial Economics
Institution:	Swansea University, University of Sheffield
Email address:	<a href="mailto:robert.bowen@swansea.ac.uk">robert.bowen@swansea.ac.uk</a> , <a href="mailto:d.j.webber@sheffield.ac.uk">d.j.webber@sheffield.ac.uk</a>

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Do UK city-regions support their rural hinterlands?
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This paper investigates the role of UK city regions in supporting economic development across their regions. Three case studies are presented and analysed of UK city regions that possess larger rural hinterlands, with a focus on policies towards rural areas within these regions.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> An analysis of policy documents and socioeconomic data for three city regions with large rural hinterlands (Aberdeen, North of Tyne, and Swansea Bay) was conducted between 2000 and 2021, with data analysed thematically according to policies of the city regions, and the changes seen within these regions over the period in question.
<b>Findings:</b> Findings reveal that rural areas are often either marginalised or peripheralised due to the direction of city region' policies towards their populated urban core areas. The city region approach to development tends not to be cognisant of the potential of rural areas, particularly where a city region's boundaries are socially constructed or where rural areas are disconnected from a city region's core. Findings point to three typologies identified among the case studies, which define the nature of the city region as a 'natural', 'hybrid' or 'socially constructed' city region.
<b>Practical implications:</b> Implications of this research could lead to greater awareness of the 'rural question' and a greater focus of city regions' policies on the role of rural areas within the region. This also calls into question whether the city regions model of regional development is suitable to largely rural areas.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The paper builds on the limited discussions within city regions literature of the 'rural question'. The value in the paper is the comparative analysis of three UK city regions with larger rural hinterlands, and the document analysis of policies towards rural parts of these regions dating back to 2000.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Dafydd Cotterell
Position:	PhD student
Institution:	Swansea University – School of Management, Fabian Way, Crymlyn Burrows, Skewen, Swansea SA1 8EN
Email address:	871833@swansea.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Crisis Management: The role of ICT in the mitigation of fundamental crisis events such as COVID-19 in rural SME's.
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This paper is based upon the highlights of a literature review conducted for the purpose of a PhD thesis. It reviews the literature in relation to three key fields, the digital divide, Crisis Management and business resilience. These three bodies of literature are reviewed in response to the research aim of; investigating the role of ICT as a means of resilience for rural SME's in the face of fundamental crisis events.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> This paper takes the approach of a literature review.
<b>Findings:</b> The paper finds that a digital divide persists to exist across the UK. The digital divide is no longer a case of 'haves and have nots' as it once was, but is now a case of a disparity in connective internet speeds, with rural areas generally receiving a slower service. A digital divide can also be seen to exist across internet inclusion with rural communities generally less included in the digital society.  In terms of the Crisis Management (CM) literature, this paper finds that Crisis Management is a typically neglected strategic function within organisations, with insufficient crisis preparation often leading to poor mitigation of crises, sometimes leading to business failure. This is despite academic research showing that organisations with strong CM planning can recover from a crisis twice as quickly as organisations without plans in place. Academic literature can be seen to extensively research CM from the perspective of large organisations but a relative paucity of research exists related to SME's; and a further paucity relating to rural SME's. Regardless of size CM literature can be seen to exist that focuses on crises localised to one company or a localised economy or population. A body of literature can also be identified that only portrays socio-technical systems as perpetrators for crisis creation rather than considering their potential role as crisis resolvers. The business resilience literature illustrates that entrepreneurs can engage in resource bricolage in order to overcome times of crisis.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> This paper could have potential implications for digital connectivity and inclusivity policy in rural firms.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Aleksandra Ćwik
Position:	PhD candidate
Institution:	Centre for European Regional and Local Studies EUROREG at the University of Warsaw, Krakowskie Przedmieście 30 street Zip-code: 00-927, Warsaw, Poland
Email address:	<a href="mailto:a.cwik@uw.edu.pl">a.cwik@uw.edu.pl</a>

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Heritage-inspired product innovation in rural areas and small towns of Eastern Poland
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> Grounded in theory and concluded with a selection of three case studies from Eastern Poland, this paper aims to analyse heritage-based <i>product innovation's</i> germaneness in rural areas.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The presentation is structured around a summary of the established in literature regional innovation determinants, including measurable socioeconomic factors such as R&D expenditure and transmission of knowledge, local social capital, industrial development, or proximity to major agglomerations, as well as less tangible influences like institutional and informal arrangements. The second part of the presentation involves a chronological review (based on the presenter's hitherto qualitative research) of three case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OSM Olecko dairy plant, supported by the European Funds to enhance the production of time-honoured cream fudge;</li><li>• "Zaniewicz" Confectioners', which through progressive production of Polish Sękacz, has grown to become a Polish leader in the cake's supply on the local and international markets;</li><li>• Cross-border Wooden Architecture Route (Poland and Ukraine), currently under development by implementing e-products; websites, virtual tours, influencer marketing, festivals and guided tours.</li></ul>
<b>Findings:</b> The theory is juxtaposed with its applicability to sustain innovative processes in remote regions and conclude that innovation is a social phenomenon that occurs in places that grant uniqueness. Innovation thrives in areas where its roots cannot be fully imitated elsewhere, hence it is possible to inject innovative processes in rural regions where cultural heritage is one of the most critical components of local identity.
<b>Practical implications:</b> It has been suggested that to bolster; progress must happen bottom-up. Existing policies working to support local innovation may be grouped into interventions that are place-neutral or specific, system-based, or actor-based. Still, a wise selection of the most applicable policy ought to be inspired by local resources and needs, not replicated between regions. Cultural heritage is a resource that warrants unique approaches.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The study has been designed to contextualise the existing knowledge in the discourse pertaining to geographically and economically peripheral areas and their sustainable development and acknowledge the still insufficiently studied relation between heritage and innovation.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Gary Bosworth <sup>1</sup> ; Maria Lucia Pato <sup>2</sup> , Steffen Korsgaard <sup>3</sup> & Robert Newbery <sup>1</sup>
Position:	Professor of Entrepreneurship
Institution:	<sup>1</sup> Northumbria University <sup>2</sup> Polytechnic Institute of Viseu <sup>3</sup> University of Southern Denmark
Email address:	Gary.bosworth@northumbria.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

Title: “Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Rural Renaissance”
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> In the wake of the Covid pandemic, the aim of this paper is to identify the nature of new entrepreneurial opportunities that will emerge across rural economies to initiate and sustain economic recovery. We examine secondary data to identify combinations of affordances most associated with rural business start-up, survival and growth and assess which of have been worst hit, and which have proven most resilient. We also re-examine the categories of “rural entrepreneur” and “entrepreneur in the rural” (Korsgaard et al., 2015) as well as those entrepreneurs service local and more distant markets (Bosworth, 2012; Pato & Teixeira, 2018) in an attempt to identify the opportunities and challenges that may ensue.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Secondary data analysis and scenario-building based on anticipated trajectories of rural economic recovery. Conceptual re-thinking of the role of place-based assets and combinations of affordances within rural entrepreneurial ecosystems.
<b>Findings:</b> Different rural areas can attribute their rates of business start-up, growth and survival to different combinations of affordances within the local economy and environment. Of the seven factors included in the analysis (broadband, local networks, tourism, skills, accessibility, organisational anchors & local market power), none was essential to every combination. With Covid impacting some of these more than others (e.g. tourism and business networking organisations), some of the “routes” to economic recovery predicted by our analysis may prove to be less resilient. The rapid escalation of online working will create new opportunities, especially for places with good connectivity and digital skills. Potentially this will blur the divide between “rural entrepreneurs” and “entrepreneurs in the rural” where the online and physical worlds interact in new ways to create value in, and for, rural regions.
<b>Practical implications:</b> Developing understanding of the rural context for entrepreneurship and the combinations of affordances that strengthen resilience and are most likely to promote growth in a post-Covid economy with new mobilities, working practices and networking spaces.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Identifying rural policy priorities at national and local levels to support a balanced recovery strategy
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> Combining strands of rural research that have sought to categorise distinct forms of rural entrepreneurship in a way that can be applied to predicting rural transformations as the legacy of the Covid pandemic unfolds across rural economies.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Peter Gittins
Position:	PhD student
Institution:	University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield, HD1 3DH
Email address:	Peter.gittins@hud.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Constrained entrepreneurship: exploring the lived experiences of English upland farmers
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> The purpose of this research is to explore the constraints and challenges facing upland farmers, with an aim to understand the nature of farm business strategies used by farmers to respond to the realities in the beef and sheep sector. It is an empirical piece of work underpinned by a classical Weberian sociological lens, drawing on the iconic metaphor of the 'iron cage' to analyse approaches to entrepreneurship and strategic management in an upland farming context.
<b>Design/methodology/approach:</b> A multi-methods qualitative approach is used, consisting of 30 interviews and 30 conversations with various farmers and agricultural stakeholders. Photographs and an on-going research diary are also used. This research is carried out by an 'industry insider', by someone who both lives and works on an English hill farm. Weberian influenced typologies and case stories are used to present the qualitative research data.
<b>Findings:</b> The findings present a number of different typologies around: the nature of constraints facing farmers, types of upland farmers and farm businesses, alongside several forms of farm business strategies used by farmers to respond to the challenges in the sector.
<b>Practical implications:</b> Findings will be useful in a practical manner both to farmers and various agricultural trade bodies and organisations. The findings provide an account of the real-world challenges facing farmers, alongside identify areas where upland farmers require greater support in managing their farm businesses.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> The findings show the contemporary views of farmers in regard to agricultural policy change. Upland farmers are concerned with the removal of subsidy support payments, post-Brexit trade and a transition to the Environmental Land Management Schemes.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> This research extends existing debates on conceptualising farmers as entrepreneurs but within the under-research context of upland farming. It does so in an inter-disciplinary fashion drawing on relevant theories, themes, and concepts from the areas of entrepreneurship, strategic management and sociology to empirically explore the worldviews of farmers. A methodological contribution is also made by reflecting on my own positionality as an industry insider under a social constructionist/interpretative approach.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Thomas Hastings
Position:	Lecturer in Management
Institution:	Queen's Management School, Queen's University Belfast, Riddel Hall, 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5EE
Email address:	<a href="mailto:t.hastings@qub.ac.uk">t.hastings@qub.ac.uk</a>

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> The intersections between state energy policies and rural development
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> The paper examines the intersections between state energy policies and rural development, focussing on Northern Ireland's Agri-Food industry. The paper utilises a garbage can model (GCM) to explain how government and industry recently collaborated to help connect NI's agribusiness – in particular pigs and poultry industries - to global markets, examining the role of green energy transitions within this approach. The paper considers the role of chance, temporal constraints and different actor agencies in influencing the development of global production networks (GPNs) in this context. This is both an empirical and theoretical paper.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The research is funded by Northern Ireland's Department for Economy, and represents the qualitative findings from a research project involving Northern Ireland and Thailand. It is based on semi-structured interviews with NI stakeholders.
<b>Findings:</b> Findings are theoretical, and are suggestive of the need to integrate an appreciation of chance, context and actor agency in the development of GPNs. The findings indicate substantial errors in incentivising anaerobic digestion facilities in particular.
<b>Practical implications:</b> There are practical and policy implications in the form of advice to the state in particular, in relation to green energy policies and the incentives for adopting green technologies.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The paper strives to make an original theoretical contribution to production network theorising.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Daniel Mahn
Position:	Phd student
Institution:	Universidad del Desarrollo
Email address:	<a href="mailto:dmahnb@udd.cl">dmahnb@udd.cl</a>

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Drivers of growth expectation in Latin American rural contexts
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> Given the importance of growth-oriented entrepreneurship in the context of economic development and the need to understand how to develop rural communities, our objective is to determine how the drivers of growth expectations differ between urban and rural settings, empirical
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> We use three strategies: first, a descriptive analysis with nonparametric testing was conducted, then hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used to analyze the predictors of growth expectations in both contexts, and finally, coarse matching was employed to identify possible self-selection bias.
<b>Findings:</b> In contrast to mainstream entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurs' intrinsic knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are not significant in the rural-specific model, except for entrepreneurs' education level, emphasizing its importance as a pivotal factor in terms of increasing high-growth ventures in rural communities
<b>Practical implications:</b> It is of public interest to focus on education as a channel for encouraging self-sustaining rural ventures that create jobs over the long term. However, primary, secondary, and higher education are not sufficient
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Social implications —Because the high-growth entrepreneurial dynamics in rural areas are unique, public policies should target purpose-driven entrepreneurial education. This includes “lifestyle entrepreneurship” (e.g., retirees returning to rural areas to become entrepreneurs), preventing entrepreneurial brain drain in rural areas, and attracting highly educated urban entrepreneurs to exploit opportunities in rural areas
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> There is little consensus between the entrepreneurs' intrinsic KSAs such as networking and self-efficacy and the rural entrepreneurship literature regarding the factors that drive high-growth entrepreneurs in developing contexts

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	John Meirion Hughes
Position:	PhD Student
Institution:	Cardiff Metropolitan University, School of Management, Llandaff Campus, Western Ave, Cardiff CF5 2YB
Email address:	st20149588@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Internationalisation Of Rural Welsh Alcohol SMEs
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This paper will research rural Welsh alcohol SMEs (WASMEs) using a case study approach that will analyse and interpret the worldview of owners and senior management to understand the barriers and constraints they face internationalising. One we have ascertained the exporters perspective; we will also interview their distributors to complete a 180-degree view of the competitiveness of WASMEs.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The research will create a database of all the WASMEs by using Cardiff Metropolitan University's FAME database, information from company's house and google searches. WASMEs on this database will be sent an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will elicit information on these companies' international operations. Ten companies will be selected for further research. Secondary research will be conducted via interviews. These interviews will be semi-structured interviews that draw on the interviewee's experience of internationalising. Third-stage research will be interviews with distributors that deal with WASMEs to gain a 180-degree view of the competitiveness of WASMEs compared to their international peers. This additional perspective will illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the WASMEs internationalisation procedures.
<b>Policy implications:</b> To understand how WASME entrepreneurs and management view their business environment and internationalisation. This research will provide insights into the aforementioned issues and other challenges, such as the lack of SME exports in the UK and the general lethargy around exporting compared to English, Scottish and N. Irish companies. We will also interview distributors to offer a 180 view of WASMEs and how they compare to other exporters, which will offer insights to how WASMEs may improve their international competitiveness.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Exporters usually grow faster than their peers as exporters gain a competitive advantage over their peers via knowledge and information transfer from a wider network. These advantages generate profits that create jobs and additional investments into the business offering opportunities to partner companies. As the company grows it stimulates rural development and creates "hubs" of businesses that can lead and inspire new companies to form and grow in a circle of growth.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The first analysis of the Welsh alcohol industry and the barriers they face internationalising with an additional 180-degree feedback from distributors to understand their international advantages and disadvantages. From this research, a platform will be developed for further research into one of the core industries in Wales (food and drink).

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Ian Merrell, Anita Fuzi, Emma Russell, Gary Bosworth
Position:	Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Institution:	Centre for Rural Economy, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Agriculture Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK
Email address:	Ian.merrell@newcastle.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> How rural coworking hubs can facilitate well-being and overcome social isolation through the satisfaction of key psychological needs
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> Once considered an urban phenomenon, rural enterprise hubs (REH) and rural coworking spaces (RCWS) are now increasing in popularity to support entrepreneurial rural communities. Whilst previous research examined economic and community benefits, a focus on well-being benefits has been overlooked. Framed by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2011), this empirical research investigates whether rural coworking is reported to enhance people's well-being by fulfilling key psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. By applying a well-being focus, potential key drivers of rural coworking uptake and durability can be elucidated, including for those who were previously working in home environments.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Our mixed methods case-study approach uses survey and interview data with members of REH and RCWS in rural Wales and the North-East of England. 8 REH and 2 RCWS were involved in the research. 59 semi-structured interviews and 89 survey responses were gathered. Spaces differed in terms of ownership, location and size. Using a deductive thematic-analysis approach, phrases related to psychological needs were entered into NVivo and used as a coding framework. Survey results were analysed using SPSS. The results of both data collection phases were cross-analysed.
<b>Findings:</b> Participants reported a number of drivers (represented by 16 sub-themes) for joining and remaining in spaces. These related to the key psychological needs of: (i) autonomy, workers reported greater 'flexibility' and 'work-life balance'; (ii) competence, workers reported feeling more 'professional' and they 'learned from other' members; and, (iii) relatedness, workers reported a sense of 'belonging' and 'opportunities to network'. The spaces offered practical solutions for working more effectively, supported people undergoing a significant life change or striving for more meaning and purpose in their working lives, and allowed greater connection to the rural locale and nature. The survey reinforced these findings, pointing to the importance of increased interactions in social and professional networks. Well-being suffered primarily when infrastructure/resources were compromised, management was disorganised, or when relationships between members became strained.
<b>Practical implications:</b> The study demonstrates the importance for hub management to consider how psychological needs can be met and how well-being could be framed as a 'benefit' for these communities.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Considering the drastic impact COVID-19 has had on people's work situation, uncovering how well-being impacts these infrastructures is more important than ever.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> Largest study of well-being in REH and RCWS to date. First to use mixed methods to verify results across two locations.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Ian Merrell & Fran Rowe
Position:	Postdoctoral Research Fellow & EC Research Fellow
Institution:	Centre for Rural Economy, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Agriculture Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK
Email address:	ian.merrell@newcastle.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Fostering the Creative Industry's Role in Rural Development through the Mechanism of 'Honey Pot' Enterprise Hubs
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This paper is an empirical study into rural enterprise hubs (REH)(physical infrastructures designed to support rural businesses) which follow two main business models: Honey pots (b-2-c) and Hives (b-2-b)(Cowie et al, 2012). Honey pots (HPREH) are the focus of this research, which are best suited to tenants who sell directly to the public (e.g. the creative industries, retail and tourism). HPREH are thus designed to cater to these needs by attracting footfall, providing cafes and facilities to visitors and hosting events. The creative industries (particularly the arts and craft sector) have an important role in future rural development, and HPREH can foster growth in this sector. We also provide a complimentary qualitative analysis to the recent findings on the importance of 'micro-clusters' (Siepel <i>et al</i> , 2020), and expands this thinking into rural areas, thus addressing a lack of empirical studies into the contribution of creative clusters towards igniting a 'creative fire' in rural localities (Balfour et al 2016).
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The methodology takes a qualitative inductive approach, drawing on interviews from HPREH tenants (14) and managers (3) of three cases in the North East of England. These case studies were selected purposively, finding HPREH from a range of ownerships (private and third sector). All interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using Nvivo, using an inductive approach for our coding strategy.
<b>Findings:</b> We use a twofold category of 'tangible' and 'intangible' to describe the benefits of tenants operating in a HPREH. Tangible benefits have a direct economic effect, including; increased sales from a local presence/shop-window, the collective draw of tenants, opportunities to teach classes/workshops and a heightened sense of professionalism. Intangible benefits provide non-economic benefits, including; inspiration from nature and other tenants/management, increased knowledge exchange and networking opportunities. Critical determinants of success for HPREH are also explored, including the services managers provided to increase footfall.
<b>Practical implications:</b> The paper gives insights to hub managers on how to maximise the benefits of HPREH for their tenants, and its application to creative businesses.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> HPREH are a valuable policy initiative to support the growth of the rural arts and crafts sector, and creative industries more widely. Findings are relevant for Regional and National policy makers and development agencies with an rural remit.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> Practical means of stimulating the creative industries in rural development are needed, with HPREH being one such mechanism. We also provide a complimentary analysis into micro-clusters research and expand this into rural areas

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Robert Newbery*, Gary Bosworth*, Pattanapong Tiwasing, Mohammed Haddoud
Position:	*Professor of Entrepreneurship, Northumbria Business School
Institution:	Sutherland Building, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 8ST
Email address:	Robert.newbery@newcastle.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Exploring Rural Affordances for Entrepreneurial Emergence
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> Affordances, being the advantages that an environment offers to a perceptive individual (Gibson, 1966), have been used to understand environmental opportunities within different contexts, with a particular focus on digital and learning opportunities. Recent research within the field of entrepreneurship has asked how affordances from different domains might interact to define the entrepreneurial activities that emerge in varied contexts (Nambisan et al., 2019). Following recent interest in affordance for rural entrepreneurship (Gaddefors et al. 2020), this conceptual and empirical paper proposes an approach to identifying rural affordances that enable entrepreneurial emergence.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The research brings together secondary data from 182 English local districts to identify rural affordances for entrepreneurial emergence. We initially identify 8 affordance domains, then for each use: a. factor analysis to identify relevant data groupings then, b. Structural Equation Modelling to predict firm birth rate at the district level. We thus identify affordances and constraints, whilst discarding insignificant factors. We then use a unified SEM model to identify critical affordances across domains and use fsQCA to understand how different combinations can lead to entrepreneurial emergence.
<b>Findings:</b> We identify 18 affordances and constraints across domains and show how different configurations of 6 affordances lead to entrepreneurial emergence in the districts. We propose a typology of affordances to support emergence in rural districts.
<b>Practical implications:</b> The paper offers an approach to deriving affordances that may be used in varied contexts.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> The approach allows policy-makers to understand how different configurations of environmental opportunities can be leveraged for business start-up. The key levers of entrepreneurship policy may therefore vary by district depending on a unique and heterogeneous resource base.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The paper locates affordance theory within the field of entrepreneurship and demonstrates how it may be used within a rural context.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Dr Ernestine Ning
Position:	Lecturer in Enterprise and Entrepreneurs
Institution:	Coventry University (ICTE)
Email address:	<a href="mailto:ad6525@coventry.ac.uk">ad6525@coventry.ac.uk</a>

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

**Title:** The supply chain and sustainability of rural small-scale commercial farmers in Cameroon: Problems and prospects

**Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):** It aims to discuss challenges and opportunities to focus on poor and vulnerable farmers in the context of local food purchase programmes and explores the implications of engaging vulnerable farmers in local procurement programmes. To promote sustainability in the supply food-chain from the primary rural producers to the final consumers. To understand the complexities of sustainability with small scale farmers in supply chain, and reflect on the challenges faced by rural farmers and provide innovative and sustainable solutions.

**Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):** This is an in-depth qualitative research from small scale farmers from the ten Regions of Cameroon. A total number of 20 farmers were interviewed through zoom, skype WhatsApp calls and emails. Two rural farmers from each of the ten Regions. Semi-structured and Unstructured questions were asked based on their supply chain and how it impacts on their farm productivity, whether or not they get support of any kind from the government, the prices of the produce, what drove them to small scale farming, the challenges they face, etc. Probes were used to better understand some of the responses. Observation could have revealed a lot more but there was no face to face contact. The responses were analysed based on themes as shown below.

**Findings:** Trust among actors in agric food chains is often not very high. This is caused by the low number of transactions between agric food value chain actors, the long distance between producers and end market and the general lack of understanding and therefore appreciation of each other's roles. In these situations, all chain actors first of all try to protect their own interests as much as possible. There are lots of imbalances and imperfections within the value chains at large and those of locally traded produce in particular. Opportunistic behaviour, and self-interest among chain actors is rampant and cooperation is virtually non-existent

**Practical implications:** Sustainable or green entrepreneurship has been gaining interest among scholars in recent years. Addressing its challenges and barriers need much more attention to fill the gap in the literature. The SDGs of 2030 stresses on the development of all. However, this development is not done individually but in a collaborative manner with actors in a network or supply chain etc. It is expected that collaboration will boost performance and growth especially with small scale farmers in Cameroon with very limited social, economic and technological backing, but supply chain management success is an uphill task..

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Your details:

Name:	Dr Kenny Odunukan, Dr Marfuzur Rahman, Dr Paul Igwe, Dr Dieu Hack-Polay
Position:	Lecturer
Institution:	University of Lincoln, UK. LN6 7TS
Email address:	KOdunukan@lincoln.ac.uk

## Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)

<b>Title:</b> Evaluating Firm level and Societal impacts of rural SMEs' Internationalisation: A developing country perspective
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual, or case study etc):</b> Firm level growth and Societal benefits are key impacts for the internationalisation of large and Small businesses. Although existing literature has identified several competitive advantages attached to internationalisation strategy of small businesses, studies that identify both firm level and societal impacts for rural SME Internationalisation within the field of International Business (IB) and Regional Studies (RS) are scarce. The paper aims to evaluate firm level and societal impacts of rural SMEs internationalisation from an emerging market context. In addition, the paper examines the degree to which firm level and societal dynamics have bearing on the internationalisation of rural SMEs in developing countries.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Quantitative data analysis technique is used in this study to identify the impacts of these firm level/ societal forces on internationalisation of rural SMEs both from micro and macro levels. This paper employed primary data collected through the questionnaires from 403 Nigerian rural SMEs. Based on the data, this study has developed and validated partial least square based structural equation model (PLS-SEM) to assess the impacts of firm level/societal factors on the internationalisation of rural SMEs with particular attention to entrepreneurial attractiveness. <b>Research limitations:</b> A few limitations include the following. First, focusing on firm level and social impact indicates a form of limitation as the study could widen its scope to include other factors such Technological, political, legal and economic impacts. Second, the paper could have been better served if it also tried to include the use of qualitative analysis as attempted elsewhere. Third, the paper focusing on developing country in Sub-Saharan African which somehow limit the applicability of the context to emerging markets.
<b>Findings:</b> The paper has successfully framed Firm level and Societal impacts of rural SMEs' Internationalisation as a second order hierarchical reflective model and found that there is a significant positive relationship between societal and firm level performance and the internationalisation of rural SMEs. It further shows that societal impacts are marginally more significant.
<b>Practical implications:</b> Practically, this paper researched in an area which was neglected and under-reported by existing studies. The contribution of the research can provide better guidance to internationalising SMEs operating in rural Nigeria and presents opportunities for further research to examine rural SME internationalisation processes in other developing countries too. In addition, it makes a significant contribution to understand the precautions, supports and consequences of internationalisation of rural SMEs and above all to achieve sustainable economic development through the international growth of rural SMEs.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> The paper is very useful and significant to policy makers, owners and managers of rural SMEs and international businesses. Its exploration showed that it has potential to contribute significantly to the policy makers and implementers as it comprises SMEs and emerging countries. It has been noted in the literature that these economies and firms are less capable to conduct research independently as they are resource constrained.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> Despite increasing research on SMEs and Internationalisation as a strategy for growth, little is known about firm level and societal impacts for rural SME Internationalisation in developing countries. The overall image that appears from literature focused on developed and partly developing Asian countries like India and Bangladesh leaving potential research gap for rural SMEs in African developing countries. Based on insufficient coverage of international business activities of African rural SMEs, this paper filled some of the gaps in literature and provided a useful reference point for rural SMEs and IB research in Africa. This paper combines firm level and societal impacts in a hierarchical model using PLS based SEM to investigate their contributions particularly in under explored area of rural SMEs from a Nigerian contextual perspective that seeks to encourage international entrepreneurship.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Name:	David J Smith (co-authors: Will Rossiter & Rupert Matthews)
Position:	Emeritus Professor of Innovation
Institution:	Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, NG1 4FQ
Email address:	<a href="mailto:david.smith02@ntu.ac.uk">david.smith02@ntu.ac.uk</a>

**Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)**

<b>Title:</b> The ‘Pod Shaving’ Revival: How Rural Entrepreneurship is leading to a Re-birth of Craft Production in Cricket Bat Manufacturing in England
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Case study research. The case study focuses on changes in the structure of cricket bat manufacturing in the UK. It is highly sector specific, but nonetheless exemplifies the ‘revival’ that researchers have identified in a number of industry sectors. The case study makes extensive use of documentary sources together with interviews of bat makers.
<b>Findings:</b> Studies in a range of industries have pointed to a ‘craft revival’ taking place in recent years as new entrants challenge the prevailing industrial orthodoxy by increasingly returning to craft production methods. The craft brewing sector is one widely reported and well studied example of this trend. However comparatively little attention has been directed at other industries and sectors where this phenomenon is present. This study finds that in the sports equipment industry there has been a dramatic increase in new entrants entering the cricket bat manufacturing sector, despite the claims of some that this is an endangered craft. As one leading bat maker put it recently, ‘there used to be a magnificent seven, now there are about fifty little companies all competing with each other’. This re-structuring reflects dramatic changes that have taken place in the sports equipment sector. These include intense competition from global sports brands utilizing global value chains and the offshoring of production by established UK brands, and more recently the emergence of a significant number of independent bat makers in various regions of England. The latter are the focus of this study. They are typically small scale producers with a strong commitment to traditional artisanal methods of craft production. A distinctive feature of these businesses is that a large proportion are found to be based in rural locations in many cases occupying premises actually located on farms. Hence they constitute interesting but little studied examples of rural entrepreneurship. The characteristics of these rural entrepreneurs are analysed, together with the nature and extent of their commitment to craft production methods. It was found that the backgrounds and prior experience of these rural entrepreneurs varied widely. However they all shared a strong commitment to producing an authentic handmade product using traditional artisanal methods. Housed in small workshops that often comprised re-purposed agricultural buildings, they were found to be well embedded in the rural eco-system both in terms of the facilities they used and the local services they drew upon.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> This is a comparatively unusual form of rural entrepreneurship, particularly since cricket bat manufacturing has previously been largely confined to industrial/urban locations. There has been little research into the sports equipment industry. It explores the paradox of new entry into an endangered craft. It provides further evidence of the widely reported and extensively studied ‘craft revival’ but in a sector that has previously received almost no attention

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Name:	Dr Robert Smith
Position:	Independent scholar
Email address:	<a href="mailto:r.smith-a@hotmail.com">r.smith-a@hotmail.com</a>

**Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)**

<b>Title:</b> Illegal Rural Enterprise – Developing a framework to help identify and investigate shadow infrastructures and illicit criminal networks
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This conference paper builds upon the extant studies of the authors Robert Smith and Gerard McElwee on <i>Illegal Rural Enterprise</i> [IRE] crimes. This stream of research has resulted in a considerable publication output. However, instead of taking a single or micro case approach within specific sections of the farming and food industries as we did in the individual publications, here we examine the concept holistically from a macro case perspective across our publication stream. Many IRE crimes simply could not be committed without insider knowledge and complicity, so it is important to appreciate this when researching or investigating such crimes. We have long argued that IRE crimes are part of an ongoing system of criminal enterprise facilitated by ‘ <i>criminal capital</i> ’ and operationalised through illicit shadow networks involving both insiders and organized criminal groups. Thus, although they are usually investigated as single cases, events, or scandals they are often in reality criminal conspiracies operating withing parallel supply chains, networks and mechanisms. They illustrate the existence of a ‘ <i>Hidden Enterprise Culture</i> ’ in the farming and food industries.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Using data from existing published studies we introduce the theoretical concept of ‘Shadow infrastructure’ to help analyse and explain the prevalence and endurance of such criminal enterprises. Using a multiple case study approach, we examine the data across the cases to provide an analysis of several industry wide crimes such as 1) The illicit halal meat trade; 2) the theft of sheep and livestock; 3) the theft of tractors and plant; 4) Puppy farming; and 5) the supply of illicit veterinary medicines.
<b>Findings:</b> We examine IRE crimes across various sectors including to identify commonalities in practice and in relation to business models. The purpose of this paper, drawing from a multidisciplinary literature spanning business and criminology, is to identify such enterprises; how they are inter-linked; and to provide suggestions for how to investigate such structures.
<b>Practical implications:</b> We identify a number of practical implications in relation to the investigation of such crime and from an academic perspective in relation to researching the phenomenon.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> There are obvious policy implications including setting up a multi-agency intelligence hub to provide expert knowledge to the numerous agencies involved in investigating such crime.
<b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The originality lies in combining the data from numerous individual studies from a macro perspective to provide practical solutions to a multi-faceted problem.

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Name:	Dr Pattanapong Tiwasing
Position:	Research Fellow
Institution:	Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University,
Email address:	<a href="mailto:pattanapong.tiwasing@coventry.ac.uk">pattanapong.tiwasing@coventry.ac.uk</a>

**Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)**

<p><b>Title:</b> Do social media business networks enhance SME performance?: A rural-urban analysis</p>
<p><b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> In the digital era and in particular during the COVID-19 crisis, social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) are increasingly popular for people and businesses, providing new mechanisms for communication, interaction, and collaboration, and subsequently the emergence of “Social Media Business Networks”. Social media business networks offer a low cost and easily accessible route to building business relationships and accessing essential external resources/information from their partners and business support agencies. They have also become an integral part of marketing strategies to improve business performance and growth for SMEs. However, with inferior digital technology, poor broadband connectivity, geographical remoteness, and limitations on digital and technological skills, SMEs located in rural areas may be disadvantaged in accessing social media business networks and other online networking activities, leading to lower business performance and often underperform urban counterparts. This paper, therefore, provides a rural-urban comparative analysis of business performance across SMEs that both participate and do not participate in social media business networks. The analysis further examines the differences in business plans between 4 location-network groups to understand how rural and urban SMEs use these networks for their future plans to improve business performance.</p>
<p><b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> The analysis provides a match-paired comparison of business performance (measured in terms of annual turnover and sales growth) between rural and urban SMEs that use and do not use social media business networks. The analysis draws on data of 13,906 SMEs in England and Wales using the UK Government’s Longitudinal Small Business Survey (LSBS) for 2015. Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW) is applied to control for selection bias of firms selecting into a rural location and business networks and variations in business characteristics (i.e., size, region, sector, age of business etc.). Then, the analysis compares the differences in plans between the 4 location-network groups: rural SMEs with a social media network membership, rural SMEs without a membership, urban SMEs with a membership, and urban SMEs without a membership.</p>
<p><b>Findings:</b> The findings reveal that for annual turnover, rural SMEs that are members of social media business networks perform as good as urban counterparts and perform better than rural and urban SMEs that are non-members. However, for sales growth, they tend to underperform urban SMEs that are part of these business networks. The results also reveal that using social media business networks is crucial for rural SMEs in developing their business plans. The results reveal that rural SMEs that are members of social media business networks are more like to plan to enhance workforce skills, improve leadership capability of managers, develop new products/services, and introduce new working practices than urban counterparts and those who are non-members of these networks.</p>
<p><b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> Increasing adoption of social media business networks by rural SMEs can enhance business performance and help overcome some of the inherent advantages of urban areas, such as a location for technological advances, business connections, and stimulating product innovation. Therefore, improved digital infrastructure and broadband connectivity can lead to better business performance. However, infrastructure improvements alone are insufficient since rural SMEs have lower level of sales growth than urban counterparts when using a social media business network. This draws attention to both infrastructural issues and skills development. Business support programmes, especially for business start-ups and older businesses (including older staff), should incorporate practical advice on building a social media business profile and how best to use it connect with potential customers, source market intelligence, identified market opportunities and stimulate business collaboration. Without a focus also on the “demand side” investments in digital infrastructure, rural SMEs will not reap full potential rewards.</p>
<p><b>What is the originality/value of paper:</b> The paper is the first to examine the differences in business performance between rural and urban SMEs who are members and non-members of social media business networks using large cross-sectional survey of UK SMEs. This paper also provides an evidence-based analysis on the impact of social media business networks, a new form of networking activities, on SME performance in rural areas.</p>

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Name:	Prof Don Webber (and Dr Simon Rudkin)
Position:	Prof of Managerial Economics (SL in Economics)
Institution:	Sheffield University Management School (Swansea Uni)
Email address:	<a href="mailto:d.j.webber@sheffield.ac.uk">d.j.webber@sheffield.ac.uk</a>

**Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)**

<b>Title:</b> Regional resilience, local context, and path dependency
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc):</b> This article explores how path dependencies and local contexts interact to shape the evolutionary economic landscape and engineer subsequent resilience of local economies to shocks. Although the theoretical evolutionary path dependency literature emphasises the importance of lock-in when generating continuity, some lock-ins may be weak when local contextual factors are strong.
<b>Design/methodology/approach (including limitations if applicable):</b> Through application of a novel methodological approach in this literature called topological data analysis, this article explores the evolutionary paths of UK local authority districts from 1980 onwards and assesses whether clusters of regions following similar paths end up responding to the 2007 global financial crisis in a uniform manner.
<b>Findings:</b> Our empirical results highlight that regions following a common evolutionary path do not necessarily respond to an economic crises in a uniform manner. Local contextual factors can overpower forces favouring continued membership of a common path and effect asymmetrically different regions' responses to an economic shock.
<b>Policy Implications (if applicable):</b> The recordable resilience of a region varies across output, productivity, and employment metrics, because these metrics reflect a diversity of underlying industrial structures, market forces, and managerial choices that respond to experiences, context, and change in place-specific ways.