

## **Rural Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise**

**Chair: Artur Steiner**

It is fashionable to suggest that citizens will take greater responsibility for organising services traditionally delivered by the state with communities, neighbourhood groups and community organisations doing things 'for themselves' (Munoz, et al., 2015). International governments have supported social enterprise through direct funding, business support and, increasingly, through direct procurement of goods and services. To date most research attention has focused on social enterprise in urban contexts. However, it is argued that social enterprise can help *rural* communities to respond to change and become more resilient. While some rural social enterprises address the needs caused by socio-economic and political changes (such as withdraw of some public and private services), other are more proactive and skilfully utilise available resources to enhance local development and introduce innovation (Plunkett Foundation, 2016).

The perception of policymakers is that the role of social enterprises could / should be even greater, particularly in terms of delivery of local services. However, are expectations towards rural social enterprise realistic? On one hand, characteristics of rural locations, such as social cohesion and mutual knowledge, might present a suitable nurturing ground for social enterprise. On the other hand, however, the nature of rurality (e.g. sparsely populated areas, high cost of service provision) also raises concerns (Steinerowski et al., 2008). This panel session seeks to understand the importance of context when enacting social entrepreneurship in rural areas.

We welcome articles situated within the broad area of Rural Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise. Papers might focus on, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Social Entrepreneurship as a way to enhance sustainable rural development
- Contribution of social enterprises to rural community resilience
- The role of social enterprises in rural service co-production
- Rural social enterprise – cure or threat to public service withdraw?
- Opportunities and challenges for social enterprises delivering rural services
- Rural social entrepreneurship – necessity or luxury?

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