

Editorial: Introducing the ‘Festschrift’ in honour of the founding editor – Professor Gerard McElwee

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Introduction

This special issue consists of an editorial, a commentary by Professor Gerard McElwee and five empirical papers, as detailed below. To make room for the studies presented below there is no teaching case in this issue.

Professor Gerard McElwee is the founder and first Editor of *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*. This special issue is designed as a ‘Festschrift’¹ to honour his editorial stewardship of the journal and to mark his own approaches to researching entrepreneurship. Indeed, under his tireless and patient guidance, the journal has gone from strength to strength to become internationally recognised. Gerard continues to have a distinguished academic career, which has included chairs at Nottingham Trent, Sheffield Hallam, the University of Huddersfield and now York St Johns. Through his editorship and his work with his peers and students, Gerard has demonstrated a passion and proven track record of doctoral supervision in several countries, and has examined many PhDs. He has encouraged many early career researchers to publish in IJEI. In addition, he is a Fellow of the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) and formerly ran the Rural Entrepreneurship track at its annual conference, while chairing that special interest group. During his career,

Gerard became known by peers for his patient approach of encouraging and supporting new scholars and peers, alongside his infectious humour and sagacious advice on all aspects of scholarship. Gerard retired from his editorial role in 2020 and Professor Laura Galloway and Dr Deema Refai are the new joint editors. We at the journal feel it is a relevant time to mark his achievements and editorship.

Objective

In publishing this Special Issue, we believe it is fitting that it is articulated as a ‘Festschrift’ in honour of Gerard to mark his patient and diligent editorship, and his contribution to the field of entrepreneurship and wider academia. While encouraging and mentoring peers and younger scholars is a major part of the hidden workload of Professors and Editors, Gerard reveled in it, particularly finding new talents and encouraging new ideas. Indeed, the guest editors owe a lot to Gerard and his patient editorship. It is often the patiently worded rejection letter and sagacious,

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encouraging advice to earnest and aspiring scholars crafted by editors such as Gerard, which makes the biggest contribution to their academic careers and future publication outputs. The sign of a professional editor is the time they devote to the work of others, often to the detriment of their own writing and publishing outputs. Writing with doctoral students, early career researchers and peers is a time-consuming, but rewarding, activity. However, it is also one of the greatest contributions that an academic can make, and indeed Gerard epitomised this stance. Taking the time to explain in plain English (albeit not always in politically correct terms) the art and craft of writing is a service to the academic community that pays dividends in the long run. One of Gerard's most effective traits is his ability to select and place trust in others and give them an opportunity to contribute to special issues of the journal as Guest Editors, while allowing them space to honour their commitments.

On top of his editorial and professorial commitments, Gerard has taught and published prolifically and is a heterodox and respected scholar. He is best known for his contribution to the literature on Rural Entrepreneurship and in particular for his stream of work in relation to *'The Entrepreneurial Farmer'* (Ghouse et al., 2017, 2019; McElwee, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; McElwee and Annibal, 2010; McElwee and Wood, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2017; Vik and McElwee, 2011). Other notable areas of contribution include *'Enterprise and Criminality'* (Bunei et al., 2016; Firth and McElwee, 2007, 2009; McElwee, 2009; McElwee et al., 2017a; Refai and McElwee, 2022; Smith and McElwee, 2013, 2015; Smith et al., 2017; Somerville et al., 2015), *'Animateurship'* (McElwee et al., 2017b) and *'Supporting Rural Enterprises'* (Annibal et al., 2013; Bosworth et al., 2015; De Rosa and McElwee, 2015; DeRosa et al., 2019; Gittins et al., 2020; McElwee and Whittam, 2012). To honour his editorship, pay tribute to his influence in the field and his impact on entrepreneurship scholarship, and to mark this end of an era, this special issue reflects on Gerard's work and considers what we have learned from it; and how can we extend it. Whilst he seeks to spend more time on his music and his hobbies of piping and dry-stone dyking, Gerard will continue to engage in academia and this special issue does not mark an end to his contribution, which we expect to continue for a long time to come. Nevertheless, this special issue affords us an opportunity to reflect on his body of work to date and to extend it via new writings. Given the style and structure of academic publishing outlets, seldom do scholars have the chance to write an overview of their works to finesse their theoretical and conceptual contribution to their chosen fields². Modesty often dictates that this is often best done by others, and it is in this spirit we publish this 'Festschrift'.

After this editorial, we first present a short reflection by Gerard on his career as an entrepreneurship researcher in

which he looks both backwards and forwards reflecting on his achievements, his work in enterprise education and entrepreneurship research and hopes for the journal. As he incisively put it ".... editing *IJEI* has been an important feature of one of my lives". This is crucially important because an editor and his or her editorial decisions can also influence and shape the work and careers of other academics. Gerard briefly introduces the three main strands of enquiry or research themes central to his research engagement and output (both personally and editorially). These are – i) Enterprise teaching and learning, ii) education management and iii) rural entrepreneurship and illegal enterprise in the rural.

In this Special Issue, we have a mixture of studies examining entrepreneurship at the peripheries, or the in-between, incorporating Gerard's writings on the rural, the illegal, the marginal and all the other 'edgy bits', which have come to characterise the context of his works. All the papers are empirical studies, either extending aspects of Gerard's work or utilising theories or themes posited by him and his many co-authors.

The first paper is a poignant submission from the late Professor Alistair R Anderson and Dr Carol Air entitled "Performing, Learning and Entrepreneurship: Playing by Ear" and is inspired by Gerard's work and his love of music. Employing an entrepreneurship as practice perspective, the paper examines how musicians become entrepreneurs and how they move from an aesthetic to a commercial understanding via socialised learning and performing. A few weeks after submitting this manuscript, Alistair tragically and unexpectedly passed away after a short illness in 2021. Alistair was a stalwart of the journal, and was one of the first members appointed onto the editorial board by Gerard. Indeed, Alistair in conversation with Professor Mike Danson, was the first person to moot the idea about publishing this 'Festschrift'. The paper by Alistair and Carol is a tribute to Gerard and the inventive nature of his body of work.

The paper by Dr Kathryn Burnett and Professor Mike Danson entitled 'Romance and Resilience: The assets and Ambitions of Scottish Remote Rural Enterprise Contexts' articulates how the narratives embedded within the assets and ambitions of rural and island communities are framed as stories of place (Romance) and people (Resilience) and relate to materiality and lived-experiences. Using case studies of rural island communities, it also extends Gerard's work on 'animateurship' and Alistair's work on 'Romancing the Rural'. It demonstrates how narratives of Romance and Resilience shape the entrepreneurial experiences of rural entrepreneurs and their markets, and create a generative, international and entrepreneurial growth mindset of social, economic and symbolic capital ambitions.

The paper by Karen Wilson, Shelley Harrington and Alex Kevill entitled 'A Taxonomy of Rural Micro-Enterprises: Disembedded or Bedrock of the Community' builds upon

the work of Gerard in relation to expanding the taxonomy of rural entrepreneurs based on the level of rural embeddedness. Drawing upon 19 in-depth narrative interviews, three new taxonomies are suggested. These are of 1) 'bedrock', 2) 'anchored', and 3) 'disembedded' and 'perfunctory' enterprises. This new categorisation challenges the notion that all rural micro-enterprises add value to the rural economy. Of note are that 'disembedded' enterprises may have parasitical tendencies and be negative contributors to rural economic sustainability due to the actions and choices made by their owner-manager(s).

The paper by Nermin Elkafrawi and Deema Refai, entitled 'Egyptian Rural Women Entrepreneurs: Challenges, Ambitions and Opportunities' builds on Gerard's interest in the marginal and marginalised, and his emphasis on the role of 'animateurs' in driving rural development. It examines the main challenges and opportunities facing Egyptian rural women entrepreneurs to start and grow their enterprises. It does this via a narrated case story covering various social and economic aspects of lived experiences.

The final paper by Sakura Yamamura and Paul Lassalle is fittingly entitled 'Borders of Immersive Fieldwork: A methodological critique of entrepreneurship', and is written in the manner of a viewpoint article. It examines three core elements of Gerard's work and provides a critical commentary on how the work uniquely develops and expands the field of qualitative entrepreneurship research. It is written as a 'Lobschrift'³ inspired by Gerard's commitment to boundary-breaking, unconventional and yet strongly tangible topics in entrepreneurship, often encompassing issues of illegality and criminality. It is a celebration of provocative approaches to conducting research.

After the call for papers for this Special Issue, we received many emails from scholars or students who have worked with Gerard during his career. These were too numerous to name, but many detailed how his tuition or supervision influenced their work. Individually and collectively, they spoke of how working with Gerard has been a privilege and an honour, and emphasised the sense of friendship, collegiality, humility and humour, which epitomize Gerard's academic editorial style. However, his most endearing editorial trait was to make writing and publishing fun.

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Notes

1. A collection of writings published in honour of a scholar.
2. American Position Papers aside.
3. As in 'panegyric' as pointed out by Sakura in an email trail.

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