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The dark side of the rural idyll: Stories of illegal/illicit economic activity in the UK countryside

ABSTRACT

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In rural sociology and rural studies, rurality is commonly constructed as an idyllic space in which crime is perceived as an urban problem. A less visible counter construct of rurality in opposition to the idyll exists with the countryside being seen as a place where the individual is vulnerable and where the population is socially beyond the urban. This article challenges the universality of the rural idyll thesis by reporting on research in rural areas which demonstrates that crime, in particular illicit and illegal enterprise based crime, is commonplace in the countryside. In urban areas, illicit and illegal forms of entrepreneurship occupy a distinctive space in entrepreneurship practice in terms of how they are construed and enacted – so why would it not be similar in rural areas? The paper presents a theoretical framework based on the work of Ferdinand Tönnies which demonstrates that contemporary examples of roguery are found in the otherwise idyllic UK countryside. We make more visible what previously was invisible, or ignored in the literature. Five stories of illegal rural enterprise are presented which provide a counterargument to Mingay's rural idyll. Since illicit and/or illegal rural enterprise is under-researched this constitutes an original attempt to frame an emerging phenomenon of interest.

Keywords: Ferdinand Tönnies; Roguery; Illegal Rural Enterprise; Illicit Rural Enterprise; Criminal-Entrepreneurship.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights a contemporary changing trend in rural crime and discusses how illegal enterprise crime is subtly changing perceptions of traditional criminality in rural contexts as older criminal practices merge with new entrepreneurial criminal behaviours (Smith, 2009). The study and the bulk of the literature interrogated are primarily set in a British context, albeit some of the findings could be transferable to other ruralities. This work challenges existing perceptions relating to the moral status of rurality and particularly the pervasive notion of the 'Rural Idyll' (Williams, 1973; Mingay, 1989; Bunce, 1994; Yarwood, 2005) through an examination of the social relations and dynamics of contemporary illegal and/or illicit entrepreneurial practices in the UK Countryside. These practices include food-fraud and adulteration, theft; counterfeiting, drug dealing and Tax avoidance which exist at the boundaries of enterprise and organised crime. We consider illicit entrepreneurship a process whereby entrepreneurs supply customers with legal, illicit and/or illegal services or products often without being aware of the illicit nature of the transaction, service or product, or the illicit means used to channel the legal products or services provided.

Although the subject matter and context of this paper is rurality *per se* the stories used to examine and illustrate the illegal and/or illicit rural practices we encountered during our research employ the conceptual rubric of entrepreneurship to address a gap in the established field of rural sociology and the developing fields of rural criminology and entrepreneurship. The extant literatures of crime, entrepreneurship and rurality play an important role in framing this research. Despite these literatures being conceptually and theoretically separate domains we see areas of crossover in terms of subject matter (when each literature uses the other as context). The topics of rural criminal-entrepreneurship and illegal and/or illicit rural entrepreneurialism

(Davis & Potter, 1991; Smith & McElwee, 2013) add another missing dimension to the literature. This paper adds to earlier attempts to question the rural idyll and on the 'Dark Sides' of the rural (See Eriksson, 2010; and Scott & Biron, 2010) for a discussion on the differential stereotypicality of media representations of rural masculinities. Of interest is an expanding literature on rural entrepreneurship and rural enterprise independent of the rural studies literature (See Bryant, 1989; Wortman, 1990; Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos & Skuras, 2004; and McElwee, 2006). Indeed, Bryant argued that the entrepreneur (and the entrepreneurial activity of other people) in the rural environment is crucial in sustaining the vitality of rural areas. This extends the notion of the entrepreneur to include entrepreneurial activity by other social actors in rural communities. This is important because criminal-entrepreneurs in rural areas may not have the appearance of legitimate entrepreneurs or traditional criminals.

Bryant critically asked '*what benefit can be derived from entrepreneurial activity*'?

We argue that entrepreneurship is an enabling framework open to all in the rural population and should not be restricted to examples derived from legal, moral, or conventional enterprise. To date, a major omission in the rural crime debate within rural studies is the notion of criminal-entrepreneurship *per se* (Hobbs, 1988; Smith, 2009). This work answers the call for studies (Yarwood & Edwards, 1995) that focus on this notion but adds to a growing debate on urban-rural relationships and crime and criminal-entrepreneurship in rural areas which is a theme in this special issue.

We use the term 'enterprise' loosely to cover actions and activities performed in the pursuance of financial or material gain and not in the traditional sense of an enterprise as a business entity. We define entrepreneurship simply '*as the creation and extraction of value from an environment*' (Anderson, 1995, 85), and criminal-entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship that involves breaking criminal law (Baumol,

1990). Baumol (somewhat vaguely) defined criminal-entrepreneurship as ‘the imaginative pursuit of wealth without consideration of the means’. This framework explains entrepreneurial activity in urban and rural settings and immoral, amoral and criminal forms of enterprise (Anderson & Smith, 2007). However, rather than the word ‘criminal’, we prefer the terminology of ‘*illegal and/or illicit rural enterprise*’ [IRE] (McElwee, Smith, Somerville, 2011; Smith & McElwee, 2013) because it locates such behaviour between the paradigms of entrepreneurship and crime and moreover our research relates to changing perceptions of rural crime and enterprise.

We challenge perceptions regarding the moral superiority of rurality, by examining contemporary examples of illicit and illegal entrepreneurial practices encountered during research into the changing nature of rural crime, criminality, and enterprise. We argue that whether an entrepreneurial criminal act is perceived as illicit or illegal depends upon the context in which the act occurs because the commission of such acts challenge and disrupt idealised (and idyllised) notions of rural space and rural crime and criminal behaviour.

In the ethics literature there is an argument that when an act is proscribed by law as a crime then anyone who breaks the law becomes a criminal (Machan, 1991) but if an act is merely illicit or immoral then no crime is committed. Thus if an entrepreneur commits a crime they are regarded as criminals, not entrepreneurs. This takes no cognizance of harmful acts of immorality (Machan, 1999: Ackoff, 1987). Our research problematic is to examine how licit/legal and illicit/illegal entrepreneurship are combined and intertwined by rural criminal entrepreneurs and businessmen. This necessitates considering the differences between licit/legal and illicit/illegal entrepreneurial activity in a rural setting and, thus, we critique the concept of the rural idyll, which casts a long shadow over the literatures of rurality, rural crime and rural

enterprise via the writings of Tönnies (1957) and Mingay (1989). Indeed, Tönnies' concept of 'roguery' is our main theoretical interrogation tool.

In the next section, we position rurality within the inter-disciplinary literatures by **discussing theory, concepts and earlier research**. Thereafter, we consider the nature of rural crime before briefly conceptualising the concept of illicit/illegal rural enterprise. We follow this with a discussion of methodology. **The empirics are based on interviews and presented in the form of "stories" which are interpreted**. We then present our findings and conclusions.

2. POSITIONING RURALITY WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Rurality is a concept, a category, a discourse, an organizing architecture, a location and a material space dependent upon the unit of analysis used (Halfacree, 2006). In rural studies, crime and entrepreneurship feature in research articles primarily as research variables but seldom appear together, even though many variables commonly identified with enterprise and 'rural development' are also associated with crime (Rephann, 1999). Indeed, issues of location and space are central to understanding other ruralities (Halfacree, 2003) and for the purposes of this article, rurality is a space in which criminals who shelter under the rural idyll can operate freely.

2.1. Considering the rural idyll and definitions of rurality?

The writings of Tönnies (1957) on the topic of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) whereby Tönnies ascribed special qualities to those who reside in rural areas by virtue of the cohesiveness of familial relationships and qualities **are our starting point**. This theme is continued within the literature on rurality, in the

evocative notion of the 'rural idyll' (Williams, 1979; Mingay, 1989; Short, 1991; Bunce, 1994, 2003; and Short, 2006) which alludes to an (unsustainable) idealized, utopian or picturesque countryside. Although views of cohesiveness takes a number of different forms (e.g. pastoral – Bell, 1997), its core meaning is that the rural is morally superior to the urban, in this instance suggesting levels of crime and criminality are lower in rural areas (see Pennings, 1999; Carcach, 2000; Jobes *et al*, 2004; Hogg & Carrington, 2006; Donnermeyer, 2006; DeKeseredy *et al*, 2006; Francisco & Chénier, 2007 for the full debate). The rural idyll is our argumental base point because we argue that the bucolic aesthetics of rurality are at variance with the urban based aesthetics of crime (Millie, 2008). In spite of numerous critiques of this notion (Little & Austin, 1996; Cloke & Little, 1997; Swaffield & Fairweather, 1998; Cloke, 2003; Bell, 1997, 2006), it continues to dominate some discussions of rural social difference (Browne, 2011) albeit informed scholars appreciate it is changing to become more diverse and more inclusive but its core moral meaning remains. Thus interpretations of rurality are changing due to the industrialisation of agriculture and other social issues from the 19th century to the present day. It is this alleged moral superiority of the rural that we question. To do so we begin by considering alternative constructions of rurality. See table 1 for a critical discussion of these.

Insert table 1 here

The defence of the rural idyll is well-worn in rural studies. Woodward (1996) identified a number of discourses of rurality that reject the counter-idyllic label of deprivation, re-presenting it variously as inconvenience, an unavoidable part of rural life, a natural outcome of specific ways of living, a lifestyle choice, an individual failing, or simply as non-existent (an urban problem only). Alternatively, Neal and

Walters (2007), envisage the rural narrated, not only as a space of safety but as a space of freedom. The ‘regulated’ character of ‘a settled landscape mapping out a social order across a picturesque terrain’ (Bell, 1997, 95) is contrasted with ‘non-regulated’ or ‘unregulated’ usage which may involve transgressions of the rules of the non-rural world. These two narratives are but two sides of the same idyllic coin: the mutuality of surveillance that promotes and produces public safety (as described by Jacobs, 1961, in urban areas) is precisely what makes it possible for people to move and express themselves freely, without fear of harm. The rural idyll is not to be identified with either ‘regulation’ or ‘non-regulation’ but rather with Hayek’s ‘spontaneous order’ – self-organisation or self-regulation. This notion of freedom involves autonomy to transgress the usual social and legal conventions such as underage driving, underage drinking, driving on private land/back roads, and ownership of guns. Natural environments (e.g. woods – Bryson, 1997). Open spaces are viewed as idyllic but can become loci for fear and anxiety. Such transgression is contained because it is restricted to certain kinds of activities in certain areas (Neal & Walters, 2007, 259). These transgressions and their containment are accepted by those who live in rural areas. This aspect of rural culture is associated with a wider dislike or occasional outright rejection of governmental regulation seen to be overly bureaucratic and lacking in understanding of rural concerns and needs (Neal & Walters, 2007, 260-1). The rural idyll is thus suffused with transgression – both illicit and criminal behaviour. So its claims to the moral high ground are unstable. The same close-knit communities that are seen as comforting and supportive can also be experienced as suffocating, damaging and even criminogenic. Having discussed the nature of rurality it is time to consider the nature of rural crime.

2.2. Considering the nature of rural crime and the existence of the rural rogue?

The foregoing discussion of rurality was necessary in attempting to understand the nature of rural crime. It is not just that the various versions of the rural idyll conspire to distort people's perceptions of rural crime; it is also that the different meanings of rurality imply different understandings of rural crime. In particular, the concept of a differentiated countryside suggests that the types of crime committed may vary, and may be viewed differently, from one rural area to another. It also suggests that rural crime, like rurality, is to be understood in terms of the localities in which it occurs, how it is socially represented, and the everyday circumstances in which it is committed, experienced and interpreted. According to Mahar (1991), rural identities are negotiated *via* the use of gender-based strategies and distributions of capital. This system is organised according to a specific logic of moral differences specific to rural communities in that rurality is predominantly patriarchal and masculine.

The contemporary literature on rural crime generally falls short of recognising its distinctiveness from urban crime. Mostly, as Donnermeyer *et al* (2006) have pointed out, it has been dominated by urban-based criminological approaches. Increasingly, it is becoming accepted that the nature of rural areas is extremely varied and subsequently this variety is likely to be reflected in the complex and distinctive nature of rural crime (Williams, 1999; Donnermeyer, 2006). As scholars we are not yet clear about how to make sense of this variety. In their review of the literature, Marshall and Johnson (2005, 47) concluded that basic research needs to be conducted to examine variations in crime in a variety of areas. One cannot make generalisations about crime and safety in rural areas albeit views on rural crime remain polarised between the urban and rural. See table 2 for a theoretical comparison of the (idyllic) dichotomy.

Insert table 2 here

Although the existence of rural-rogues is hardly surprising, what has been missing to date is an examination of the local processes and contexts working to allow or hinder their actions. In relation to the processes and contexts which enable criminals to operate unhindered in rural areas Barclay *et al.* (2004) show, high cohesiveness can facilitate and support offending behaviour through ‘blind-eye turning’ (Bartel, 2003; Ellickson, 1991; and Neal & Walters, 2007, 260) and ‘techniques of neutralisation’ (Enticott, 2011). Such processes and contexts may be similar to those in urban areas - for example a respected entrepreneur in an urban restaurant doing illicit side deals against the interests of social networks and status. The rural v urban debate continues to the present day (see Nurse, 2013) and typifies over-generalisation across both urban and rural areas. However, the argument is not a topical one necessitating consideration of other approaches to understanding rurality. Yet we argue there is something distinctly unique about illegal rural enterprise crime. See table 3 for a theoretical comparison of these.

Insert table 3 here

Having considered how these approaches help our widening appreciation of the rural context in relation to crime it is appropriate to synthesise these with the emerging concept of illegal/illegal rural enterprise.

2.3. Conceptualizing Illicit and /or Illegal Rural Enterprise

We briefly introduce relevant entrepreneurship theory to orientate readers unfamiliar with the theoretical context and to illustrate how entrepreneurship occupies a distinctive moral space (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Pompe, 2013). Although there is a great deal of literature on entrepreneurship and also on rural enterprise and illicit business (McElwee, 2006), there is very little written that addresses the phenomenon

of illicit or illegal enterprise in the rural. Entrepreneurship is a diverse social phenomenon and although we have chosen Anderson's (Anderson, 1995) definition of entrepreneurship many other definitions emphasize a broad range of activities including innovation and the acceptance of risk and failure (Schumpeter, 1942), albeit it is usually legal risk that is discussed. Entrepreneurial activity helps improve market efficiency and overall economic welfare (Kirzner, 1973), and Etzioni (1987, 175) suggests that the activities of entrepreneurs help change obsolescent and ossified societal patterns (including idylls) positioning entrepreneurs at the forefront of social change. Entrepreneurship is viewed as both a private and a public good (Buckley & Casson, 2001) although it is a morally ambiguous pursuit, because it always entails a degree of exploitation. Yet we argue that the description of entrepreneurship as a *life theme* by Bolton and Thompson (2000) demonstrates that entrepreneurship pervades all social mileux irrespective of whether they are urban or rural.

Theoretically, there should be little difference between a rural and an urban enterprise, other than the extent to which the start up, development of and support for it is constrained by exogenous factors such as geographical location, access to labour markets, infrastructure and value chains (Vik & McElwee, 2011). Yet these factors are significant (Smith & McElwee, 2013). Where enterprise, and entrepreneurship, are explored in a rural context, studies focus on the dynamics and behaviours of a small number of individuals, often farmers (*e.g.* Kalantaridis & Bika, 2006; McElwee, 2006), and not illicit or illegal entrepreneurs. Exceptions, include Smith (2004) and Smith and McElwee (2013) on rogue farmers and Basran, Gill and MacLean (1995) on exploitative farmers.

Baumol (1990) argued that entrepreneurship can also be unproductive and destructive and that entrepreneurs and criminals emerge from the same social mileux.

Moreover, much, but not all, illicit entrepreneurship can be located within the informal economy (Williams, 2006/2011) because there is a blur between what is considered to be licit by the entrepreneurs themselves and the apparent willingness of individuals to break the law when the opportunity presents itself and when there is little likelihood of being caught.

There is a growing appreciation (Smith, 2004; Wempe, 2005; Fadahunsi & Rosa, 2002) of the characteristics of illicit economic activity. The commission of illicit rural enterprise crime necessitates the possession of appropriate forms of social capitals (Ellickson, 1991; Pretty & Ward, 2001) because as an activity it differs from other criminal activities in that it is not dependent upon the possession of entrepreneurial and/or criminal social capitals. It may be committed by otherwise apparently law abiding individuals, networking with others who possess entrepreneurial or criminal acumen. **Entrepreneurs have acumen based on their business experience and social capital and criminals have a different acumen set of capitals. Many have social capitals which spans both mileux.** The focus is upon a discrete, and almost invisible entrepreneurial milieu in which legitimate and criminal fraternities (Smith, 2013) use their entrepreneurial ability to create and extract additional value from the environment and surrounding landscape (Anderson, 1995). **In a rural context there are numerous intertwined criminal fraternities (see Smith, 2013 for a fuller explanation). Although these fraternities are ostensibly separate entities they can and do collude with each other to commit profit driven crime and as such can all be classed as rogues using Tönnies definition (1957).**

Research into illicit and illegal entrepreneurship has sought to explore why certain groups and individuals, despite not fitting the conventional description of the entrepreneur, engage in enterprise and entrepreneurship. They work at and beyond the

boundaries of what is known and, occasionally, of what is accepted in the pursuit of profits. The majority of research exploring illicit entrepreneurship, however, has tended to focus on criminality rather than on the illicit (Rehn & Taalas, 2004; Smith, 2004, 2007, 2009; Williams, 2008, 2009; Frith & McElwee, 2008, 2009b). Moreover, individuals involved in these enterprises are commonly portrayed as deviant and often as social outcasts who operate at the margins of society. However, illicit enterprises and other marginal activities are not necessarily criminal, and illicit rural entrepreneurs exhibit characteristics, such as strategic awareness, opportunity spotting and networking, shared by licit entrepreneurs (McElwee, 2008). Drawing on earlier work with drug dealers (Frith & McElwee, 2008), we suggest that illicit rural entrepreneurs may well have multiple business interests that generate employment and develop the rural economy. Frith and McElwee (2009) challenge the prevailing assumption that entrepreneurship is always a good thing. Moreover, Baumol (1995) acknowledged the often parasitical nature of entrepreneurship, describing the deplorable and debilitating effects that such actors (or illicit entrepreneurs) can have on the 'natural' workings of the economy. This is a key issue because standard definitions of entrepreneurs ignore the multiple interests and the social entrepreneurialism of the illicit enterprise. The stereotype of the illicit entrepreneur is framed as a 'dodgy' or 'unscrupulous' character (Galloway, 2007, 271). Consequently, Smith (2007, 245) and Williams (2006) argue that research on illicit entrepreneurship should move away from mainstream or typical cases of entrepreneurship to focus on cases of entrepreneurship that are at the 'edge of the known and accepted'. This study takes up this challenge.

3. METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

One of the problems with researching illicit or illegal entrepreneurship in rural environments is that rural enterprise covers such a wide gamut of activities (Smith, 2004). Gaining access to respondents can be problematic. To develop a robust framework for defining types of illicit enterprise activity in the rural, we employed a mixture of qualitative methodology and methodological strategies. Individually and collectively we have been engaged in this research since 2007 and have now interviewed over thirty respondents located in Aberdeenshire, Cumbria, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Cornwall. Our respondents included 2 retired rural police officers; a serving police officer; a PCSO; an animal cruelty officer; 4 farmers; 4 members of staff from The Food Standards Agency; 6 council employees ranging from animal health officers, environmental health officers to trading standards officers and several rural entrepreneurs. Many of these interviews were recorded using audio technology and a typical interview lasted for 60 to 90 minutes. However, some respondents preferred not to be recorded and spoke more freely in a free flowing conversation. Our approach was a broadly 'reflective' phenomenological approach (Cope, 2005) drawing upon data gathered from a variety of 'narrative based' sources such as interviews with respondents coupled with 'insider knowledge' (Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2009). Consequently, our research is underpinned by an interpretive framework.

Nevertheless, the stories we gathered from our respondents were of cases they had dealt with, or stories they had been told by others. Thus, although we gathered storied data on illegal and illicit criminal activity committed by rogue farmers and entrepreneurs, we were unable to collect direct quotes from criminal respondents. Also our respondents had insider knowledge of illicit rural enterprise and, being

industry insiders, were able to engage in 'backyard ethnography' (Heley, 2001/2011) via the privileged position of their occupations. From these respondents we elicited nearly 100 examples of illegal and illicit activities including cattle and sheep rustling, tax evasion, EU subsidy fraud, collusion with organized criminals and even prostitution. Some of the stories related to the same individuals and from these we present stories to feature as worked examples.

Following Weber (1978), our aim was to attempt to understand the experience of entrepreneurs by listening to the ways in which they make sense of the world and ascribe and attribute value to their experiences (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, 14). Hitherto, little research on rural entrepreneurship has used ethnomethodological, phenomenological, social constructionist, or interpretative approaches. Surprisingly, it is only relatively recently that interpretative approaches have been used in entrepreneurship research (Smith, 2004; Cope, 2005; Devins & Gold, 2002).

The broad range of the material collected allowed us to categorize the data thematically whilst integrating human interpretation (Schutz, 1953) with entrepreneurial practice. Thus we identified the nature of the phenomenon and developed patterns of behaviour to be visualized and understood, as well as identifying relationships between these themes or aspects which we then analysed using accepted constant comparison techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

4. RESULTS

We now present five of our stories of rural criminal enterprise narrated to us by our respondents which challenge the rural idyll and thereafter present an analysis of how their stories advance our understanding of the ruralities discussed above.

Bert's Story

Bert is a 'well-to-do', successful 'entrepreneurial-farmer'. He engages in pluriactive behaviours and has numerous outside business interests and investments. He is a hard working and industrious individual with an active mind open for entrepreneurial opportunities but is well known locally as a confirmed bachelor, womaniser and a 'bit-of-a-lad'. He likes a drink and is a very sociable person. He was not originally from farming stock but associated with young farmers in his youth. He used a family inheritance to rent his first farm in the 1970s and borrowed heavily from the banks to finance his venture. In the 1980s a financial depression resulted in high interest rates. To stave off bankruptcy he entered into a 'no-questions-asked' relationship with a local gangster whom he allowed to use rented properties. This arrangement lasted several years before it came to light in a police case. Bert being regarded as a reputable businessman gave evidence that he was unaware of the gangsters' reputation. He openly admits that he would have 'gone under' financially had it not been for the regular illicit income and knows that other farmers in similar circumstances have been sent to jail.

Charles's Story

Charles is a 'gentleman farmer' and serial-entrepreneur, from an established farming family who married into gentry. However, Charles a canny farmer with the 'Midas touch' was always 'on the make'. On one occasion he bought a piece of agricultural plant at a 'knock-down' price on a 'no-questions-asked' basis only to be visited by

several 'heavies' sent to recover the bargain. The matter was never reported to the police. His reputation for sharp practices in the farming community was legendary. When he built a new building he always added several feet to the dimensions to increase productivity. One story relates to him selling the outer perimeter of his fields to his son so that in the event of a bank foreclosing on a loan the property would be of no value as the bank/new owner would have to negotiate access to the fields through the son. He has fallen foul of the law being convicted of the commission of environmental crimes such as polluting the environment with slurry spillages to ease the pressures of factory farming. He is not averse to taking risks and cutting corners or running tractors without road tax.

Jackie's Story

Jackie, a serial entrepreneur brought up in a small village has owned and run a variety of businesses in urban and rural settings. Jackie bought into a rural garage and car sales business and owned and ran this along with a portfolio of other businesses. When the second-hand-car sales industry hit a period of recession he rented the business to a local gangster with no business experience who used the business as a cover for money laundering purposes. The gangster installed a 'front' man who ran the business at an apparent loss for several years before it closed down. It will never be established whether Jackie had knowledge of criminal intent or not but reputations are easily checked in rural business communities.

Ivan's Story

Ivan is a rural businessman originally from Lithuania. He is an opportunistic entrepreneur who runs a weekly bus service between Lithuania and the UK and

supplies a local Polish shop with a wide range of items. The bus carries parcels both ways. His current top seller is homemade vodka which retails for £5 a litre and sells in Lithuania for 70p per litre. Ivan operates on the fringes of crime and his business has upset an illegal still owner.

Andrei and Aleksander's Story

Andrei and Aleksander are brothers and business partners, originally from Bulgaria who now live in a rural village in England. The two brothers initially established a rural gang masters business ten years ago providing migrant labourers but now conduct an illicit business activity focused around VAT fraud. They use headed paper of another legitimate gang master business but include their own address. They put an invoice in the envelope with a note asking for Cheques to be made payable to another named party. The farmers on being invoiced usually pay without considering there is anything abnormal. Cheques can be up to £10,000 per day with VAT on top for around 8 - 10 weeks peak season. They also engage in selling red diesel and ships diesel (for which no tax is paid). Profits are reinvested in property and building work in Bulgaria. They also trade pound coins at £60 per £100 and notes at £40 per £100.

See table 4 below for an individual analysis of these stories in relation to rural crime using Tönnies' concept of roguery to help us better understand their entrepreneurial activities and how they are counter idyllic.

Insert table 4 here.

Collectively, all the rogues use illegal or illicit practices to create and extract additional entrepreneurial value from their businesses either when the opportunity presents itself or routinely. We consider if there is any difference between their illegal

activities (as farmers and rural entrepreneurs) and those of the conventional acquisitive criminal?

On reading across the stories and using the technique of constant comparative analysis several themes emerged from the data. Firstly, character **flaws feature** in the stories. Bert and Jackie are hedonists who liked to socialise, drink and party which brought them into contact with a wide range of individuals across the social strata, exposing them to illicit entrepreneurial opportunities. Charles was driven by his ambition to expand his empire to pass onto his sons and showed little regard for authority. Ivan, Andrei and Aleksander engaged in entrepreneurial pluriactivity using legal businesses to piggyback their criminal activities. Commercial and financial pragmatism connected to sharp business practices **is an obvious** driving force in all the cases as the rogues seized opportunities either of necessity or from choice. There is evidence, in the cases of Bert, Charles and Jackie, of the more established rural elite 'turning a blind eye' to the criminal nature of their actions (thereby engaging in neutralization techniques) whilst running parallel legal and illegal ventures simultaneously.

Using Tönnies' concept as an interrogative tool to examine the stories in relation to the literature on rurality, we can report the following. All the rogues were male, confirming Little's notion of rural crime as a masculine gendered domain. All the examples discussed challenge or contradict the social construction of criminality and in particular rural crime as an activity conducted by urban invaders. The crimes were all committed by farmers, local businessmen and people living in rural communities, thus challenging the urban marauder thesis and from the analysis it is evident that most of the individuals conformed to Tönnies' category of rural dwellers infused with the spirit of rural community. The examples of illegal and illicit entrepreneurial

activity did not occur in isolation requiring the active participation of an illicit entrepreneur from the entrepreneurial and/or farming communities. Our rogues were embedded in either the farming or entrepreneurial business communities or both. By identifying and documenting the existence of such rogues we make a contribution to the literatures on crime, entrepreneurship and rurality and provided a new framework for reading rural social constructions of crime. In accordance with Baumol's definition of criminal-entrepreneurship our respondents were imaginative in their pursuit of financial gain. To some extent they hid their illicit and illegal activities behind the cloak of the rural idyll but **cannot** claim the moral superiority associated with it. Far from being Tönnies' brutalised victims some are members of the rural elite (Mahar, 1991). They were not deviants or outcasts but materialistic rogue-farmers and entrepreneurs operating in a hidden, deniable rural criminal space where they engaged in illicit productivist practices to maximise their profit. They are examples of Wylie's and Halfacree's rural productive materialists. Our research confirms the complexity of rural crime, as suggested by Cloke, and challenges the dominance of the rural idyll.

Rogues have always existed in the countryside and it is in their interest to maintain this idyll. In such stories, there is a clear rupture between individual and social perspectives such that the moral viewpoints of the entrepreneurial individual are exposed as being misaligned with prevalent ethical parameters. Some of these rural-rogues are very much a part of their communities, for example Bert, Charles and Jackie, but nevertheless they engage in illegal or illicit practices which undermine those communities and threaten their idyllic status. Ivan, Andrei and Aleksander, on the other hand, because of their ethnic identity, could be viewed as alien to the countryside yet have lived within the rural community for nearly a decade now. Bert

and Charles as successful farmers add value to the community by providing jobs and a secure income to locals. Their illegal and illicit activities help them extract additional value from the countryside. All these individuals sustain and reinforce the fundamental tension between roguery and respectability and use the space thereby created to exploit opportunities that other individuals would find morally objectionable.

Paradoxically, however, our respondents were able to operate unhindered only because their illicit or illegal activities were hidden by the cloak of the rural idyll itself, and because the rural space permitted them freedom to do so, as argued by Neale and Walters. **Laws that are not accepted by rural communities will not be complied with (Bartel, 2003).** The rural idyll protects them from close scrutiny by enabling them to belong to an ‘established elite’ of land and/or property owners. **It is of note that some of the crimes discussed border on being close to organised crime for example - tax fraud; selling illicit labour. Many impinge upon but cannot be fully subsumed within the category of ordinary "white-collar-crime" (Sutherland, 1949).**

5. CONCLUSIONS

In our research, we have taken the view that research into illicit entrepreneurship should be concerned with all types of entrepreneurial activities in which current laws, norms and rules of behavior are challenged, reconsidered, redefined, and, in certain circumstances, rewritten. **We have highlighted one contemporary change that is occurring in the nature of rural crime and enterprise which is tied up with complex social issues such as: the withdrawal of police from the countryside (Smith & Somerville, 2013); the increasing levels of rural crime as the countryside becomes more of a target for organized criminal gangs; and the rise in rural entrepreneurial**

crime committed by insiders (Smith, Laing, McElwee, 2013). The illegal pluriactivity of the rogue-farmers we highlight provides an alternative example of the discourse on farmers as rational decision-makers, albeit they can be exploitative and dishonest as any other business entrepreneur (Mooney, 1988).

Our research challenges the claimed moral superiority of the rural idyll by setting up and testing Tönnies' concept of roguery to facilitate our understanding and theorising about illicit entrepreneurship, using the rural as a context. Not only do illicit and illegal entrepreneurial activities in rural areas represent a fascinating phenomenon in themselves, their investigation also promises fruitful insights into entrepreneurship in general. A strength of the study is that it discusses illegal/illicit activities and entrepreneurship in the rural context and connects this to (mainly) sociological theory and previous research. The study reviews and draws on a wide range of literatures to bring together what have been the rather discrete spheres of theorising and research relating to entrepreneurialism, morality, ethics and criminality and rurality and rural spaces. Another major contribution lies in illustrating that some crime in rural areas is being committed by farmers, rural entrepreneurs and businessmen acting as opportunists, predators and rogues (Mood, 2005), not by urban-criminal-invaders. However, we cannot dismiss completely the crimes of the urban-invader because to do so would be to ignore the social and technological changes occurring in the world which allow organised crime to easily infiltrate rural environments, e.g. cannabis production, and environmental and wildlife crime, which utilise local residents to further their operations (see Enticott, 2011; Nurse, 2013). Moreover, these examples of illicit rural enterprise are not crimes that the police normally deal with, nor examples of white-collar-criminality, but entrepreneurial

crime committed for financial gain (one of the characteristics ascribed to rogues by Tönnies).

This study demonstrates the potential for cross fertilisation between research on rurality, social change, crime, community safety and the literature on entrepreneurship discussed elsewhere. It deals with a topic that is of considerable interest to scholars of both rural studies and entrepreneurship, namely multiple manifestations of the entrepreneur and the variety of activities in which they engage. We have established that there are negative as well as positive aspects to rural entrepreneurial behaviour, thus adding to Rephann's argument that '*rural development*' is similarly associated with both enterprise and crime (Rephann, 1999). We add to the debate on social change, crime and community safety focusing on emerging issues in rural areas.

Our stories reveal the power of the rural idyll to effectively conceal the nefarious activities of our rogues who operate unseen in closed networks, using their specific rural and criminal social capitals to their advantage. This is important because entrepreneurship and criminality are strongly connected to social context, necessitating further investigation. There is an assumption in the literature that entrepreneurs are engaged primarily in moral forms of enterprise (Rhen & Taalas, 2004), in which they do not cause harm to others. Whilst questioning this assumption, we acknowledge that illicit entrepreneurship in rural settings is difficult to interpret. Our stories assist in such interpretation by challenging the veracity of the rural idyll and question the universal validity of the urban marauder thesis. The work of Tönnies on rural crime and rural sociology remains under-appreciated and we make an additional contribution by using his concept of roguery as an interrogative tool to analyse our storied data thus reopening the debate.

We acknowledge the incremental nature of our contributions and that a deeper level of analysis of the data and an expansion of the data set may reveal further nuances and understandings. More in-depth research into the concept of IRE is necessary in order to exploit this area of research and to understand the phenomenon. There is a need to encourage similar studies to be tested in other regions/countries and for studies into the perceptions of rural business owners and ordinary rural dwellers. We need studies into differences and similarities in rural-urban illicit/illegal entrepreneurship and further empirical research into the nature and condition of rural crime in established entrepreneurial elites to facilitate the development of new theories of rural crime and rural criminal-entrepreneurship. We need to move beyond stories to engage in theorising to address questions such as, for example: how did our rural entrepreneurs end up engaging in illicit activities? How do such illicit activities shape rural countrysides? How do illicit and licit entrepreneurial activities interact to create patterns of entrepreneurship? And finally, what are the underlying mechanisms or dynamics underpinning this? We call for a further round of inter-disciplinary examination, by quantitative and large scale qualitative studies and perhaps even by more “backyard ethnographies” like those conducted by Heley (2008, 2010, & 2011).

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Approaches / Turns	Explanation	Meaning
Physical geography approach (Mingay, 1979).	The rural as simply the countryside - the land or space or territory or locality or 'natural' environment that exists outside the urban or mainly 'built' environment.	The terminology of 'natural', as contrasted with 'built' supports notions of a rural idyll. Natural' is typically (though wrongly) assumed to be morally superior and crime is not seen to be part of this idyll.
Perceptions of negativity (Weisheit <i>et al</i> , 1996).	Rurality viewed as relatively backward, parochial, reactionary, intolerant of change and diversity, and suspicious of outsiders. This two way process casts both urban and rural dwellers as other.	Yet who should be included as an outsider is flexible, depending on context and situation. Thus urban dwellers, in-migrants, criminal and pariah peoples are all labelled outsiders. Nevertheless the urban criminal is viewed as an invader.
The Productivist turn (Halfacree, 1993 & 2006)	Locates countryside, not as a 'natural' environment to be respected and cherished but one to be manipulated and re-engineered to maximise profits for landowners and 'agri-business'. Halfacree interpreted productivism as a historically specific formation of rurality, dominated by an increasingly industrialised agriculture (rural locality), supported by government literature and policy (social representations), and lived by rural populations.	From the mid-20 th century onwards, the productivist hegemony was questioned by environmentalists and gentrifying consumers, who, in different ways, wanted to protect and preserve what was left of the 'natural' environment (e.g. as a tradition or heritage), and in some cases to restore what had been lost.
Post-productivist turn (Halfacree, 1993 & 2007)	Locates rurality as culturally (as opposed to 'naturally' or economically) constructed. Halfacree identified four <i>species</i> of post-productivism': Super-productivism (a ruthless exploitation of natural resources). Consuming idylls (rurality as a resource for leisure and pleasure). Effaced rurality (an annihilation of rurality altogether). Radical rurality (an active production of environmentally friendly locales, land-based activities and ecocentric beliefs).	The rural becomes viewed as a disembodied cognitive structure which we use as rules and resources to make sense of our everyday world'. This is a subversion of the productivist, idyllised and effaced rurals. The only one of these <i>species</i> that does not clearly involve a claim to the moral superiority of the rural is 'effaced rurality'. Yet it is far from clear what this would look like. Although the 'radical rural' rejects the other three rurals, it still holds to its own visions of the rural idyll.
The Material turn (Halfacree, 1995; Wylie, 2005; Massey, 2006).	The rural as produced through physical human and non-human activity.	This enterprise based approach redresses the idealist, immaterial definition of post-productivism but crime is not viewed as a materialist activity.
As embodied practice (Cloeke, 2006; Halfacree, 2006/2007; Lefebvre, 1991).	Rurality is not merely a geographical space, nor a social representation (or idyll). Rather, it is all of these things mixed up together, 'a complex interweaving of power relations, social conventions, discursive practices and institutional forces which are constantly combining and recombining'.	Halfacree drew upon Lefebvre's theory of space, applying his conceptual triad of spatial practices, representations of space and spaces of representation to make sense of the three-fold nature of rurality. Spatial practices were identified with rural localities, representations of space with social representations of rurality, and spaces of representation with embodied rural practices.
A multiplicity of ruralities	This is context based rurality depending upon the (changing)	This is a promising category in relation to this study because it does

(Pratt, 1996)	character of various combinations but what is specifically rural about each of the constituents of the combination, as well as about the whole remains open to interpretation.	specifically debar crime from the framework.
Differentiated countryside (Murdoch <i>et al</i> , 2003).	Rurality as defined by context, time and place.	This challenges the monolithic hegemony of many of the above definitions including idyllic and traditional definitions making it a promising category in relation to this study.

Table 1 – A critical comparison of alternative constructions of rurality

Theoretical viewpoint	Explanation	Meaning
Urban Marauder thesis (Jay, 1992; Hogg & Carrington, 1998; Dhalech, 1999; Yarwood, 2001; Little <i>et al.</i> 2005; Marshall & Johnson, 2005; Little, 2005; Smith, 2010).	There is a commonly held perception that in rural areas most crime is committed by urban invaders. Evidence is lacking, however, concerning whether outsiders present any real risk to country-dwellers. This view equates to the assumption that any threat to safety must come from outsiders who do not understand or share rural values. Conversely, ‘visible’ outsiders face risks visiting some rural areas. In the study on women’s fear of crime in rural areas, the only (perceived) threats to safety mentioned by respondents came from other residents not from strangers.	This approach is an idyllic one as it ignores the insider perspective. Thus the rural idyll influences people’s perceptions of rural areas as places of safety, even when the opposite is true. Whether rural areas that are frequently visited by outsiders are particularly at risk from travelling criminals remains unanswered in the literature. It is easier (and safer) for residents of small rural communities to erroneously attribute crime to outsiders than accuse neighbour within the confines of small groups. Thus both crime and the fear of crime are less prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas’ lending credibility to and supporting the idyll. This is valid on a global scale but there is good reason, to challenge this view.
Rural-Rogues and Criminals Tönnies (1887/1957); Sorokin & Zimmerman (1929); Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin (1931); Clinard (1944).	Until recently, the notion of the ‘rural criminal’ has not advanced much since the works of Tönnies and Sorokin and his associates and other early theorists such as Clinard. Tönnies considered offenders to be driven by the underside of the capitalist ethic whereby they were its brutalized victims driven to crime <i>via</i> poverty, despair and circumstance.	Tönnies considered the distinction in psycho-social status between the urban and the rural criminal, with the actions and attitudes of both reflecting practices and culture more widely in capitalist society. He divided criminals into ‘rogues’ and ‘offenders’ coining the term ‘roguery’ to cover crimes motivated by financial gain and profit. Although the majority of rogues operated out of urban enclaves, there were rural rogues too. Tönnies and his contemporaries viewed the urban as a fractured society (<i>Gesellschaft</i>) and regarded the lower crime rates in rural areas as a consequence of greater social cohesion (<i>Gemeinschaft</i>) in those areas. Sorokin and colleagues argued that these lower crime rates could be an artefact of the lower density of policing in rural areas.

Table 2 – A theoretical comparison of the urban rural dichotomy and associated theoretical viewpoints

<p>Place based approaches (Marshall & Johnson, 2005, 47; and Mirrlees-Black, 1998; Freudenburg, 1986).</p>	<p>There are confusions and paradoxes in current thinking and practice around rural crime.</p>	<p>Classifications of rural areas for crime recording purposes are arbitrary and inconsistent with one another; and insufficiently sensitive to small area variation. Thus crime ‘hotspots’ may exist in rural areas that are measured by police statistics/surveys to be relatively crime-free when the opposite is true. Also, the contradictory effects of counterurbanisation, resulting in both a decrease in crime (per head of population) because of increased affluence with crime tending to be higher in poorer areas can cause confusion. As can an increase in crime due to reductions in the ‘density of social acquaintanceship’ associated with lower crime rates.</p>
<p>Green Criminology (Hogg and Carrington, 2006; Barclay <i>et al</i> 2004; Donnermeyer, 2006; Beirne, 2002; Nurse, 2008/2011; Enticott, 2011).</p>	<p>This is a more sophisticated approach to understanding rural crime, in which each characteristic of a rural area e.g. sparsity of population, density of acquaintanceship, distance from government can function as a source of <i>both safety and danger</i>.. Currently, however, social representations of rurality are dominated by the (idyllic) view that rural environments are safe places.</p>	<p>This movement is referred to as Green Criminology and covers issues such as biodiversity, biosecurity and regards rural crime as distinctively rural rather than as just an extension of urban crime in line with changing theories of rurality (see table 1) i.e, as a composite of locality, social representation and lived experience. This challenges the hegemonic social representation of rurality and crime as dominated by the idyllic.</p>

Table 3 – A theoretical comparison of associated theoretical viewpoints

Subject	Analysis of the stories
<p>Bert</p>	<p>Bert was fortunate to be treated as a witness because in effect he knowingly formed the alliance with an urban based criminal. This is a legal grey area in that it all depends on whether they knew of the criminal’s previous convictions and intentions, or not. Although his farming and business activities are now strictly legal and productive in a Baumolian sense he is nevertheless ashamed of his past behaviour. His reputation within the farming and business communities is intact but the stories of roguery add to his personal legend locally. This example of income generation activity is at least morally wrong but demonstrates how illicit entrepreneurial pluriactivity can both simultaneously create and extract value. Bert acknowledges that he is or has been a bit-of-a-rogue but as an entrepreneur he is pragmatic and justifies his former shady dealings to himself as being committed out of necessity. He is an example of the archetypal</p>

	loveable-rogue beloved of entrepreneurial mythology. Bert is a member of the rural elite and is a definite 'insider'. He falls into Halfacree's typology of post-productivism (super-productivism) as a ruthless exploiter of opportunities with a materialist outlook. Yet he maintains his idyllic farming persona. From a Baumolian perspective Bert practices productive and destructive entrepreneurship.
Charles	Charles is a more complex character. His stories are classic examples of entrepreneurial sharp practice and of Tönnien roguery. As a farmer, he sometimes operates in a moral grey area, which he justifies as being business pragmatism not real crime - many of his activities are illicit rather than criminal. He is driven by the profit motive and by the need to leave a legacy to his sons who are now also farmers. Charles is a doyen of the rural elite and unquestionably an 'insider'. He too falls into Halfacree's typology of post-productivism (super-productivism). He is ruthless to the point of being almost sociopathic as a ruthless exploiter of opportunities. He adopts a materialist outlook but revels in his idyllic farming persona. From a Baumolian perspective Charles practices productive, unproductive and destructive entrepreneurship.
Jackie	Jackie is known locally as a rogue but also as a clever serial entrepreneur. Outwardly his garage business retained the appearances of legality although it was being used for illegal and thus unproductive purposes. He created and extracted additional value by drawing rent and income from an otherwise ailing business. The gangster who rented the property also gained value in terms of seizing a money laundering opportunity. Jackie has a reputation for sharp business practices, hedonism and partying and is very much a lovable-rogue. As a village based entrepreneur he too is part of an entrepreneurial business elite and thus is an insider. He too is post-productive materialist. From a Baumolian perspective Jackie practices productive and destructive entrepreneurship.
Ivan	Ivan was raised in rural Lithuania and prefers to live in the countryside. It is his intention to remain in the UK and gain citizenship. Although he is an outsider and in-migrant he is not a visible member of the business community. He will deal with urban and rural rogues alike. Eventually he and his family will assimilate into the locality and become a part of the rural elite 'living his idyll'. He is a profit driven rogue under Tönnies' definition and a materialist post-productivist under Halfacree's typology. From a Baumolian perspective Ivan practices unproductive and destructive entrepreneurship.
Andrei & Aleksander	The brothers are serial criminal-entrepreneurs who were brought up in rural Bulgaria. They see nothing unusual in their activities but can still be classified as Tönnien rogues and as criminal entrepreneurs as most of their activities are criminal and not illicit. They are classic outsiders who adopt an urban gangster persona. Their business is rural based merely for convenience but there is nothing particularly rural or idyllic about it. Halfacree's typology is not relevant here. From a Baumolian perspective Andrei and Aleksander practice destructive entrepreneurship.

Table 4 – An analysis of the stories from the perspective of Tönnien roguery and notions of rurality