

Re-Sourcing the City through Radical Institutional Enterprise

Entwining and Embedding the Rural in Urban Peripheries

Topic

It may seem perverse to propose considering the re-sourcing of nature in the *urban* periphery as of direct relevance to *rural* studies scholars. Our aim here is to show that this is far from the case. Rather, we seek to illustrate the likely significance of extant theorization of rural enterprise, ecosystems, and development to analysis of urban contexts by presenting a single city case study, with multiple research sites. Our study gathers, tells and reflects on a wide range of inter-connected projects – institutional enterprises, in their own right – which seek to re-source the natural within the city of Glasgow, and bring back the benefits of rurality.

Our project aims to celebrate, recognise and record these institutional entrepreneurs who have become curators of our urban heritage and our future endowments: wild and tamed; natural and industrial; recreational and productive; inspirational and encumbered; shared and contested. They seek to do so as part of a just transition to more equal social context, given extreme localised human adversity.

Perhaps inspired by COP 26, Scotland in general, and Glasgow in particular, are shifting their institutional enterprise culture very rapidly towards social and environmental innovation aimed at sustainable and sustaining growth for people and planet. Understanding, appreciating, interpreting and using these natural resources and natural capital (<https://naturalcapitalscotland.com/>, 2020) is embedded into the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>, 2020) and clearly compatible with meeting the SDGs.

Well embedded ourselves within Glasgow's local authority and activist network we have spent the past 12 months collaborating on one small citizen science project which aims to unearth the meaning and value of trees, particularly for the city's peripheral areas. "Every Tree Tells a Story" was designed, inter alia, to provide a process for gathering storied data from unvoiced parts of the city, so as to drive policy and development work. Radical institutional entrepreneurs within a variety of organisations have come together to develop and promote the project, which also forms one example in our city case.

"Every Tree" has additionally provided us with friends in edge places, in an array of projects which seek to re-source our shared ecosystem by turning back to nature, and the ethos of the rural. Nature-

based solution hubs, climate change and gender projects, local community gardens and growing spaces, cycling hubs, re-storying the Clyde; we have been lucky to find ourselves engaging with all these examples of institutional enterprise, and more.

‘New Approaches: Reshaping inclusive Enterprise, Policy and Practice Post-Pandemic’

The study is designed to explore one leading major trajectory of emergent inclusive enterprise cultures, at policy and practice levels: the pressing need to include nature and natural resources within our works. Our Glasgow case sites are located within some of the poorest places in Europe, where male life expectancy continues to fall and is, at its worst, now lower than 60 years – 14 years lower than averages in the city’s wealthiest spots. Environment here is literally a matter of life and death, as is extending the reach of our place-based studies into highly adverse contexts, at home as well as abroad.

Aim

We aim to explore, in practice and theory, the potential of walking practices to more inclusively, deeply and rigorously co-create new understandings of peripheral pathways to enterprise.

Methodology

We engaged in a semi-structured review of the academic literature on re-sourcing depleted urban communities, carried out over several months, as a formal underpinning for the study. Our main methodology, however, entailed site visits, walks, chats and cycles: together, apart, and with interesting others – within as many relevant study sites as we could secure access to. Some visits were planned and researched weeks in advance, others were more opportunistic and serendipitous. These visits will continue over the summer and autumn of 2022, at least.

We each kept reflective research journals, in a variety of formats, using autoethnographic approaches to explore both the peripheral places visited, and their learnings, as well as our growing understanding of the practices, cultures, norms, connections, aims, resources, community and progress of these field sites.

In late summer, these journals will themselves become data, as we seek to develop themed understandings of our experiences, and what walking the edge can help us to think, share and learn better about inclusive entrepreneurship and place.

Our proposed ISBE presentation will take the form of sharing stories of individual field sites, as well as emerging reflections on their connections and the emerging ecosystem of radical institutional enterprise. The powerpoint presentation will be framed by a theoretical launchpad from the literature, with special emphasis on rural enterprise cultures and institutional entrepreneurship. Our concluding comments will return to this, and seek feedback on approach, stories, and tentative theorization.

Contribution

Our study delivers an early theoretical and practical assessment of an important emerging institutional context for entrepreneurship, the re-sourced urban. With its emphasis on living well with the land, and all that we share it with, this radical and emergent enterprise culture resonates strongly with the rural. We explore this resonance, and identify specifically novel phenomena which appear to be associated with patterns of urban re-sourcing, for consideration by the conference's rural enterprise experts.

Implications for policy, if applicable

Strong connections with our own local policy makers will allow for feedback to reflect on these approaches as a policy-supporting research tool. Place-based approaches to policy data, and nature-based solutions, are both resonant trends in the policy landscape, and our sample sites are examples of these. All our contribution is thus policy focused.

Implications for practice, if applicable

The study has profound implications for our own practice, enacting and reflecting on embedded and collaborative field work at the periphery, drawing rural enterprise studies into urban scholarly practice.