

Policing Rural Criminal Enterprise: The Changing Landscape of Crime in Rural Britain

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The Rural Idyll



How do images of Urban Crime fit Rurality?



Investigating Rural Criminal Networks

- Criminality' is associated with 'Urbanity' and 'Images of Urban Criminality' pervade our consciousness. **Urban Marauder Thesis.**
- Rural Criminality is under represented and as a result under researched.
- Nevertheless, rural criminal networks do exist! These are often enterprise based.
- Also, Policing is viewed as a separate domain from those of business and enterprise.
- 'Policing' is associated with 'Urbanity' and 'Rural Policing' is marginalised as less serious.



Rural Crime and Enterprise

- Studies of 'Rural Crime' are rare.
- They are spread across disparate literatures.
- Much 'Rural Crime' occurs within what Williams (2006) refers to as the 'Hidden Enterprise Culture.'
- Of interest is the concept of 'Illegal Rural Enterprise [IRE] (McElwee, 2009).
- Studies of illegal rural enterprise are even rarer.
- Research opportunity identified.



Rural policing problems

- Rural policing is seen as being an 'idyll'.
- Closure of rural police stations.
- Under staffing of rural divisions.
- Redistribution of officers from rural to urban areas (withdrawal).
- De-skilling of the rural police officer.
- Rural crime is viewed as less serious and therefore does not attract volunteers.
- Rural policing requires a different skill set.
- There is no universal training course on rural policing despite it being a different paradigm.



Other issues / consequences

- Crime in rural areas is rare
- Rural areas are seen as 'Quiet Backwaters'.
- Crime in rural areas difficult to quantify.
- Hagiographic image of rural policing as Cherry Pie (Brogden, 1999; Mawby, 2004).
- 'Doing what we've always done' (Baird-Olson, 2000).
- Derogatory perception of rural policing being about 'Dogs, drunks, disorder, and dysfunction' (Berg & Sun, 2005).
- Problem of lack of accessibility to policing services.



Other issues continued

- Fear of crime (Various)
- Miserable Countryside (Yarwood,2000).
- A 'Rural Crisis' (Hogg, 2005).
- Diverse policing typologies - farm crime, wildlife crime and the policing of villages.
- Rural policing is a metaphysical concept with its own policing philosophies and methodologies.
- These are learned slowly.
- The multiplicity of Govt. Agencies with a rural policing role. The non sharing of Intelligence. Trading Standards, Gang Masters Agency, Food Standards Agency, Ministry Vets, SSPCA/ RSPCA, Animal health, Customs & Excise.



Models of rural policing

- **Traditional Model:** The 1940's to 1980's characterised by village bobbies and single stations.
- **Devolved Model:** The 1980's to present day. Characterised by strategic withdrawal.
- **Contemporary Model:** 2000 onwards characterised by change and innovative policing practices.
- **Bespoke Models:** Characterised by a Rural policing strategy.



Strategies to overcome the changing geography of crime

- Dedicated Rural Beat Officers / Parish Constables / Rural Special Constables.
- Rural Intelligence Officers.
- Targeted Intelligence Led Patrols.
- Mobile Police Offices / Surgeries / Drop Ins.
- Farm Watch / Rural Watch / Horse Watch / Forest Watch / River Watch.
- PRIME
- NO SUBSTITUTE FOR TRADITIONAL PRESENCE



Rural Crime Types

- Crimes against the person; Crimes against Property; Crimes against Animals; Statutory Offences (See Table 2 in paper).
- Farm Crime
- Wildlife Crime
- Village Crime
- Lack of proper statistical gathering of rural crime (Ashby, 2005).
- Socially constructed nature of rural crime (Yarwood, 2000: O'Conner & Gray, 1989).
- Rural communities have divergent social structures (Jobes, 2003).



A Typology of Rural Criminals

- Urban Criminals.
- Settled Urban Criminals.
- Greenbelt Bandits.
- Travelling Fraternity.
- Rural Criminals.
- Migrant Criminals.
- Village Criminals.
- Rogue Farmers.
- Rogue Entrepreneurs.
- Alternative Business Community.



Illegal Rural Enterprise

- The paradox of change and continuity is very much a part of rural crime Weisheit & Donnermeyer (2000).
- IRE – An alternative reading (McElwee, 2009).
- Link between crime and rural economic development (Rephann, 1999: Weisheit, 1999).
- Hidden links between crime and enterprise.
- Follow the money.
- Building new rural intelligence model.
- Holistic approach.



Some Conclusions

- Need to develop a rural multi agency partnership model.
- Need for the co-ordination of government thought and action (Williams, 2006: 218).
- in terms of organised crime the existence of a rural underworld seems abundantly clear albeit that it exists as multiple underworlds instead of one single underworld (Egmond, 2004: 104).
- There is no single rural criminal sub culture but a number of criminal subcultures.
- Forces who ignore this do so at their peril.
- Otherwise the criminally / entrepreneurially minded will exploit this vacuum for their benefit.



Final Thoughts

- Could you identify urban criminals and crime in context?
- Can you see the links between rural crime and enterprise in its many forms?
- Can you provide further examples?
- Are you interested in helping develop such research?
- IF SO CONTACT - r.smith-a@rgu.ac.uk
- Questions?

