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Studies in Agricultural Economics

Volume 118, Number 1

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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Manuscripts should be prepared in English and sent via e-mail to the Editor-in-Chief at studies@aki.gov.hu.

The cost of printing this issue is supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

© Agrárgazdasági Kutató Intézet, 2016
1463 Budapest, POB 944, Hungary
https://www.aki.gov.hu/studies
ISSN 1418 2106 (printed)
ISSN 2063 0476 (electronic)
Established 1962

Foreword

For the third year running, the first issue of this volume of *Studies in Agricultural Economics* has been produced by AKI in cooperation with the European Rural Development Network (ERDN, www.erdn.eu). By contrast, for the first time since number 88 appeared in 1996, this issue has been compiled by a Guest Editor-in-Chief. Dr. Katonáné Kovács Judit is a member of the *Studies in Agricultural Economics* Editorial Board, a longstanding active participant in ERDN and has carried out extensive research on the topic of human and social capital in rural areas.

Scoones (1998)[1] was an early adopter of the concept of 'sustainable rural livelihoods' which, he argued, are achieved through access to a range of livelihood resources including human and social capital. The former can be defined as 'the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health and physical capability important for the successful pursuit of different livelihood strategies' and the latter as 'the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations) upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies requiring coordinated actions'.

Despite the passing of almost 20 years, these topics remain high on the agricultural and rural development agendas. This thematic issue of *Studies in Agricultural Economics* brings together seven papers that address different aspects of human and social capital development across the European Union (EU).

The first two papers explore the state of rural and agricultural development in Poland. Czapiewski, Janc, Owsiński and Śleszyńsk model future social and intellectual capital development in the municipalities of Mazowieckie *voivodeship*. The increases in both capitals are expected to be, in relative terms, often more pronounced in rural areas than in the urban space, although the existing gap shall frequently remain. Interventions will continue to be needed to overcome the still persisting, and sometimes sharpening, differences.

Nowak and Kijek assess the role of human capital on farms across Poland. They show that both the flexibility of production in relation to the labour factor and the average and marginal productivity were in many instances higher for farms managed by farmers with higher-level education. The results highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs of farmers in post-socialist EU Member States.

Research by Katonáné Kovács, Varga and Nemes clearly demonstrates that social innovation has a role in rural development in Hungary. The context in which social innovation is developed has a strong effect on the likelihood of success, while initiators or 'agentic engines' also have a fundamental role. Institutionalisation, possibly through some kind of social enterprise, is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of social innovation.

In the first of three papers in this issue that investigate the LEADER approach, Dax and Oedl-Wieser use the experience of its implementation in Austria to argue that LEADER is losing its innovative character. Future LEADER and local development actions need to reinvigorate long-established core principles, most notably the notion of social innovation, and to concentrate on local and regional assets and deliver at that level.

Despite the high share of Common Agricultural Policy Pillar 2 funding allocated to LEADER in Puglia, Italy in the period 2007-2013, Labianca, De Rubertis, Belliggiano and Salento report that Local Action Groups in the region were severely limited in the aims that they could pursue. The programme interpreted innovation an industrial and technological issue rather than seeing it in social and cultural terms.

A similarly pessimistic assessment of LEADER in Andalucía, Spain is made by Navarro, Cejudo and Maroto. Entrepreneurs and 'town halls' benefitted most from LEADER investments, while there is evidence of inadequate participation by disadvantaged groups such as women and young people. Farmers were not adequately engaged by the programme. Several '*deep rural*' municipalities failed to secure any LEADER funding during the 2002-2008 period.

Pocol and Moldovan Teselios analyse the perception of support, either given or anticipated, by members of two groups of women in Romania: entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs. Future women entrepreneurs tend to overstate, in anticipation, the help they will receive from local institutions, but place themselves in relatively similar positions with women entrepreneurs regarding the help expected to be received from family and friends.

It has been a pleasure for me to work with Judit to produce this issue of *Studies in Agricultural Economics* and am confident that you will find its contents of interest.

Andrew Fieldsend
Budapest, March 2016

[1] Scoones, I. (1998): Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis. Working Paper 72. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

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