

RESEARCH ON RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TERMS OF THE LITERATURE: DEFINITION PROBLEMS AND SELECTED RESEARCH ISSUES

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ABSTRACT: Rural entrepreneurship has become an important research issue with great development potential in the face of intense socio-economic changes in rural areas. However, few significant studies cover this topic in Polish and foreign literature. In this article, the authors attempt to review and evaluate the current research on rural entrepreneurship emphasising the Polish literature and including geographical studies. The article describes and organises theoretical research achievements to date and offers a definition of rural entrepreneurship and the directions and prospects for further research.

KEYWORDS: rural entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, research review, rural geography, agricultural geography

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship-related issues are often addressed as research topics, primarily in economic sciences, but they are also widely discussed in other academic disciplines, including social and economic geography and spatial management (Zioło, Rachwał 2012; Rachwał 2018), as well as in journalistic discourse. Rural entrepreneurship is part of general entrepreneurship. It is undoubtedly specific and determined by agricultural, spatial and social structures. Increased research activity concerning this type of entrepreneurship

is expressed in a number of published papers and academic conferences. Entrepreneurship research has begun to stimulate great interest among academics in recent years, influenced by the constantly changing economic structure, especially in rural areas. Research in this field is essential due to its theoretical and practical dimensions, especially in solving various rural problems related to the labour market, functioning of enterprises and social issues. In the literature, the process of establishing new companies related to non-agricultural activities is treated not only as a factor in the development

of spatial systems at various scales (Wach 2015; Ziolo 2015, 2017) but also as one of the most critical tools for inducing rural development (Dinis 2006; Groszkowski 2014; Korsgaard et al. 2015; Pato, Teixeira 2016, 2018; Wojtyra 2020), as well as an effective way to overcome crises and unemployment in the countryside (Labrianidis 2006; Pato 2020). The importance of research on rural entrepreneurship is also emphasised by the fact that it is recognised by the EU and other international organisations (including the UN, OECD) as a critical component of regional and international policy, which favours the inclusion of rural areas in contemporary civilisation processes (Strano et al. 2012). Currently, most research on rural entrepreneurship is conducted in highly developed countries, mainly in the USA and Europe, including Germany, the UK, Spain and Greece (Calispa Aguilar 2021; Pato, Teixeira 2016), but in the 1990s, it also appeared in the Polish literature (Jabłoński 1991; Hunek 1993; Szydłowski 1993; Gałaj 1993; Bylicki et al. 1995; Kołodziejczyk 1995; Chyłek 1996; Barczyk et al. 2019; Pawlik, Dziekański 2021). In Poland, growing interest in this issue resulted from the systemic transformation of the state in which private property was recognised as the primary form of ownership, and entrepreneurship as the main factor of the country's socio-economic development. This issue also appeared as a result of processes that affected rural areas, including changes in the structure of land ownership (disappearance of state-owned farms) and farm size (processes of agricultural land concentration), the decline in the economic efficiency of farms and demographic changes (Duczkowska-Małysz 1993, 1994; Mydlak 1996; Kaczor-Pankow 1996; Moskal, Kolata 1997). The intertwining of these and other processes with the state's agricultural policy increased the economic diversity of rural areas, including the abandonment of traditional agriculture and the search for non-agricultural sources of income, which has led to multifunctional rural development. Entrepreneurship in rural areas is undoubtedly a challenge for those undertaking such activities and researchers who open up interesting new research fields. Despite the growing interest in rural entrepreneurship, it remains the youngest and least recognised research issue within entrepreneurship (Wortmann 1990), which has already brought significant

achievements. Getting to know and organising these current achievements is an essential cognitive task and can be used for practical purposes.

The aim, research method and source materials

The main aim of this article is to present the essence of rural entrepreneurship, attempt to explain it, and identify the most important thematic areas (trends) and prospects for development, paying particular attention to the Polish literature on the subject, including geographical studies. The systematic literature review method, one of the most frequently used in literature analysis, has been used to identify the articles (Calispa Aguilar 2021; Cook et al. 1997; McKibbin 2006; Wolski 2017). Due to the high degree of formalisation, this method includes a precisely defined research question and a repeatable searching strategy (taking into account databases, terminologies and related criteria, years and limitations, at the very least). It offers the opportunity to analyse a large number of publications selected objectively. The following indexing databases were used for the review: Scopus, Sage and Google Scholar. These databases were considered to be attractive mainly due to their multidisciplinary nature and coverage of many resources, including those potentially related to the subject. They were searched based on the following terms: rural entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship in rural areas, entrepreneurship in the countryside, non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas and non-agricultural economic activity in the countryside, as these were considered to be the most relevant to the issue. During the search procedure, they performed the function of keywords and, if a searched item was not found, also the topic. Only work published after 1990 was taken into account, dictated by the relative timeliness of the publication and the chance to analyse the materials (texts) reliably. As a result, over 22,000 papers were obtained, of which 210 were considered necessary for the research theme. They all underwent an overall qualitative analysis, including the title, abstract and keywords. As a result, from the entire collection, after deducting duplicates (the same papers in different databases), 60 academic texts were subjected to in-depth

qualitative analysis (reading the entire text of the article), mainly those in which methods, approaches and research concepts were analysed. Attempts were also made to describe empirically, qualitatively, statistically and mathematically the phenomenon of rural entrepreneurship. The works mentioned above were also supplemented with selected items obtained thanks to a study of the authors' previous works and the achievements of Polish geographers who, from 1990, took up the subject of rural entrepreneurship but were not identified on the database mentioned earlier.

This article is a result of the analysis of this literature, which became an inspiration for further reflections, especially on the concept of 'rural entrepreneurship' itself.

Rural entrepreneurship: Definition problems

Despite its introduction at least four centuries ago, the term 'entrepreneurship' remains an undefined (vague), multifaceted and ambiguous concept. This observation also applies to the concept of rural entrepreneurship, variously defined at the beginning of the 20th century. As Wortman noted in his classic work, *Rural entrepreneurship research: Integration into the entrepreneurship field* (1990), most researchers dealing with rural entrepreneurship did not define it, assuming that everyone knew what it was. Other authors, in turn, defined it in two ways: referring to the stereotypical image of an entrepreneur and assigning independence, risk-taking, focus on success, self-confidence, diligence, innovation and other features, or as a process of creating jobs and the possibility of new ventures (Wortman 1990). The choice of a specific way of looking at rural entrepreneurship depended on one of two theoretical and methodological perspectives: the cultural or the traditional economic. The first, represented mainly by theoreticians of organisation and management and sociologists, is based on the assumption that a complete understanding of the phenomenon is possible only after taking into account cultural factors (Glinka 2008), resulting in paying more attention to the socio-psychological characteristics of an individual and defining entrepreneurship through the lens of the behaviours

and actions that it manifests in relation to the surrounding reality. The emphasis here is on how an individual (or a group) operates in the environment and emphasises their readiness and ability to undertake economic activities and accept the associated risks. The second way of defining rural entrepreneurship arose in the field of economics. Its feature is perception only in economic terms, through the lens of the conditions and factors determining opportunities for economic development. Researchers representing this point of view reduced entrepreneurship to creating new companies (economic activities) located in rural areas and the provision of services and products by entrepreneurs. Both research perspectives barely refer to the specificity of the rural environment and define entrepreneurship in the context appropriate for urban research.

Based on the literature in English, one of the first definitions of rural entrepreneurship was proposed by Frederick and Long (1989). Contrary to earlier formulations, they pay attention to the rural environment and its distinctiveness and unique character. In their opinion, rural entrepreneurship is creating a new organisation (company) functioning in the rural environment that introduces a new product, creates a new market, provides services and uses new technologies. According to the definition, entrepreneurship of this type includes organisations (companies) that: (1) introduce new products from an existing agricultural product, e.g. the use of corn starch in biodegradable plastics; (2) serve or create a new market, e.g. the production of bacteria that prevent the freezing of plants sensitive to cold; (3) use new technologies, e.g. genetically modified crops resistant to some herbicides (Frederick, Long 1989; Wortman 1990). The new approach to rural entrepreneurship differs from the previous one by drawing attention to the strong relationship between the company (enterprise) and the rural environment, i.e. its surroundings. For the first time, the concept, as understood by Frederick and Long, distinguishes companies that are only located in a rural area from those whose activities are inscribed in the local environment and bring innovative elements to it. The new way of defining rural entrepreneurship refers to the vision proposed by the classic economist Joseph Schumpeter. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurship consists of 'creative destruction', i.e.

creating and disseminating new products, introducing new production methods, finding new markets, building new economic forms and discovering new sources of supply for raw materials (Schumpeter 1995; Augustyńczyk 2020). In this case, 'creative destruction' can refer to the rural environment in which changes in social, economic and spatial relations are made, resulting from the emergence of new innovative elements.

Recognising the role of the local environment in the entrepreneurial process and the importance of endogenous factors in the socio-economic development of rural areas has led to two fundamentally different terms in the foreign literature: 'entrepreneurship in rural areas' and 'rural entrepreneurship'¹. The first of these concepts means only the location of companies/enterprises in the countryside or rural areas; the second has a broader semantic context and refers to companies/enterprises that are not only located in a rural area but constitute a 'pure' form of rural entrepreneurship. This means that entrepreneurs use the resources of the rural (local) environment while creating products and services, and their activity is a source of many benefits for this environment (Pato, Teixeira 2018; Pato 2020). Moreover, in the case of rural entrepreneurship, the resources of the local environment not only determine the nature of the activity but also shape the entrepreneurial process itself (Baumgartner et al. 2013). Entrepreneurs are not only present in the rural physical space, but they are also attached to the place (embedded/rooted in it), i.e. they have a good understanding of the specificity of the rural environment and can use it effectively in the process of entrepreneurial activities (Baumgartner et al. 2013; Korsgaard et al. 2015; Pato, Teixeira 2016, 2018). Rural entrepreneurship refers to the specific type of involvement of entrepreneurs in the local social and economic environment and concerns the involvement of residents and their knowledge in creating these companies. In this sense, rural entrepreneurship cannot be located elsewhere without losing its previous character due to the 'localness' of settlements. Rural

entrepreneurship is also defined as a particular combination of endogenous factors that create value for entrepreneurs and the entire rural community (Korsgaard et al. 2015). In the modern understanding, the concept of rural entrepreneurship excludes companies/enterprises that are not embedded in the local economy and thus do not contribute to this economy (McElwee, Atherton 2011). Rural entrepreneurship includes only entities that show strong relationships with the rural environment, e.g. employing local people, providing and using local services, and generating income for the rural environment (McElwee, Atherton 2011; McElwee, Smith 2014). A rural entrepreneur is a person who lives in a rural environment, who relies on this community in his/her activities and has a strong influence on the social networks and social characteristics of the inhabitants of this environment (Stathopoulou et al. 2004; Akgün et al. 2010). Rural entrepreneurship understood in this way may be endogenous or exogenous, or both simultaneously, but its essence is a strong relationship with the local (rural) environment. In the Polish literature, this dual view of rural entrepreneurship is not, as yet, widespread, and as a result, it remains undefined, which creates an inevitable terminological muddle and may cause misunderstandings regarding its academic explanation. Researchers most often identify rural entrepreneurship as a simple criterion of company location (in geographical space) in rural areas (Kamińska 1996; 2004a, b, 2015; Bański 2003; Wójcik 2004; Pawlik, Dziekański 2021), which implies a distinction between rural entrepreneurship related to location in rural areas, and other entrepreneurship, i.e. non-rural, which does not reflect the actual complexity of the content of the general concept.

Trends and areas of rural entrepreneurship research with particular emphasis on geographical aspects

Rural entrepreneurship research has more than 20 years of tradition and is present in many academic disciplines, resulting in a great variety of topics. The nature and type of research are influenced by the state's agricultural policy and

¹ In the English-language literature, you can also find the term 'activity located in a rural area' when regarding entrepreneurship in the rural area and 'entrepreneurship considered in a rural context' when regarding rural entrepreneurship (Gaddefors, Anderson 2019).

various national and international programmes in rural areas that change the socio-economic life. The majority of the articles are studies of an empirical and applied nature, while a few are theoretical studies. A general overview of the available studies indicates that economics and related disciplines have the most outstanding achievements, primarily in agricultural economics and management (accounting for 51% of all articles devoted to rural entrepreneurship – Pato, Teixeira 2016). However, specialists from other fields are also represented, including geographers, town planners and sociologists. Owing to the dominance of economic research, rural entrepreneurship was most often discussed in the Polish and foreign literature in rural development, rural renewal and revitalisation and socio-economic development. Among the topics, apart from the analysis and identification of the development of private economic activity in rural areas in various spatial systems (at national, regional, poviát and commune levels), much attention was paid to factors hindering and facilitating (stimulants and destimulants) the development of rural entrepreneurship. Attention was focused both on macroeconomic conditions (e.g. state policy, EU policy, including the impact of EU funds, or the activity of local government, etc.) and on individual (endogenous) factors resulting from the values of a given settlement unit and the socio-psychological characteristics of entrepreneurs (e.g. demographic analyses of the non-agricultural population). Much space, especially in the sociological and pedagogical literature, was devoted to issues related to the entrepreneurial attitudes of rural youth and the education system in stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour. Rural entrepreneurship was also considered part of the research on rural tourism, focusing mainly on agritourism, the description of the demographic characteristics of people conducting such an activity, and analysis of the development of this form of tourism, including its determinants. Most articles were created using secondary statistical data (mainly from Statistics Poland, official documents, censuses, etc.). There are fewer studies based on primary information obtained directly from entrepreneurs operating in rural areas, e.g. as a result of questionnaires or free interviews. Over the years, the research subject has evolved, referring to current trends (directions

of research) that were binding primarily in disciplines dealing with agriculture in the broader sense, i.e. rural and agricultural economics, rural geography, agricultural geography, agribusiness and so on. A breakthrough for the development of its theoretical foundations in rural areas was the work of Wortmann (1990), in which, for the first time, the issues were reviewed, assessed and organised, taking into account approaches used in various disciplines. A definition of rural entrepreneurship was presented, emphasising its relationship with the local (rural) environment, and opportunities and limitations for further research were outlined.

The theoretical and methodological revolution in the social sciences at the turn of the 21st century brought several changes in the interests of researchers dealing with issues of rural entrepreneurship, including those by geographers. More attention has been paid to the human being as the leading creator of the local environment and to the environment itself (the countryside) in which the entrepreneurial activities are undertaken. There has been a change in the approach to space, the expression of which was a departure from perceiving it only as a fixed physical location for resources and economic entities, in favour of a dynamic system of relations including the activities of local actors, and social and institutional capital. Along with the recognition that space is not given, but built by history, tradition and local communities (Nowakowska, Walczak 2016), there has been a departure from strictly sectoral (macroeconomic) topics, related, for example, to the impact of emerging economic activity on the development of rural areas, or the study of economic (sectoral) trends based on econometric methods, in the direction of areal approaches, mainly exposing the resources of the territory and characteristics of entrepreneurs operating there, e.g. the activities of local actors, local entrepreneurial behaviour, the roots of rural entrepreneurs, and their demographic and socio-psychological characteristics (Dinis 2006; Neumeier 2012). In the past 10 years, there have also been studies describing the institutional behaviour of rural entrepreneurs, including researching the strategies of their activities, the organisational structure of their companies or describing the relationships they establish with other entities. There has also been significant

progress in theoretical work. Recently, several publications analysing the phenomenon of rural entrepreneurship from the theoretical and methodological points of view have been published. They mainly concern such problems as potential paths for entrepreneurship development in rural areas (Anderson 2000; Avramenko, Silver 2010; Teixeira 2011, 2016; McElwee, Smith 2014; Fortunato 2014; Korsgaard et al. 2015), evaluation and the chance to use various methods in its study (Gladwin et al. 1989; Stathopoulou et al. 2004; Dinis 2006; Henry, McElwee 2014; Müller, Korsgaard 2018), the identification and evaluation of the current state of research (Calispa Aguilar 2021), and attempts to develop a coherent theoretical and methodological concept of entrepreneurship (Wortmann 1990; Bull et al. 1995; Kasabov 2014; Pato, Teixeira 2016; 2018; Newbery et al. 2017; Gaddefors, Anderson 2019; Pato 2020).

Geographic research on rural entrepreneurship is carried out under two competing theoretical and methodological perspectives, i.e. an objectivist (naturalistic) approach and a subjectivist (humanistic) approach. The research concepts listed above differ fundamentally in their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. The choice of a specific orientation equips the researcher with different conceptual systems and imposes specific methods of collecting and organising materials and their interpretation. "In the objectivist approach, it is recognised that the world is real and consists of material things, and its order can be described and explained by establishing various kinds of relations subordinated to the natural laws that we are trying to discover. In the humanistic approach, the environment is interpreted as man's subjective reality and its products. Therefore, in order to understand and explain it, it is necessary to reveal the world of imagination, full of meanings and values, and much more complicated than its material dimension" (Tobiasz-Lis 2016: 166). Although among geographers today, no one doubts that the so-called objective and subjective approaches are different but complementary planes of the same reality, the vast majority of research on rural entrepreneurship is conducted from an objectivist perspective. The common denominator for most is placing the 'system over the individual' and explaining rural entrepreneurship through

material relationships, disregarding its subjective determinants. These studies rarely take into account individual aspects, emotions or values. However, the objective approach is characterised by significant inaccuracy in explaining rural entrepreneurship, as it creates a false and untrue impression that the reality in which entrepreneurs operate is 'natural and unchanging' – the same for everyone. In the geography of agriculture and rural settlement, the research included in the objectivist trend has focused on documenting the spatial differences in the development of individual non-agricultural economic activity (Czarnecki, Heffner 2003; Bański 2003, 2016; Rudnicki, Biczkowski 2004; Kamińska 2004a, b, 2011; Pałka 2004; Wójcik 2004; Kopacz-Wyrwał 2017), on the identification of macro- and microeconomic factors favouring or hindering the establishment and running of enterprises in rural areas (Falkowski, Kluba 2004; Kołodziejczak 2004; Czarnecki 2006; Kołodziejczak 2012; Bański 2015; Staszewska et al. 2017; Szmytkie, Tomczak 2018; Wojtyra 2020), and on the identification and analysis of their development in the context of the importance they play in the process of revitalisation and renewal of rural areas (Kiniorska, Wrońska-Kiczor 2016; Pałka-Łebek 2017). Research is also undertaken on the issue of creating groups of agricultural producers as a manifestation of rural entrepreneurship (Czapiewska 2021). Research at the macro- and mesoscales (country, region, powiat) mainly uses the methods of descriptive and mathematical statistics.

In the research conducted in the objectivist trend, an objective external observer was assumed, who has a neutral attitude to the examined object and does not take any position towards the reality being explained. Limiting the research on rural entrepreneurship to the objective level only deprives it of an essential interpretative and explanatory factor. Objectivist research, based on numerical analysis of phenomena, can only be, as Sagan (2000) notes, "a background for in-depth research using interview techniques, drawing on literary descriptions, diaries, trying to discover what determines the specificity of a place and community" (in Tobiasz-Lis 2016: 166). In the subjectivist approach, currently represented mainly in the field of rural geography, there is a departure from macroscale studies towards the microscale level, from 'system' towards 'area'

approaches, in which a human element, rural entrepreneur and a single village with its natural and socio-cultural specificity, occupy the most important place. Geographers take up topics in which, on the one hand, they try to discover and explain the meanings that a person gives to the surrounding reality, and on the other, identify distinguishing features and situate them in this reality. It requires a redefinition of space by extending its meaning from purely physical, as the location of economic (material) entities, towards a cultural space filled with values and norms. A broader understanding of space allows for a better understanding and interpretation of the world of human action, and human choices influence the perception and explanation of rural entrepreneurship.

Currently, research on rural entrepreneurship from a subjective (humanistic) perspective in geography is poorly developed and most often focuses on social problems in rural areas as generally understood, including identifying the behaviour and attitudes of rural entrepreneurs, analysing the extent of their roots in the rural environment (Chodkowska-Miszczuk et al. 2018), and the conditions and quality of life in the countryside in the context of rural entrepreneurship development (Kopacz-Wyrwał 2015), as well as the importance of social and human capital in this process (Tarkowski 2017; Siczko et al. 2021). The lack of a coherent concept of rural entrepreneurship and geographers' lack of creativity in using various research methods lead to papers of a subjective nature, usually informative. However, they are not supported by statistics or mathematical analyses, as is the case in an objective approach, but by the results of social research, based most often on standardised quantitative techniques (surveys and questionnaire interviews).

In geographical studies of rural entrepreneurship, it is necessary to adopt a more open and pluralistic position and, therefore, more extensive use of available research methods. Operating on the border of existing trends may enable the researcher to describe a phenomenon from various perspectives, subjective and objective, and bring it closer to understanding and, consequently, to interpret and explain its complex nature.

Prospects for further research

A village is a limited unit with a unique specificity determined by spatial, social and economic boundaries, which largely determine the entrepreneurial process (Gaddefors, Anderson 2019). Therefore, the interpretation requires a new approach, enriched with social and spatio-cultural studies, in which more emphasis is placed on the issues of both individual experiences, resulting, for example, from emotions, approaches to what is of value, relations in the local environment, identity and the specificity of where the entrepreneur lives and works. Such research requires reference to a different methodology related to social research, such as interviews, direct contact with people and their place of living, and the use of common knowledge. It is also necessary to conduct in-depth studies on a microscale, considering the physical, social and cultural diversity of the rural environments. Research of this type should reveal the impact of ruralism on entrepreneurial behaviour and the impact of rural entrepreneurship on ruralism, e.g. the concept of a developing village and rural development. From this point of view, research to determine the impact of rural entrepreneurship on changes in the shaping of the rural cultural landscape would be necessary (changes in the morphology and physiognomy of villages) along with the loss of rural identity in favour of other non-rural landscape forms. What is also worth considering are issues illustrating relationships in the rural environment, e.g. between the community and local entrepreneurs, and outside it (e.g. rural versus urban entrepreneurship).

It would be equally important to pay more attention to the social aspects of rural entrepreneurship, including reflection on the entrepreneurial attitudes of the self-employed in a rural environment, their careers and biographies, and their motivations and skills. The undertaking of such research is favoured not only by the acceptance of pluralism by the academic community and thus enabling research at the interface between various disciplines, but also a broad and diverse range of research methods and concepts based on, for example, rural and agricultural geography, as well as other social sciences. Researchers should move from describing and analysing rural entrepreneurship to identifying,

understanding and explaining the diversity of forms and the very process of entrepreneurship embedded in the rural environment. Pluralism of research approaches and microscale case studies can initiate an open interdisciplinary debate on rural entrepreneurship, help explain and understand it and identify new research problems. The division of existing academic papers proposed by Blackburn (2001) was used to assess the current state of knowledge about rural entrepreneurship. Depending on their research (development) potential, academic achievements can be divided into three basic categories: 1 – dead ends; 2 – permanent; 3 – innovative. The first of these categories covers topics already well recognised and researched in the literature that most likely will not generate new knowledge. The category of so-called ‘permanent’ studies covers those issues present in research for some time. Their durability is indisputable due to the theoretical and cognitive importance of the research; hence, they are permanently inscribed as academic achievements. On the other hand, the innovative category includes new issues that have recently emerged and are trying to gain acceptance. The fact that rural entrepreneurship is an intensively developing trend and, at the same time, strongly dependent on politics and economics, means that innovative publications, as well as supplementary ones which are the response to the current socio-economic situation (e.g. the rural entrepreneurship of women), have a significant share in the total (Wojcieszak 2019).

Many studies fall into the category of dead ends, resulting from duplicating macroeconomic topics (e.g. trends in the development of rural entrepreneurship in a regional perspective). However, there are relatively few to date that can be classified as permanent due to theoretical weakness or the lack of a defined research framework allowing for a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. Despite considerable theoretical and methodological achievements in rural entrepreneurship, no generally accepted theoretical or methodological framework describing it has been developed so far. It makes it challenging to integrate accumulated knowledge through different disciplines and approaches. The main reason should be seen in the complex nature of rural entrepreneurship itself, the essence of which is poorly recognised. Most

researchers believe, however, that entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon that cannot be confined within one discipline and one approach, and “...unanimity among researchers would mean that the phenomenon has been thoroughly understood...”, while “...the multitude of perspectives and approaches to entrepreneurship does not constitute weaknesses of the discipline, but it creates good ground for its development” (Ciesielska 2006).

Conclusions

Analysis and reflection on previous achievements in rural entrepreneurship bring several general conclusions to mind.

1. In developing research on entrepreneurship in rural areas, the most critical issue is the conceptualisation and definition of rural entrepreneurship. Although this definition has been pre-formulated, as indicated in the article, it requires discussion and universal acceptance by representatives of various disciplines. Developing such a definition seems to be a fundamental issue, especially for further developments.
2. In the Polish literature on the subject of rural entrepreneurship, more and more attention is drawn to the need to extend its current understanding. Many authors agree that the concept of this phenomenon cannot refer only to establishing and running a business, as it significantly narrows the concept of rural entrepreneurship. Therefore, the authors postulated the extension of its meaning, taking into account the characteristics of people, the attitudes and behaviour of not only entrepreneurs and farmers, but also representatives of institutions and local communities. Such a view enables the consideration of this phenomenon in a broad aspect of economic, social, legal, environmental and cultural conditions, which is consistent with the expressed need in the foreign literature to study rural entrepreneurship in various contexts: social, spatial and institutional (Krzyżanowska et al. 2020).
3. There is a need to undertake a larger-scale discussion on the directions, trends and research issues in rural entrepreneurship, which could

provide the basis for developing joint, interdisciplinary research programmes or general syntheses. The literature review shows that the theoretical framework that could be the starting point for developing such programmes is only at the initial stage (Pato, Teixeira 2016). Furthermore, although there have recently been some critical and exciting theoretical and methodological papers, few of them are conclusive, and none offer a promising approach or a solid theoretical framework for studying the broader context of rural entrepreneurship (Gaddefors, Anderson 2019). Without such theoretical and methodological discussion, achievements in rural entrepreneurship will still be characterised by a random selection of research issues and the predominance of empirical studies that do not refer to any theoretical framework and do not solve any significant issues. This postulate is particularly relevant in Poland, where so far no wide-ranging, interdisciplinary discussion has been undertaken on the theoretical and methodological concept of rural entrepreneurship. As a consequence, the Polish research conducted on this topic is very limited. It does not reveal the entire nature of this phenomenon and it also does not allow for formulating objective and comparable conclusions at the level of various spatial scales.

4. The number of studies describing rural entrepreneurship in the category of 'place' expressed by emotions, values and the individual aspects of entrepreneurs is growing. This is due to the strengthening of the territorial development concept in social research and greater emphasis put on learning about the specific resources of the studied place with the tangible and intangible conditions of its development, which is also expressed, for instance, in the changing rural landscape. Considering these statements, in the existing division of research issues into 'entrepreneurship in rural areas' and 'rural entrepreneurship', the latter's share will dominate the research. Along with the thematic evolution of this field of research, we should also expect a shift in the way rural entrepreneurship is studied. The positivist approach, which is dominant today, especially in the Polish literature on the subject, will be replaced by various alternative

approaches and qualitative methods based more than today on case studies, Giddens' sociological structuration theory or Granovetter's embeddedness theory. It is even more justified as foreign literature provides more and more evidence of the benefits of networking and the process of embedding in entrepreneurship development in rural areas, which seem to be exceptionally well-suited to such research, due to their local character.

5. Rural entrepreneurship is now the subject of interest in many disciplines, including sociology, economics, management sciences and geography. The geographical point of view seems to be irreplaceable due to the ability to interpret the undertaken problems from various perspectives: spatial scales, contexts and spheres of living, as well as referring to different conceptual models developed in geography, such as space, place, landscape and environment (Suliborski, Wójcik 2014). In the light of current international research on entrepreneurship, including rural, the variety of approaches based on combining various paradigms is considered to be one of the essential features in finding an answer to the question what entrepreneurship is in general, including rural entrepreneurship. Geographical studies are especially predestined to develop and enrich the achievements in this field. This thesis is confirmed by research by Schmude et al. (2008) on the activity and involvement of various academic communities in entrepreneurship issues in the broader sense both in terms of the number of publications and the active participation in conferences demonstrating the dominant role of geographers.

6. Against the background of the general achievements of researchers dealing with entrepreneurship, the direction relating only to the rural environment is much weaker and is still in the initial development stage. It is progressing along with the changes taking place in social sciences. Researchers attach increasing importance to the context in which entrepreneurship arises and to its interpretation in a holistic perspective.

7. Owing to the apparent over-representation of research on rural entrepreneurship in highly developed countries, i.e. the USA, UK, Greece or Spain, it is advisable to pay more attention

to less developed countries, such as Asia and Africa, which account for only 13% of all studies (Pato, Teixeira 2016). It results primarily from the great importance of rural areas in these countries and the intense changes they are subject to. In a world entangled in various types of relations, both vertical (network) and horizontal (hierarchical), studies of less developed countries may be of importance not only theoretically and illustratively, but above all, in terms of application (utility).

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