



Toward a Higher Profile for Rural Geography: A Reply to Michael Woods

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First, we would like to thank Michael Woods for his thoughtful engagement with our essay and with the challenge we had put forward: how to construct a more visible rural geography in the United States. Not only does Woods respond to and expand upon the substance of our article, he also issues an even broader, more difficult, and vitally important challenge, arguing that the “time is right” for “forging a truly international critical rural geography” (Woods 2009, 406), while paying special attention to the flows and reception of rural geographical knowledge. Further, we greatly appreciate Woods’ work for situating the practice



of rural geography in Britain in a broader institutional and disciplinary context. We have learned much from his response.

Still, we are concerned that our intent in writing an essay on publication strategies may be seriously misinterpreted. We disagree with Woods' suggestion that, because American rural geography focused less on theory, we accuse it of being "staid and unadventurous" (Woods 2009, 400). Our complaint is not with the theoretical complexion of the sub-discipline in the U.S., but with its relative lack of visibility. And rather than seek to provide a thorough explanation for the differences that exist between British and U.S. rural geography, we focused on publication as a particular venue through which those who wished to do so could actively intervene in the process of sub-disciplinary formation. We acknowledge that practices of publication were merely one means by which sub-disciplinary differences between the U.S. and Great Britain were constructed. We also take Woods' point that truly effective interventions should be based on the best possible explanations. Our claim to have been offering an intervention instead of an explanation was, admittedly, based on a problematic separation between these two pursuits.

Yet, we believe that the best explanations are a product of extended discussions that involve many participating voices. In that spirit, we had hoped to contribute to such discussions, and we are delighted that Woods, with his strong institutional focus, has added another rich account of sub-disciplinary formation to the conversation. We invite ACME's readers to contribute more discussion about the ways that a relevant and ecumenical rural geography can be deliberately crafted into a more visible field. We believe it should become a locus for more self-identification, and a higher-profile site for the production of situated yet generalizable knowledge from people and places around the world, knowledge that advances everyone's understanding of the significance of the rural.