Preface

Entrepreneurship as an academic and a clinical discipline can only be as good as the theory and research that underlies it. For the past 20 years, there has been an unprecedented focus by entrepreneurship researchers on laying a foundation of exceptional research. The value of this passionate focus is profoundly evident. Opening any current issue of the leading journals in Management, such as *Administrative Science Quarterly*, the *Academy of Management Journal* or *Review*, you find articles by top researchers that seek to explain aspects of entrepreneurship, or use entrepreneurial samples to explain issues central to the larger field of Management. This growing intellectual centrality of entrepreneurship to one of its major parent disciplines is the remarkable payoff of this 20-year effort of our best research scholars in entrepreneurship.

As monumental and welcome as this advance has been, it is not without its costs. The journals mentioned above are largely North American in their focus, outlook and editorial boards, and the entrepreneurship researchers who published these 20 years of groundbreaking, example-making research were also largely North American-based. Also, the focus of these often frame-breaking works has been narrow. This is defensible as a way to assure the quality and fine-grained consideration of a topic, which is especially necessary in a situation as multidetermined and dynamic as the entrepreneurial act. Still, many of the resulting theories, while exceptionally ‘tight’ from a conceptual sense, were also often intellectually isolated from the rest of the field. In both cases, what was called for was a movement of the highest level of entrepreneurship research toward theory that is not only ‘tight’, but also contributing to and benefiting from other strengthening elements of entrepreneurship research. This movement should also be global, as ideas from North America and the rest of the world interact and inform one another.

Thus it was that the members of ESBRI – Sweden’s Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research Institute – launched the idea of the Movements in Entrepreneurship series. The goal of the series of meetings and published works is deceptively simple, to move top-level researchers closer together for their discussions, in hopes of helping them push even farther the leading-edge of the field in terms of the global orientation and intellectual creativity of their thinking. ESBRI’s goal was no less than to make its own modest contribution to launching a new generation of entrepreneurship theory and research that is not only world-class in its quality, but also worldwide in its focus, application,

and impact. The Movements series would be work grounded in *interaction* as its basis, leading to *invention* across the discipline and continents, which might someday lead to the discovery of a basis of *integration* toward the future 'grand theories' that might explain entrepreneurship.

The team at ESBRI – Björn Bjerke, Frédéric Delmar, Daniel Hjorth, Chris Steyaert, and Magnus Aronsson – came up with this idea, and even tested it out on themselves, through their involvement of an international scholars committee including Howard Aldrich, William Gartner, Kelly Shaver, Scott Shane and myself. Coming to ESBRI was always pleasant, but also meant always being engaged. The idea was to find a model for bringing diverse scholars together, and bringing out their best, for the 'greater good'. I think all of the international scholars instantly recognized the aspirations of the ESBRI team, and helped to make their own contributions to developing the Movements process.

The resulting conference operationalized this effort. Away from the city and its distractions, an international group of scholars gathered to work on each other's ideas, and to frequently stand back and speculate on the potential impacts of these ideas, or their spin-offs, for future theory, research or policy. It was an exceptionally concentrated period of reflection and response, among researchers of undoubted intellect and good will. The goal was deceptively simple – to help each other to make the best theories possible. The job then of the people from ESBRI was as midwives to this process of birth of new ideas – offering support and sustenance, advice, motivation and perhaps even an occasional dash of admonition. As is true of midwifery, success occurs through a focus on the goal, and by taking steps to prevent the myriad of problems that can make the most natural processes in the world go awry. As idea midwives, the people from ESBRI did an exceptional job.

A part of the results comprise the chapters in the volume you hold. The quality of these is a decision only you can make. As one observer of the Movements process, let me offer some suggestions as to what interesting artifacts of the process you might notice. Most evident I think will be the outlook demonstrated in papers by authors with whom you are already familiar. What stands out in the Movements papers is the greater awareness and utilization of material from outside North America. This was an obvious and intentional aspect of the Movements process.

What might be perhaps less apparent are the influences of two perspectives that emerged with great passion at the conference. One model is rooted in economics and institutional theory, and looks at issues of opportunity and resources. The other is rooted in critical studies and comparative methodology, and looks for the play of countervailing forces and the dialectic discourse. Intellectually, aside from the globalization issue, these two major orientations would wash over the participants repeatedly and passionately. For the most part, the scholars in attendance realized the value of each approach, and also realized

that there is not a simple, integrative answer that accommodates them both. Still, when confronted with ideas of power and elegance, ideas that help raise new questions and answer old ones, it is hard to turn away. As a result, in looking at these chapters, you may more than occasionally see the juxtaposition or even the interplay of these critical and resourceful ideas. As you do, consider yourself invited to become involved in a truly interesting exercise for research intellects, finding ways for each approach to inform the other, until a synthesis (as the critical studies types seek) or a merger (as the resource types would seek) occurs.

With this balancing and consideration in mind, you can understand the intent, provenance and impact of the Movements in Entrepreneurship series. With a different mix of scholars, future Movements gatherings will no doubt give rise to the interplay of different theories. However, the Movements process itself, one of mutual exchange and support, of shared aspirations for exceptional individual research, for a stronger collective discipline, and for a greater good through entrepreneurship, is well served by the gathering, this volume, and the continuing stewardship of the Movements process by ESBRI and its people. New Movements in Entrepreneurship *are* needed, and this volume, and the process that underpins it, offer an exceptional opportunity for its realization.

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