Foreword

This book is about knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship (KIE) in low-tech industries. It originates from a large-scale collaborative project concerning knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship – AEGIS (Advancing Knowledge-Intensive Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Economic Growth and Social Well-being in Europe, 2009–12) – which was funded by the European 7th Framework Programme in the Social Sciences and Humanities and which involved several European research centers and universities, each trying to understand knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in specific ways, either with a sectoral, country, company or an individual focus.

Low-tech industries occupy a relevant share of employment and production both in advanced and in developing countries: therefore they deserve detailed analytical scrutiny for a deep understanding of their characteristics and dynamics. In the last years these industries have been undergoing change and transformation, and KIE is one of the main driving forces at the base of these processes. Therefore a full understanding of the relevance, origin and impact of entrepreneurship in this sector represents something of vital importance for several reasons: a comprehension of the evolution of these industries, an identification of the factors of change, an analysis of the drivers of innovation in low-tech industries and a base for the setting up of policies that may revitalize and rejuvenate this sector.

However, while lots of analyses have been done regarding knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in high- and medium-tech industries and services, much less work has concentrated on the low-tech sector. This gap needs to be filled by studies that address this type of entrepreneurship in these industries: it is necessary to identify the characteristics, specificities and differences of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in this sector compared to other sectors. This is what the book very timely aims to do.

One of the strengths of this book is that it focuses on KIE at various levels and dimensions and that it uses various methodologies, from case studies, to surveys, to country analyses. In particular, the book utilizes an extensive survey of KIE (AEGIS Survey) done at the firm level in various European countries and focused on several aspects of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship: origin, characteristics, strategy, organization, innova-
tiveness, performance and growth. In sum, the book combines a multilevel analysis of this phenomenon, complementing in-depth qualitative case studies with quantitative studies.

What emerges from this book is a rich and articulated picture of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in low-tech industries which is indeed diffused across countries and regions but it presents several differences compared to knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in medium- or high-tech industries. These specificities have to be well kept in mind if policies aim to target KIE in order to foster innovation and transformation in these industries.

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