
Introduction

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‘Take the everyday, and shape it.’
Dymott (2017, p. 204)

A reading guide to my context work

Introducing and reviewing one’s own work is a rather daunting task, and retrospectively making sense of my research work turned, for me, into a very personal journey. Little did I know that this would be the case when I agreed to Francine Sullivan’s wonderful suggestion to put together a selection of my work related to entrepreneurship and contexts. Already the first step, the selection of some works, was not easy: How does one select representative works out of a body of research which, at the time of writing this Introduction (autumn 2018), encompasses nearly 30 years? What is representative, anyway – given the fact that I publish both in German and English, and this is an English-language publication; and that much of my research is a team effort? The 20 chapters I have compiled for this book reflect my personal choices on what I deem relevant for showing some of my journey into and through the ‘entrepreneurship-context’ jungle. I also included works which are less accessible, because they have not (yet) been published in journals and are ‘only’ available through websites and/or as electronic working papers.

In this Introduction, I will illustrate how the context theme unfolded and grew on me, which facets I have worked on over the years as well as which themes are evolving at the time I am writing this. Also, when working on the Introduction, I noticed that, for me, all articles have their own story of how and with which author teams they came about. They are contextualized in time and place, so I wove some of that into my musings. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly outline the structure of the Introduction and offer various ways to read through the collection of essays in this volume.

Table 1 presents an overview of the main contextual themes of each chapter in this volume, either explicit (signalled by ‘xx’) or implicit (characterized by ‘x’). The table also shows that most of my articles speak across various topics, demonstrating, to me, the multiplicity and complexity of the context theme. This makes any ordering more difficult, but I also came to recognize this as opportunity. I used Chapters 11 and 18 to identify relevant context themes, where I believe we need more – conceptual and empirical – work in the future. In Chapter 11, I reviewed the – then – context discussion in entrepreneurship research, offering ways forward as to why, what and how to contextualize entrepreneurship. To systematize my review and conceptual thoughts, I suggested a classification of ‘where’ and ‘when’ contexts: where comprises the business, social, spatial and institutional contexts in which entrepreneurship happens; when refers to temporal and historical contexts. In Chapter 18, I outline my research journey into and between many different contexts, illustrating the importance of the doing context theme.

Table 1 Classification of Contextual Themes

Chapter	General information		Where and when contexts			Doing contexts		Gender and contexts	Entrepreneurial diversity
	Chronological	Empirical	Conceptual	Institutional	Spatial: Rethinking places	Temporal: History matters	How researchers do context		
1	Smallbone, David and Friederike Welter (2001)			Former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe		x		x	
2	Smallbone, David and Friederike Welter (2003)			Former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe		x		x	
3	Achtenhagen, Leona and Friederike Welter (2005)	xx		Germany		x			
4	Welter, Friederike and Frank Laseh (2008)		xx	Europe		xx	xx		x
5	Schmude, Jürgen, Friederike Welter and Stefan Heumann (2008)	xx		Germany		xx	xx		x
6	Welter, Friederike and David Smallbone (2008)	xx	x					x	x
7	Brush, Candida G., Anne de Bruin and Friederike Welter (2009)		xx	x				x	xx
8	Ettl, Kerstin and Friederike Welter (2010)	xx		Germany					xx
9	Achtenhagen, Leona and Friederike Welter (2011)	xx		Germany	x				xx
10	Trettin, Lutz and Friederike Welter (2011)	xx	xx		xx				

(Continued)

	Author(s)	xx	Introduced this typology		xx	x	x	xx	xx
			Transition economies						
11	Welter, Friederike (2011)	xx			xx		x		xx
12	Welter, Friederike and David Smallbone (2011)	xx	Transition economies				xx		
13	Welter, Friederike (2012)	xx		x	x				xx
14	Welter, Friederike and Mirela Xheneti (2013)	xx	Transition economies				xx		
15	Welter, Friederike, Candida Brush and Anne de Bruin (2014)	xx	x	xx			x	xx	
16	Welter, Friederike and David Smallbone (2015)	xx					xx		
17	Welter, Friederike, David Smallbone and Anna Pobel (2015)	xx	xx			x			xx
18	Welter, Friederike (2016)			x	xx				
19	Baker, Ted and Friederike Welter (2017)	xx		xx	xx		x		xx
20	Welter, Friederike, Ted Baker, David B. Audretsch and William B. Gartner (2017)	xx			xx		x		xx

Source: Author

In the next section, I discuss the chronology of my essays, also sorting the chapters – roughly – into empirical and conceptual papers. As difficult as the identification of chronological patterns proved, reading through my work from the oldest to the newest was very illuminating for me. Such a reading order illustrates how the context themes have evolved and keep evolving over time; it also illustrates the complexity and multiplicity of context themes, showing how themes overlap and became ever more complex, as my understanding of the intricacies of contexts increased and conceptual works started to emerge.

I then discuss the chapters in this volume along a few topical context themes. History and its role in contextualization of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship research is the first theme I turn to in this Introduction. Chapters 4 and 5 speak directly to this theme, showing how scholarly traditions and the history of our research fields influence our own methods, topics and outcomes of research. But history is also, for example, reflected in path-dependent individual behaviour as touched upon in my research on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour in former socialist countries or on women's entrepreneurship (for example, Chapters 1, 2, 6, 12 and 14); in other words, when entrepreneurs do context.

Doing contexts is the next theme I turn to in this Introduction. How researchers and how entrepreneurs do contexts is of interest here, and, as Table 1 illustrates, a long-standing theme in my own research. I first discuss how researchers do context, something which is explored from different perspectives in Chapters 4, 5, 11 and 18–20. Then, I outline how entrepreneurs do context, a theme which has gained importance over the years in my own research (Table 1). 'Doing context', be that through – sometimes involuntarily – changing institutions or by drawing on bricolage and entrepreneurial resourcefulness, concerns the agency of entrepreneurs towards their contexts, which much earlier context research has neglected, seeing contexts as influences on entrepreneurial behaviour but not vice versa. Chapters 1, 2 and 6, which touch upon this theme implicitly, contribute empirical perspectives, which I develop conceptually in Chapters 12, 14 and 16.

Gender and contexts come next, perhaps not surprising to the reader, given the number of studies on women, gender and entrepreneurship I have conducted and participated in. Chapters 6–9 and 15 speak directly to this theme, although I frequently use empirical evidence from gender projects to illustrate my entrepreneurship ideas (for example, Chapters 11 and 14). I illustrate that and how the contextual debate has moved from contextualizing gender towards gendering contexts.

Next, I turn to the spatial context. Again, this is a theme which implicitly is present in much of my work, not least because there is a close interplay between spatial, social and institutional contexts and the doing of contexts. It is this interplay that the works I present in this section touch upon and explore from different perspectives, although in this case, the chapters do not provide definite answers (yet), but instead they leave us with many more interesting research questions. Chapter 10 provides an overview of spatial context research from empirical, methodological and theoretical perspectives, while Chapter 15 focuses on the interplay between gender and place. Currently, there is a flurry of spatial context papers, which confirms, for me, the importance of this theme.

I end my thematic context journey in this Introduction with a closer look at entrepreneurial diversity and its many different facets which are explored in Chapters 11, 13, 17, 19 and 20. Once more, it is not only the chapters I present in this section and in this volume, that emphasize our need to study entrepreneurial diversity. In retrospect, entrepreneurial diversity

has been a defining feature of my work since I started my research journey (see Table 1 and Chapter 18). I finish the Introduction with a few thoughts on what comes next.

Searching for chronological and other context patterns

My first inclination, when re-reading the papers I selected for inclusion, was to sort them thematically. However, after I found myself constantly shuffling the chapters around, without coherent results, I finally settled on a chronological order. If I was to interpret this, I could conclude that my research already reflects the multiplicity inherent in contextualizing entrepreneurship (see Chapter 11): the papers I selected for inclusion in this book do not cover just one context theme or fall into just one context category, but they overlap. A chronological order helped me to understand how the context theme evolved over time; and it also illustrates how, and which thematic clusters arose or vanished over time.¹

Chapters 1, 2 and 6 in this volume reflect my early and long-lasting research interest in entrepreneurship and small business development in so-called transition economies – that is the former Soviet countries which began the transition from planned economy towards market economies when socialism and the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s. The chapters in this volume, which are part of a larger body of work on entrepreneurship in transition contexts (for example, Lageman et al. 1994; Smallbone and Welter 2009; Smallbone et al. 2001; Smallbone et al. 2010; Welter 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000b, 2002; Welter and Smallbone 2011) covered many of the states of the former Soviet Union and former socialist European countries. A major theme in this stream of research is the distinctiveness of entrepreneurship under transition conditions. In Chapter 1, David Smallbone and I were interested in whether entrepreneurship in these contexts was distinctive and, if so, in which aspects. Our findings emphasized the variety of motives, the highly qualified background of these entrepreneurs, as well as the importance of networking and informal connections in highly unstable conditions. In other words, we already then pointed to entrepreneurial diversity as reflected in motives, experiences and behaviour and as the outcome of contexts – mainly institutional, and to some extent, historical contexts. Where we considered contexts, we mainly looked into institutional and historical influences on entrepreneurs, but we also started to describe the ways in which entrepreneurs creatively drew on their contexts for solving business problems – thus already paving the way for the ‘doing context’ theme (Baker and Welter 2017, Chapter 19 in this volume).

For Chapter 1, we drew on two large-scale empirical studies one or both authors were involved in, one on survival and growth of SMEs from Poland and the Baltic States, another one on the support needs of SMEs in Belarus, Moldova and the Ukraine which we had conducted in 1996–1998. The latter was my first large-scale empirical study. Looking back, I realize how fortunate I have been to participate in so many different research projects on entrepreneurship and small firms in transition contexts and, at the same time, to work as consultant and evaluator for the German government which offered additional insights into how business organizations and ministries changed under transition. From 1993 onwards, I conducted empirical research in a wide variety of different countries and cultures, ranging from Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, the Central Asian republics (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan) and to the European transition countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Projects were either funded by the German government or, from the mid-1990s, by European Union research funding, but

in any case, they all included empirical components: we often set up large-scale empirical surveys, because statistical data at that time was highly unreliable or non-existent; we complemented those surveys with case interviews and expert groups, and, of course, also analysed statistical and secondary data where available. ‘We’ is the group of colleagues from former socialist countries: Anton Slonimski from Belarus, Elena Aculai from Moldova and Nina Isakova from the Ukraine and, later on, Alexander Chepurenko from Russia. In addition, over the years, there were a whole bunch of early career researchers, some of whom have stayed on in academia (like Anna Pobol who now holds a professorship in Minsk, Belarus), some of whom moved out of academia and sometimes out of their own country. And of course, David Smallbone, who I was lucky enough to meet at a conference in Bulgaria in 1995 and who has become a long-time collaborator, co-author and close friend.

I believe that the rich and varied empirical work and the variety of colleagues I worked with, both had a decisive influence on the context theme and the way it shaped up for me over the years. Looking back, I owe many of my early context insights to our discussions and the constant queries of our ‘formerly socialist’ colleagues as to why we ‘Westerners’ considered things should be done in that way and not another. For example, I vividly remember our initial project meeting in Kiev, December 1996, where we had a long discussion on what profit is and whether each business needs to be profit-oriented (pre-empting today’s discussion on social entrepreneurship) and whether and how managers differ from entrepreneurs. Topics which those of us trained in Western management theories thought were obvious and did not need to be discussed, but which those of our colleagues schooled in Marxist thought questioned – in turn making the Westerners aware of the unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions underlying our thinking and our theories.

As I realized many years later, when writing Chapters 11 and 18, these discussions and the joint project work have had an enormous impact on my own understanding of entrepreneurship and small business behaviour in different contexts as well as on my questioning of the applicability and generalizability of Western theories. Chapter 2 touches upon this, questioning the dichotomy of necessity- and opportunity-based entrepreneurship. This is a paper David Smallbone and I presented at the 2003 Babson–Kauffmann Entrepreneurship Research Conference (BKERC), and which never made it into a journal (see Chapter 18 for more details of why we did not manage to publish this paper although that apparently did not hinder its reception in academia). Our paper was motivated by a discussion the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Consortium (GEM) had initiated which at that time had decided to categorize entrepreneurship into necessity- and opportunity-driven and had analysed GEM data accordingly. Implicitly underlying that dichotomy was a thinking that saw opportunity-driven entrepreneurship as something good, and necessity-based entrepreneurship as something bad because it would not produce innovations, growth and employment. David and I just knew that such a dichotomy did not reflect what we both had seen in transition economies. We had long discussions between ourselves about how we could debate this, as we saw it, misinterpretation. Finally, we went back to our projects and the survey as well as the case study data – by then, we had built up rich empirical databases and, thanks to our colleagues, a deep understanding of entrepreneurship in transition contexts, and re-analysed our empirical evidence. We focused on the motivations of entrepreneurs in transition countries for setting up a business and tried to figure out whether and to what extent this influenced their business development or outcome of the venture creation process. Of course, the evidence we

used was not collected specifically to answer these questions but still, our analysis illustrates the too simplistic understanding of the dichotomy ‘necessity- versus opportunity-based entrepreneurship’.

I remember so many conversations with entrepreneurs during our joint research projects that clearly demonstrated how highly qualified individuals were kicked out of their well-paid jobs once transition started and, out of necessity, started with very simple activities, sometimes restricted to illegal shuttle trade across borders – all in order to gain an income but still being inventive and innovative, just differently from our Western understanding that automatically connects innovation to technology and business development to high growth. If I recall this correctly, David and I discussed our suggestions with Paul Reynolds at the conference, the paper was presented – and the GEM consortium has since tried to better acknowledge the diversity of countries and settings they study – as far as this is possible with such a large-scale and cross-country survey. For me, this was one additional push setting me on the path towards questioning the theories and concepts we use to explain entrepreneurship, which is inherent in the question as to whether entrepreneurship in different settings is distinctive. Yes, it is – and, without knowing at that time, I tapped into a conversation Bill Gartner had begun who suggested that more attention should be paid to entrepreneurial variety (Gartner 1985). Our findings in Chapters 1 and 2 emphasized the importance of a contextualized interpretation of entrepreneurship and helped me to understand why and how entrepreneurial activities are bound in time and history.

Chapters 3, 8 and 9 also discuss, from various perspectives, whether entrepreneurship is distinctive – in these cases based on empirical evidence for Germany. In Chapter 3, for example, Leona Achtenhagen and I drew on media, linguistic and discourse techniques to analyse the media discourse on the entrepreneurial spirit in German newspapers; in Chapter 9 we used those techniques to study the newspaper discourse around women’s entrepreneurship. Leona and I had met at the BKERC in Jönköping 2001 – the start of a wonderful research collaboration and friendship (which, just as an aside, led to me occupying her living room for several months when I moved to Sweden in 2008 and initially couldn’t find a place to rent). Our idea arose out of Leona’s interest in ‘doing something with media’, and my interest in the purportedly negative public discussion on entrepreneurship in Germany – which, at that time, had settled on a very uncomfortable path, not least because of the high unemployment rates and initiatives to foster new venture creation of formerly unemployed individuals: there is too little entrepreneurship in Germany and where people set up new businesses, those are of the wrong kind – too small and only survival-oriented.

Both Chapters 3 and 9 build on a massive database which we constructed manually. We conducted keyword searches in the (online or CD-ROM) archives of eight major German newspapers. For Chapter 3 we covered the years from 1997 to 2003. We then downloaded all relevant articles (747). In a second step, we developed our own categories to classify the information in the articles. This included general information on the articles (newspaper category, key term, date of publication, headline) and content categories related to our key term ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ (*Unternehmergeist* in German language): images, key statements, country focus, evaluative assessment of key term. We complemented the newspaper analysis with an analysis of the ‘environment for entrepreneurship in Germany’ (Chapter 3, p. 6), to ground the discourse analysis in its wider context. All that sounds easy, when recounting our steps, but in looking back I recall our sometimes frantic conversations around the mass of data

we were assembling, and how we could make sense out of this. Now, I know that we could have looked to other disciplines, such as linguistics, that have a fully-fledged repertoire of techniques to assemble and analyse such a corpus of data – at that time, we apparently were not (yet) used to looking beyond our own research field.

Our findings showed that the ‘grand discourse’ (that is, the representation of our key term within the newspapers) increased until the dotcom bubble burst in 2002. Even more important, its discussion in the newspapers moved beyond economic categories, pointing to that entrepreneurship is more than just economic behaviour. Our analysis, however, also illustrated how the valuation of ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ changed over time: where media initially were criticizing a lack of entrepreneurial spirit in Germany and praising its abundance in the US, after the Internet hype, they presented a differentiated valuation. Yet another call to consider the distinctiveness of entrepreneurship – this is one contextual theme which implicitly runs through much of my work. With this project, we not only looked at entrepreneurship in one specific institutional and political context, but the idea itself was grounded in context.

The same applies to Chapter 8, where Kerstin Ettl – then still a doctoral student working with me, now junior professor with a focus on entrepreneurial diversity – and I analysed how women entrepreneurs in Germany acquired their business knowledge in different contexts (institutional, historical, spatial – in this case: urban and rural regions in West and East Germany). Again, our idea was contextualized because the German federal government, in the mid-2000s, was worried about the low level of women’s entrepreneurship and interested in how best to motivate more women to set up a business. We applied for and won a contract for a large-scale research project, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, studying how women entrepreneurs learned and applied their knowledge in entering entrepreneurship and for developing their businesses.

Thus, in my early work, I journeyed back and forth, as I also did in real life, between various transition countries and Germany. Both strands of research helped me to discover in which institutional, social and spatial contexts (and, to a certain extent, when) entrepreneurship happened and to what extent contexts influenced entrepreneurial behaviour. Re-reading these chapters made me aware of a distinct contextual layer in my research: I not only studied entrepreneurship in context, but also contextualized my research ideas.

When going through the chapters chronologically, I see another temporal pattern emerging, namely whether papers were more empirically- or more conceptually-driven – with a clear peak of conceptual and review papers in later years. This is not simply an outcome of my selection for this book, because I checked my other publications and the pattern holds. Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 report on findings from our own research, either in the former transition economies (Chapters 1 and 6) or in Germany (Chapters 3, 5, 8 and 9). Chapter 2 (the above-mentioned unpublished conference paper from 2002) stands in between both categories. Chapters 7 (published in 2009), 10–17, 19 and 20 (all published since 2011) are more conceptually-driven and/or review papers (Chapters 10, 11, 13 and 17). Reflecting on this, I think this simply illustrates how I approach research (also cf. Chapter 18): study something where we cannot find enough evidence on or which is new, first empirically, and then go on to distil from those empirical findings ideas for furthering our concepts and theories. When I reflect on what that meant and means for the context theme, I have to acknowledge that for me, the contextualization of entrepreneurship (research) became much more complex and difficult the longer I have been working on and thinking about this – not least because the

discussion as such has moved onwards from attempting to understand the impact of contexts on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour towards the interplay between individuals and the construction of their contexts.

Anyway, I better move on from this somewhat disparate attempt to discuss the chapters in strict chronological order. Yes, there are a few temporal patterns, but they cannot be disentangled from the contextual themes that simultaneously developed. If I were to assess all chapters in this volume, I'd rather talk about a puzzle that is spiralling outwards, like a spiral galaxy. Some pieces – such as the distinctiveness of entrepreneurship and its diversity, the doing context and agency of entrepreneurs towards their contexts – have been in place very early on in my writings but not fully developed yet, others – such as the interplay of contexts and their construction – were developed much later; and all together form a contextual understanding that is constantly growing over time and with each new research collaboration and which, luckily, can never be complete. In the next sections, I will discuss some of my – current – favourite contextual themes from this ever-spiralling puzzle.

Then, now and in future: (how) history matters

Thinking about history and its importance for contextualizing entrepreneurship, one could assume that this would introduce a too deterministic angle which contradicts the fluidity and constructivist nature of contexts – along the lines of ‘history determines the impact of contexts on the nature of entrepreneurship’. I have a different perspective which, I believe, results from my longstanding interest in history and learning to value its role in understanding today's world – both at secondary school and at university history was one of my majors and exam subject. I studied economic and social history and the history of economic thought. This has provided me with a historical lens on the context theme, which also is reflected, directly, in Chapters 4 and 5. Both chapters stem from a special issue on ‘Entrepreneurship Research in Europe’, published in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* in 2008, which I edited together with Frank Lasch, professor at Montpellier Business School in France. Articles in that special issue discussed entrepreneurship research across the Atlantic, focusing on the outcome variable (Brush, Manolova and Edelman 2008); traditions of entrepreneurship scholarship in the UK (Blackburn and Smallbone 2008), in Germany (Schmude, Welter and Heumann 2008, Chapter 5 in this volume), in the Nordic countries (Hjorth 2008), and in France (Lasch and Yami 2008), and, summarizing the papers, Bill Gartner contributed an ‘Entrepreneurship-Hop’ (Gartner 2008).

Chapter 4 contains our introduction to this special issue. I included it in my selection because here, Frank and I argue for an historically grounded perspective on entrepreneurship scholarship that also investigates how the traditions of our disciplines inform ideas and themes and influence the development of how we do entrepreneurship research. For us, the context ‘in which entrepreneurship research takes place’ matters. At the time the chapter was written, several volumes and articles had taken stock of the European tradition, analysing whether and how it differed from US research. Looking back a decade, I think that European scholars were overwhelmed by the rapidly growing convergence in methods, themes and ideas and wanted to reassure themselves – and others – of their distinct European scholarly identity. I am convinced, as in 2008 when we published Chapter 4, that this is less a question of European (or, we may add now, African, Asian, Latin-American) distinctiveness in scholarship than rather a call for accepting variety in our research approaches instead of

searching for ‘an overarching “norm” regarding theories, concepts, topics and methods.’ (Chapter 4, p. 246).

In Chapter 5, Jürgen Schmude (then Professor of Economic Geography at the University of Regensburg), Stephan Heumann (then doctoral student working with Jürgen) and I investigated the history of entrepreneurship scholarship in Germany. We were interested in its historical origins and embeddedness as well as to what extent entrepreneurship research in Germany was and continued to be distinctive, because of its historical roots. We outlined the development of the field through a detailed analysis of its first conference, its first publicly funded research programme and the resulting research collaborations and through the areas and themes studied by German-speaking scholars in the years 1994 to 2006. I still vividly remember the amount of time and efforts we spent on identifying relevant publications and discussing possible classifications, before we finally settled on an adapted version of Gartner’s four areas of new venture creation (Gartner 1985), ordering and re-ordering these publications.

For our analysis of whether German scholarship was distinctive, we drew on a knowledge-based classification of themes by Blackburn (2001) who characterized research contributions as either dead-ends, enduring or novel. We identified pronounced differences in German topics, if compared to the – then – international debate. Studies were very descriptive and several pursued ‘dead-ends’, which we explained with a need for dead-end topics in a context in which entrepreneurship still needed to be described in full before further theorizing could start. But, we also identified a few topics where German scholars pre-empted emerging debates in the field, as, for example, the current understanding around households and their role for entrepreneurial ventures beyond family businesses. For example, Michael-Burkhard Piorkowsky, a recently retired agricultural economist and professor at the University of Bonn, has devoted much of his research to the so-called ‘household-enterprises’, conceptualizing Chayanov’s concept of the Russian peasant economy for entrepreneurship research and empirically studying this phenomenon for Germany (for example, Duschek et al. 2003; Fleißig and Piorkowsky 2005; Hansch and Piorkowsky 1997, 1999; Piorkowsky 2000, 2002; Piorkowsky and Holland 2001). A first step onto exploring entrepreneurial diversity and the heterogeneous nature of entrepreneurial activities – more than a decade before scholars started to argue against the Silicon Valley standard model of entrepreneurship (for example, Aldrich and Ruef 2018; Pahnke and Welter 2019). His work was, for me, a definitive influence on my own work on households and enterprising families, as well as on my research on the value of diversity and diverse outcomes of entrepreneurship (Chapters 14, 17, 19, 20 and Welter et al. 2012; Welter and Xheneti 2015).

The caveat, then and today: where research is published (solely) in the German language, its international recognition will simply not happen, at least not directly. Piorkowsky developed his ideas at the same time, that scholars like Sara Carter (Carter and Ram 2003; Carter, Tagg and Dimitratos 2004), building on Baines, Wheelock and Abrams (1997), as well as Howard Aldrich and Jennifer Jennings (Aldrich and Cliff 2003) reconsidered the role of households and families for entrepreneurship. Their work received international recognition, because it was published in English and in well-known academic journals, whilst Piorkowsky’s work was disseminated through reports or in German journals and was probably best known to the first generation of German entrepreneurship scholars. Historical precedents were Gustav Schmoller who was one of Germany’s eminent ‘context’ scholars in the 19th century but whose publications, unlike Weber and Schumpeter, never were translated into English

(Chapter 5 in this volume). Alas, today he is known to history buffs like me and to historians with an interest in entrepreneurship research like Dan Wadhvani with whom I have an ongoing conversation about how we could revive Schmoller's writings and findings for a wider audience in the entrepreneurship field.

Again, history matters, in this case the publishing traditions of our respective disciplines. Because German scholars for a long time continued to publish – sometimes exclusively so – in the German language, their findings and ideas went – mainly – unnoticed in the international entrepreneurship discussion. Whilst I cherish my possibility to tap into two distinctive communities – the German-speaking and the English-speaking ones – I also believe that the missing international reception of many national scholars is an opportunity lost for our international research community. For example, France, Spain, Russia and China also have large national communities of entrepreneurship scholars that increasingly turn to English as their publication language. I think this convergence is pushed by international doctoral programmes that foster homogeneity in the way we think about and study entrepreneurship. But, homogeneity is de-contextualization – in other words: the de-contextualization of our research is increasing with growing internationalization. In Chapter 5, one of our major conclusions was that German entrepreneurship scholarship became institutionalized in a way that fostered interdisciplinary and the kind of multidimensional thinking asked for by Steyaert and Katz (2004). That is, our research community – at least at that time – was contextualized. The institutionalization also, early on, led to research that considered context specificities, thus both echoing its historical roots as well as pre-empting 'the recent call of international entrepreneurship scholars to understand entrepreneurship as societal phenomenon' (Davidsson 2003, cited in Chapter 5, p. 304). Whether this still holds true today, is of course an open question – in particular because of the convergence of the field that we noticed already at the time we published our overview, stating that '...the approach to "doing entrepreneurship research in Germany" is changing' (Chapter 5, p. 305).

So, what are the good and bad sides of historical influences? History as reflected in the history of a discipline and its thoughts, its scholarship and its themes, can help contextualizing our own research, thus offering new research avenues (Zahra 2007) as well as new research methods (Wadhvani 2016a, 2016b). It can also – implicitly – restrict us in disseminating knowledge to the wider academic community if we become trapped in our own language and disciplinary traditions. The growing internationalization of our field also can contribute to de-contextualization as we lose track of the history of entrepreneurship in our own cultures and its context-specificities. History matters in many more dimensions than we have considered so far in context research; and I am convinced that a historical lens on entrepreneurship broadens our understanding of entrepreneurship and its diversity.

How researchers do contexts

The authorship of Chapter 5 also, albeit indirectly, points to another contextual pattern. The newer context research has settled on that contexts are constructed (for example, Brännback and Carsrud 2016; Steyaert 2016) and that contextualization is something that is actively influenced by both scholars and entrepreneurs (Chapter 19 in this volume; Baker and Welter 2018). We 'do contexts'.

How does that relate to Chapter 5 and its authorship? Jürgen Schmude and I belong to the first generation of entrepreneurship scholars in Germany. Most of these first-generation

scholars were active in constructing their own academic community – and this went beyond disciplinary boundaries. For example, from its creation in 1997 as the first scientific conference on entrepreneurship in Germany, Jürgen and I had been participating in the G-Forum Conference, then a small community of German-speaking entrepreneurship and small business scholars, nowadays assembling around 150–200 participants annually and having introduced English as the (second) conference language. Jürgen also co-founded another, international conference, which still exists today, and which reflects the interdisciplinary nature of much of Germany's – early – entrepreneurship research: the IECER – that is the Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research, established in 2002. Furthermore, he was one of the initiators of the first large-scale research programme on 'Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship Research', funded from 1998 to 2004 by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The impact of this programme on entrepreneurship scholarship in Germany has been tremendous, the participants' list reads like a 'who's who' of (then) German entrepreneurship and small business scholars. I participated with a project on nascent entrepreneurs in Germany (for some of the publications from this project, most – still – in German, see: Welter 2000a, 2001a, 2001b; Welter and Bergmann 2002). Stephan Heumann, our third co-author on Chapter 5, belonged to one of the waves of doctoral students connected to the various projects of this research programme. Without all of us researchers 'doing context', the entrepreneurship research community in Germany could not have happened.

How researchers do context is present in several of the chapters in this volume (Chapters 4, 5, 11 and 18–20). Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how researchers can use history, as reflected in the traditions of their countries and their disciplines, to arrive at more nuanced interpretations of entrepreneurship scholarship, thus contributing to study varieties of entrepreneurship across contexts. This in turn offers interesting avenues both for international collaborations and contextualized research, at the same time questioning – and probably refuting – the trend towards convergence, instead providing further arguments for more variety in entrepreneurship scholarship. International scholars, for example, have started to turn their national contexts, traditions and specificities of entrepreneurship into an advantage, discussing how they can preserve the uniqueness of national entrepreneurship scholarship and use it for theory development (for example, Su, Zhai and Landström 2015).

Chapter 11 contributes a more theoretical perspective on how researchers can do context – and I will review this chapter in more detail below. How researchers do context, for me, is also part of my research approach – that itself is contextualized in that sense: teamwork, working with and learning from colleagues from cultural contexts I am not familiar with; reaching out across disciplines and getting out of the academic ivory tower. I explore my journey and its context-specificities in Chapter 18, recounting how the diverse contexts I worked in, shaped my research themes and my research career. Language and conversations also contribute to researchers doing context. Chapters 19 and 20, for example, show which conversations shape our understanding of what constitutes entrepreneurship. In Chapter 19, Ted Baker and I use the research on women's entrepreneurship as an example for a ghettoized subfield of entrepreneurship studies – like family business studies, research on migrant entrepreneurs, rural entrepreneurs and many small such research communities. For example, Jennings and Brush (2013) argued that research on women's entrepreneurship could make bigger contributions than are commonly acknowledged to the field of entrepreneurship research. We follow their argumentation, outlining which contributions women's entrepreneurship research

could bring back to the field, for example, acknowledging diversity in business aims, motivations, definitions of success, amongst other topics. The question remains, however, why we tend to remain in those small communities of like-minded researchers – is it a question of comfort in talking to those who understand me and speak the same language? Doing context would imply bringing our findings back to the ‘mainstream’ field but we may have lost the ability of listening and talking to each other.

Why this has happened is our theme in Chapter 20, where Ted Baker, David Audretsch, Bill Gartner and I argue for a drastically new conversation in entrepreneurship scholarship, namely one on entrepreneurial diversity. The paper arose, once more, out of – at that time separate – conversations I had with David, Bill and Ted. I realized that we had a common interest therefore I suggested that we write something as a team. Not that easy! Although we in general agreed on the theme, our first difficulty was that we disagreed about our term. Was it main street entrepreneurship (David), ordinary entrepreneurship (Bill), mundane entrepreneurship (I), or normal entrepreneurship (Ted)? I cannot recall how we finally arrived at everyday entrepreneurship – but our discussion illustrates, to me, how important such conversations are. I will come back to Chapter 20 once more in the last section of the Introduction.

How entrepreneurs do contexts

Entrepreneurs also ‘do context’ through enacting and constructing their contexts (Chapter 19 in this volume, Baker and Welter 2018). Several chapters in this volume explore entrepreneurial agency and the interplay of contexts and entrepreneurial behaviour. Re-reading my selection, I realize how, over time, this theme becomes much more prominent. Chapters 1, 2 and 6 touch upon, albeit implicitly, how entrepreneurs deal with their contexts, understanding their behaviour as part of the distinctiveness of entrepreneurship in a transition context. Chapters 12, 14 and 16 directly explore different facets of entrepreneurial agency in relation to contexts. In Chapter 12, together with David Smallbone, I conceptualize entrepreneurial agency in challenging environments, drawing on our empirical research projects on entrepreneurship in transition contexts. We apply institutional theory, which we further refine to include the interplay between entrepreneurs and institutional change, and suggest a situational (that is, contextualized) understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Chapter 16 develops these ideas further. This is a working paper, that is, work-in-progress – if we ever will find the time to update and finalize our literature review. The paper started out as conversation between us (like the story behind Chapter 2): David and I were critical of the emerging discussion about institutional entrepreneurs because, again, what we had seen in transition contexts resembled institutional entrepreneurship, but was also very different. Entrepreneurs were quick to exploit ‘institutional holes’ to their own advantage, but also to further business development. They frequently initiated institutional change as unintentional ‘by-product’, whilst institutional entrepreneurship was – then – defined as intentional change behaviour. We therefore settled on reviewing the literature, wishing to write a thorough critique and suggest refinements. In 2012, I searched literature databases for a few selected keywords and compiled around 800 articles. Our substitute for institutional entrepreneurship was ‘institutional change agent’, which we understand to include those entrepreneurs that unintentionally changed their contexts. We presented a preliminary analysis at the *Rencontres-de-St. Gall* and the *RENT* conferences that year and received good feedback – but there the project stopped. A project on hold – for now, although I believe that there is scope for further

theory development on entrepreneurial agency because of the interdisciplinary nature of the research on institutional entrepreneurship we located in our review.

Chapter 14 links the emerging discussion on entrepreneurial resourcefulness to contexts – this is a project I started to work on together with Mirela Xheneti. When we came to know each other, she worked at the Small Business Research Centre at Kingston University, then moved on to Sussex University (and was originally from Albania – thus adding her personal insights on challenging environments to our discussion). Our research in this chapter builds on two large-scale projects on cross-border entrepreneurship: one dealt with non-European border regions in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova (for example, Welter et al. 2014), the other one with new and old Eastern European border regions (Smallbone, Welter and Xheneti 2012). In this chapter, we studied how entrepreneurs negotiated, enacted and overcame contextual boundaries, through that contributing to contextual changes. Based on case evidence, we illustrated the forms of resourcefulness in a transition context and investigated the specific contexts that enabled or restricted resourceful behaviour. Our research in this chapter and later publications (Welter, Xheneti and Smallbone 2018) demonstrates that, and how entrepreneurs enact contexts as resources – thus creating contextual resource strategies as one distinct form of ‘doing contexts’. To me, this is a very promising emerging research avenue, which I am currently exploring further both conceptually and empirically.

Contextualizing gender and gendering contexts

One distinctive theme in my work refers to gender and contexts. Chapters 6–9 and 15 all discuss various aspects about women entrepreneurs, gender and contexts. This theme goes back to the late 1990s, when a colleague and I were asked to prepare a review on women’s entrepreneurship policies and programmes, which was used as input for a large conference on women entrepreneurs (Rudolph and Welter 2000). That was followed by the first-ever large-scale study on women entrepreneurs in Germany that René Leicht, a sociologist from the University of Mannheim, and I led in the early 2000s. My research in that project studied the role of the institutional and political contexts on the development and structure of women’s entrepreneurship – with some surprising results about the impact of institutions on female entrepreneurship. Ever since, research on women’s entrepreneurship has been one of my favourite research themes – probably also because it led me to the international DIANA research group and exciting new ideas for research. A lot of what makes this research theme so interesting for me has to do with contexts.

While the earlier work contextualized gender, focusing mainly on the impact of contexts on women entrepreneurs, later research moved on to discuss the gendering of contexts. Chapters 6 and 8 are illustrative of the first strand of research. In Chapter 6, David Smallbone and I took a close look at women’s entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan, applying an institutional lens. We drew on empirical results (a survey with 200 women, 60 men; plus 35 case studies) from a large research project on women entrepreneurs in Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, funded once more by the European Union (INTAS-00-843). One of my favourite projects because it allowed me to combine my interest in transition context entrepreneurship with the gender theme – I have very fond memories not only of our project meetings and the whole project team, but also of the fantastic women entrepreneurs we met and interviewed in all three countries. I believe we also were amongst or even the first entrepreneurship researchers conducting a large-scale project on women’s entrepreneurship in former Soviet countries.

That project casts a long shadow and resulted, beyond Chapter 6, in several reports and other publications (for example, Aidis et al. 2007; Welter and Smallbone 2010; Welter et al. 2003; Welter et al. 2007), including a whole book on enterprising women in transition economies (Welter, Smallbone and Isakova 2006).

In Chapter 6, we demonstrated the impact of regulatory and normative institutions on the nature and extent of women's entrepreneurship, together with the historical legacy stemming from the Soviet period. Our empirical findings showed how normative institutions such as the prevailing gender roles that governed Uzbek society both during and after Soviet times, determined whether women could enter entrepreneurship. We also drew attention to the influence of places where entrepreneurship happened, because, for example, traditional neighbourhood communities and rural traditions reinforced the prevailing gender roles. Contexts mattered, especially in their interplay – but, looking back, although we alluded to women being able to change their contexts, our predominant perspective at that time still was one of 'contexts matter, they are out there and influence who enters entrepreneurship, where and when'.

Chapter 8 takes us back to Germany, where Kerstin Ettl and I analysed the entrepreneurial learning of women entrepreneurs and the impact of different contexts on that. Like in Chapter 6, our qualitative evidence illustrated the interplay of contexts as an important influence on how women acquired business knowledge and learned, and the chapter follows the same approach in contextualizing gender and not – yet – gendering contexts. As conceptual framing, we applied the so-called '5-M-framework' Candida Brush, Anne de Bruin and I had developed (Chapter 7), which I will discuss further down in this section.

Chapter 9 is more in line with the gendering contexts thinking because it suggests women's entrepreneurship as socially constructed. We investigated how media contribute to the construction of women's entrepreneurship, analysing how women entrepreneurs were presented in newspapers. For this study, which we pursued over several years (Achtenhagen and Welter 2003; Welter and Achtenhagen 2006; Welter et al. 2006), we acquired additional funding from the MMTC at Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) and, later on, from a German ministry, which allowed us to cover the years from 1995 to 2004.² We built up a database of 4955 articles on key terms 'female entrepreneur' and 'female founder' which we downloaded and analysed. We concluded that the way women entrepreneurs are portrayed in media contributes to the overall social construction of women's entrepreneurship because media transports images and creates expectations through the content of articles and the language used. For Germany, newspapers contributed, at that time at least, to perpetuating a somewhat outdated role model where women were mothers first, entrepreneurs second. Media also presented women entrepreneurs as the exception to the norm of what constitutes an entrepreneur and his success.

Chapters 7 and 15 are mainly conceptual papers, that furthered my gendering context thinking. Chapter 7 presents the 5M-framework we relied on in Chapter 5. The idea for this paper arose out of our discussions that entrepreneurship research desperately needed gender-aware frameworks. Candy drew our attention to the 3-Ms of market, money, management which we extended by 'motherhood' (metaphor for family and household embeddedness of women entrepreneurs) and the combined meso/macro environment. In Chapter 7, we used the framework to assess the research field, based on a literature review of articles published in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* and in the *Journal of Business Venturing* from 1996 to

2006. (By the way, as an aside, I recall that in our first paper version, presented at the ICSB conference in Turku, we had set out to conduct a comprehensive literature review – guess who was responsible for that idea? Yes, yours truly ... that seems to be a pattern guiding my empirical research: be accurate and as comprehensive as is possible...) Our results showed no clear trend ‘for a particular M’ in ETP, while most of the identified JBV articles tended to focus on the classic 3M. We ended our paper with a few suggestions for future research.

The reception of this paper has been tremendous – although I soon felt uncomfortable with our ‘motherhood’ metaphor. I recall a keynote presentation in Germany, where I introduced our framework: motherhood has very specific connotations (also historical ones) in the German context, and I suddenly realized that scholars easily misunderstood the context we had wanted to draw attention to with this metaphor. Nevertheless, in retrospect, and despite that mine as well as my co-authors’ thinking on the gender-context theme has developed much further, I still see this chapter as an important step moving on from contextualizing gender (that is, considering the impact of contexts on gender respectively women entrepreneurs) towards gendering contexts (that is, considering the implications gender has for contextualizing entrepreneurship).

Chapter 15 outlines the next round of thinking regarding the gendering contexts – this is still work-in-progress, as is visible in its working paper status (further versions have been developed since, but not – yet – been published. Personally, I believe it is much more difficult to get conceptual ideas out in print than empirically based papers). I wanted to do some more conceptual work on gendering contexts, specifically from a spatial perspective, and persuaded Candy and Anne to join me. Our first iterations of this chapter were presented at the DIANA 2014 conference in Stockholm and at the RENT Conference the same year. We tried to make sense out of what has been written in relation to gender and contexts from a spatial perspective, showing both how contexts influence women and how women gender their contexts. This chapter points to another contextual theme I am passionate about and that concerns place – therefore I’ll continue my context journey in the next section.

Places, places, places: rethinking the spatial context

Over the years, I have become more and more fascinated with the spatial contexts, with places and the way they impact on entrepreneurship as well as their interplay with other contexts. If I was to suggest a context hierarchy (not that I think this is possible – or maybe it is?), I believe place would play a central role for how entrepreneurs do context and it also most likely will be the first context they will impact on or be able to change. Questions that I find interesting, include, for example, in which communities and neighbourhoods entrepreneurship happens; how place simultaneously enables or restricts entrepreneurship; how architecture and physical spaces influence whether contexts become gendered or de-gendered, and so on and so forth. Many interesting research avenues are currently opening up for me.

Chapters 10 and 15 present some of the facets of my work on (and in) this context. In Chapter 10, Lutz Trettin, an economic geographer, then working at the RWI Essen, and I outlined the challenges for spatially oriented entrepreneurship – an idea, that (if I recall correctly) arose out of Lutz’s hunch that entrepreneurship research was mainly conducted at supra- or national level. He set up a comprehensive literature review: we searched 18 international entrepreneurship and geography journals, from 1990 to 2007, and identified potentially relevant articles through a combined list of keywords from entrepreneurship and

from geography respectively regional economics (see Table 2 in Chapter 10, p. 581). The resulting 348 papers were classified according to their geographical scale, their topics, data and information sources for the study, and methods of analysis. Lutz's assumption proved correct: most entrepreneurship papers analysed at supranational, cross-national or national levels. Local geographical contexts were neglected. We only identified 17 papers in our sample, that explicitly addressed entrepreneurship in urban districts, small towns or villages in peripheral rural areas; and these studies covered a wide array of themes. Were we to repeat this search and analysis today, I think we would find many more studies discussing entrepreneurship at local level, and with a few patterns evolving. For example, Steffen Korsgaard is developing an interesting research stream on resourcefulness and rural contexts (for example, Korsgaard, Ferguson and Gaddefors 2015; Korsgaard, Müller and Tanvig 2015; Müller and Korsgaard 2018); Johan Gaddefors studies the co-creation of contexts and entrepreneurship, offering ideas for future theorizing on spatial contextualization (for example, Gaddefors and Anderson 2017; Gaddefors and Cronsell 2009). The renewed consideration for local places may well result from the contextualizing turn in the field; it provides further input for the spatial context discussion.

Chapter 15 illustrates my interest in combining the spatial context theme with gender. In autumn 2013, I sat down and searched on google scholar for keywords on geography, space, place and gender/women's entrepreneurship. I discovered a treasure trove in other disciplines like feminist geography and urban planning that tackled issues around gendered spaces and places. In the chapter, we present a short – and preliminary – overview of these studies, showing how feminist geography can assist us to further gendering contexts. For example, feminist geography studies the role of places for occupational segregation and locational choices of women entrepreneurs or for gendered identities, but also explores how women (entrepreneurs) 'do gender' and context simultaneously, breaking out of place-based norms.

Since we wrote this paper, and because this still is work-in-progress, I have explored the theme of gendered places further, specifically reviewing studies on gendered architecture and considering the interplay with women's entrepreneurship – a fascinating theme with much potential! One striking, and historical, example of 'gendered home architecture' is the so-called 'Frankfurter kitchen', the first mass-produced kitchen in Germany after World War I, designed by the architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Housing space was in shortage, so the architect sought to rationalize the tasks carried out in the kitchen and built the kitchen accordingly. This could be seen as reinforcing women's role as housewives, but in fact, the kitchen was designed in a way to assist and facilitate their work, thus recognizing women's status in the home (cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_kitchen, <https://www.the-guardian.com/lifeandstyle/2006/apr/01/homes1>).

Entrepreneurial diversity: towards more reality in entrepreneurship research

The last theme I turn to arises from some of my conceptual works (Chapters 11, 13, 17, 19 and 20) that, to me, add one distinctive piece to the context puzzle. These chapters consider different aspects of entrepreneurial diversity, illustrating how the consideration of entrepreneurial diversity can contribute to more reality in our research and in our theorizing. Chapter 11 is my 'flagship' context article, in which I discussed conceptual challenges in contextualizing entrepreneurship.³ I explored the why, what and how of contextualizing entrepreneurship, suggesting a classification of where contexts along several dimensions

(proximate/distal, omnibus/discrete; business, social, spatial, institutional). Again, the empirical illustrations I drew on to illustrate the multiplicity and impact of contexts, came from my research in transition countries. But when writing and revising this article I finally understood, through the reviewers' and editor's comments, that research in 'unfamiliar' contexts helps us to see the familiar with new eyes and to both question our hidden assumptions and to re-interpret – a contextual pattern that has been running through my research for a long time.

But how does trust fit into this picture? What's the connection to context? Chapter 13 explores trust and its role in and for entrepreneurship. It is an invited review paper published in the *International Small Business Journal* – and I could choose the topic. My interest in trust initially stems from another pan-European research study, with partners from the UK, Italy, Russia and Estonia (Höhmman and Welter 2005); I also explored trust themes in the projects on cross-border entrepreneurship and in several other studies. Oftentimes, trust is seen as solely connected to personal relations, but my research had taught me that trust is closely connected to contexts – Italy and Russia, for example, can be classified as low-trust environments, not least because of their political instability, Germany is a high-trust context; sectors also differ in their level of trust. Does genuine trust exist in business relationships, or is this, in the words of Williamson (1993), rather a calculated risk? I enjoyed going back to the trust literature in the 2012 review article and outlining a few avenues for future research. And this research agenda is the reason I picked Chapter 13 for inclusion in this volume – the questions I suggested then are still of interest today and have not – yet – received enough attention in entrepreneurship research. Trust is built up slowly, but destroyed quickly – how does that differ across contexts, how does the interplay between contexts, trust and entrepreneurship work, and how does that influence entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes?

What comes through here, once again, is that contextualizing entrepreneurship drives us down the road of acknowledging entrepreneurial diversity. This also includes informal entrepreneurship, yet another theme which for far too long, has received too little attention in entrepreneurship research. In Chapter 17, David Smallbone, Anna Pobol (from Belarus) and I reconsider informal entrepreneurship and the informal economy as missing piece of the 'entrepreneurship jigsaw puzzle' (Chapter 17, p. 292). Taking stock of the current debate around informal entrepreneurship, we discussed the different 'shades of grey, black and white entrepreneurship' because what is informal differs between countries and over time, and asked whether informal entrepreneurship is there to stay or whether it is a temporary phenomenon. In concluding, we argued that it is worthwhile considering informal activity as one valuable facet of what constitutes entrepreneurship, thus, again, supporting a perspective on entrepreneurship which considers entrepreneurial diversity.

Finally, Chapter 20 where, as said already, Ted Baker, David Audretsch, Bill Gartner and I suggest a drastic re-orientation of entrepreneurship research: set aside the standard model of technology-oriented, high-growth and venture-capital backed entrepreneurship (the Silicon Valley model of entrepreneurship) in favour of entrepreneurial diversity and studies of everyday entrepreneurship. In other words we suggest a contextualized approach to entrepreneurship, drawing attention to its diversity, instead of the predominant de-contextualized approach that emphasizes its similarities. Our editorial apparently was spot on – there is a growing conversation around entrepreneurial diversity and variation and a promising movement towards more realistic models of entrepreneurship (for example, Aldrich

and Ruef 2018; Pahnke and Welter 2019; Welter, Baker and Wirsching 2019). As soon as we start to contextualize, we need to realize that there is not one best model of entrepreneurship, but several and that our explanations are getting more complex – contextualizing comes with a few trade-offs between simplicity, accuracy and generalizability of our theories.

Here ends the tour-de-force ...

... through my selection of articles that illustrate both my journey towards the entrepreneurship in context theme as well as several interesting research questions that still need studying. I hope that I have made sense to you in connecting and re-connecting the dots between entrepreneurship and contexts, and that I have been able to show you how the theme unfolded for me, over time. Re-reading my work has been fun and very illuminating for me as I realized that I started putting together themes in totally different ways than when the articles came fresh off the press. Contexts matter – that is nowadays taken for granted. Which contexts matter is one of the themes I have explored in this Introduction, with emphasis on the temporal dimension, looking at history and its role for how as researchers we do contexts. I also discuss the mechanisms of how entrepreneurs do contexts as this cannot be separated from our own ‘doing context’. These themes illustrate the complex interplay of research methods, research traditions, entrepreneurial behaviour and the various contexts. Moreover, these themes (history and doing contexts) already point to the processual nature of a contextual approach to entrepreneurship. The sections on gender and contexts as well as on place and contexts underline the importance of a critical process approach to the context debate in our field (Baker and Welter, 2018). To end, the theme of entrepreneurial diversity points to what the outcomes of a contextualized perspective can be – a broadened view on what constitutes entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development. In summarizing, I believe that my context works, those presented here and those that have been published recently or are in the publication pipeline, all contribute towards a differentiated understanding of entrepreneurship and contexts, celebrating both its diversity as well as the complexity of a contextualized perspective on entrepreneurship. With this Introduction, I also hope to have offered you a few different pathways to read through this collection of essays.

What’s next for me? Besides the themes I outlined in this Introduction, that originate from the articles presented in this book, I have started to explore the visualizing of contexts – both as method and for theory building (Welter 2019). Now, I leave it to you, the reader, to make your own sense out of my research – and I am very much looking forward to reading and discussing your ideas as to how to further develop the context theme. Or do you think it is a dead-end? I don’t believe it is, yet.

Notes

1. The selection for this volume starts in 2001 and ends in 2017. I did publish before 2001. My first publication was a working paper (the Diplomarbeit – equivalent of a master thesis), written in German (Welter 1989). Most of my early publications were reports, working or conference papers in the German language, reflecting both the disciplinary publishing traditions of that time as well as the fact that from 1993 on, much of my research output came from contract research from German ministries which expected us to publish our findings in German. Chapter 18 outlines my journey and adventures in publishing my research in more detail.
2. Recently, we acquired new funding and have been able to extend the study up to 2014. The findings show that whilst the coverage of women entrepreneurs has increased in German newspapers, their portrayals are still biased, gendered and compared to an – invisible – male norm of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial success and entrepreneurial behaviour (Ettl, Welter and Achtenhagen 2016).

3. To my big surprise, in 2017 this article received the Greif Research Impact Award, handed out annually for an entrepreneurship article with the highest citations in management and entrepreneurship outlets six years after publication.

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