1. Introduction: women's entrepreneurship in global and local contexts

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The phenomenon of women's entrepreneurship has gained significant momentum across the globe. Increasingly businesses started and managed by women are contributing to job creation, innovation and well-being (Kelley et al. 2015). Despite the contributions women entrepreneurs have made to overall economic well-being, the vast majority of prior research about women entrepreneurs has taken an individual-centric approach (Pathak et al., 2013; Jennings and Brush, 2013). However, recently we are observing a shift in the focus of women's entrepreneurship research from micro-level and individual factors to a greater focus on how meso- and macro- contextual levels impact individuals' decisions – that is, from "gender as a variable" to research based more on feminist perspectives and the formal and informal institutional factors that influence entrepreneurial creation by women (Brush et al., 2006). Even with the shift in research interest on the influence of contextual variables on women entrepreneurs, the impact of macro-national social values and cultural traditions (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010; Roomi, 2013; Zahra and Wright, 2011) and gendered social forces (Brush et al., 2009; Díaz-García and Welter, 2013; Loscocco and Bird, 2012) remains under-researched.

Because entrepreneurship is a social embedded process, connecting entrepreneurial behaviours of individuals to their context can offer a more insightful explanation of the entrepreneurial phenomenon (Davidsson 2004; Sarasvathy 2004; Zahra 2007; Welter 2011; Zahra et al., 2014). Berg (1997: 262) argues that "the material and socio-cultural contexts in which entrepreneurship take place are gendered". Therefore, women entrepreneurship research would benefit greatly from taking into consideration how macro-national factors, such as cultural norms and societal expectations, and the meso-organizational structures and institutions are related to the phenomenon (Baughn et al., 2006; Roomi, 2013; Wright and Marlow, 2011).

The chapters of this book have been grouped into three parts according to the topic of research and the context. The first part, "Institutional factors explaining women's entrepreneurship", is comprised of four chapters which refer to the impact of institutional aspects on women's entrepreneurship in order to gain a better understanding of those factors that might promote or inhibit women's entrepreneurship at either a global or individual level. This issue is important in light of the persistent gap that exists between males and females in their participation in entrepreneurship (Xavier et al., 2013). The second part, "Meso-organizational structures and institutions influencing women entrepreneurs", includes five chapters that focus on cooperation with other businesses or with associations for internationalization, social entrepreneurship and financing as a result of dealing with banks and other equity providers. The third part – "Women's entrepreneurship as embedded agency: entrepreneurial intention, firm creation and management" – features four chapters on factors influencing entrepreneurial intention and firms' performance, focusing more on the individual agency of women when considering creating their own firms or managing them while embedded in gendered structures.

PART I INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS EXPLAINING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The first and second chapters in Part I examine the gender gap from a macro perspective, using an institutional perspective to explain the impact of gendered institutions such as political empowerment, entrepreneurial social capital and occupational distribution. The third chapter illustrates how women engage less in technological innovation due to their societal role expectations (with evidence from Germany) and how the gendered conceptualization of innovation – as only technological – results in women benefiting less from public policies on innovation. The fourth chapter analyses the impact of public policies in Tanzanian women's entrepreneurship.

Chapter 2 by Ruiz Arroyo, Fuentes Fuentes and Bojica discusses the role of gendered institutional contexts for the rate and type of women's entrepreneurship across countries. Within an institutional theory framework, the authors consider both formal (political empowerment in governance structures) and informal (social capital) gendered institutions at country level, and study their relationship with the level of female entrepreneurial activity. Political empowerment was established by a sub-index of the Global Gender Gap Index measuring female/male ratios: in minister-level positions, in parliamentary positions and in the number of years in the office of prime minister or president in the last 50 years. The authors suggest that when both political empowerment and social capital demonstrate gender equality, they are positively associated with the level of opportunity-driven female entrepreneurship in a country, but not with that of necessity-driven female entrepreneurship. Formal institution (political empowerment) also impacts significantly the overall level of female entrepreneurship. An increased visibility of women within high-level decision-making positions can foster policies targeted at women, weaken sex stereotypes and, in turn, raise society's consciousness of women's capacity to face and overcome challenges. Therefore, narrowing the gender gap in positions within governmental structures and facilitating entrepreneurial social capital for women can lead to a corresponding improvement in the overall participation of women in entrepreneurship by increasing rates of opportunity-driven female entrepreneurship.

Chapter 3 by Aidis highlights the fact that women are crowded into certain sectors (in which they had previous work experience) that are highly competitive and less profitable. Were occupational crowding-out reduced, and more women entered male-dominated industries, there would be an overall positive impact on entrepreneurship for women. Occupational crowding places women at a disadvantage with regard to business profitability and growth, venture funding and the receipt of government subsidies and tax concessions. Aidis uses a quantitative measure for assessing labour force balance per sector (60:40 or 40:60 ratios), allowing a cross-country comparison and the ability to track changes over time, based on data available through the International Labour Organization (ILO). Gender balance in occupations is not related to a country's economic development or number of economic activity sectors. Women need to be aware of the gap in earning potential in different sectors and be exposed to work experience in male-dominated sectors (training, traineeships and mentoring programmes). Female entrepreneurs should be encouraged to enter male-dominated sectors as a means to increase women's business profitability and growth.

Bijedić, Brink, Ettl, Kriwoluzky and Welter (Chapter 4) highlight that the commonly used ways of operationalizing innovation lead to distortions and blind spots in the perception of innovative activities both with regard to the types of innovation (technological innovation is prioritized over social or organizational innovation, since the former is considered more tangible and its measurement easier and more reliable) and with regard to sectors in which innovations take place (biased towards manufacturing sectors instead of services ones). Thus, the authors suggest that in order to capture the reality and true nature of innovations in female-led businesses, researchers need to apply a "gender-neutral" definition of what constitutes innovation. This will require public support programmes to gain a wider understanding of innovation instead of (implicitly or explicitly) favouring technology innovations or innovations in high-technology industries. Focusing on technology-driven innovation, for which data are available in Germany, the authors present possible explanations for the below average share of innovation in women-led companies: women still prefer to set up their businesses in sectors with a lower innovation rate; they invest less time in their company than men, and generally own smaller businesses. In Germany, role expectations comprise a traditional model of division of labour within the family, impacting both the institutional framework and gender-specific preferences; this in turn affects the scope of self-employment, with occupational gender segregation, smaller business size and less time devoted.

Nziku (Chapter 5) analyses factors influencing entrepreneurial start-up decisions for Tanzanian female entrepreneurs. Within Tanzanian society, women and men are unequal in terms of access to resources. The Tanzanian government recognizes this disparity, and since 2002 government policy has stipulated that gender mainstreaming is to be enhanced in all initiatives pertaining to small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development – including identifying factors inhibiting women and designing special programmes to encourage and support women. Despite the efforts on behalf of the Tanzanian government to support entrepreneurship and special consideration for female entrepreneurship, these policies have not impacted women's decision to create firms; and, in fact, women in rural areas are unaware of these policies. Most of the women have micro-businesses. These women are strongly influenced by the role models of other successful female entrepreneurs within their localities, and are also heavily affected by the poor economic conditions within their existing environments. Although they mainly finance their firms through personal and family savings, when relying on debt they normally apply for informal loans with higher interest rates due to a fear of denial from financial institutions which have inflexible conditions regarding collateral. Among the recommendations is that the government should provide support for accessing capital in more favourable conditions, besides formal training and networking programmes that connect female entrepreneurs (especially successful ones) across all regions of the country; underscoring with the latter the importance of cooperation, especially in developing economies to surmount institutional deficiencies.

What can we learn from these chapters in relation to a contextualization of the gender gap in entrepreneurship? First, that achieving equality in gendered institutions (governance structures, entrepreneurial social capital) and labour markets (balance in gender distribution across sectors) has a greater impact on the levels of opportunity-driven female entrepreneurship (see Chapters 2 and 3). But traditionally gendered institutions and labour markets or economic development have changed women's entrepreneurship reality little over time. Therefore, this highlights the need to consider gender inequalities in social institutions as a constraint to women's entrepreneurship, and the need to promote ways to reduce these constraints: for example with gender-balanced lists within political parties or with strategies to integrate women into male-dominated sectors (such as mining, construction and manufacturing).

Second, not only structures are gendered; many concepts on which public policies are based are gendered too. One of them is innovation, which has become a popular topic for research (Alsos et al., 2013; Nählinder et al., 2015); but many researchers have used a narrow definition of research, and as a result women entrepreneurs are frequently portrayed as having little interest in innovation. Chapter 4 by Bijedić et al. points out the importance of widening the definition of innovation to encompass social and organizational innovation, and the necessity of understanding how context (that is specific initiatives within a sector, work environment or structure within an organization) influences the interrelationship between gender and innovation (Foss et al., 2013).

Third, little is known about women's entrepreneurship in developing and emerging economies (Jamali 2009; Minniti and Naudé, 2010; Kelley et al., 2015). De Vita et al. (2013) in their systematic literature review on female entrepreneurship, identify "the role of female entrepreneurship in developing countries" as one of the current and challenging areas for future research. For example in most of East Africa (three chapters research this area: Nziku, Tillmar, and Ford and Cooper), surplus labour makes self-employment necessary for subsistence. For this reason, early-stage entrepreneurial activity is more common for both men and women in the East African region than in any other part of the world (GEM, 2009: 25). In this sense, it is important both to target females as beneficiaries of government programmes for entrepreneurial development and to create favourable environments for sustainable female entrepreneurship (ILO, 2007). Furthermore, to guarantee the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in SME policies, governments should design programmes that facilitate a posteriori control for the effects of these policies, especially in rural areas, in which scarcity of resources can hinder the implementation of those policies (see Chapter 5).

PART II MESO-ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS INFLUENCING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

This part is composed of five chapters focusing on the importance of meso-organizational structures and institutions for women entrepreneurs. One of these structures is cooperation networks, which are especially important either for doing business (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) or for engaging in internationalization (Peru). Another structure is the social community in which women entrepreneurs discover social needs which foster their engagement in social entrepreneurship (Kenya and Turkey). The final chapter provides American evidence of how women have to deal with banks and other external equity providers in order to finance their high-growth potential businesses.

Tillmar (Chapter 6) interviewed men and women business-owners in urban Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda to focus on the gendered nature of contexts in which SMEs engage in cooperation. This chapter discusses enabling and constraining aspects of the context based on the model developed by Brush et al. (2014). Most of the SME owners, even if their work would be more efficient through cooperation, prefer to have lower profits rather than increase their risks by cooperating with a partner. Women in many cases need the consent of their husband before starting a business or forming a cooperative relationship. If a husband is not positive (or the couple are not married), the women entrepreneurs find themselves in more vulnerable situations. For women, the necessity to contribute to the well-being of their children is a strong incentive to take risks. Women's groups play an important role in enabling them to circumvent the patriarchal context and exercise some agency. However, growing their business and taking on greater business opportunities are major challenges as long as some limiting contextual circumstances are in place: corruption, difficulty in entering business networks; and cultural aspects such as non-acceptance of women travelling alone, having business premises out of their homes, or cooperating with men on equal terms. Therefore, changing the institutional contextual dimensions via legislation and support mechanisms may not solve the real problems of gender inequalities as long as the context is still patriarchal.

León (Chapter 7) studies the case of women handicraft exporters in Peru. Usually these home-based entrepreneurs are located in peripheral neighbourhoods of Lima with minimal access to public services. Although this helps minimize direct costs, it also results in higher transaction costs. These women have significant work experience and expertise in craft production; however their low levels of education lead them to rely on men within their families for important activities such as purchasing materials or selling products. This experience and family involvement, the segmentation of their clientele (adapting products to their tastes), and connection with large trading organizations are the main determinants for reducing overall costs, allowing them to sell abroad and become sustainable in the market. The owners of these micro-enterprises report that there are actions and strategies they must adopt for engaging in export. Enrolling in organizations is crucial to successful exporting because they provide information about how to improve production and marketing and how to surmount, at least partially, their small scale of operation which prevents them from assuming larger orders. They are highly active in the market; engage in different selling practices (fairs, export companies, Fairtrade organizations); and have a clear client orientation (that is, facilitating different forms of payment to clients).

Ford and Cooper (Chapter 8) focus on social entrepreneurship aimed at achieving wide-reaching, systemic social change. Precisely, due to the multi-faceted nature of the goals of social enterprises, there is no common approach for impact assessment (Leviner et al., 2007). In this chapter, the authors propose an interesting model to evaluate the aggregate impact of social entrepreneurship, using the Impact Value Chain (Clark et al., 2004). They present the case of Soko, a mobile-to-web platform that directly connects producers and consumers in a peer-to-peer model of trade based in Kenya. Soko has the potential to create substantial systemic change because it is supporting entrepreneurs within the Kenyan economy, many of whom are women, with the potential to play a key role in fostering development and change within their communities. The authors analyse its outputs and its outcomes, the latter less quantifiable but more broad-reaching. Their evaluation compares artisans inside and outside the platform (control group). Their findings add to our knowledge of how artisans in the developing world define success in terms of the creative expression of their work and their ability to spread economic benefits to others – a fact largely absent from previous research conducted in developed countries.

The next two chapters discuss women's entrepreneurship in Turkey and the United States. Uygur, Kahraman and Günay (Chapter 9) focus on social entrepreneurship in Turkey. The authors highlight the process of creating value through the use of innovative business models for social enterprises by drawing on three examples of female entrepreneurs who established social ventures employing innovative business models that address different social problems and empower women founders, employees and end-users. For their analyses, the authors adopt a framework established by Hamel (2002) consisting of four components: customer interface, core strategy, strategic resources and value network. Each component of the business model is a potential area for applying radical innovation that goes beyond the general product/service innovation based on technological novelties. This chapter highlights the need for reconsidering how innovation should be understood to be more inclusive of agents and activities (Nählinder et al., 2015). The authors also propose many suggestions for improving the ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in Turkey.

Coleman and Robb (Chapter 10) examine differences for men and women owners in firm growth, financing patterns and credit market experiences for high growth potential firms (those with more than five employees) in the United States that began operations in 2004 and were tracked through 2011. Women owners had less start-up experience and their firms were smaller (number of employees), had lower credit scores and were less likely to be in high-tech or have either intellectual property, a product offering or business premises. They observe large gender gaps in financing, since men start firms with nearly twice the capital that women have. These discrepancies actually widen at the higher end of the firm-size spectrum (top 25). In terms of financing patterns women were more reliant on owner equity and insider financing than men, and a very small fraction of their funds came from external equity. In terms of credit market experiences, women had similar loan application rates as men (controlling for other variables) and similar rates of actual loan approval (only lower in 2008). Nevertheless, women were more likely than men to not apply for credit when they needed it for fear of having their loan application denied. The authors provide different strategies to combat these problems, ranging from individual ones (that is building the financial capabilities of women) to systemic measures (that is ensuring access to bank/equity financing and encouraging greater participation by women on the financing and investing side).

The chapters in Part II evidence that patriarchal relations in less developed countries strongly influence women's contribution to the economy. Women's entrepreneurship is often relegated to the domestic and informal spheres, which means that a large part of their contribution is invisible (Kamuzora, 2009). Initiatives reported by Ford and Cooper in Chapter 8 signal the importance of targeting female entrepreneurs in the informal economy with specific support.

These chapters also clearly emphasize the positive influence that entrepreneurs themselves have on context – through cooperation, internationalization and social entrepreneurship. For example, in a turbulent environment, networks can substitute for deficiencies in the institutional environment (Welter, 2011; Welter and Smallbone 2010). In poor economies, artisans can successfully export through engaging in organizational networks, which provide them information and sufficient dimension to compete in international markets. However in order to export, firms also need a client orientation (customizing products and forms of payment) and an affordable price sustained in an efficient cost structure (see Chapters 7 and 8). There is much to learn from the resourcefulness of these women in resource-deprived contexts by looking at how they strategize to reduce costs (often requiring family involvement in the firm) and, at the same time, add more value to their clients.

Women can also earn a living helping their community, through social entrepreneurship. For example, in developing and post-socialist countries, social entrepreneurship can substitute for gaps in the governmental infrastructure. Social entrepreneurship is generally neglected in gender-related entrepreneurship studies (Jennings and Brush, 2013). One exception is the study by Datta and Gaily (2012), who observe individual perceptions of empowerment in economic security, development of entrepreneurial behaviour and increased contributions to the family. Social entrepreneurship creates new business models which deviate from traditional forms by blurring the boundary between the for-profit and non-profit worlds, since they try to accomplish social and environmental goals that characterize the non-profit world while generating income to achieve their sustainability – which is also typical of the for-profit world (Haigh and Hoffman, 2012). For-profit and social entrepreneurs in the developing world define success in terms of their work and their ability to spread economic benefits to others – a fact largely absent from previous research conducted in developed countries.

Chapter 10 by Coleman and Robb confirms that access to financial capital, a key resource input for growth-oriented firms, is more of a challenge for high-growth women-owned firms than for men. That the primary owner is a woman is negatively related to total financial capital, external equity, but positively related to fear of denial of loan application. The fact that high-growth women-owned firms have similar loan rates of application and no fewer loan denials should encourage women owners to submit loan applications, especially because firms with external funding from banks perform better (see Mari et al., Chapter 14 in this volume).

PART III WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS EMBEDDED AGENCY: ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION, FIRM CREATION AND MANAGEMENT

Part III of the book deals with how women experience an embedded agency when developing entrepreneurial intention, creating their firm or managing it. The first two chapters focus on factors explaining the entrepreneurial intention of students in two different country contexts: Spain and Lebanon. The third chapter proposes the importance of experiencing a trigger effect in order that women engage in entrepreneurship when benefiting from a welfare state (Iceland). The final chapter exposes the contextual and individual determinants of women's entrepreneurship performance in Italy.

Sánchez-García and Hernández-Sánchez (Chapter 11) draw on a theoretical framework rooted in social action theory and role theory. They propose a psychosocial model, aiming to observe whether there are gender differences in women's entrepreneurial intentions among university students across different Spanish regions. The results show no significant differences between men and women in internal locus of control or the perception of subjective norms. However, men have self-perceptions that are higher for self-efficacy, perceived behaviour control (PBC) and proactiveness, and reported significantly more favourable entrepreneurial attitudes than women. Regarding plans to start a business, men reported greater intention than women. Feasibility relationship to entrepreneurial intention is partially mediated by attitude, PBC and subjective norms, which significantly influence the students' entrepreneurial intention. There is also evidence that gender moderates these relationships: female students are more influenced by subjective norms when forming their entrepreneurial intention (they need to perceive support by their inner circle); and the effect of PBC on entrepreneurial intention is stronger for male students, who need to feel capable in order to undertake an entrepreneurial endeavour.

Alexandre (Chapter 12) tries to cover a gap in the literature by focusing on which factors explain the entrepreneurial intentions of students in Lebanon. Lebanon, as with other Middle East countries, has a very low female employment rate and a low female entrepreneurship rate (the majority of it in the informal sector), even though the country could be considered as less restrictive with regard to working women than other Arab countries. Almost half of the students aim to create their own business; but whereas a higher proportion of men report being prepared to engage in entrepreneurship just after completing their studies (indicating a higher risk propensity), the proportion of women reporting this intention increases with the time horizon. The majority of both genders, but especially women, think that it is not easy to create a company in Lebanon; but especially men think it is even more difficult for women because there is a perception that it is not a socially acceptable career option for women (as reported by around a third of the sample). Although a large majority of these educated men are adamant that men will accept the fact that a woman could create a venture (perceiving women as equal), almost all the women are unsure of the reaction of Lebanese men in general. However, the women's perception is that this difficult socio-cultural environment takes second place to the economic environment (restriction of capital), which they consider is the greatest difficulty to surmount in order to become entrepreneurs. Focusing on cognitive factors, the motive "to acquire autonomy" is very important for both genders.

Armannsdottir, Brindley, Foster, Wheatley and Pich (Chapter 13) conduct an exploration of Icelandic marketing entrepreneurs. The context of the study is novel, since entrepreneurship within the island's ecosystems is an under-researched area, and Iceland has been identified as the country with the world's smallest gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2014). However this small gender gap is not reflected in the entrepreneurship figures, which show that only 8 per cent of Icelandic women are entrepreneurs, compared to 15 per cent of men (GEM, 2009). Within this welfare state, women go into self-employment because of a "push" trigger event (for example the financial crisis made them redundant at their place of employment; it was difficult to find a job after maternity leave; unhappiness in a previous job), but they are highly satisfied with their entrepreneurial choice. They recall the emotional support provided by women's professional network associations while they were creating their firms. Once in business, they relied heavily on their social networks for getting clients, highlighting the importance of social capital in the Icelandic ecosystem (a small island), especially since the majority of these women work alone. The authors try to identify the cultural traits in the individual construction of personality, and find that some of these businesswomen possess the "action poet" trait (a cultural Icelandic personality pattern held by fiercely independent individuals, who have high levels of confidence and produce better-than-average results).

Mari, Pogessi and De Vita (Chapter 14) explore female entrepreneurship in Italy. Italy is an economically developed country with social context peculiarities such as:

- a higher unemployment rate of women, especially in the southern part of the country;
- lower levels of female education;
- weak development of welfare services, related to a great reduction in women's employment rates as the number of children increases;
- strong family traditions of self-employment;
- traditional division of roles, with women assuming domestic and caring responsibilities; and
- a pivotal role played by the family as a welfare provider.

The authors show how personal (that is human capital and motivations), environmental (business financing) and social context (family and work–life balance mechanisms) variables influence the performance (revenues) of Italian women-owned firms. Women business-owners with higher levels of education, more entrepreneurial experience, a clear need for achievement, and who invest more time on managing the firm have higher levels of performance. Those businesses which are more established, develop industrial activities (rather than services or agriculture) and receive funding from banks or providers (instead of family funding) also have better performance. Focusing on social contexts, being married is positively related to performance; however having children is negatively related, which might be due to the fact that using work–life balance mechanisms (in the form of help by others or flexible hours) does not impact significantly on performance.

These chapters suggest that for women, their perception of subjective norms – that is, support for their entrepreneurial initiative by their inner circle – is crucial to their participation in entrepreneurship (see Chapter 11). Therefore, a change in gender role expectations has to be promoted and internalized by women from childhood. For example, societal gender role expectations are at the root of occupational segregation. This segregation – through both the institutional framework and women's internalization of norms – perpetuates a scope of self-employment for women that limits their success. In developed economies, the concentration of women-owned businesses in the service sector, as well as other sectors considered appropriate for women entrepreneurs, contributes to the lower performance of women-owned business (see Chapter 14). Broadening young women's aspirations for career choices in a broad variety of fields, including science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers, and making them aware of the potential of entrepreneurship as a career option should be governmental priorities. Along this line, governments should also take into account the importance of offering entrepreneurship education in both formal and informal settings, since a more educated female population would engage in more profitable entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, in some developed economies, generous social policies may inhibit women's self-employment decisions (Neergaard and Thrane, 2011), and women may need a trigger event (such as difficulties in returning to the labour market after maternity leave or being made redundant in times of financial crisis) to encourage entrepreneurial action. However, social policies differ widely across developed economies. Therefore researchers need to design, collect and analyse data with knowledge of the particular context for their projects, because some policies can be helpful while others may hinder women's entrepreneurship (see Chapter 14).

However, in developing countries, and especially in Arab countries, despite the importance of socio-cultural barriers, finance can still be the greatest constraint for women. Women make up 70 per cent of the world's poor. These women are rarely financially independent, due to hurdles in accessing credit and financial services (Khan and Noreen, 2012) because their needs usually fall outside the formal banking sector and require them to use exploitative, informal moneylenders. Therefore, micro-finance can be used as a developmental tool to create emancipation and female empowerment (Littlefield and Rosenberg, 2004) – but the micro-credit programme has to be structured according to the social and economic context of women (Hartungi, 2007; Holvoet, 2005; Guérin, 2006) because it can explain the success or failure of this system in lifting them out of poverty. Many times these women do not have total control over the credit – their husbands do (in 60 per cent of cases according to Goetz and Gupta, 1996) – and, therefore, the efficacy of a micro-credit programme should not be sustained essentially in the rate of return of the credit (profitability) but in the ability to improve the lives of its recipients; its ability for social transformation (Gomez-Gil et al., 2005). For example, in Arab countries, since conventional micro-credit is interest based, which is forbidden in Islam, in order to eliminate faith-based conflict with regard to financing decisions Islamic finance will need to be interest free (Rahman and Rahim, 2007).

CONCLUSION

To overcome the gender gap in entrepreneurship, there is evidence that promoting gender equality in traditionally gendered institutions (for example governance structures, business networks, occupational distribution of genders within the labour market) can increase the quality of women's entrepreneurship by encouraging women both to select the entrepreneurial career path because of opportunity perception and to create firms with a higher potential for profitability. In developing economies, institutions should focus on creating a favourable environment for entrepreneurship with gender mainstreaming and targeting women as beneficiaries of specific programmes, inclusive of women operating in the informal economy and in rural areas. Within developed economies, many women need a push trigger event to engage in entrepreneurship. Therefore, policies that support continuing the business during maternity leave (without income reduction) or the provision of childcare which fits women's needs are needed to enhance their entrepreneurship outcomes. Occupational segregation, although present in all countries, is comparatively more harmful in developed countries since it enlarges the gap between men- and women-owned firms with regard to benefits received from governments (subventions, tax reductions) and firm performance. It is important to launch sensitization campaigns that target young women to make them aware of different paths for their studies from those traditionally followed by their families or acquaintances, for example STEM programmes. It is also important to provide young women successful, non-traditional role models to show that they can be successful in non-traditional occupations with better options for employment, either by creating their own firm or by working for others.

Culture also influences women's entrepreneurial intentions, especially in societies that do not perceive entrepreneurship as an appropriate career for women due to patriarchal relations and the confinement of women to the domestic sphere. Women seem to be highly influenced by subjective norms, the perception of legitimacy that their inner circle bestowed upon their entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, old stereotypes regarding either women's entrepreneurial capabilities or the appropriateness of self-employment as a career choice for women (especially now that employment is no longer a guarantee of security) have to be changed. If this occurred, then potential female entrepreneurs would be more encouraged to create businesses and the occupational segregation problem would be corrected to a greater extent.

Finding finance for funding and growing firms is perceived as an important barrier in all countries, but the sources of funding required by firms differ by context. In developing economies, micro-finance, with or without interest, is the key for women entrepreneurs if they are to avoid informal expensive funding. In developed economies, external debt and/or external equity is needed to support high-growth ventures. Although evidence suggests that there are no gender differences in loan approvals, women entrepreneurs still perceive that they are less likely to be funded. Therefore, increasing women's financial self-efficacy and fostering banks' initiatives to build innovative, comprehensive programmes that actively support women in business (see, for example, the Global Banking Alliance for Women (GBA) initiative) can prove helpful.

It is important to reiterate that entrepreneurs are embedded in social structures; but that they can influence their context or ameliorate its negative impact on their entrepreneurial endeavours. Women entrepreneurs can use different strategies – ranging from cooperation, internationalization and innovation. The latter has to be analysed with a wider scope, not only focusing on technological innovation but also on management innovation (in marketing, organizing, and so on) and the business model. Many entrepreneurs are engaging in social entrepreneurship, creating a value proposition based on strategic resources and allies, which allows economic and social objectives to be achieved. Cooperation is important in all contexts, but especially for entrepreneurs in deficient institutional environments as it can provide a platform for competing in international markets and for receiving market information and gaining clients for the business.

In sum, we would like to encourage academics to contextualize women's entrepreneurship research. This implies being aware of the context when reviewing the literature, proposing hypotheses or research questions, designing methodologies and analysing results. This will lead to a more insightful discussion of the findings and richer conclusions, especially for practitioners and policy-makers.

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