

1. Introduction: entrepreneurship, contextual, process and gender differentiations

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INTRODUCING RENT XXVII IN VILNIUS

This volume presents a selection of significant papers from the 139 presented at the RENT Conference XXVII hosted by ISM University of Management and Economics in Vilnius, Lithuania, in November 2013. The RENT Conference is one of the key entrepreneurship research conferences in the world, attended by 176 delegates. Entrepreneurship is an interdisciplinary field with many interesting and continuously emerging sub-fields. While some researchers are striving to push the field toward maturity with core theories with delineated topics and established methodologies, many see entrepreneurship research as an adolescent that continues to experiment and evolve in new directions. Consequently, the RENT XXVII Conference featured papers spanning a variety of topics and units of analyses, as well as methodological approaches and we have sought to reflect this when selecting the papers for this volume. The book also demonstrates how the field is developing, in terms of the lens that is used to examine specific research topics, its approaches and implications. This is evident in this volume in two specific ways.

First, the recent focus and importance of ‘context’ illustrates that the entrepreneurship research field is starting to gradually grasp what the implications are for the field. For example, it is not enough to generate new research from emerging economies, as opposed to Western countries. Rather it is important to understand the heterogeneity within the contexts and the continuous changes in the environments in which we are researching entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship gains new meanings across different places during different times. Nor do these meanings necessarily have to be always positive. Entrepreneurship as a dynamic concept can be also dysfunctional or have unintended consequences. At the core

is the idea that differences in entrepreneurial behavior between regions or universities, for example, cannot be understood without paying close attention to the institutions and social norms within which they are situated. In this sense individuals are not seen as completely free or autonomous but as embedded in their environments and social contexts. Some of the research papers presented at the RENT XXVII and in this volume reflects this understanding.

Second, interest in women's entrepreneurship has grown ever since researchers discovered that women are increasingly involved in entrepreneurial ventures and enter into entrepreneurial careers. Early studies focused on learning more about these women and how they differed from men in their entrepreneurial activities. Women's entrepreneurship grew into a sub-field that attracted the interest of many female researchers, and designated tracks in RENT conferences. Still the area continued to be at the margins, and quite often grouped with research of other marginalized individuals, such as ethnic, immigrant or disabled entrepreneurs. Recently the focus has moved away from gender as a variable toward understanding gender as a lens and a socially constructed category. This approach suggests that it is not about comparisons between the sexes but particular gendered processes that contribute to the marginalization or subordination of women as entrepreneurs. While gender continues to be associated with women and involving research of female entrepreneurs by female researchers, there are clear signs, with dedicated special issues, books and journals, that the research on gender and entrepreneurship is hardly of marginal interest only. Hence, it is of no coincidence that this volume features several chapters focusing on gender and entrepreneurship with the broad set of different approaches that is typical for the field.

INTRODUCING THE CHAPTERS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the liberalization of economies, entrepreneurship research placed an interest into generating new knowledge and information about the emergence of entrepreneurial activity and development entrepreneurship support systems in these transition economies. In Chapter 2, Chepurenko suggests that, overall, entrepreneurship development has been much lower than expected in these countries and it has not always resulted in bottom-up productive forms of entrepreneurial activity. However, he cautions against viewing this country group as having one form of transition but points toward the different transitions and consequently different entrepreneurship landscapes, resulting in difficulties in measuring the entrepreneurial quality in these different environments.

In Chapter 3, Marlow provides a critique of entrepreneurship research focusing on female entrepreneurs as the source of poorer entrepreneurial abilities and behaviors that can be corrected by women becoming and behaving more like men. The chapter warns against reinforcing our understanding of gender differences simply resulting from biological sex. Gender matters but it is through structural constraints that this takes place. For example, too often research is ignorant of the gendered disadvantages that constrain or hinder women to act entrepreneurially and produces results demonstrating that women are failing to grow their firms. Marlow also points out that the sub-field of women's entrepreneurship research may be a problem per se as it produces an enclave where these questions are investigated, and also allows for mainstream entrepreneurship research to remain gender-blind. Within entrepreneurship research, masculinity remains invisible but should be focused on in the future.

Institutional theory is increasingly applied to discuss the forces that shape entrepreneurial success. Institutional entrepreneurs are individuals and actors that are able to create new or to transform existing institutions. Chapter 4, by Hermes and Mainela, proposes a conceptual model of institutional change processes in erratic environments and entrepreneurial behavior therein. They suggest that the idea of institutional entrepreneurship is a paradox, since how can individuals change the institution of which they are part? Thus, the debate links to the tensions between structure and agency. The authors suggest that both the structure and agency need to be viewed as flexible and recursive. The chapter relies on three recent theoretical concepts of emancipation, bricolage and effectuation. Using these concepts, three attributes of entrepreneuring aimed at institutional change are identified: pluralism, non-linearity and non-teleology of entrepreneurial behavior. Methodologically the authors propose the study of the network level, located between the individual and the structural.

The study of entrepreneurial intentions is one of the enduring core themes in entrepreneurship research. In Chapter 5, Guerrero and Urbano contribute to the field by investigating the relationship between the university and social environments in two Iberoamerican universities. Adopting the social and institutional economic approaches, and an empirical test with a sample of 640 university graduate students in Spain and Mexico, the results confirm the mediating role of cognitive factors and the role of the university environment for start-up intentions. More specifically, the chapter confirms that a favorable perception of the university environment, mediated by cognitive factors, has a positive effect on start-up intentions. Moreover, the social environment mediated by cognitive factors positively influences start-up intentions both in Spain and Mexico. On a

practical level, the authors suggest a need for universities to recognize their role in nurturing entrepreneurial potential.

Entrepreneurship research highlights entrepreneurial self-efficacy as one of the most important antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. Chapter 6, by Tegtmeier and Mitra, investigates the relationship between the accumulation of human capital and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE). They draw upon a sample of 443 graduate women entrepreneurs in Germany. By focusing on female entrepreneurs, the authors wish to highlight the need to understand the heterogeneity among women, and the need to analyze women's entrepreneurial activities in their own right. The analysis confirms that human capital accumulation has an impact on ESE, and in particular practical management experience is a strong driver of ESE. Thus, women's entrepreneurial activities are influenced by their education but also by the quality of their careers and work experience.

Competitions designed for entrepreneurs are a part of entrepreneurship promotion globally. However, the gendered consequences of them have yet not been researched. In Chapter 7, Gögüş, Öрге and Duygulu investigate media discourses generated through and around entrepreneurship competition with the purpose of identifying the most successful women entrepreneurs and to share their stories with women potentially aspiring to become entrepreneurs one day. Their research is based on media texts on an entrepreneurship competition for women entrepreneurs in Turkey and the analysis focused on investigating how women's entrepreneurship is framed and constituted through the competition. The results suggest that, contrary to the overt objective of empowering women, the competition may in fact subjugate women by reconstructing the dominant, masculine entrepreneurship discourse.

While research on gender in entrepreneurship has gained a strong foothold in the field, there has been much less focus on gender in family business research. This may result from the unit of analysis, whether it is an individual or the business, and in family business research the unit is often the family firm. In Chapter 8, Byrne and Fattoum investigate the role of gender in family business succession by adopting a 'gender as a lens' approach. The research materials comprise interviews with ten family business members from five different family businesses in France. The findings illustrate the gendered nature of successor selection but goes beyond the essentialist binary categorization of men and women. For example, privileged forms of masculinity may explain the denial of succession to sons with feminine qualities. Their findings also emphasize how socialization of daughters for successions takes place differently from that of male siblings, and they highlight the ways that some potential successors may be overlooked – even by themselves – in the process.

Innovation in SMEs has been widely studied but limited attention has been paid to the role of employees in contributing to innovation, especially in manufacturing SMEs. On the other hand, the role of owner-managers is emphasized in the SME context. In Chapter 9, Aaltonen and Hytti investigate practices that hinder employee behavior in two manufacturing SMEs in Finland. The chapter builds on practice research in order to conceive innovative behavior as an unfolding of everyday practices. The authors identify two sets of practices, one dealing with the SME context (firm size) and the one with management. The employees perform versatile tasks leaving little room for innovation. In manufacturing the priority is maintaining production, so innovation is deprived of time and resources. Decisions were controlled by the owner-managers, and often done in a rapid manner. These practices did not reward or encourage the employees to be innovative. Clearly, there appears to be contradictory forces at work in SMEs in relation to the levels of autonomy of employees. While these results are significant and interesting, the authors conclude with a suggestion for more in-depth analyses from different contexts.

OUTLOOK

We hope that readers of this volume find the selection of papers stimulating and thought provoking. The chapters illustrate the vibrancy of the field and the scientific quality of the research undertaken, and reflects the breadth of contemporary approaches. In many ways the field is itself becoming more critically aware of the implications of research.

A common thread crossing through the chapters warns us against too simplistic interpretations and conclusions of our research. Even if it is possible to empirically identify differences in entrepreneurial behavior between groups of individuals or between regions, they remain shallow without an in-depth understanding of the groups and/or the regions within which they are situated. Entrepreneurship research appears to be evolving and it is intended that this edited volume stimulates further research agendas and approaches.