Foreword

Science is based on the assumption that knowledge is essentially cumulative, that is, new research is built on earlier knowledge (Kuhn, 1970). In all research fields, it is essential to obtain an up-to-date understanding of the accumulated knowledge, making it important to stop now and then to synthesize the knowledge within the field. This is particularly important in rapidly growing research fields, such as entrepreneurship.

Over the past five decades, entrepreneurship as a scientific field has grown significantly – from a small emerging ‘venture’ in the 1970s to a global industry today, with thousands of scholars around the world who consider themselves entrepreneurship researchers and teachers (Landström, 2020). The field continues to grow. An extensive number of individuals are attracted by entrepreneurship: for example, Master’s students taking their degree in entrepreneurship, PhD students conducting their studies on different entrepreneurship issues and, not least, a large number of scholars from other fields who migrate into this field. Some characteristics can be identified in the growth of entrepreneurship as a scientific field that have important consequences for knowledge accumulation – in terms of an extensive diversity and changeability of the field.

Entrepreneurship can be characterized as a diversified field of research and there are several reasons for this:

- The eclectic nature of the field makes it possible to include a large number of societal phenomena and incorporate concepts and theories from many different fields in the social sciences. Over the years, the number of prefixes and suffixes in entrepreneurship has increased, for example, social entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. The fragmentation of the field has created almost autonomous groups of scholars – or ‘tribes’ – who focus their attention on different topics within entrepreneurship and research using different methodological and paradigmatic approaches (Gartner et al., 2006; Landström and Harirchi, 2018).
- In addition, we have witnessed a significant globalization of entrepreneurship research. Scholars from around the world make contributions to entrepreneurship research by establishing a strong presence in international journals and at different meeting places. We can identify an increased international isomorphism (Aldrich, 2000), where knowledge, research themes and methods become similar across regions. However, having said that, we can assume that entrepreneurship is characterized by a strong ‘contextual heterogeneity’ (Welter, 2011), where entrepreneurship research reflects the contextual differences in entrepreneurial activities in different regions and countries, but also differences in research traditions in various countries.

Entrepreneurship is also characterized as a changeable field of research (Landström et al., 2012) in which old topics fade quickly and new ones constantly emerge. The past

decade has shown significant changes in society, such as new forms of communication (for example, Facebook), customization (for example, three-dimensional printing), online platforms (for example, crowdfunding) and new currencies (for example, Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies), but also an increased interest in social and sustainable aspects of entrepreneurship – changes that will significantly influence entrepreneurial activities in society. Entrepreneurship scholars have not been slow in keeping up with these changes in society, which have also attracted the interest of scholars in other fields, for example, information systems, geography and finance. As a consequence, entrepreneurship as a scientific field is now characterized by an interesting balance between ‘continuation’ of already existing research themes and knowledge platforms and ‘novelty’ in identification of new research opportunities based on the changes in society.

In this type of fast-growing, diversified and changeable field, there is always a risk that knowledge accumulation will be lost – new studies tend to rely more on the latest article than the accumulated knowledge within the field. However, I argue, in line with Wiklund (1998), that as in successful ventures in general, where favourable business opportunities tend to combine opportunity focus with resource orientation, it is not sufficient to identify new research opportunities unless they are securely rooted in previous knowledge. In this context, the second edition of the *World Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* is extremely important for the building of knowledge within the field that creates the basis for future research opportunities.

The *Encyclopedia* illuminates the diversity of the field – it includes the large variety of topics and concepts that are central to the field as well as its international character, with contributions by scholars from around the world covering topics that attract scholars in different parts of the world. This second edition of the *Encyclopedia* mirrors the balance between the ‘continuation’ of existing, well-developed issues in entrepreneurship research and ‘novelty’ research issues in entrepreneurship. The changes in entrepreneurship that we have witnessed over the past decade become obvious – the number of chapters has increased from 55 in the first edition to 76 in the second – and in this respect the book elaborates on a large number of new aspects of entrepreneurship.

I am honoured to provide this Foreword. In the second edition of the *World Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, Léo-Paul Dana has managed to gather a large number of the leading entrepreneurship research scholars in the world and synthesized their knowledge in an impressive work. As the book ensures a stronger knowledge accumulation within the field, it is not only important for all scholars already working within the field, but especially for new entrants who are attracted by entrepreneurship. I sincerely hope that the *Encyclopedia* receives the attention it deserves and impacts on our thinking about entrepreneurship.

Professor Hans Landström
Sten K. Johnson Centre for Entrepreneurship
Lund University, Sweden

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