Review of A. Fayolle, P. Kyro and J. Ulijn (eds.) ‘Entrepreneurship Research in Europe: Outcomes and Perspectives'

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that have vested interested in encouraging these beliefs, despite the limited evidence we have found in this book to support them.

As I said at the start... I only wish I had been clever enough to write it!

Notes

1. Taking the current editions of the eight ‘market leaders’ in Entrepreneurship and Small Business texts by UK authors only Deakins and Freel (2003) make any reference... and that is on one occasion.
2. My survey of eight textbooks yielded no references to optimism, but every one mentioned opportunity!

References


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*Entrepreneurship Research in Europe: Outcomes and Perspectives* has the aim‘... to provide some new insights into the landscape of entrepreneurship research in Europe and thus advance the European-specific debate on entrepreneurship research’ (p. 1). To *European* entrepreneurship scholars, this goal is provoking and challenging at the same time. However, before embarking on this endeavour, we, as European entrepreneurship *scholars*, will be cautious about advancing the European-specific debate on entrepreneurship research. Our ultimate efforts, yet, shall be directed towards advancing the theory of entrepreneurship, which, by its nature, shall and will be borderless. Further in their opening chapter though, the editors, I believe, implicitly support this concern as they anticipate that in the future ‘... the European contribution will again occupy a more established position as an equal and unique partner [alongside the American contribution to entrepreneurship research] in entrepreneurship debates’ (p. 3). Naturally then, one’s expectations from reading this book will be to realize the magnitude of the European contribution to entrepreneurship theory. To various degrees, this book satisfies such aspirations.

The book is organized into 3 parts, comprising a total of 14 chapters. Part 1 is
concerned with conceptual and methodological issues of entrepreneurship research in Europe, and includes four chapters. Chapter 2 (Davidsson) is a powerful example of the European contribution to entrepreneurship research. Two key contributions could be singled out. First, Davidsson (p. 36) proposes the following delineation of entrepreneurship as a scholarly domain (for review see Davidsson, 2003a):

Starting from assumptions of uncertainty and heterogeneity, the scholarly domain of entrepreneurship encompasses the processes of (real or induced, and completed as well as terminated) emergence of new business ventures, across organisational contexts. This entails the study of the origin and characteristics of venture ideas as well as their contextual fit; of behaviours in the interrelated processes of discovery and exploitation of such ideas, and of how the ideas and behaviours link to different types of direct and indirect antecedents and outcomes on different levels of analysis.

Second, being concerned with the existence of a sampling bias in entrepreneurship research, Davidsson makes first attempts to advance a theory of sampling selection (Berk, 1983: 396) in entrepreneurship research. According to Berk, without such theory, ‘. . . it is difficult to draw even preliminary inferences about the nature of the problem and impossible to choose how best to implement sample selection corrections’. As a starting point, Davidsson maintains that today the approach to entrepreneurship research resembles the study of factors that lead to success at gambling on race horses, in which one studies only people who have won money (received net gain), and concludes that gambling is profitable: the more you bet, the higher your gains; the more unlikely winners you bet on, the more you win. Therefore, researchers risk misrepresenting the nature of the research field by studying only successful and surviving firms. For example, researchers risk presenting these firms’ behaviour as success factors when in fact they may easily be the factors that increase the risk of failure (see also Davidsson, 2003b). He then discusses ‘an array of tricky challenges’ (p. 51) in studying on-going venture start-up processes, e.g. assessing the applicability of existing theory, identifying a relevant sample, and acknowledging heterogeneity as a fundamental characteristic of economic agents and entities.

Next, Delmar (Chapter 3) and Iakovleva and Kolvereid (Chapter 4) address some of the challenges identified by Davidsson in the previous chapter. For example, Delmar presents a detailed account of a longitudinal project which aims ‘. . . at understanding and explaining how new firms emerge and evolve in the sector of the economy that is research intensive’ (p. 55). Specifically, he discusses the theoretical framework and the research methodology of the project, including advantages and disadvantages of conducting a longitudinal study. Whereas Iakovleva and Kolvereid assess the applicability of existing theories ‘. . . to explain performance differences among young businesses’ (p. 81). They review several theoretical frameworks, mainly population ecology, strategic adaptation, resource-based, and behavioural-psychological perspectives. On the basis of this review, they put forward a model of new small venture performance, which remains to be tested. Dana, Bajramovic, and Wright (Chapter 5) conclude Part 1 by arguing that future research about entrepreneurship in Europe ‘. . . will
increasingly need to address issues of internationalization’ and ‘. . . should reflect the new reality that involves a multi-polar distribution of power and control’ (p. 102–3). Having examined the major trends that currently affect the ‘New Europe’, they propose a typology of networks that consists of horizontal, vertical, and trans-industry networks, and provide pointers for future research in Europe.

Part 2 brings together four chapters dedicated to philosophical and methodological debate within entrepreneurship research. Kyrö and Kansikas (Chapter 6) explore the current state of methodology by reviewing 337 refereed articles published in leading entrepreneurship journals in 1999 and 2000. They start on the ground that entrepreneurship research needs ‘a specific methodology’ (p. 121), and ‘its own philosophical basis’ (p. 131). Kyrö and Kansikas’ approach to the philosophical debate is a bit confusing. They define a paradigm ‘. . . as a group of theories . . . for describing the field of study’ (p. 134); as compared, for example, to the definition of paradigms by Burrell and Morgan (1979) as tightly coupled ideologies, ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies that guide modes of organizational analysis. Moreover, they use ‘paradigm’ as a mediator between ‘epistemology’ and ‘methodology and theories’ (p. 137). To a certain degree, their review findings though support Ogbor’s (2000: 622) earlier view that positivist paradigm has become an ideology that controls the concept of entrepreneurship by sustaining not only prevailing societal biases, but also serving as a tapestry for unexamined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of entrepreneurs.

Bhalla, Henderson, and Watkins (Chapter 7) continue the philosophical discourse by using multi-lens perspective to interpret a case study. Specifically, they use paradigmatic frameworks developed by Whittington (1993) and Burrell and Morgan (1979) to analyse the narration of the case study. Inter alia, this approach to discourse analysis is an excellent teaching tool for the introduction of philosophical paradigms to students. Bernasconi and Moreau (Chapter 8), on the other hand, employ a longitudinal case study methodology to understand the evolution of high-technology start-ups. Although Bernasconi and Moreau present ‘. . . some interesting management issues’ (p. 188), later in the chapter, they acknowledge that ‘. . . the results [of the study] did not bring any real new knowledge of the topic itself’ (p. 189). And this is worrying since the expectations from a case study research are to contribute to the development of the theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Eijnatten (Chapter 9) ends philosophical and methodological debate by introducing a chaordic lens perspective for understanding entrepreneurship; where the term ‘chaordic’ derives from an amalgamation of chaos and order (p. 194). The key characteristic of a chaordic enterprise is uncertainty, which, according to Davidsson (2003a), is an inescapable aspect of the environment of the emerging economic activity. Eijnatten (p. 202) argues that chaordic systems may become hypersensitive, when minor changes in initial conditions may have dramatic effects on the system’s outcome (the butterfly effect).

Part 3, and the final in the book, explores the significance of the European context to entrepreneurship research. Fayolle, Ulijn, and Degeorge (Chapter 10) explore via in-depth interviews entrepreneurial behaviour of engineers across
three cultures: French, Dutch, and German. Two types of entrepreneur engineers emerged as a result of their study: (1) the technician, who is very close to the inventor profile, and (2) the manager, who is very close to that of the innovator (pp. 248–9). Vernier (Chapter 11), via action research in a European telecom company, investigates ‘. . . the link between spin-offs, the dynamics of change and organizational learning’ (p. 256). His study generated six elements of learning: (1) formalization of the process; (2) integration of the process; (3) acquisition of new research skills and development of new internal relations; (4) opening of the company to foreign firms; (5) development of new skills and new processes of entrepreneurship development; and (6) fresh look on the valuation of the spin-off process. Aaltio (Chapter 12), employing an ethnographically oriented methodology, explores ‘how to remain entrepreneurial over time and how to fill the cultural gap that the founding entrepreneur leaves in the company’ (p. 279). This study suggests that when entrepreneurs leave, the company becomes vulnerable, and new, intrapreneurial practices are required instead. Aaltio concludes by asking whether ‘. . . the existence of the entrepreneur sometimes excludes the existence of the intrapreneurs’ (p. 289). Mahlämaki-Kultanen (Chapter 13) explores the rural entrepreneurship culture in Finland by employing method-triangulation methodology. The study supports ‘. . . a general similarity with the earlier findings of the Finnish national culture according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, with the exception of target-dependent power distance and higher masculinity’ (p. 307). In the remaining two chapters, Hall and Silva (Chapter 14) and Silva and Hall (Chapter 15) investigate and compare, in the context of the UK and Portugal, ‘. . . the factors associated with growth during the start-up phase of SMEs and their profitability once they are established’ (p. 315). Regarded as exploratory in nature, these two studies generated a myriad of pointers for future research.

The unifying theme of the book was to (re)position the European entrepreneurship research as an equal and unique partner alongside its American counterpart in entrepreneurship debates. Both conceptual and empirical chapters, put together by the editors of this book, contribute nicely towards achieving the above aim. The value of the book is in its capacity to contribute to entrepreneurship research and teaching, as well as to inform policy and management decisions.

References


This book contains 20 chapters focused on different aspects of research into women’s entrepreneurship, from an international perspective. This book is timely, as there is a lack of comprehensive work to bridge the body of work on women’s entrepreneurship from different parts of the world. However, many articles can hardly be related to international perspectives at all, while quality ranges from original research articles to ‘general briefing’ type papers. Nevertheless there are insightful findings from a broader perspective and generally the book is valuable in providing a solid foundation and a future direction for women’s entrepreneurship research.

The first part (Chapters 1–4) of the book is devoted to the most widely researched areas of entrepreneurship – personal characteristics and personality traits. Factors such as motivation, need for achievement, locus of control and personal characteristics were central to these studies. A major criticism of these studies is their descriptive nature and lack of theoretical contribution. This weakness is recognized by the authors of this book. Murial Orhan (Chapter 1) provides the first steps in addressing this issue by developing an integrated conceptual framework to investigate entrepreneurial motivation. She points out that women’s motives form a complex system of interacting factors and argues for a multidisciplinary approach linking theories from business to sociology.

The second part (Chapters 5–8) examines the constraints that serve to inhibit women’s success along with the strategies they use to achieve success. In the discussion of constraints (Chapter 5), the authors point out the diversity of women business ownership that leads to different constraints and difficulties faced by different women entrepreneurs. The emphasis on heterogeneity is supported by other authors and forms the main theme of this book. In Part III (Chapters 9–12) the experiences of women small business owners from different ethnic backgrounds is introduced and, in Part IV (Chapter 13–17), global perspectives on women’s entrepreneurship are covered.

The first four parts of this book try to present different pieces of the women’s entrepreneurship puzzle. The final part of this book (Chapters 18–20) is aimed at putting the pieces together to show the reader a global, bigger picture of women’s entrepreneurship. Chapter 18 (Oppedisano) ‘Past journey: global lessons learned from entrepreneurial women in US history’ focuses on role models from history.