

Entrepreneurship & Innovation – Broadening the Range (Barak S. Aharonson & Andreas Strobl)

Entrepreneurship and innovation are extremely important to economic and societal development. These areas hold many interesting opportunities for important contributions for researchers willing to embrace the embedded complexity. Over 40 years the European Management Journal has contributed to enhancing our understanding of a diverse range of entrepreneurship (Shirokova et al., 2016, Birkinshaw, 1998, Chreim et al., 2018) and innovation topics (Vermeulen, 2004, Nohria and Gulati, 1997, Gebauer et al., 2012). In this joint contribution, we highlight some of the complexities that should be addressed in future work and avenues for potential future contributions.

Entrepreneurship research. While the complexity of the field is significantly embedded in the context of entrepreneurial activity, studies often fail to note this issue. The assumption that all the individuals who found a venture are alike – even on average – is likely unfounded. For example, being entrepreneurial in a corporate context will very likely require very different competences and practices compared to what it means to be entrepreneurial as a female immigrant seeking to establish a living in a foreign country. Thus, contextual issues matter!!!

Contextual influences can be broadly classified along four categories: individual (e.g. different social identities impact how entrepreneurship is performed), organizational (e.g. ownership types influence entrepreneurial goals and behavior), environmental (e.g. regional networks shape entrepreneurial activity), and temporal (e.g. historical narratives form entrepreneurial perception). We encourage future studies to theorize using diverse contextual levels and examine the differences they comprise. For instance, research about regional entrepreneurship can provide a clearer picture to policy makers as well as to researchers, answering questions such as: (1) How do regional contexts shape entrepreneurial activity across various industries? and, (2) What are drivers or obstacles to regional entrepreneurial activity within specific industries? As for the individual contexts, insights into female, minority, immigrant, and disabled individuals' entrepreneurial inclination and actions would provide valuable contributions. Questions in this line include: (1) How do different individuals (e.g. young vs old) develop entrepreneurial mindsets? and (2) How do societies and cultures shape the different forms of entrepreneurship? In terms of organizational contexts, the public sector, non-profit organizations and family businesses are likely to provide different and unique contexts to study entrepreneurship. Finally, it is important to pay a closer attention to macro-economic trends and developments shaping entrepreneurial activity (e.g. the expected rise of the collaborative commons and declining marginal cost).

Innovation research. The field has suffered from definitional dilution leading to a lack of coherency. The implicit assumption that innovations are things new to an individual or an

organization seems widespread. However, that would imply that everyone is an innovator, and anything becomes an innovation. We call researchers to reconnect with the original notion of innovation, which is new to the world or, at the very least, new to the industry (worldwide)!!! New to the organization or the local industry but not new elsewhere, falls under mimetic behavior. Further, being creative does not equate with innovation. While art draws from creativity, not all art is innovative, even though a picture might be new to the world.

Finally, again context matters (e.g. Schaarschmidt and Kilian, 2014, Varriale et al., 2021)!!! Various contextual issues influence a firm's innovative activity and its impact on performance (e.g. the source of innovation (e.g. customers, suppliers), and type of innovation (product vs. process vs. service innovations, radical vs incremental)). Innovative processes and outcomes may differ across industries, cultures, ownership structures etc. We call researchers to clearly consider context, do in-depth analysis, seek the answer of what is different rather than what is similar, and, above all, be clear with the term innovation (e.g. Gebauer et al., 2012).

Capturing the complexity of entrepreneurship and innovation and its contextual influences calls for a diverse range of theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and data sources to generate a deep understanding. We encourage contributions based on solid theorizing from various fields, creativity in data collection, and rigorous analytical approaches.

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