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Disadvantage Entrepreneurship: Decoding a new area of research

Adnane Maalaoui, Vanessa Ratten, Sibylle Heilbrunn, Malin Brannback, and Sascha Kraus

Introduction

Lately, entrepreneurship has come to symbolize the principles of our modern socio-economy, in which markets and societies are one, and which then, following Audretsch's (2009) argument, become entrepreneurial societies. Embedded within the new 'common sense' (Lewis-Kraus, 2014; Szeman, 2015) entrepreneurs are celebrated as cultural heroes and self-employment has become an idealized ambition—combining freedom and independence, wealth and hard work, while creating added value for the economy and society (Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2019). The entrepreneur-hero's typical business is often hidden from popular discourse, as are governmentally created opportunities for unproductive entrepreneurship (Mitra, 2012). Instead, an atypical minority of extremely successful cases have attracted interest—media, research and policy—and have colonized the zeitgeist model. In this special issue we focus on the "others", those that are far from the entrepreneurial hero zeitgeist model.

We intend to generate reflections, debate and critical discussions on the disadvantaged entrepreneurs, following Karatas-Ozkan et.al. (2014) who propose, that in order to more deeply engage in philosophical and theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship research, paradigms need to be questioned.

Who are the disadvantaged entrepreneurs?

Disadvantaged entrepreneurs can appear in different forms and in different contexts. Causes for disadvantage can be as various as national identity, disabilities, sexual orientation, age, religion, or political affiliation (Morgan, 2019). Importantly, the assumption that all entrepreneurs have equal access to resources, participation and support, as well as an equal chance to develop a successful venture startup (McAdam et al., 2019) must be questioned concerning disadvantaged entrepreneurs. Thus, in terms of the OECD agenda, missing entrepreneurs are groups of people who need to receive support and access to equal opportunities and resources in order to create successful sustainable businesses (OECD, 2019). Next to seniors, immigrants and young people, women are among the key target groups of the OECD's inclusive entrepreneurship policy agenda, aimed at expanding entrepreneurship in order to create jobs, leverage technological development and meet economic and social challenges (OECD, 2019). Compared to a rather large body of literature focusing on constructive and positive characteristics of successful disadvantaged entrepreneurs (Balcazar et.al, 2014; Hsieh et.al, 2019; Saxena & Pandya, 2018) there are fewer attempts to address the impact of negative personal circumstances (Miller & Le-Breton Miller, 2017; Hsieh et.al, 2019).

In the call for this special issue we extended the scope of investigation to a variety of dimensions of disadvantage, very much encompassing the social divisions at the basis of inequalities, namely class, gender, race/ethnicity and (in)ability (Yuval-Davis, 2015).

Disadvantaged entrepreneurs – we believe - incorporate a wide range of individuals and groups that vary depending on their socio-demographic circumstances and attributes (Kushnirovich et al., 2017; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). They are young people and students (Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000), women (Marlow, 2014), seniors (Kautonen, 2008; Kautonen et al. 2011; Maâlaoui, et al. 2013, Curran and Blackburn, 2013), unemployed immigrants (Aliaga-Isla and Rialp, 2013; Kushnirovitch and Heilbrunn, 2017), ethnic minorities (Aldrich and

Waldinger, 1990; Carter et. al, 2015; Dana, 2007; Zhou, 2004), ex-prisoners (Cooney, 2012) and disabled people, including those with ADHD and physically handicapped (Dimic and Orlov, 2014; Logan, 2009; Pagán, 2009). Other features of disadvantaged people are also emerging due to continuous political and economic changes such as refugee entrepreneurs (Heilbrunn, Freiling & Harima, 2019; Heilbrunn, 2019) who are newly classified as disadvantaged (De Clercq and Honig, 2011). The Challenge – Based Model of entrepreneurship introduced by Miller and Le-Breton -Miller (2017) postulates that disadvantaged entrepreneurs can be classified based on the challenges they encounter, namely, economic, sociocultural, cognitive, and physical and emotional challenges (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). This classification is very inclusive and useful but should be extended to a more comprehensive model utilizing the social positioning approach introduced by Angela Martinez Dy in this volume.

Contextualizing disadvantage entrepreneurship

The interrelationship between entrepreneurship and context is increasingly recognised and discussed by scholars, practitioners and policy makers alike (Ratten and Dana, 2019; Elfving, Brännback, and Carsrud, 2018; Brännback and Carsrud, 2018; Welter, 2011; Welter and Gartner, 2016). Following institutional theory, contexts can be homogeneous or heterogenous, fostering or hindering, enabling or challenging entrepreneurship. Whereas much has been written about positive environmental factors that can foster entrepreneurship (Amankwah-Amoah, Danso, & Adomako, 2019), only recently have studies suggested that also unfavorable life challenges could be drivers of entrepreneurship (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Seguí-Mas, Oltra, Tormo-Carbó, & Sarrión-Viñes, 2018). As suggested by Miller & Miller (2017: 7): *“some critical drivers of entrepreneurship come in the form of serious life challenges rather than personal advantages and strengths, or favorable contexts”*. Understanding disadvantage

entrepreneurship and the disadvantaged entrepreneurs concerns the dialectics of agency and structure, individual and context. Therefore, there is an increasing need to investigate the role of individual differences as well as the role of contextual differences. In 2012 the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation featured a Special Issue on 'Silent Minorities' (Vol 13,2). Collectively the studies on the communities discussed in that special issue have substantiated the argument that entrepreneurs are not a homogeneous group and that each community is deserving of detailed attention regarding the unique attributes that might influence their ability to start and grow a business. The ongoing search for micro-level drivers involves concepts such as opportunity recognition, self-confidence, fear of failure, social capital, independence and networking, identified as the most central drivers recognized in academic literature (Arenius & Minniti, 2005; Koellinger, Minniti and Schade, 2007; De Clerq, Danis and Dakhili, 2010; Miller and Le-Breton-Miller, 2016). Corresponding within the tradition of the "European School of Entrepreneurship" (Gartner, 2013) - , there is a call to "give voice" to "other" entrepreneurs, the less privileged, those at the margins of society, those who do not "belong" (Ahl, 2004; Essers and Benschop, 2007; Pio, 2007; Ram et.al; 2008). Hence disadvantaged entrepreneurship as a topic has rapidly gained preeminence, also since it addresses the "other" entrepreneurs and accounts for economic, cultural, social and societal conditions (Hughes et al, 2012; Maalaoui, Castellano, Safraou and Bourguiba, 2013; Bullough, Renko, and Myatt, 2014; Irastorza and Pena, 2014; Carter et al, 2015; Maalaoui, 2019; Brännback and Carsrud, 2019). Disadvantaged entrepreneurs are embedded in environments and communities based on nested structures of social interactions and social discourses (Ferreira, Ratten and Dana, 2017), these environments are as heterogeneous as are the disadvantaged entrepreneurs themselves. Thus, heterogeneity evolves in agency as well as in structure; the disadvantaged entrepreneurs are as heterogeneous as are their contexts, therefore both have to be investigated in itself and in interaction.

Overview of the articles

Authors around the world submitted 23 papers addressing a wide range of issues concerning disadvantage and entrepreneurship. Of the 23 submissions 10 were selected by the guest editors and only four were accepted for publication in this special issue of the European Management Review.

The four papers cover a range of important issues concerning disadvantage and entrepreneurship: The article *"Not all entrepreneurship is created equal: Theorising entrepreneurial disadvantage through social positionality"* by Angela Martinez Dy suggests a theoretical and conceptual framework for addressing disadvantage. The article *"Self-efficacy and success of disadvantaged entrepreneurs; the moderating role of resilience"* written by Gabriele Santoro, Alberto Ferraris, Manlio Del Giudice and Francesco Schiavone addresses the physically and mentally disadvantaged. In their article *"Overcoming the liability of foreignness: A typology and model of immigrant entrepreneurs"* Călin Gurău, Leo-Paul Dana and Ivan Light develop a model of immigrant entrepreneurship. Ekaterina Murzacheva, Sreevas Sahasranamam and Jonathan Levie address gender as a double advantage in their article called *"Double disadvantage: Gender, spatially concentrated deprivation and nascent entrepreneurial activity"*. This special issue includes one conceptual article and three empirical studies, two utilizing quantitative methodology and one a qualitative study.

The first article titled 'Not all entrepreneurship is created equal: Theorizing entrepreneurial disadvantage through social positionality' by Angela Martinez Dy addresses the very nature of entrepreneurial advantages and disadvantages in terms of entrepreneurial agency and resources. Social positionality is located at the intersection of structure and agency, at the intersection of the outcome of social position and the process of action and meaning. Positionality thus accounts for resource allocation and accumulation and the potential

inequality in access due to existing social hierarchies (Dy and Agwunobi, 2019:1735). Thus, applying positional perspective, entrepreneurship is entrenched within persistent social hierarchies in which some entrepreneurs have access to critical resources and others do not. Dy - accounting for positionality, therefore, challenges the assumption that entrepreneurship is neutral or meritocratic (Dy, 2019). She maintains that awareness of positionality is crucial for contextualizing entrepreneurship, while focusing on the accessibility of resources and the criteria for gaining this accessibility. Thereby her article provides a conceptual lens for investigating and understanding disadvantage entrepreneurship.

The article titled 'Overcoming the liability of foreignness: A typology and model of immigrant entrepreneurs' by Calin Gurau, Leo-Paul Dana and Ivan Light suggests a new typology of immigrant entrepreneurship. The authors aim at integrating existing models into a wider framework encompassing four routes of immigrant entrepreneurship, each categorized by elements the immigrant entrepreneurs use in order to deal with their liability of otherness: individual resources, network embeddedness and entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors. The emerging types of immigrant entrepreneurs (ethnic enclave entrepreneur, transnational intermediary, trans-cultural entrepreneur and knowledge-based entrepreneur) in combination with Bourdieu's social practice network, are the building blocks of their general model of immigrant entrepreneurship. Within the framework of this model foreignness can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the entrepreneurs' habitus.

The article titled 'Doubly disadvantage: Gender, spatially concentrated deprivation and nascent entrepreneurial activity' by Ekaterina Murzacheva, Sreevas Sahasranaman and Jonathan Levie tackles double disadvantage of gender and location. Leaning on the intersectionality theory and the mixed embeddedness framework, the article explores the effect of gender differences in human capital and deprivation on entrepreneurship across different locations. Combining Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data with the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD),

this quantitative study included 135825 observations in 197 communities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The results of the study show, that women have more difficulties coping with local deprivation than men, even if they have the human capital associated with entrepreneurship. Double disadvantage occurs at the intersection of gender and location with spatial deprivation often consistent over time. Thus, not only are women disadvantaged in terms of human capital when starting a business, but local deprivation offsets human capital advantage. The authors argue that especially in deprived localities, where education opportunities are limited, entrepreneurship rates are lower and unemployment higher (Bynneer & Parsons, 2002) people are less exposed to entrepreneurship. Women have to deal with male entrepreneurial identity as well as with local deprivation, exposing them to “double disadvantage”.

Physically and mentally disadvantaged entrepreneurs were investigated in the study presented by Gabriele Santoro, Alberto Ferraris, Manlio Del Giudice and Francesco Schiavone. The article titled ‘*Self-efficacy and success of disadvantaged entrepreneurs: The moderating role of resilience*’ aimed at evaluating the impact of self-efficacy on disadvantaged entrepreneurs’ success, and the moderating role of resilience. Theoretically this quantitative study utilizes Bandura’s self-efficacy approach in combination with the psychological trait of resilience as the ability to face difficulties (Bullough et.al, 2014). The results of the study demonstrate, that for physically and mentally disadvantaged entrepreneurs, self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial success and that this relationship is strongly moderated by individual resilience. Business success is driven by self-efficacy and resilience, with the most successful disadvantaged entrepreneurs being those who rate highest on self-efficacy, are able to cope with difficulties and meet difficulties with creative solutions.

Conclusion

The meritocracy thesis, assuming “neutrality” and emphasizing that everything depends on individual hard work, complements the entrepreneurial hero zeitgeist model of the neoliberal paradigm. However, the mere concept of disadvantaged entrepreneurs is a case in point that the reality is different. We are not created equal! Moreover, not all disadvantaged entrepreneurs are equally disadvantaged; thus, it is important to understand the sources and consequences of disadvantage. The theoretical framework of social positioning as suggested by Dy (2020) enables to conceptualize entrepreneurial advantage and disadvantage more systematically. Positionality concerns agency, structure and culture and accounts for the unequal distribution of material, cultural and economic resources (Anthias, 2001) which are crucial for entrepreneurial undertakings. Context is an important dimension within the discourse of entrepreneurship in general (Welter & Gartner, 2016) and disadvantage entrepreneurship in particular. Positionality contextualizes disadvantaged entrepreneurship and also accounts for the often-overlooked matter of power relations within contexts of structures and cultures, highlighting who has and who does not have access to vital resources.

The Challenge-based model of underdog entrepreneurship proposed by Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2017) categorizes disadvantage in terms of challenges to be met by the entrepreneurs. Thus, for example the unemployed face economic challenges, immigrants face socio-cultural challenges, cognitive challenges are typical for people with dyslexia or ADHD and handicapped persons must face physical/emotional challenges. Following from the articles of this special issue, we believe that a revised model of disadvantage entrepreneurship should be expanded and incorporate social positionality. Disadvantaged entrepreneurs are “others” than, and their “otherness” is context dependent – in terms of structure and culture. Thus, when Călin Gurău, Leo-Paul Dana and Ivan Light discuss the liability of foreignness of immigrant entrepreneurs and present a typology, “otherness” concerns the migration status of entrepreneurs. Following the authors, they are adjusting habitus to current contexts in an

interplay of agency and structure and culture (Dy, 2020). The types of immigrant entrepreneurs presented in the article (the ethnic entrepreneur, the transnational intermediary, the transcultural entrepreneur and the knowledge-based entrepreneur) exemplify different entrepreneurial agencies in different cultures. The liability of foreignness can be an asset or a constrain, depending very much on the social positionality of the entrepreneurs. For Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2017) immigrant entrepreneurs have to face socio-cultural challenges. These challenges are an expression of domains of inequalities and hierarchies mainly in terms of gender, race and ethnicity and social class which are at the heart of hierarchies (Dy, 2020). The article by Ekaterina Murzacheva, Sreevas Sahasranamam and Jonathan Levie, “*Double disadvantage: Gender, spatially concentrated deprivation and nascent entrepreneurial activity*”, utilized intersectionality theory and accounts for positionality of women entrepreneurs in deprived locations. The article exemplifies how access to resources and entrepreneurial agency interact: women are discriminated as women and when living in deprived circumstances have more problems to break the vicious circle of deprivation than men. Thus, in the terms of Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2017) women entrepreneurs could be categorized as women facing socio-cultural challenges, since their “otherness” concerns being female as opposed to the male entrepreneurial hero image, but at the same time geographic location poses economic challenges. Their disadvantaged positionality concerns the intersection of gender and locality. Gabriele Santoro, Alberto Ferraris, Manlio Del Giudice and Francesco Schiavone in their article titled ‘*Self-efficacy and success of disadvantaged entrepreneurs: The moderating role of resilience*’ investigate disadvantaged entrepreneurs who must deal with cognitive challenges. The article focuses on the entrepreneurial agency and is less concerned with structure and culture. Their “otherness” concerns a health related condition that can foster or hinder entrepreneurial agency.

Disadvantaged entrepreneurship and disadvantaged entrepreneurs evolve around entrepreneurial agency, structure and culture in contexts. Insights from this special section enhance the broader understanding that entrepreneurship is not a ‘one size fits all’ activity, even more so when it comes to disadvantaged entrepreneurs.

The concept of disadvantaged entrepreneurship runs the risk of being vague and undefined, as it seems to include very broad categories of entrepreneurs. Sartori (1970) refers to this as conceptual stretching due to a way some concepts become devoid of meaning. Disadvantaged entrepreneurship needs to be defined in order to ensure that nuances are properly understood. In order to provide greater clarity, it is important that researchers, practitioners and policy makers use similar conceptualizations. To this end, a contextual approach is required that recognizes the complexity of the intersections. Crafting an updated and systematic literature review on disadvantaged entrepreneurship (Kraus et.al, 2020) should be a first step for the future development of the field.

Disadvantaged entrepreneurship represents an emerging area of research that is badly needed in times of societal and technological change. The uncertainty surrounding health pandemics like Covid-19 has shown that a more progressive and inclusive approach to entrepreneurship is required. Disadvantaged entrepreneurship can be a way to respond to major societal challenges also due to institutional failure and voids where governments do not provide adequate social services (Bjerregaard and Luring, 2012) and support.

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