

**Britta Timm Knudsen, Dorthe Refslund  
Christensen and Per Blenker (eds.):  
*Enterprising initiatives in the experience economy:  
Transforming social worlds.*  
Abingdon & New York: Routledge. 2015**

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Entrepreneurship is typically related to neoliberalist authoritarian capitalism rather than to cultural theories. The book *Enterprising Initiatives in the Experience Economy* claims to combine entrepreneurship and empowerment into one theme by exploring the cultural impact and aspects of entrepreneurship.

Edited by scholars at Aarhus University, the book is the fifth volume in a series of studies 'pushing the boundaries of entrepreneurship', as stated by the Routledge series editors Jay Mitra and Zoltan Acs. The definition of entrepreneurship to which the contributors subscribe describes entrepreneurship as 'value creation' by 'innovative people and organizations in creative environments that open up opportunities for developing new products, new services, new firms and new forms of policy making in different environments seeking sustainable economic growth and social development'.

Entrepreneurship is often divided into three forms: 1) external, which means starting a business and doing business, 2) internal, which means enterprising behaviour within an organization (intrapreneurship) and 3) enterprising behaviour or attitude in general. This book adopts the third and very inclusive definition of entrepreneurship, trying to capture it by drawing on social sciences and the humanities. For business studies, the novelty of this approach is that it moves beyond the primarily economic profit-seeking phenomenon and bridges the production of commodities and cultural production, referred to in existing literature on business studies as 'the cultural turn'. An attempt to elaborate theories and vocabulary for the study of entrepreneurship in the nexus of culture and economy is

needed in the global political and cultural economy, where traditional theories fall short because the boundaries between the economic and cultural spheres are becoming increasingly blurred. A negotiation between different fields of research can at best result in a trans-disciplinary framework.

Many of the chapters in the book exploring the enterprising initiatives in the cultural sphere are based on case studies that derive from fields of study as different as participatory urban planning and curatorial design, blogging and digital content production, entrepreneurship education, event making and industrial strategy. Phenomena captured in the case studies relate to a variety of different research topics, such as the community-driven development of city beaches, the Chinese copycat movement, online discussions of music festival goers and young adults acting as co-designers of an exhibition on digital natives.

The cases contribute well to the main idea underlying the anthology, which is how ordinary citizens can become enterprising by rallying around a common issue to form productive publics, thus disclosing new worlds and revealing how organizations can support and scaffold the formation of these types of activities, which may serve the common good. All forms of capital—economic, social and cultural—can constitute the base of entrepreneurial value exchange. The lines between the producer and the receiver and between the service provider and the customer are porous, if there even are any.

The core concepts of the volume, *Experience Economy* by Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore (1999) and *Intensive Environments* by Scott Lash (2007, 2010), originate from within business studies. Outlining a framework for the collection of articles, the editors of *Enterprising Initiatives in the Experience Economy* propose an ontological turn within the experience economy, following the first turn from material to immaterial production and the second turn from consumer behaviour to prosumer behaviour. The editors even go so far that they introduce the term ‘dual social constructivism’ to leverage social constructivism as we know it from Berger and Luckmann. They argue that opportunities can only emerge when co-constructed with other social beings; therefore, ‘it is important not simply to understand that the world is socially constructed, but to act practically in a social constructing way’ (p. 9).

There is no denying that studies of entrepreneurship are likely to benefit from the introduction of new ideas to their discipline, but when concepts are transferred from one context to another, several issues should be discussed. Concepts such as agency, empowerment, self-determination and collaboration were adopted from the social sciences and the humanities, where they have typically been elaborated in relation to theories of democracy and political participation, (social) psychology and learning, and theories of culture. The volume shows that it is not entirely unproblematic to transplant these theories in a new environment such as business studies.

First, entrepreneurship in its third form does not necessarily function as an identity label or a tool for identity creation; many of the agents defined as ‘enterprising’ in this context would probably not align themselves with the umbrella concept of ‘entrepreneurship’,

or they would perhaps not even realize the consequences of the economic, social, cultural and personal value creation to which they are possibly contributing. Indeed, what is less in focus in the volume is to what extent the participants in fact realize the existence of and are willing to be included in the frame of entrepreneurship. The contributors inquire less into the incentives that cause producers and participants to collaborate and to choose to act for the common good; instead, sometimes the possibilities that appear through openness, collaboration, risk taking and other aspects of the entrepreneurial paradigm are relatively uncritically endorsed.

As the processes of entrepreneurship are articulated together with concepts of creativity, innovation, flexibility, hope and solution finding, they can be difficult to oppose or resist; the politics of possibility and the feeling of everything being changeable appear relatively alluring. The editors propose that 'the general empowerment of consumers encompasses the possibility of altering both economy and culture' (p. 2). It is truly important to follow the sub- and countercultures of entrepreneurship and inquire into the subversive strategies that potentially emerge from these bottom-up initiatives. However, a deepened examination of structures of power and the potential transformativeness of practices would be relevant to contest the banalities of the inspirational stories of success and happiness that often accompany the accomplishments of entrepreneurship.

Second, one element that remains in the background in *Enterprising Initiatives in the Experience Economy* is the discussion about the connection of enterprising activities to the very basics of entrepreneurship, the economy. Focus is on how things operate in the cultural sphere, whereas the economic principles for the activities of 'risk-takers', 'makers', 'tinkerers', 'project-makers' and other engaged individuals and organizations are discussed less. Yet for organizations, communities and individuals involved in the entrepreneurial processes it would be important for the sake of the assessment and development of the outcomes to know how social and cultural values are captured, i.e. quantified, measured and evaluated. Without a more systematized approach it may be difficult to say what is enterprising (enough), and why it matters.

A critical afterword might have reframed the theoretical ideas put forward in the introduction and in the individual chapters and caused them to resonate even better with the theoretical frame of entrepreneurship. In summary, however, the book offers a multifaceted view of recent trends in participatory culture and provides readers with useful tools for making sense of them. The book opens up interesting discussions and provides a rich basis for further elaborations of the conditions and criteria for what constitutes and is not understood as entrepreneurship, and how sub- and countercultures of entrepreneurship can be studied.

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