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Entrepreneurial Groups: Definition, Forms, and Historic Change

*Isabell Stamm, Allan Discua Cruz & Ludovic Cailluet**

Abstract: »*Unternehmerische Gruppen: Definition, Formen und historischer Wandel*«. This article connects with the rapidly expanding idea that entrepreneurship is a collective action undergone by entrepreneurial groups – a debate so fundamental in its impact that it may ring in a paradigm shift in entrepreneurship studies. Yet, the emerging small group perspective to entrepreneurship treats the empirical phenomena as new, whereas historical studies suggest that entrepreneurial groups have been present all along, but have taken different forms across time and cultures. We adopt the view that the concept of entrepreneurial groups, which can function as an overarching term for various forms of collective engagement in entrepreneurship, goes beyond start-ups and new venture teams. This article features a broad definition of entrepreneurial groups as collaborative circles engaged in an entrepreneurial project and operating under organizational pressures. Such conceptualization is important because it allows a context-sensitive perspective of entrepreneurial groups that attends to the social and historic circumstances of group formation and their development. The papers featured in this special issue highlight diverse theoretical and empirical approaches to assist in understanding collective actors in entrepreneurship and further our understanding about entrepreneurial groups.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, groups, teams, organizations, collective action, capitalism.

1. Introduction

Early works about entrepreneurs express a fascination with heroic, mostly male, individuals that single-handedly push forward innovative ideas, take on risks and strive to increase wealth (Cooney 2005; Deutschmann 2008). Exam-

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ples such as Andrew Carnegie, Benjamin Franklin, and John D. Rockefeller have embodied the ideal type of an entrepreneur in the thinking of Joseph Schumpeter, Max Weber, and Israel Kirzner. Despite the differences in their approaches, they share an understanding of the entrepreneur as a physical person equipped with particular cognitive competences and character traits who has internalized meritocratic and capitalist values and has the ability to mobilize resources. The entrepreneur is a hustler who sees opportunity where others see obstacles. This image has deeply influenced conceptual and empirical approaches to entrepreneurs and even inspired a distinct stream of entrepreneurship dedicated to identifying the personality traits of entrepreneurs (Swedberg 2000).

These same early works, however, voice unease about such a strong individualization of entrepreneurship. Schumpeter, for example, suggests that being an entrepreneur is only an episode in one's life course and entrepreneurs can only temporarily be distinguished from managers or capitalists (Schumpeter 1980, 116). As a consequence, he turns to studying the bundles of activities that make up entrepreneurship and arrives at his famous definition that entrepreneurship is a recombination of production factors (Schumpeter 1980, 214). Weber, as another example, suggests that the spirit of entrepreneurs is largely molded by their cultural context (Weber 1988). As a consequence, he turns to studying the socio-historic conditions that bring about entrepreneurs as gatekeepers in the transition towards a rationalized capitalism (Weber 2009 [1921]). The picture conveyed here is that of entrepreneurship being a dynamic and socially embedded process.

This image has also sustainably influenced entrepreneurship research. In fact, a process view of entrepreneurship has turned out to be the dominant approach in this interdisciplinary research field (Gartner 1988; Moroz and Hindle 2012). This approach carries forward the unease about an over-individualized view of entrepreneurship (Swedberg 2000), even claiming at times that asking "Who is the entrepreneur – is the wrong question" (Gartner 1988). As a consequence, as Davidsson (2016) and Gartner (2010) critique, the field has not been able to grasp the interaction of the multiple actors involved in entrepreneurship.

Following through with a process view, the question arises: what kind of social orders are produced and reproduced in the process of entrepreneurship? And relatedly, under what conditions do these orders arise?

Entrepreneurship scholars increasingly see entrepreneurship as the collaborative activity of a *set* of individuals. Hence, instead of zooming in on the cognitive and creative capacities of single individuals or examining the creation of new businesses, their focus shifts to the interactions among a small group of individuals engaged in an entrepreneurial project (e.g., Ben-Hafaïedh, Micozzi, and Pattitoni 2018; Breugst, Patzelt, and Rathgeber 2015; Jaskiewicz, Combs, and Rau 2015). This shift has revolutionary character, as it establishes a "new"

unit of analysis in the interdisciplinary field: the entrepreneurial group (Ruef 2010). With this focus in place, questions about interactions and dynamics within such groups become relevant. Triggered by repeated inconsistencies in the characteristic individual-process-gap in entrepreneurship research, the shift brings about a new understanding of entrepreneurship as collective action, gradually debunking the lone entrepreneur as myth.

Similar to the early fascination with the personality and characteristics of the lone entrepreneur, we can observe a quest to understand the inner workings and interests of such groups in relation to the success of their venture (Jin et al. 2017). Here, the hero entrepreneur simply seems to be substituted by a hero entrepreneurial group. Less pronounced, however, are reflections about the conditions that allow small groups to bundle their activities and the social and historic embedding that may explain the fluid character and changing forms of groups across time. Yet, for an understanding of entrepreneurial activity, as new economic sociology pronounces (e.g., Swedberg 2004, 1991), it is necessary to combine the analysis of interests with an analysis of social relations. The way in which individuals coordinate their activities to obtain the capital and labor necessary to sustain a business venture can be studied by considering the social structure within which small groups construct firms (Granovetter 2000). At the same time, the activities of entrepreneurial groups may not be limited to a single firm and instead create links between firms, as can be learned from the research on interlocking directorates (Faccio and Lang 2002; Koskinen and Edling 2012) and interorganizational relations (Mizruchi and Galaskiewicz 1993, 1994; Mintz and Schwartz 1985). As such, entrepreneurial groups provide the micro-foundational basis that allows an understanding of the role of structures in interactions and the impact of the group as “skillful actors” on the stability and dynamics of economic processes (Beckert 2003; Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

It is the goal of this HSR Special Issue to advance our knowledge on entrepreneurial groups as social orders of the entrepreneurial process in a context-sensitive manner. In the following sections, we provide a rough overview of the emergence of a small group perspective in entrepreneurship, suggest a definition of entrepreneurial groups, and briefly sort through various forms of such groups and their historic change. On these grounds, we introduce the collection of seven contributions to this special issue and close by outlining avenues for future research. The contributions feature in-depth and interdisciplinary empirical insights into various forms of entrepreneurial groups and their contextual embedding. By scrutinizing various historic and current forms of entrepreneurial groups, we intend to further a discussion about the collective actors of entrepreneurship. In doing so, this special issue furthers our theoretical and empirical understanding about entrepreneurial groups.

2. The Emergence of a Small Group Perspective in Entrepreneurship Research

In the interdisciplinary field of entrepreneurship research, small groups that collectively act in an entrepreneurial fashion have long been marginalized in favor of the super-hero entrepreneur. This, however, is rapidly changing (Cooney 2005; Ben-Hafaïedh and Cooney 2017; Harper 2008; Wright and Leuven 2009). In the following, we will discuss the emerging small group perspective in entrepreneurship research. We start with sketching the variance between a narrow and a broad understanding of this unit of analysis. We then argue that a broad understanding allows us to subsume a large number of empirical works under the umbrella of entrepreneurial groups, forming a critical mass of contributions that, taken together, may lead to a paradigm shift in entrepreneurship research. We further reflect upon available theoretical perspectives about entrepreneurial groups and discuss factors that may constrain theory building.

2.1 From a Narrow to an Encompassing Understanding of Small Groups in Entrepreneurship Research

The nucleus for an emerging group perspective on entrepreneurship forms a recent trend in the study of new venture teams and entrepreneurial teams (e.g., Preller, Breugst, and Patzelt 2015; Loane, Bell, and Cunningham 2014; Forbes et al. 2006; Franke et al. 2008; Ucbasaran et al. 2003; Vanaelst et al. 2006; West 2007; Cardon, Post, and Forster 2017). The trend examines the interactive nature of being entrepreneurial (Gartner 2001; Shepherd 2015) and is largely influenced by a tradition of creation and network thinking in entrepreneurship research (Ferreira, Fernandes, and Kraus 2017; Ács and Audretsch 2010). Generally, such teams are understood as two or more individuals who jointly establish a new business and hold a formal role in that business (e.g., owners or managers). A milestone in this development, if not its starting point, marks the research agenda suggested by Kamm, Shuman, Seeger, and Nurick (1990), who call for defining the dimensions of such teams, the challenges of assembling teams, and the identification of success factors (for a reflection about antecedents, see Cooney 2005). Since then, we can observe an exponential growth of studies dedicated to team engagement in entrepreneurial ventures (Klotz et al. 2014; Ben-Hafaïedh 2017).

Large parts of these studies focus on start-ups, using entrepreneurial education programs, incubators or accelerators, start-up events, or funding decisions as a stage on which to observe the behaviors of entrepreneurial teams. A sociological perspective emphasizes that studying such entrepreneurial teams only highlights a particular subset of groups bound to a very specific institutional

context within the full range of potential entrepreneurial settings (Ruef and Lounsbury 2007; Thornton 1999; Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, and Urbano 2011; Watson 2012; Welter 2011; Aldrich and Cliff 2003; Granovetter 1985; Swedberg 2000).

Ruef (2010) introduces the term entrepreneurial groups to encompass more diverse forms of engagement in business creation, including the financial, time, and emotional investments of family members, neighbors, or former colleagues who operate beyond the limelight of the start-up scene, but act as “everyday-entrepreneurs” (Welter et al. 2016). This expanded conception also allows for the examination of informal engagement in the creation of a business (such as by the supporting spouse or family helpers). While the term “entrepreneurial team” implies stable and cooperative relations, the term “entrepreneurial group” encompasses multiple forms of relations, even those that are temporary or hierarchical. For the remainder of this article, we will thus use the term entrepreneurial group.

Expanding the scope of entrepreneurial groups even further, Harper (2008) suggests studying entrepreneurial groups beyond business creation. This suggestion is grounded on a broad understanding of entrepreneurship as the creation or discovery of opportunity (Alvarez and Barney 2007), and acknowledges that groups do not disappear or fully blend into the organization once a business has been created (Shane 2008; Shane 2007). Similarly, Foss, Klein, Kor, and Mahony (2008) argue that a focus on start-up companies or even self-employment understates the role of entrepreneurship in the economy and in business organizations. Rather, entrepreneurial groups can engage in repeated business founding over time (e.g., Discua Cruz, Howorth, and Hamilton 2013; Iacobucci and Rosa 2010) or act entrepreneurially within an existing organization (e.g., Thornton 1999; Courpasson, Dany, and Marti 2014; Stewart 1989). This view invites historic and processual analysis of changing engagements, group compositions and contexts of entrepreneurial group activity.

Allowing for such a broad and dynamic concept of entrepreneurial groups (we will offer a definition in the next section) opens a new perspective on entrepreneurship as collaborative effort. This perspective demotes the entrepreneur to a group member, who can act within a variety of roles, but can only drive the entrepreneurial process in collaboration with others and in a specific social and historic setting. In contrast to an ego-centered network, in which “the entrepreneur” as an individual agent draws upon resources from strong and weak tie constellations, a group perspective acknowledges that this drawing of resources creates interdependent and institutionally framed linkages among individuals who are jointly invested in an entrepreneurial project (i.e., a clique within a network).

2.2 Integrating Fragmented Research under the Umbrella of Entrepreneurial Groups

Adopting a broad definition of entrepreneurial groups allows us to shed new light on previous empirical research in the field. It becomes obvious that numerous clusters of studies exist that have been examining various shades of group engagement in entrepreneurship, although they may not have used the terminology of entrepreneurial groups. Here are a few examples:

- Research on start-ups, spin-offs, and new venture teams looks at the formation of such groups, their capability to allocate resources and to negotiate roles, typical compositions, and performance (e.g., Visintin and Pittino 2014; Breugst, Patzelt, and Rathgeber 2015; Jung, Vissa, and Pich 2017; Jin et al. 2017; Lechler 2001; Ben-Hafaïedh, Micozzi, and Pattitoni 2018).
- Studies on top management teams address cohesion and group dynamics with these small groups as well as their capability to create newness and novelty within organizational structures (e.g., Amason, Shrader, and Tompson 2006; Barrick et al. 2007; Smith et al. 1994).
- Family business research vividly highlights how engagement in an entrepreneurial activity can be transferred across generations within entrepreneurial families. This research thus speaks to the reproduction of entrepreneurial groups as well as to the need to coordinate entry and exit of group members (e.g., Pieper, Astrachan, and Manners 2013; Salvato, Chirico, and Sharma 2010; Nordqvist and Zellweger 2010; Zellweger and Sieger 2012; Jaskiewicz, Combs, and Rau 2015; Stamm 2016).
- Studies on the working conditions of self-employed entrepreneurs, and in particular of women, point towards the relevance of the household context as a realm for informal engagement in entrepreneurial groups, particularly with regard to spousal support (e.g., Jennings and McDougald 2007; Eddleston and Powell 2012; Loscocco and Bird 2012; Gudmunson and Danes 2013).
- Migrant entrepreneurship points to the relevance of both individual, transnational experiences and local community context in order to strike collaborations as entrepreneurial groups (e.g., Casson and Godley 2010; Dimitratos et al. 2016; Ma et al. 2013; Discua Cruz et al. 2016).
- Finally, studies on the emergence and development of industries or fields highlight the collective effort of groups in gaining legitimacy and in (re-)producing institutions (e.g., Ferrary and Granovetter 2009; Khaire 2014; Khaire and Wadhvani 2010; Haveman and Khaire 2004). In these studies, groups appear as central elements in a yet larger social context, including network relations, institutions, and intermediaries.

We argue that a small group perspective allows the linking of these various contributions under the umbrella of collaborative engagement. Together they

form a critical mass of contributions, fostering an increasing consensus in the field about entrepreneurship being a group effort. These studies have repeatedly demonstrated the empirical relevance of small group engagement in founding and managing businesses (e.g., Ruef 2010; Astrachan and Shanker 2003; Colli and Rose 2003).

2.3 Theorizing about Groups in Entrepreneurship

The existing rich empirical work turns conceptual clarity and theoretical integration into pressing issues. For example: What are the common characteristics of such collectives engaged in entrepreneurship? How do the bonds formed through entrepreneurial activity relate to other social bonds, such as family or friendship ties? How does social order arise in the process of entrepreneurship and how does it shape the process? Current theorizing about entrepreneurship is still in its infancy and ill-equipped to answer these questions. Nevertheless, some important steps have been taken, as we will outline in the following.

Particularly instructive appear to be the works on group involvement in small and medium sized businesses. For example, Katz (1993) and Gersick (1990) argued that the development of a small group and its entrepreneurial project varies strongly by situation, depending on time and task demands. Shedding some light on the inner workings of the black box of team development, they point towards the relevance of shaping and taking roles as well as the establishment of task routines. According to Katz (1993), entrepreneurial group members have to learn how to act within the group. The adaptation of tailored and interlinked roles constitutes a way of thinking in terms of “us vs. them” and enables coordinated activity.

Along these lines, Taylor (1999, 7) develops an alternative view of small firms as expressions of temporary coalitions of networked venturers and their entrepreneurial endeavors. In this view, firms are thus structured snapshots of the underlying coordinated activities within a coalition of entrepreneurs that operates under specific economic, social, and regulatory conditions. Hence, firms are temporary “*social artefacts of collective agency*” (Taylor 1999, 2) that change when their venturer’s interests shift. Taylor situates this idea of temporary coalitions in the “gift economy”, advocating an exchange situation between durable personal relationships built on trust, reciprocity, and obligation. In sum, these contributions point towards a complex relationship between the layers of individuals, groups, and organizations, where the interactions among group members define the individual entrepreneur’s role and imprint the organizational structure.

In his editorial on entrepreneurial teams in a special issue of the International Small Business Journal, Cooney (2005) embraces the idea of groups being a fluid and evolutionary concept that is defined by active participation. He offers a discussion about typical stages in the process of building an organization

through a group, synthesizing his reflections into a model of team venture creation. The starting point of the model forms either the inception of an idea that binds individuals to a team or an event that creates a team that then searches for an idea. The procedure then flows through an allocation of required resources, team development, and eventually the implementation of the idea, by launching a business. The model succeeds in integrating teams not only as components, but as collective actors of entrepreneurship. However, the specificity of this collective actor vs. an individual remains in a black box; further, potential interaction effects between team development and other stages are not considered.

Both Harper (2008) and Foss et al. (2008) utilize an understanding of entrepreneurship as a collaborative (learning) activity under uncertain conditions that involves drafting future plans in a profit-seeking, problem-solving process. Both integrate their analytical thinking about entrepreneurial groups in economic theory, economic network theory, and a resource-based view, emphasizing the dimension of the problem situation that requires group entrepreneurship. Harper (2008, 614) argues that bounded structural uncertainty and perceived interdependence arising from common interest are strongly conducive to group formation. Foss et al. (2008, 81) see two significant elements at play: (1) heterogeneous yet complementary managerial mindsets on the processes of discovery, creativity, and learning; and (2) healthy team dynamics that enable them to debate about and capitalize on their knowledge assets. In this view, the emergence of an entrepreneurial group can occur within, across, or outside firms, which brings about two advantages: it achieves an analytical distinction between groups and organizations (it is firm neutral) and it can specify the entrepreneurial character of group activities (which is future-oriented problem-solving rather than firm creation). At the same time, this approach remains short on defining the relationship between entrepreneurial groups and organizations.

The most elaborate theory of entrepreneurial groups thus far, put forward by sociologist Martin Ruef (Ruef 2002, 2010; Aldrich and Ruef 2006), systematically expands these ideas to what he calls a relational demography of entrepreneurial groups. Ruef argues that the creation of an entrepreneurial group goes hand in hand with the emergence of a business. The activities by the group can be read as an ongoing recruitment and selection process for individuals invested in the entrepreneurial project. During this process, groups negotiate roles of who owns, controls, manages, and supports the organization – which explicitly include all forms of time, money and emotional investments. By situating entrepreneurial groups in both social embeddedness theory (e.g., Granovetter 1985) and network analysis (e.g., Ibarra 1993; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears 2006; White 1992), Ruef is able to identify four mechanisms for explaining the dynamics of entrepreneurial groups. These are:

in-group biases on salient demographic dimensions; (2) intimate relationships to spouses, cohabiting partners, and kin; (3) a tendency to organize activities in residential or “virtual” spaces; and (4) entrepreneurial goals that prioritize social and psychological fulfillment over material well-being. (Ruef 2010)

His approach to relational demography also makes headway in understanding the group’s capacity to be innovative or to affect firm survival. Nevertheless, the application of this approach remains limited to venture creation and emphasizes group composition over collaborative activity.

Overall, theorizing about entrepreneurial groups is still emerging and requires further clarification of the underlying aspects of small groups as social orders, the capacity of small groups to collectively act entrepreneurially (Forsström-Tuominen 2015), and the specification of the relationship between entrepreneurial groups and organizations. Within entrepreneurship research, new emerging theoretical streams, such as a practice perspective on entrepreneurship (Clercq and Voronov 2009; Steyaert 2007; Johannisson 2011), effectuation theory (Fisher 2012) and narrative and communication perspectives on entrepreneurship (Hamilton, Discua Cruz, and Jack 2017; Larty and Hamilton 2011; Gartner 2007), capture group interactions and are becoming more open towards the integration of small groups as collective actors of entrepreneurship. Beyond entrepreneurship research there is an opportunity to reconcile the vast theorizing about groups in other social spheres (the family, the work-group, even the top-management-team) with entrepreneurial activity. The challenge will be to specify the particularities of entrepreneurial groups in comparison to other types of collaborative efforts (Parker and Corte 2017). Further, contributions in organization theory may offer insights to the group-organization-intertwinement (e.g., Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Taylor 1999; Granovetter 1985). Internal and external conceptual compatibility may nurture essential theoretical advancements and even further promote a shift towards a small group perspective on entrepreneurship.

2.4 Challenges in the Unfolding of a Small Group Perspective

As outlined thus far, the conditions for a shift towards studying the interactions of groups involved in entrepreneurship are generally favorable. Yet, to fully mature, this perspective faces at least four challenges:

First, the emerging small group perspective on entrepreneurship resonates well with contemporary narratives about entrepreneurs being collaborative teams rather than genius loners or family patriarchs. There is a striking coincidence between the popularity of a narrative about friends in entrepreneurship (start-ups, spin-offs) and an increased interest in studying group dynamics within entrepreneurship. Reflections about the cultural narratives of entrepreneurship as well as the field of entrepreneurship as a player in producing and reproducing these narratives are essential components in developing a small group perspective on entrepreneurship.

Second, another key constraint in theorizing about entrepreneurial groups is an often ahistoric perspective on entrepreneurship that only few scholars have begun to overcome (e.g., Jones and Wadhvani 2007; Kirsch, Moeen, and Wadhvani 2014; Wadhvani, Jones, and Bucheli 2014). Placing entrepreneurial groups in their respective historic settings will open an understanding of the embeddedness of group formation and behavior in historical understandings of trust, loyalty, and solidarity among family members, friends, and other ties that affect group relationships (e.g., Harlaftis 2007). As such, a historical account of entrepreneurial groups may uncover long-term shifts in the presence of typical forms of entrepreneurial groups, their vitality, and intertwinement with other forms of social order.

Third, the mapping of coordinated activities of entrepreneurial groups over time requires multi-level and longitudinal methods. In this regard, there is a promising trend towards the analysis of experimental settings (e.g., Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, and van Praag 2013; Huber, Sloof, and van Praag 2014) and ethnography (e.g., Clarkin and Rosa 2005; Watson 2013) – both typically used in small group research. While these methods appear adequate to grasp micro dynamics within entrepreneurial groups, research routines to understand group trajectories have not yet been developed in entrepreneurship.

Fourth, these multi-level and processual methods require a theoretical and methodological reflection. The attempt to integrate groups as an additional layer of analysis, aside from the individual, the organization, and time, points towards unresolved challenges (Harper 2008). Exemplary questions arising are: What is the distinction between the levels of analysis? How much overlap or blending can we reasonably tolerate before the concepts become too fuzzy? How can we account for interrelations between events on individual, group, and organizational levels? What contexts are relevant on each of the levels?

3. Specifying Entrepreneurial Groups

Defining entrepreneurial groups defies an easy approach. Understanding what an entrepreneurial group is requires a discussion about diverse concepts, an acknowledgement of their heterogeneity and the relevance of historical changes.

3.1 A Definition

Based on the considerations above, we identify three building blocks for a definition of entrepreneurial groups: (1) What constitutes a group? (2) How do group activities qualify as entrepreneurial? (3) Finally, how does the entrepreneurial group relate to organizations?

According to these building blocks, Table 1 summarizes selected, commonly used definitions of entrepreneurial groups. Following a broad understanding of entrepreneurial groups, we included not only definitions of entrepreneurial teams, but also of new venture teams, top management teams, collective entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial families.

As the table illustrates, there is much variety across the definitions. The idea of what a group is ranges from a simple minimum of two people, with a specification of their relationship as cohesive or as related, to more complex definitions that account for shared intentions or joined efforts. With regard to the incorporated understandings of entrepreneurial activity, the definitions depict the unsettled discourse of what entrepreneurship is in the interdisciplinary field. Finally, these definitions suggest groups to be agents of business emergence or as actors within an organization. The table also illustrates that most definitions remain partial or unsatisfying because, for example, the group is not specified beyond a number (usually two or more), the activity is too broadly defined, or the relationships between groups and organizations is not addressed at all.

Consequently, the opportunity for a broad definition of entrepreneurial groups to arrive at conceptual clarity capturing the empirical phenomenon and allowing for a comparison between its various forms is not leveraged. Yet, for the purposes of a thematic issue, a lucid definition of entrepreneurial groups appears to be useful in helping to find a common language across contributions. We thus sketch a potential definition according to the three building blocks, knowing that this definition will need to be subject to much further discussion and theoretical development.

1) What constitutes a group?

When we speak of groups, we use the term in the sense of small groups rather than as simple groupings of individuals or social groups (e.g., workers, migrants, millennials). Small groups are a ubiquitous part of social order; they come as families, friendship cliques, or work groups (Neidhardt 1983; Homans 1972; Schäfers 1999). Small groups are certainly not a new social phenomenon and they have long been an essential element of sociological and organizational research (Schäfers 1999; Harrington and Fine 2006; The Authors 2016). Classical approaches agree that cohesion and personal attribution are key characteristics of small groups (e.g., Homans 1972; Neidhardt 2017 (c1969)). This emotional surplus of groups, as Neidhardt (1983) points out, affords particular group capabilities but also the drama and potential destructiveness of

Table 1: Overview of Selected, Common Definitions used for Entrepreneurial Groups in a Broad Sense

Contribution	Clarification of...		
	... group	... entrepreneurial	... relation by group and organization
Reich, 1987 <i>collective entrepreneurship</i>	Manager/owner and (all) employees on every level of a company with diverse backgrounds, individual skills integrated into the team/group.	Adapting to new opportunities and capitalizing on them. Jointly solving problems, looking out for small adjustments, improvements, and innovations.	Team/group acts within the organization in order of organizational development.
Kamm et al. 1990 <i>entrepreneurial team</i>	Two or more individuals.	Jointly establish a business in which they have equal financial interest.	Venture creation.
Wiersema & Bantel 1993 <i>top management team</i>	Top executives of a firm.	Monitoring of environmental conditions to determine whether the current fit with the firm is appropriate or whether strategic interventions are necessary.	Team acts within the organization and directs the organization's relationship with the environment.
Watson et al, 1995 <i>venture partnerships (dyads)</i>	Two individuals.	Jointly establish and actively participate in a business in which they have an equity (financial) interest.	Venture creation and management.
Lounsbury, 1998 <i>collective entrepreneurship</i>	Individuals sharing similar roles across various organizational contexts as well as common goals and ideas.	Jointly constructing a new occupational identity and mobilizing resources to increase the status of their occupation.	Organization creation as a result of the collective entrepreneurship of a small group. Group dissolves in the organization.
Enslin, Pearson, Amason, 2000	A small group	of managers	at the top of an organization (implies hierarchy, bureaucracy).
Lechler 2001 <i>entrepreneurial team</i>	Social interactions between two or more individuals that take personal and career risks and share responsibility for a venture.	Jointly engaged in innovative tasks with the goal of creating a business.	Venture creation.
Hildenbrand 2002 <i>entrepreneurial families</i>	Family dealing with particular paradoxes caused by business influence.	Ownership and operation of a farm or firm.	Family as intertwined with business.

Shepherd and Krueger 2003 <i>entrepreneurial team</i>	Teams are social artifacts of shared cognitive maps or enactments of a collective mind, rarely a simple combination of the cognition of individual members.	Focused on proactively and creatively seeking opportunities to bring into existence future goods and services (= entrepreneurial intention) within an existing organization.	Team/group acts within the organization.
Cooney 2005 <i>entrepreneurial team</i>	Two or more individuals	have significant financial interest and participate actively in the development of the enterprise.	Organizational development.
Harper 2008 <i>entrepreneurial team</i>	A group of entrepreneurs with a common goal.	Appropriate combinations of individual entrepreneurial actions.	---
Schjoedt and Kraus 2009 <i>new venture teams</i>	Two or more persons who are interdependent in the pursuit of common goals and venture success, are accountable to the entrepreneurial team and for the venture, are considered to be at the executive level with executive responsibility in the early phases of the venture, and are seen as a social entity by themselves and by others.	Have an interest in and committed to, both financial and otherwise, a venture's future and success.	Including founding and pre-start up.
Ruef 2010 <i>entrepreneurial group</i>	A small number of individuals	investing time, money and effort in the creation of a business.	Business creation
Comeche and Loras, 2010 <i>intrapreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship</i>	Internal cooperation of the entire collective and joint effort of all organizational members (= managers and workers).	Collective capacity to identify opportunities and to respond to these opportunities, the venture being based on the efforts of the team by turning to the talent and creativity of each one of its members. Capacity for experimenting with and developing new systems for building knowledge and accumulated experience via its members.	Work teams within an existing organization in order of organizational development.

Schjoedt et al. 2013 <i>new venture and family business teams</i>	Teams are really groups of individuals who attempt to work together to achieve a set of imperfectly overlapping and negotiated superordinate organizational goals, potentially for different reasons and often in spite of conflicts emerging from their backgrounds, personalities, and individual motives.	Not specified.	New ventures and family firms are two contexts in which teams function. Both contexts lead to a unique set of challenges owing to the nature of the problem, the composition of the team, and the behavioral dynamics that influence the process and content of team decisions.
Jennings, Breitkreuz, and James 2013 <i>entrepreneurial families</i>	Two or more individuals related by blood, adoption, marriage, or a marital-like relationship.	The activity of organizing, managing, and assuming the risks of a business or enterprise (following Shane 2008).	Reciprocal relationship between family and organization with beneficial or detrimental effects.
Klotz et al. 2014 <i>new venture teams</i>	A firm that is in its early stages of development.	The process of bringing their initial products/services to market, forming a customer base, and putting into place organizational processes and procedures.	No distinction.
Stamm 2016 <i>entrepreneurial families</i>	Family members that are involved in (formally or emotionally) an entrepreneurial project.	Founding and operating one or multiple businesses.	Reciprocal and multidimensional relationship; affects life courses, generational relations, and social identity of family members; affects the power structure, strategic outlook, and culture of an organization.

their inner conflicts. Groups develop and reproduce a system of rules, emotional cultures, structures, and boundaries. One can expect that the inner relations of groups change depending both on the degree of activity of the whole group and on changing membership numbers (Neidhardt 1983, 20, see also Simmel 1992). Such aspects suggest that some approaches to studying entrepreneurial groups may be better suited to capture emotional process and conflict than others (Ruef 2010).

As a side note, Parker and Corte (2017) suggest that Michael Farrell's (2001) understanding of small groups as collaborative circles may be particularly useful in conceptualizing entrepreneurial groups. For the purposes of this special issue, we will expand upon this thought. The concept of collaborative circles was originally developed on the basis of a multi-decade study of lab and artist groups. These collaborative circles "*share similar occupational goals and [...], through long periods of dialogue and collaboration, negotiate a common vision that guides their work*" (Farrell 2001, 11). At the beginning of their collaboration, individuals usually discover that they enjoy interacting with one another. Through the exchange of ideas and temporary collaboration, trust emerges in a working relationship. A particularity of collaborative circles is that they blend the informal dynamics of primary groups with the instrumental aims of a workgroup (Parker and Corte 2017, 265). The entrepreneurial group as a collaborative circle is thus distinct from, but overlapping with, the family (in the case of entrepreneurial families) or a friendship group. The collaborative circle develops a vision that guides their activities and collaboration. The actual work, however, mostly occurs individually or in dyads but is still legitimized, codified, and refined within the group (Parker and Corte 2017, 265). From formation to dissolution, collaborative circles go through a sequence of personally attributing and re-attributing informal and formal roles (Farrell 2001). In line with neo-institutionalist thinking, Parker and Corte (2017) extend Farrell's original concept by integrating the embeddedness of such groups in their respective fields (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). They argue that relevant field-related factors may explain differences across various forms of collaborative circles.

Entrepreneurial groups are collaborative circles in the sense that they share similar occupational goals, engage in a dialogue and collaboration over longer periods (at least exceeding the time scope of social encounters), and are guided by a common vision. The concept of collaborative circles reasonably accounts for a period of nascent entrepreneurship, fluid and evolutionary group development, and describes entrepreneurial activities as collective activities. Yet, what remains unanswered is how the activities of entrepreneurial groups are specific in comparison to other forms of collaborative circles (such as lab groups, artist groups, or political groups).

2) How do group activities qualify as entrepreneurial?

A potential answer to this question rests in the type of activity that entrepreneurial groups engage in. One can argue that entrepreneurial activity is creative work in a Schumpeterian sense, involving the creation of new products, processes, or models (Schumpeter 2009 [1941], 1952, 1991). While a single activity an individual may engage in – such as renting an office, recruiting a team, acquiring customers, raising funds – does not qualify to be entrepreneurial in and of itself, it is its orchestration in a coordinated effort that forms the entrepreneurial process (Moroz and Hindle 2012; Harper 2008; Johannisson 2011).

Recently, there seems to be a growing consensus that the entrepreneurship field entails the examination of:

... how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited Consequently, the field involves the study of sources of opportunities; the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate, and exploit them. (Shane and Venkataraman 2000, 218)

From this definition, entrepreneurship entails more than materializing a business venture (Gartner 2001; Moroz and Hindle 2012); it involves the study of a process, involving a collective approach to entrepreneurial activities.

These creative, entrepreneurial activities are guided by fictional expectations and an idea of a reachable future state (Beckert 2013, 2016), which may refer to an industry, market, or personal development (Schjoedt et al. 2013). It is important to note that there does not need to be consensus about an imagined future within the group, but too large of differences may also trigger conflict (Preller, Breugst, and Patzelt 2015). In any case, the group commits to an entrepreneurial venture, or rather, the achievement of a new state through entrepreneurial activity (Schjoedt and Kraus 2009). The pacing of entrepreneurial ventures is distinct from the pacing of the venture's development as an organization. Over time, the content of the imagined future and the commitment to the entrepreneurial project may change.

3) How does the entrepreneurial group relate to organizations?

It is important to note that there is a leap in character in how groups and organizations coordinate their activities. Following a Weberian tradition, organizational task attribution is specific and purposeful in contrast to personal attribution and commitment in groups (for example, see Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy (Weber, 2009 [1921], 124f.)). Along these lines, Scott (2004) further advances the view of an organization as a rational, natural, and open system. In his view, organizations codify – more or less explicitly – how they do their work and how their parts relate to each other. Organizations' structures group together jobs into larger units, such as departments, including authority

relations and patterns of formal communication among participants and units (Scott and Davis 2007, 23).

As these thoughts suggest, a distinction between groups and organizations is not clear-cut, particularly when considering a distinction between formal and informal organizations (Scott and Davis 2007); in this regard, Claessens (1983) seems to be the most instructive. He argued that groups may be exposed to an organizing (the verb, not the noun) pressure, which creates tensions for their members between fuzzy-personal and specific-purposeful orientations. This is the case when ongoing tasks require – internally or externally – an instrumentalization of membership relations or produce a need to formalize these, as in founding a business, buying shares, or succession of management. From this perspective, entrepreneurial groups can be understood as groups under organizational pressure; task coordination within the group thus becomes connected to task coordination in the organization but remains distinct. Each group-organization constellation defines which tasks remain in a group and which are in an organization modus (Neidhardt 1983). Scott further argues that organizations are embedded in an institutional environment, a field in which they thrive for legitimacy (Scott 2004; Scott and Davis 2007). Hence, they are not only structures, but collective actors themselves. Entrepreneurial groups and organizations are situated in the institutional environment with respect to one another and, as such, can influence and shape actions, routines and forms.

Situating entrepreneurial groups and organizations in this manner also allows the distinguishing of entrepreneurial groups from both business networks and business groups. While the entrepreneurial group refers to a joint engagement of individuals, business networks are based on the coordinated activities of independent businesses (Sydow and Windeler 1998; Windolf 2008), and business groups are businesses that are legally – or by their operation – interlocked. Entrepreneurial groups may function as boundary spanners in business networks and business organizations, creating important links among businesses. As such, entrepreneurial groups may contribute to complex and ambivalent relationships between businesses that blur the notion of competition and cooperation (Bengtsson and Kock 2000).

Based on these brief considerations, our suggested definition for this special issue reads:

(1) Entrepreneurial groups are collaborative circles committed to an entrepreneurial project. (2) They strive to achieve an imagined future through the coordination of their activities. (3) In their collaborative efforts, they experience high internal and external pressures to organize formally (e.g., the creation of a business) and organization provides grounds for their activities.

3.2 Forms

The above overview of existing studies on collaborative engagement in entrepreneurship has already indicated that the term entrepreneurial group is designed to encompass a large variety of forms of this social unit. Expanding upon the three building blocks of our suggested definition not only illustrates the scope of their heterogeneity but also allows us to categorize these forms:

- First, entrepreneurial groups can differ by their group features. This includes surface-level characteristics such as the size of the group, their tie composition (e.g., family, friends, former colleagues); deep-level characteristics (also called micro-dynamics) in groups, such as the emotionality of group relations, their way of collaboration, their way of dealing with tension between personal and structured logics, their definition of roles, or their level of activity; and finally, time-level characteristics such as group member movement, redefinition of roles, and changes in level of activity. Based on a selection of these mentioned group features, Harper (2008) puts forward a taxonomy of entrepreneurial groups, which includes economizing groups, singleton entrepreneurial groups, hybrid entrepreneurial-economizing groups, nested entrepreneurial groups, and emergent entrepreneurial groups.
- Second, entrepreneurial groups can vary by their entrepreneurial project. This includes the content of the group's imagined future and the pace in which it changes, the time horizon envisioned – a habitual component of their entrepreneurial activity – and the bundle of activities chosen to implement the project.
- Third, entrepreneurial groups can vary by the degree of organizational pressure. Depending on the industry, the market, legal regulations, norms, and ethics, the need to formalize group activity in an organization can be highly variable.

Numerous studies are interested in understanding how the configuration of an entrepreneurial group's form (e.g., size, heterogeneity of composition) predicts venture performance (Schjoedt et al. 2013). However, it is rare to find studies that explicitly study macro-changes in group forms over time or compare between various forms of entrepreneurial groups (for an exception, see Discua Cruz, Howorth, and Hamilton 2013 or Bird and Zellweger 2018).

Parker and Corte (2017) suggest that the actual configuration of entrepreneurial group forms is largely influenced by their institutional environment (their particular strategic action field). They remind us that an institutional environment varies in terms of how many creative positions receive attention and legitimization, the degree to which creators achieve consensus regarding creative techniques, the relative power and number of their socially legitimated gatekeepers, the resources available to a circle to achieve its goals, and finally, the importance of geographic arrangements and pre-existing organizations. For

example, Neidhardt (1983, 27) elaborates that if collaborative activities of groups are rejected or perceived as illegitimate, then the propensity for in-group-outgroup dynamics increases. In other words, we may observe an increase in internal group cohesion as well as in tendencies for alienation or the development of a radical counter-culture. Following this argumentation, collaborative circles operate within distinctive institutional contexts, the character of which structures their intergroup dynamics, their entrepreneurial project and the degree of organizational pressure.

3.3 Historic Change

Studying forms of entrepreneurial groups in their respective institutional environments yields a set of essential questions: What cultural ideas and expectations are entrepreneurial groups confronted with? What forms of entrepreneurial groups are accepted today or how have the legitimate forms changed over time? The emerging paradigm of a small group perspective in entrepreneurship currently treats this empirical phenomenon as new, whereas historical studies suggest that entrepreneurial groups have been present all along but have taken different forms across time and cultures. Forms of entrepreneurial groups have been discussed in historical research, even if business historians may not have used the vocabulary of entrepreneurial groups. A historic perspective calls on scholars to attend to the historic circumstances of group formation and change.

A particularly informative stream of research that formed historical accounts of entrepreneurial families can be found in several business history works that looked at entrepreneurial families and their attached businesses between the late 1970s and the mid-1990s, following the seminal research of business historians Mary B. Rose and Geoffrey Jones (Jones and Rose 1993; Rose 1979, 1995). These works have been particularly influenced by Chandler's (1976, 1977) claims that family ties provide a basis for trust among entrepreneurial group members that is valuable during the uncertainties of business formation; at later stages, however, family constellations turn out to be dysfunctional for business development. In his view, this trend accounts for the formation and development of single firms as well as for capitalist societies at large. An interest in entrepreneurial families as forms and drivers of venturing activities has been renewed with scholars questioning the performance and the determinants of the resilience within entrepreneurial families (Colli 2003; Colli and Rose 2003; Fernández-Pérez and Colli 2015). Two special issues of *Business History*, the leading European business history journal, show the importance of the topic (Jones and Rose 1993; Colli, Howorth, and Rose 2013). While playing a key role during early industrialization and the emergence of modern capitalism, entrepreneurial families turn out to be a persistent and dominant form of entrepreneurial groups, which qualifies common assumptions in business history (Colli 2003; Colli and Rose 2003). While family ties as a constitutive element

may have remained stable, their normative orientation and group practices have dramatically changed over time and vary across cultures, as does the very understanding of the family unit.

From historic accounts of dynastic entrepreneurial families such as the Wendels, Haniels, and Falcks (by James 2006; for further examples see, e.g., Lubinski 2010 or Priemel 2008), we learn that only looking at family ties as distinctive characteristics for an entrepreneurial group form can be insufficient. These works illustrate constantly changing group sizes – including the shrinking of the entrepreneurial group to just one family member and thus disqualifying it as a group at all – and varying constellations that highlight the importance of non-family members, at the very least, as temporary group members (e.g., interim-managers). Rather, it is the particularity of their entrepreneurial project as wealth accumulation and legacy building spanning generations that makes this form of entrepreneurial groups distinct and allows it to manage risk during periods of upheaval and uncertainty when both states and markets are disturbed (James 2006). In a recent study by Martin Ruef (2018, forthcoming) on New York City during industrialization, the findings revealed the historical malleability of who is included in an entrepreneurial group and the extent of control exercised by entrepreneurs over those who labor for them.

In looking at a British entrepreneurial couple, Popp and Holt (2013) show that the layering of family and business relationships may be supplemented by additional ties, as in their case by ethnic ties and diaspora experience – creating yet another distinct form of entrepreneurial groups. Take, for instance, the work of Bregoli (2016), a historian whose research focuses on eighteenth-century Italian and Sephardi Jewish cultural and social history. She exploited the correspondence of diasporic merchants from Tunis in the 18th century, looking at the emotional content of their letters. She did this in an attempt to “understand the role that emotions played in shaping cross-cultural trade”. In her work on diasporic ties, she looks at how (venturing) relationships were maintained or challenged over time among dispersed entrepreneurial family members. Her perspective is particularly interesting due to the fact that this is clearly akin to a layering of personal and business relationships in entrepreneurial group constellations that operate beyond the taken-for-granted space of their social context.

Recent historiographies about ethnic diasporas have added further nuance to the importance of ethnic ties in explaining collective engagement in venturing, and have shown that entrepreneurial networks are as important in the host country as in the home country of ethnic entrepreneurs (Sifneos 2011). In their article relating to Greek entrepreneurs in the early 19th century, Vlami and Mandouvalos (2013) show how communities or networks of ethnic Greek entrepreneurs developed the ability to act quickly, reassessing their strategies thanks to the fluidity of their assets and networks. Their fast decision-making abilities and an extensive use of ethnic and family ties provided a definitive

advantage to help them take care of opportunities or respond to challenges: “Every new enterprise [over time] brought a new distribution of authority and capital, a new strategy and a new set of connections among the merchant community” (p.108). What Vlami and Mandouvalos reveal here is the non-persistent nature of business alliances forming around entrepreneurial groups and their rebound effect on entrepreneurial group constellations.

Beyond that, historical work emphasizes that entrepreneurial groups based on collegial or friendship ties are not exclusive to contemporary start-ups. Several works have shown the importance of business partnerships, ranging from traditional industries to aerospace (Howard 1998), aluminium (Smith 2002), metallurgy, or pharma.

For example, Werner von Siemens and Georg Halske founded in 1847 the Siemens AG of today, and in 1863, Dr. Eugen Lucius, Carl Meister and Ludwig Müller founded the Hoechst AG, demonstrating impressively that even at the beginning of the 20th century, entrepreneurial teams could be very successful. (Lechler 2001, 263)

In addition, venture capital and the role of regional clusters have been of particular interest for business historians who work on the history of technological innovations. In that respect, the history of MIT and Silicon Valley has provided numerous cases of small teams of entrepreneurs setting up technological ventures since the 1960s (Lubinski, Fear, and Fernández-Pérez 2013; Ante 2008; Etzkowitz 2006; Kenney 2000; Kenney and Burg 1999; Lécuyer 2007; Saxenian, Motoyama, and Quan 2002).

Such historic accounts of collaborative efforts in entrepreneurship highlight the complexity required to deploy the concept of entrepreneurial groups in a historical perspective. Entrepreneurial groups only temporarily appear in their various forms and can transform from one form to another. Furthermore, entrepreneurial groups are only one potential level to look at when trying to understand the development of entrepreneurial ventures that can neither be extracted from the personal experiences of involved individuals and their personal networks nor from the attached businesses and their alliances nor from industry or cultural contexts.

4. Objective, Scope and Structure of the Special Issue

In our call for this special issue, we invited authors to exhibit the social and historic circumstances of group formation and their development, to clarify relational dynamics among group members, and to capture those mechanisms by which their entrepreneurial capacity is mobilized. By scrutinizing various historic and current forms of entrepreneurial groups, we intend to further a discussion about the collective actors of entrepreneurship. Relatedly, we adopt the view that the concept of entrepreneurial groups can function as an overarch-

ing term for various group combinations, entrepreneurial projects, or degrees of organizational pressure of collaborative engagement in entrepreneurship.

The selected articles contribute to this goal in at least one of the following ways: (a) They consider the unfolding of entrepreneurial groups from their constitution to their dissolution, marking key transitional phases (such as new member entry, founding additional ventures or exits) and transformations (morphing from one form to another); (b) They recognize typical social dynamics within groups and external structures relevant to understanding entrepreneurial group formation and development; (c) They reflect upon historic and social science methods that allow the study of entrepreneurial groups.

The first contribution is a qualitative study about new venture creation in contemporary Berlin. *Katharina Scheidgen* investigates entrepreneurial teams as specific forms of entrepreneurial groups and, more specifically, the process of entrepreneurial team formation and how this process is shaped by social context. Drawing from neo-institutionalist field theory and based on her empirical findings, she argues that independent start-ups and university spin-offs are from two sub-fields with specific conditions for team formation. While independent start-ups form a community of practice that offers blueprints for how a team should look, the process of team formation in university-spin offs is impacted largely by external expectations and guidelines, such as educational requirements or governmental funding programs. In addition, she suggests distinguishing between initial team formation and team enlargement. During the first phase, teams are predominately formed based on familiarity and sympathy – with the start-up field offering lower entry barriers than the spin-off field. During the second phase, the teams engage in an active search for competences – with the start-up field searching their entire personal network and the spin-off field applying professional search and selection mechanisms. In sum, Scheidgen develops propositions about different mechanisms for team formation not only in each phase, but also between types of ventures and their respective contexts. A key contribution of her study is to refute an over-emphasis of intentional team formation in current entrepreneurial group literature. Instead, she calls for a more precise and differentiated conceptualizing of context.

The next two contributions illuminate the role of entrepreneurial groups in industry development. The story of the Spanish Grifols entrepreneurial group in the plasma industry that *Paloma Fernández-Pérez* skillfully edits in her historical case study offers detailed insights into the morphing and changing nature of such groups across time. The central actors in this entrepreneurial project are selected members from the Grifols family, with a longstanding connectedness to the sciences. At first, one of the Grifols members engaged with colleagues in an initial entrepreneurial group that started venturing in the clinical laboratory analysis industry. After the dissolution of this initial founding group, the Grifols family founded a venture of their own that they main-

tained across generations. The family eventually combined the former clinical laboratory analysis business with the new plasma production in their own blood bank. The study highlights the stable social relations between entrepreneurial group members in contrast to individual, professional network contacts; it highlights the forming and ending of joint ventures that the family strikes across time that create a business network. In this case study, the detailed description of a particular entrepreneurial group's trajectory contributes to understanding the impact of change within the group on the attached businesses and their organization (and vice versa). Beyond that, this study illustrates how new member recruitment and alliance building were shaped by the historic circumstances of the plasma industry. At the same time, the study is a good example to illustrate the usefulness of entrepreneurial groups as a level of analysis with which to grasp industry development. Particularly striking is the discovery that maintaining group linkages helped to avoid the collapse of the business in times of crises (in this case, the AIDS crises of the late 1980s), putting them in an advantageous position relative to their competitors.

Along these lines, *Robert Peters* examines the early-modern needle industry in Germany. He illustrates how, in the 18th century, the rise of Aachen as a leading location for needle production was linked to the emergence of a small group of needlemakers that oligopolized the regional needle industry within a few years. He traces various forms of collaborative engagement in entrepreneurship throughout this industry's development. Adopting a macro-perspective, he argues that these entrepreneurial groups behaved under particular structural circumstances and, at the same time their collective agency had repercussion effects on structural change in that industry. Peters uses this case as an example with which to apply a theoretical model about the reciprocal interdependency between collective agency and particular structural circumstances, which he termed the "dynamic-reciprocal model of structural change" (DRSC). This approach integrates Wolfgang König's agency-structure concept and Paul Thomes' three phase change model. Whereas Scheidgen and Elo describe entrepreneurial group formation as largely influenced by field structures, Peters illuminates how the combined actions of multiple entrepreneurial groups can actually influence the structure of an industry.

The next two contributions both address migrant entrepreneurs as particular actors in and, as a social context, for entrepreneurial group formation and development. In her article, *Maria Elo* first engages in a detailed review of previous research streams that all look at transnational experiences as assets or constraining conditions in acting entrepreneurially – including transnational, ethnic, migrant, and diaspora entrepreneurship research. Comparing these various perspectives, she develops the argument that the immigrant experience has a capacity to form alliances – both in the sense of multiple individuals engaged in a venture (entrepreneurial group) and multiple firms engaged in a strategic partnership (business group). In the second part of her article, she

presents a case study about a returnee German-Turkish migrant entrepreneur who engaged in a venture with a business partner, later succeeding in recruiting multiple entrepreneurial families into a larger entrepreneurial group together, creating a novel business structure in Turkey, and finally was engaged in striking a global business alliance. The case study not only empirically enriches her argument about the immigrant effect on collective entrepreneurship but also demonstrates the complexity of the various levels of the entrepreneurial process.

Next, *Stefan Berwing's* quantitative study shows that the majority of entrepreneurs with migrant origins in contemporary Germany do not make use of co-ethnic resources. Utilizing a mixed embeddedness approach, he points out that a potential immigrant effect may not play out (or even be suppressed or irrelevant), depending on the respective industry or economic activity. He suggests that co-ethnic interaction in different industries of economic activity and co-ethnic economic relations form different patterns of interactions, which he refers to as figurations in the tradition of Elias. These figurations allow for a more or less pronounced immigrant effect to unfold. Eventually, Berwing proposes that such a figurational approach may be a useful complement to mixed embeddedness. Such an approach suggests focusing first on the interactions between entrepreneurial group members, and only then deciding which of the many layers of their social embedding is at play in order to define the form of an entrepreneurial group.

While Berwing's approach to entrepreneurial groups is set on the study of individual entrepreneurs and their engagement in various collaborative activities, *Weinhardt and Stamm* discuss a different way of capturing and tracing entrepreneurial groups. In their methodological article, they look at process-generated data as a promising data source to learn about entrepreneurial group formation and development. As process-generated data on entrepreneurial groups is not readily available, however, they suggest using business founding and additional engagement in business activity as an anchor in order to identify entrepreneurial groups. They critically evaluate the German Commercial Registry sampling frame and data source, guided by the data lore framework developed by Bick and extended by Baur. On this basis, they offer a critical reflection about how to deal with fluid and fuzzy group boundaries and an overlap between group and business activity. These reflections lead to a detailed description of how entrepreneurial groups can be identified with this data, including an operationalization, a discussion of coverage issues, and strategies to triangulate the data with other data sources. This article thus addresses underlying data issues of the empirical endeavor to study entrepreneurial groups.

In contrast to all previous contributions and in maximum contrast to the previous quantitative contributions, *Tim Seidenschmur* discusses entrepreneurial groups as a social construction in narratives applied for teams within corporate

settings, using the example of a company in the automotive industry. As opposed to looking at a characterization of entrepreneurial groups by group characteristics, he instead examines a case where groups are involved in an intrapreneurial project and operate beyond the need to organize formally. Applying an institutional logics lens, he uncovers that a logic of innovation exists as part of the market logic. Seidenschnur further illustrates how entrepreneurial teams are socially constructed within the innovation narrative – as a cohesive group that drives the creative process of renewal through their collaborative activities. Simultaneously, this logic suffers from contradictions and, at times, causes paradoxes. Seidenschnur proposes that the narrative construction of intrapreneurial groups may be changed according to other logics, in particular, when these challenge the logic of innovation.

In sum, the contributions to this special issue scrutinize the viability of the entrepreneurial groups' concept in order to understand entrepreneurial activities. They apply different conceptual lenses to the empirical phenomena of entrepreneurial groups, provide vivid examples of the plurality of said groups, and display various methodological approaches to study this variety. Each of them, but even more so in their orchestration, contributes to expand a small group perspective on entrepreneurship that is sensitive to the complex social and historic conditions in which collaborative engagement in entrepreneurship occurs. Finally, these contributions make evident that our knowledge on entrepreneurial group formation and development is far from being saturated and that it is a challenging task to generate this knowledge. What is needed now is more conceptual clarity and precision in terminology that can handle the complexity of the longitudinal and multi-layered character. Included in this is a need for methodological designs that are able to capture an entrepreneurial group's trajectory in a historically sensitive manner that includes relevant internal and external context factors.

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