PARADIGM SHIFT IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS METHOD AND ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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PARADIGM SHIFT IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS METHOD AND ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS

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Principal Topic

In their essay of 2011, Sarasvathy and Venkataraman suggested a paradigm shift in entrepreneurship research. Suggested view of entrepreneurship as a general reasoning and problem-solving approach permits us to recognise and understand a companion phenomenon of enterprising individuals and their actions in transforming social and economic reality.

The concept of enterprising individuals is introduced here to distinguish this emerging socio-economic phenomenon from "traditional" entrepreneurship. Enterprising individuals are people, who: a) embrace entrepreneurship as a general problem-solving approach in their individual lives; b) engage in innovative socio-economic activities without necessarily starting up own companies or being included into corporate world as intrapreneurs; and c) co-create their activities together with the network of stakeholders (cf. Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011) based on IT-supported social networks, e.g. blogs. Case studies of three bloggers illustrate the processes outlined above.

Sample and Methodology

Methodologically, the authors combined case study approach with advantages of netnography (cf. Kosinetz, 2002, 2010). Published blogs were analysed through iterative reviewing of the data in comparison with emerging categories and concepts (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). This methodology is in line with the views of Sarasvathy and Venkataraman (2011) concerning qualitative methods/case studies being particularly appropriate for entrepreneurship-as-method research.

Conclusions and Implications

Activities of enterprising individuals go beyond traditional understanding of entrepreneurship as commercialisation of innovation or creation of high-growth firms. In the study two cases demonstrated gradual emergence of entrepreneurial identity, but in the third case formal entrepreneurial identity was knowingly rejected. Nevertheless, the blogger remains highly enterprising, creative individual with strong social engagement, which complements, rather than contradicts, his economic aspirations. All three cases also demonstrate enterprising activities as embedded into networks of stakeholders. Entrepreneurial opportunities become, in fact, co-created in the interaction between enterprising individuals and their networks. These conclusions are perfectly in line with those suggested by entrepreneurship-as-method paradigm (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011).

Thus, studies of enterprising individuals within the entrepreneurship-as-method paradigm represent a new fascinating area of entrepreneurship enquiry and a theoretical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship research. Areas of investigation can range from business models used by enterprising individuals (e.g. what other business models are used in the blogosphere apart from endorsement?) to influence of IT/ICT (e.g. whether modern technology and social network make people more or less enterprising) to methodological contributions, such as use of netnography in entrepreneurship research.

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