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TOWARDS AN INSTITUTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL RESOURCE MOBILISATION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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TOWARDS AN INSTITUTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL RESOURCEN MOBILISATION

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Principal Topic

In this paper, we argue that the concept of place as is still largely ignored in process-orientated entrepreneurship research (Kibler et al., 2015; McKeever et al., 2015; McMullen and Dimov, 2013). We build on the experimental view of place from social geography to suggest that places are specific locations with material form and symbolic meaning. Therefore, we see places as sites of constraint and agency, which require “creative social practices” by the entrepreneur, or as Überbacher et al. (2015) recently argued, “entrepreneurs as skillful cultural operators”. In particular, by embedding our place-based approach within the cultural entrepreneurship perspective (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) our study proposes that the entrepreneur negotiates material and symbolic elements of different places at different points in time, which support their efforts in the ‘entrepreneurial journey’.

Method

We conducted an in-depth, longitudinal qualitative study of 10 entrepreneurs from 2012 to 2015 in Kasoa, an emerging new town in Ghana. We augment this with 15 additional interviews. In our analysis, we applied the ‘critical incident technique’ to identify the most critical ‘experienced’ events in the entrepreneurs’ journeys, and, subsequently, to specify and explain the most salient themes (Gioia, et al., 2013).

Results and Implications

We found that place played at least four major roles throughout the entrepreneurial journey: (1) place as emotional arena for ideation and strategic decision-making, (2) place as moral order for trust-worthy negotiations, (3) place as symbolic mean for (retrospective and prospective) entrepreneurial storytelling, (4) place as social centre for – purposive and casual – entrepreneurial resource mobilization (involving actors from similar and/or different institutional fields).

In so doing, we contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we introduce an experimental view of place to add to the socio-spatial understanding of the critical events shaping an ‘entrepreneurial journey’. Second, we move the geographical entrepreneurship research from observing place as single-site, regional ‘container’ or ‘backdrop’ – to ‘how’ entrepreneurs incorporate multiple places – within/outside the operating regional context – as both practical object and symbolic signifier into their entrepreneurial efforts. Third, we conclude the paper with avenues for future research on the role of ‘meaningful places’ in cultural entrepreneurship.

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