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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol28/iss16/6

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SUMMARY

DILEMMA OF COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION IN THE CREATION OF NEW FIELDS: A DYNAMIC INTERPLAY BETWEEN AGENCY AND STRUCTURE

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Principal Topic

Understanding the emergence and failure of new fields is crucial to the study of entrepreneurship and innovation. Past research has paid much attention to how various entrepreneurial strategies help to mobilize resources and legitimate the nascent field, but rarely asks if these purposive entrepreneurial actions have any negative impacts at all.

Drawing on social movement and organization theory literature, I develop a theoretical framework that demonstrates how entrepreneurial actions can set backfire on both the entrepreneurs and the field as a whole. By overusing such strategies as framing and inter-organizational collaboration, entrepreneurs can trap themselves and the whole nascent field in an “over-mobilization” dilemma, creating identity crisis by being too successful in mobilizing resources and people in the first place. The model suggests that, to fully capture entrepreneurial dynamics, we need to pay more attention to potential downside of entrepreneurial efforts and the interplay between firm-level and field-level phenomenon.

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