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SYMPOSIUM

“ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET AND REGIONAL RENAISSANCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE”

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SYMPOSIUM THEME

We invite participants to join us in reflection on phenomena linking entrepreneurial mindset and local economic renaissance. As it informs innovation and growth, entrepreneurship is an important contributor to the economic renewal of companies and to the renaissance of areas and regions. Entrepreneurship, while multifaceted and lacking a unified conceptual framework, can include such dimensions as the *sources* of opportunity, the *process of recognition* (exploration, discovery, evaluation) and *exploitation* of opportunity; the set of *individuals* who generate, discover, evaluate, seize and exploit opportunity; *forms and types of collaborative initiatives* of private and public stakeholders along the *deal flow value chain*. We adopt for now the working term of “entrepreneurial mindset” for these diverse but interrelated building blocks of entrepreneurial action.

Among the academic and business community, there is both an interest and need to understand if and how *entrepreneurial mindset* can be kindled, fostered, professionalized and transplanted to the primary actors in a start up environment (entrepreneurs, business angels, facilitators) and/or the rank and file of organizations (corporate entrepreneurship), but also beyond, to the diverse direct and indirect stakeholders of a local economy. Can the founder(s) of a company instill her/his/their entrepreneurial attitude to partners, employees and to the company itself? Can we say that a geographic area has become an entrepreneurial milieu? Is it possible to “measure” the entrepreneurial mindset of a company and/or an area? Have public authorities a role to play in fostering the entrepreneurial mindset of the area they are administering and if yes, what role? What can education institutions do in this context? Entrepreneurial mindset can even become the veritable *strategic capacity* of a particular region, thus energizing it and helping it to swift and sustainable prosperity. At this level, entrepreneurial mindset is a cultural phenomenon, as a climate of innovation facilitation is generated that not only permits to face changing markets but to lead that change.

This symposium includes a brief theoretical contributions to the phenomenon but is essentially highly empirical. We propose interdisciplinary approaches, informed from such diverse disciplines as economics, sociology, psychology, history, politics, engineering and anthropology, and such fields as strategy, innovation, finance, management, cognition, knowledge management, etc. Empirical contributions include qualitative and/or mixed-methodology research: studies that get close to very specific combinations of actors, contexts and contingencies of companies and local areas all over Europe where entrepreneurial practices, deliberate or fortuitous, bring about regeneration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Fendt, J.	<p>“ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET AND REGIONAL RENAISSANCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE”</p> <p>A brief introduction to the symposium theme</p>
Bertoldi, B., Delmastro, R. & Pattanaro G. (2009)	<p>“ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPANIES: FACT-BASED KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS”</p> <p>Authors illustrate the results of a study on entrepreneurial companies in five European countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. In the framework of this study, the elements and factors that make companies entrepreneurial (i.e., proactive, risk-taking and innovative) and able to increase their performances were investigated and analysed. In comparison to previous studies on the subject (e.g., Barringer and Bluedorn, 1999; Covin and Slevin, 1991; Entrialgo <i>et al.</i>, 2000), the study which will be presented adopted an innovative two-step approach, which combined a quantitative and a qualitative analysis (statistical analysis plus questionnaires and interviews), with the aim of testing some of the entrepreneurial practices suggested by literature on a selected sample of high performing companies. As a result of this two-step approach, it emerges that the following five practices and attitudes characterise entrepreneurial companies: a strong desire to become leader; a competitive advantage based on innovation; a very close relation with customers; a flat internal structure; the search for an international expansion. As to the importance of the external environment, on the one hand, it must be said that all interviewees agreed on the fact that an entrepreneurial-friendly surrounding environment helps entrepreneurial companies grow and expand their business. On the other hand, the experience of entrepreneurial companies suggests that the environment has an impact but company-related aspects represent the most important success factor for these businesses. It is the authors’ belief that, thanks to this two-step process, the adoption by a firm of these five entrepreneurial practices guarantees an improvement in the company’s quantitative performances. At the same time, the authors recognise that their approach requires further improvements and a broader field of application.</p>
Shirokova, G. & Shalotov, A. (2009)	<p>“EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF NEW FIRM GROWTH FACTORS USING RUSSIAN DATA”</p> <p>The paper presents empirical analysis of growth factors of entrepreneurial firms in Russia. As a source of empirical information we use the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) of EBRD and World Bank in 2005. After investigation of 240 Russian firms data the factors of external and internal environment of the companies that show considerable influence on the sales growth were revealed. As external factor influencing the growth, the environmental hostility has significance. Among internal factors there were significant factors of implementation of quality management systems and of company restructuring.</p>
Bureau, S. (2009)	<p>“DIVERSITY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSETS – LOOKING AT INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP”</p> <p>To understand entrepreneurial mindset and how to bring an unlikely area to economic prosperity, or</p>

	<p>renaissance, many scholars refer to Silicon Valley and similar prestigious high tech business areas. In this paper, we claim that other types of entrepreneurial mindsets exist and deserve to be studied. We propose to study the phenomenon of informal entrepreneurship: What does it mean to be an entrepreneur in the informal economy? We address this question by means of the so-called ‘deprived areas’ of the suburbs of Paris, France. In such districts, entrepreneurship – informal entrepreneurship – is booming. Now, traffic of drugs, guns or prostitution are not what we propose for an economic “renaissance” of Paris suburbia. But many businesses practiced are hardly immoral and barely illegal and produce important entrepreneurial dynamics. This grey area business (related to food, clothes, cars for example, but also services) is invented, developed and managed by informal entrepreneurs, having had no formal training in entrepreneurship and thus coming up with atypical entrepreneurial organisations and projects. We propose to analyse the entrepreneurial mindsets of these informal entrepreneurs that, albeit involved in grey area business activities, are contributing, to a considerable extent, to the “renaissance” of their district. What can we learn from such entrepreneurs? Where is the line between formal and informal entrepreneurship? What determines this line? Can it be moved, so as to turn informal to formal energy? If yes, how?</p>
<p>Kaminska-Labbé, R. & Murzyn, K. (2009)</p>	<p>“EMERGENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET IN POLAND”</p> <p>Prior to 1989, when Poland was subject to the restrictions and laws of the socialist political system, capitalist activity was an unstable and sometimes clandestine system of bribery and favours. In this context, entrepreneurship, while present, was nevertheless unable to flourish due to lack of clarity regarding legal boundaries and the letter of the law. Following the transition from a centralised to market-based economic system in Poland and other Eastern and Central European countries, laws restricting private ownership were abolished. This dramatic change created the conditions for entrepreneurial renewal and opened up an avenue for regional renaissance. After an initial period of activity in small business, the need for greater innovation and development of high technology industry in a global knowledge-based economy became all too evident. However, despite European Union and government investment in institutional reforms and the various encouragements given to the formation of clusters, comparatively few spin-off companies are growing up from the Polish universities in relation to other knowledge-based economies. This paper seeks to understand the factors which enhance and impede entrepreneurial progress at this level. We focus on a number of case studies of spin-off phenomena in Poland with the aim of analysing the reasons for the lack of entrepreneurial activity. Our results show that the main barriers to growth are set in existing attitudes which have grown up from decades of institutionalised disorder and which are difficult to undo. The most significant of these concern: the uncertainty which persists in the minds of the business community as to the long term ambitions of government, the gap which continues to exist between scientific research and industry, the lack of coordination and low level of services offered by business associations and furthermore the spirit of competition over cooperation which fosters distrust among business partners.</p>