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Entrepreneurial Place Leadership

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Abstract

In a world where we recognise entrepreneurial means, ends and values in terms of geographies of meaning, this book explores the phenomenon of Entrepreneurial Place Leadership. The book identifies that a place-led perspective of entrepreneurial development is becoming increasingly important, given narratives around entrepreneurial ecosystems, spatial and temporal contexts and the active design of entrepreneurial institutions. This introductory chapter outlines the rationale for the book, explores the entrepreneurial landscape, then highlights the chapter contributions. It concludes by drawing together policy and practice recommendations and suggesting directions for future research.

Keywords: entrepreneurial place; leadership; entrepreneurial landscape; community; complex adaptive systems; entrepreneurial ecosystems

Introduction

Entrepreneurial performance is contingent on the place where entrepreneurship happens. Viewing entrepreneurship through this lens, this edited book explores how entrepreneurs lead, and are led, in the context of places as locations with meaning (Cresswell, 2008) that are past, present, emergent, transient and complex. Operating within this context, we start with entrepreneurs as agents that discover and exploit lucrative, value laden, opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). In turn, leadership is taken as a process where, at its simplest, a leader guides followers towards a goal (Northouse, 2013).

Place can exert a significant influence over entrepreneurial actions, strategy and performance (Murithi et al. 2019; Tiwasing et al. 2018) and this has been recognized in calls to focus on the context of entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011) and through a burgeoning literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems (Acs et al. 2017). Here the primacy of place is apparent in terms of the constraints and affordances to action that determine entrepreneurial performance, with combinations of geography, demographics, institutions, culture and policy, defining the opportunity set available to entrepreneurs (Nambisan et al., 2019).

Places become distinct venues, events and occasions, where the entrepreneur can compose, practice and perform their craft. They can do so as entrepreneurial leaders assembling a cast and developing a scenario to maximize their performance or as cast members themselves (Gupta et al., 2014), where the organization of place is curated by ecosystem managers' intent on developing and growing the entrepreneurs of the future. This is particularly important in economically and socially uncertain times with entrepreneurial place managers experiencing challenges imposed through 'unprecedented' situations such as the Coronavirus pandemic and the climate emergency.

Entrepreneurship, place and leadership are phenomena that are each subjective and dynamic in nature. Meaning, value and goals are cognitive constructs of individuals operating in society which can be subjectively interpreted and translated in different ways (Scott, 2014). Whilst a certain value, such as a pound or dollar may appear relatively objective, it means less to a Billionaire than to a refugee living below the poverty line. Whilst entrepreneurs are often seen as individuals focused on financial value, they may seek social or environmental values as well (Apostolopoulos et al., 2018). Whilst leaders enact scenarios to move towards common goals, possibly the most charged scenario is place, where a distinct geography becomes laden with meaning through history, lived experience and a shared interpretation with others.

These phenomena are also dynamic, in that opportunities, resources, values and meaning morph over time and space. Entrepreneurship and leadership have been regarded as future facing, being 'sciences of the artificial' (Simon, 1996) that are focused on end goals that do not yet exist. Meanwhile, places may be interpreted in a future facing way through entrepreneurial goals and leadership visions, however they

tend to be understood through personal and shared histories. The temporal context is therefore just as important as the spatial context (Baker and Welter, 2020) and when we discuss place as a location of meaning, the place is a snapshot in space-time. Drawing the phenomena together in a subjective, dynamic process driven social universe, in this book we define entrepreneurial place leadership as being about how locations with entrepreneurial meaning can be created, maintained, exploited and amplified to generate future value.

In the following sections, we set the scene with an exploration of an entrepreneurial landscape, before discussing the individual chapter contributions that make up the book. Finally, we take a policy and practice perspective and make recommendations to align entrepreneurial 'place-making' policy with practice.

An Entrepreneurial Landscape

Given the focal interest in place, one way of exploring this is through the metaphor of the entrepreneurial landscape. We borrow heavily from the concept of the 'therapeutic landscape,' (Gesler, 1992), a term used to explore why certain places contribute more to a sense of wellbeing than others. In our context, an entrepreneurial landscape is one where interactions with place influence, and are influenced by, entrepreneurial agency and practices, which in turn define and alter the evolution of the landscape over time. This entrepreneurial landscape is characterised by previous approaches to mould its physical, social, political and economic complexities. This may be through an active process of traditional leadership where a scenario is built and a cast assembled (Gupta et al., 2004); or through an accidental congealing of networks that temporarily align on a common purpose (Murdoch, 2000); or through a more dynamic, mutual and collaborative shared leadership that is more abductive in nature (DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

The entrepreneurial landscape mapped out in the chapters of this book, metaphorically hosts individual dwellings, communities, planned settlements, districts, regions and nations. The individual dwelling represents the entrepreneurial location of meaning for the archetypal entrepreneur, self-building for themselves and their family (Schumpeter, 1936). These may be temporary encampments or may take on a more permanent feel over time where opportunities are concentrated (Dimov, 2011). The

entrepreneurial community represents a self-organised collective, where the whole can be seen as having agency rather than just the individual (Paredo and Chrisman, 2006). The planned settlement reflects the Entrepreneurial Support Organisation, the intermediary organisations that have been designed with the purpose of reducing risk and stimulating entrepreneurial opportunity (Bergman and McMullen, 2021). The district or cluster may be an extension of the planned settlement, or more often a loosely specialised collection of other entrepreneurial places (Piore and Sabel, 1984). Finally, the region and nation are mixtures of more entrepreneurial places and less entrepreneurial places. Drawing on the concept of institutional voids (Kistruck et al., 2015), there are places in the entrepreneurial landscape that are munificent and others that appear barren; however, it would be difficult to find a place with no historic entrepreneurial meaning – even empty fields and ancient ruins contain a past entrepreneurial meaning, which may in turn offer an affordance for future entrepreneurial action (Gaddefors et al. 2020).

Chapter contributions

Having discussed the contours of the entrepreneurial landscape, we now turn to the chapter contributions in this book, each approaching different aspects of the landscape through a mix of lenses. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on places characterised by individual and self-organising communities of entrepreneurs. *Foster* looks at entrepreneurial responsibility to place and the places in question are rural Nova Scotian communities. Here entrepreneurship is regarded as something that emerges when a suitable opportunity structure emerges at the intersection of individual and society (Watson, 2013). Exploring the context of responsibility to place, the chapter highlights how different values and meaning define entrepreneurial places, evoking Adam Smith's moral character of an economy (Sayer, 2007). In this case, place leadership resides in the individual entrepreneurial values that work for positive impacts within the local community that are sustainable beyond the life of the individual. These values may conflict with the objectives of policymakers and economic development officers that focus on competitiveness and profit maximisation. The chapter concludes by suggesting that sustainable entrepreneurial places require a better understanding of the unique meanings ascribed to a location by its inhabitants. In the case of rural Nova

Scotia, rather than meanings constructed around profit maximisation, *Foster* argues these should instead be built around stable employment, responsible resource use and a sufficiency of livelihoods for others in the community - requiring a distinct leadership vision.

Petrylaite and Robson offer a different way to think about place and focuses on the dynamic connections that exist between individuals within space-time. Here the focus is on situated masculinities and leadership, offering a specific socio-cultural context. The place is a team of entrepreneurial males situated within a higher education establishment in the North East of England. A 'situated' perspective, often used to describe learning oriented communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991), is a useful way to consider how the meaning of place is embedded in the meanings negotiated within a network of individuals that come together in a particular space through a temporary congealing of connections (Murdoch, 2000). The chapter sets out how leadership theories often relate to a leader-follower binary, however in contexts such as these relational leadership becomes the active process (Carson *et al.*, 2007). Individuals are both active-passive leaders-followers in a plural and dynamic form of entrepreneurial leadership. Within this situated educational space-time, the chapter shows how negotiated masculinities affect this plural leadership and entrepreneurial outcomes. The chapter suggests that the values and meanings given to these entrepreneurial places, through the plural leadership mode of the team, can be as heterogeneous as the individual members.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on places we might characterise as the planned settlements of an entrepreneurial landscape. Each of these chapters describes a variation of the Entrepreneurial Support Organisation (ESO) that include incubators, accelerators, labs and co-working spaces. These ESO have been describe as ubiquitous (Bergman and McMullen, 2021) and we may regard them as key places, with recognisable architectures, that may be common place within an entrepreneurial landscape. The place described by *Donaldson and Villagrasa* is a University entrepreneurial ecosystem in Valencia, Spain. This is a place designed to promote a value laden entrepreneurship (Hudson, 2001) through a carefully managed culture that curates' networks, context and shared knowledge. Within this place, embedded experience, signs, symbols and other cultural artefacts for supporting an entrepreneurial mind-set are highlighted as important. The entrepreneurial leadership of the founder has been

indelibly imprinted on place through these cultural artefacts and will be perpetuated and transmitted over time as individuals incorporate them into their developing entrepreneurial identities.

Tibaingana, Baillie Smith and Newbery explore refugee ESOs operating in Kampala, Uganda. The chapter highlights the importance of the target population to the construction and operation of these planned entrepreneurial places. The chapter shows how the dominant discourse of entrepreneurial self-reliance is used to promote, justify and fund these refugee ESO. However, the key entrepreneurial agency in the research appears to reside with the leaders and founders, rather than the refugees. The founders vary from domiciled refugees to NGOs and Government-led agencies, and whilst they speak to the hi-tech / innovation discourse of entrepreneurship, their actions are focused on supporting the survival of refugees through the provision of language skills and livelihood strategies. The chapter shows how the refugee ESOs play a critical role as entrepreneurial communities (Paredo and Chrisman, 2006) that promote locally needed, and often frugal, innovations within the community – a different role to that usually assigned to ESOs, where nascent entrepreneurs with resources are empowered in their individual agency within a safe space.

Following this, *Eid* explores the first private Business Accelerator (BA) to be established in Egypt. Whilst the BA model is based on a recognisable template imported from Silicon Valley, its placement within a developing economy presents its own challenges. However, whilst contemporary literature sets an expectation for a mismatch to occur when entrepreneurial frameworks and theories developed in the Global North are transplanted to resource-constrained contexts in the Global South (Brunton *et al.* 2013; Kimmitt *et al.*, 2019), the benefits and issues in this chapter are reassuringly familiar. In this developing context, the BAs impact is amplified: providing the safe space required by Egyptian entrepreneurs to overcome an institutional fear of failure (GEM, 2014); access networks for those with limited entrepreneurial experience; and help remove the barriers around start-up. However, whilst this helps fill a national institutional void around start-up, the entrepreneurial landscape is incomplete and post-graduation from the BA, approximately 50% of start-ups fail after 1-year.

In chapters 7 and 8 we climb a hill in the entrepreneurial landscape and look down upon a broader geography of entrepreneurial meaning. These chapters explore entrepreneurial place leadership from the perspective of the policymaker or policy entrepreneur. *Montalleti, Martin, Wilson and Jamieson* explore the Lombardy region in Italy. The chapter approaches entrepreneurial public policy leadership through the theoretical lens of Multiple Stream Analysis (MSA) (Kingdon, 1984). This recognises that public policy leadership is often an anarchic and mismatched 'garbage can' of disconnected policies, and describes a sense making approach to more cohesive entrepreneurial policy (Cohen *et al.*, 1972). MSA sets out multiple streams that include problem, policy, politics and, as added in this chapter, platform. This then highlights the importance of policy places, including events and occasions, to facilitate the required conversation, negotiation and constructive dialogue. The key role of the entrepreneurial place policy leader is to align the streams through their vernacular knowledge of the socio-technical system. *Pellow, Shutt, Liddle and Johnston* develop this theme further and compare the North East region of England with the Amsterdam City region of the Netherlands. The comparison highlights a fragmentation of policy in the North East that echoes the 'garbage can' analogy in the previous chapter and emphasizes the importance of underpinning culture, values and knowledge in supporting a cohesive entrepreneurial improvisation.

Finally, in terms of the entrepreneurial landscape, *Zivkovic* is focused on the architecture of entrepreneurial places. The chapter characterises social entrepreneurial places as complex adaptive systems comprised of self-organising component parts, operating under conditions of uncertainty (Goldstein, 1999). It is the relationships between components that tend to be under-theorised and they argue that these ecosystems cannot be controlled, but can be influenced. They explore a tool that helps manage the conditions that will, in turn, allow entrepreneurial and innovative outcomes to be nurtured and amplified. Complexity also addresses leadership theory and they suggest that leadership is not necessarily embodied in a role or person, but can be a process embedded in the interactions of agents in the system. The entrepreneurial architects must therefore consider the conditions and the framework and build leadership into the process. These conditions include: generating information rich networks that cross diverse stakeholders; encouraging the emergence of innovation; allowing self-organising processes to occur; and supporting the process

of leadership by encouraging stakeholders to learn and adapt. However, policy makers require concrete and quantitative feedback to support progress and this chapter presents an ecosystem tool as one way to measure and promote the transition to a systems approach.

Overall, the chapters in this book explore a variegated and heterogeneous entrepreneurial landscape that is characterised by historic path dependencies, rich micro cultures and negotiated values.

A Policy and Practice Perspective

Having explored the entrepreneurial landscape and discussed the chapter contributions of the book, it is important to consider what this means for policy and practice. The policy and development literature explores ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to produce favourable development outcomes (Ray, 2001). Top down expertise has been criticised for ignoring local contexts, whilst bottom-up vernacular expertise can ignore strategic approaches and best practices available elsewhere (Lowe et al., 2019; Apostolopoulos *et al.*, 2020). The entrepreneurship literature suggests that context is particularly important for entrepreneurial outcomes (Baker and Welter, 2020).

Petrylaite and Robson discuss how policy interventions work best when they are designed against the local context and consider aspects such as gender, age and local cultures. *Donaldson and Villagrasa* suggest that the consideration of local entrepreneurial values, entrepreneurial spaces, and entrepreneurial practices are essential to the development of functioning entrepreneurial ecosystem. In addition, and of particular relevance to the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic, *Pellow et al.* recognise that some regions are structurally more vulnerable, entering recession earlier and emerging later, making it paramount that policies designed to support economic recovery fully consider the local context.

Although the notion of developing policy that fully considers the local context is both logical and sensible, the chapters presented in this book suggest a disconnect between policy makers and the entrepreneurs, businesses, and places that they serve. There are several broad areas that are evidenced in the book that appear to be contributing to this disconnect. Policy makers are often driven by the need to deliver economic outcomes, leading them to focus on activities that are deemed to deliver

higher economic returns and generate and distribute wealth in and across regions and places, such as export led growth (*Foster*) or innovation led start-ups (*Tibaingana et al.*). The pursuit of such economic outcomes is well intentioned and often held against a belief that their achievement will also address social outcomes, such as, improved living standards through better employment, higher wages, or improved productivity. This belief can however fail to address the more immediate needs of the people and businesses who coexist within a place. The failure of policy makers to address these immediate needs, such as the need for refugees to become self-reliant (*Tibaingana et al.*) or businesses in rural communities to sustain themselves (*Foster*) can suppress the achievement of the higher economic outcomes to which they aspire.

Foster highlights that the pursuit of policies that deliver higher economist returns are often applied to places where they simply do not fit. Policy makers have a temptation to apply policies that have been applied successfully in other places without considering the local social and economic context. *Pellow et al.* suggest that policy makers tend to be relatively risk adverse and one dimensional in their thinking; seeing the world through their own policy lens and therefore failing to consider the wider policy perspectives that could lead to more radical and innovative thinking. This narrow view could in part explain why the generic economic thinking discussed above is applied by policy makers inappropriately.

Of perhaps greatest consequence to the disconnection of policy makers and places is the lack of effective local policy implementation structures (*Pellow et al.*). *Montalleti et al.* suggest that policy makers need to have an ability to pull together the multiple streams of problem-policy-politics-platform together across political cycles in a more persistent and sustainable way. *Pellow et al.* suggest that these multiple streams have not been effectively aligned in areas such as the North East of England, where local policy implementation structures prevent new radical thinking. This reinforces the view of *Zivkovic* that local socio-economic development is reliant on a complex adaptive system which effectively connects the key components and their interactions together. A failure to do this is evidenced in inefficiency, fragmentation, poor collaboration, confusion and an unnecessary tension between stakeholders (*Donaldson and Villagrasa, Montalleti et al., Pellow et al., Zivkovic*). In considering how this disconnect between policy and practice may be reduced, we make a number of recommendations below for policy makers:

1. Reposition enterprise as a means of tackling social issues

ESO's (Enterprise Support Organisations) often address poorly constructed policy through flexing the design of their interventions to address the local needs that would otherwise have prohibited the achievement of policy makers desired outcomes. In doing so they bridge the institutional gaps between siloed policy makers (Kistruck *et al.*, 2015), joining the dots locally and helping policy makers to understand how enterprise and entrepreneurship can support the achievement of wider policy outcomes. *Tibaingana et al.* for instance suggested that supporting refugee self-reliance did not deliver against ESOs original policy goals but did perform an important service delivering social and economic outcomes. *Foster* equally highlighted how entrepreneurs with 'non-economic' motivations could be supported to develop economic stability and resilience in rural places. These scenarios represent an opportunity for ESO to target policy makers who are tasked with delivering both social and economic outcomes, thus positioning enterprise as a solution and creating better alignment between policy and practice.

2. Develop dynamic, adaptive and intelligence led tools for consensus building

Donaldson and Villagrasa point to the need for entrepreneurial ecosystems to cater to individual entrepreneur's idiosyncratic needs and ambitions. *Tibaingana et al.* and *Eid* suggest that intelligence gathered from ESO's and BA's is essential in gaining a deep understanding of service users, providing data and intelligence to enable continuous policy review. *Petrylaite and Robson* and *Zivkovic* suggest that adaptive learning or online tools can support continuous policy review through the collection of data and insights. *Montalleti et al.* highlight the importance of embedding platforms in to the streams of analysis to enable effective joined-up policy making. Each suggests that policy development is a dynamic process that best adapts to intelligence, insights and events.

3. Apply systems thinking to the creation of local policy implementation

Pellow et al. suggested that effective entrepreneurial ecosystems need effective local policy implementation structures and *Montalleti et al.* suggested that the characteristics of an effective structure would provide policy makers the ability to pull together the multiple streams of problem-policy-politics. From a practitioners' view this may be achieved practically through the creation of dynamic local policy systems that

are underpinned by adaptive data and intelligence processes and structured around the key implementation components (*Zivkovic*) of governance, strategy, funding and delivery.

Conclusion

In summary, the following chapters present a compelling journey through the entrepreneurial landscape and one which offers distinctive viewpoints and characterisations of entrepreneurial place leadership. This highlights a need for further research into how heterogeneous entrepreneurial places are led, be it through individual or community agency, plural collaborations or through a designed process embedded in the system.

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