
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Frank Lasch is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and an Associate Dean of Research at the Montpellier Business School. He holds a PhD in Economic Geography and a French habilitation of supervising doctoral research in Management Science. He is the Director of the Chair Entrepreneurship and Innovation funded by a French Government grant (Labex) and is Academic Coordinator of the Annual Entrepreneurship Conference Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research. His major topics of research are the regional entrepreneurship, new venture outcomes and performance, ICT entrepreneurship, and entrepreneur typologies. His research has been published in a variety of journals including *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, *Small Business Economics*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *Management Decision*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*, etc.

Kerstin Wagner is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and the Head of the Competence Center Digital Strategies of the Swiss Institute for Entrepreneurship at HTW Chur. She is an Academic Coordinator of the Annual Entrepreneurship Conference Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research. Her research interest covers the emergence and adoption of new technologies, the adoption of new business models, products and services in digital markets, and user behaviour in multi-sided online platforms, mainly from an organisational and a social perspective. Her current projects deal with data-driven services, online platforms, social media and crowdfunding.

In February 2015, the Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research (IECER) was held for the 13th time. Recognised as a high quality forum to debate current trends and research in entrepreneurship from an interdisciplinary perspective, the conference was held for the second time of its existence at Montpellier Business School, France. Successfully transmitted from the founders of the conference

(Jürgen Schmude, LMU München and Michael Dowling, Regensburg University), IECER became in 2013 a joint endeavour of HTW Chur (Switzerland, Kerstin Wagner) and Montpellier Business School (France, Frank Lasch). The IECER philosophy is to provide a selective, collegial and constructive atmosphere to feature reviewed research papers with running parallel tracks of 40–50 papers (<http://www.iecer-conference.org>). The 2015 Montpellier edition of the IECER attracted more than 60 participants from Austria, Denmark, Germany, France, Norway, The Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, the UK and the USA to address the conference theme ‘Entrepreneurship in the digital age – towards a new way of venturing’. The invited keynote speech was given by David Audretsch (Indiana University, USA) addressing the topic of ‘Academic entrepreneurship’ and the best paper award went to Madeira, F., Mendonça, J. and Torres, M. (Technical University of Lisbon; ‘Business owners’ educational skills and entrepreneurial teams on workers wages: the role of business owners gender’).

As a regular outlet for IECER research, the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (IJESB)* offered a special issue based on the papers presented at the IECER 2015 conference in Montpellier. This issue includes a selection of five papers which are presented in the following.

The first paper summarises the keynote speech of David Audretsch (‘Entrepreneurship and universities’) and examines the crucial link between universities and entrepreneurship we witness today. David Audretsch finds that universities contribute to contemporary entrepreneurship not just in technology transfer, but also in two other dimensions: knowledge spillover entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship capital.

The second paper authored by Michael Beier and Kerstin Wagner (‘What determines the growth expectations of early-stage entrepreneurs? Evidence from crowdfunding’) is part of a recent stream of literature on alternative ways of new venture funding, viz. crowdfunding. Funding levels in crowdfunding can be a determining factor to capture growth expectations of entrepreneurs at the early venture stage. With this measurement, growth expectations can be better explored to expand our understanding of how entrepreneurs assess individual growth path projections. Using a Swiss dataset, the authors identify individual characteristics of early stage entrepreneurs and intended strategy as main determinants of how new venture growth expectations are set.

The third paper (‘Makers, hackers, DIY-innovation, and the strive for entrepreneurial opportunities’ by Oliver Mauroner) sheds light on particular approaches to entrepreneurship in the digital age and focuses on the maker/hacker community. It uses a multiple case study approach collecting data from five maker projects in Germany. It provides new knowledge on the relationship between maker culture and entrepreneurship. The results show that these entrepreneurs are motivated by fun and self-fulfilment and not primarily by economic stimuli. In this community, trial and error approaches are common and considered necessary to creative learning and subsequent entrepreneurial entry. As a result of this hacker culture, many new ventures have emerged based on new products.

While the two last papers focused on alternative ways of new venturing in the contemporary economy, the following papers look at environments in which new venturing takes place. Exploring contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystems in France, Christina Theodoraki and Karim Messeghem address the complexity of ecosystems and their role for entrepreneurship (‘Exploring the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the field of entrepreneurial support: a multi-level approach’). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are

described as multi-level constructs with several interacting sub-ecosystems. The results show the importance of simultaneously studying the interplay among sub-ecosystems at the macro, meso, and micro level for a better understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems success. The findings are relevant for the development of new and effective strategies for both business incubators and policy makers.

The last paper examines precisely such an entrepreneurial ecosystem and analyses new ways of venturing in form of simultaneous cooperation and competition in a French wine cluster ('Understanding the evolution of co-competition among SMEs in a wine cluster: a social capital approach' by Julien Granata, Mickaël Géraudel, Alessandro Nicolosi and Karine Garcia). Using a longitudinal case study based on 34 interviews, the authors find that the co-competition process among the SMEs located in the cluster occurs in stages driven by specific environmental factors and is facilitated by the social capital of cluster members. The social capital of the owner-managers reveals to be the key of successful implementation and development of co-competition to the mutual benefit of the cluster members.

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