
Editorial

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1 Introduction

The main aim of this special issue is to highlight the unique characteristics and rich variety of European research in entrepreneurship, investigating new trends in terms of conceptual coverage and methodological advancements.

This special issue follows the main idea of the European university network on entrepreneurship (ESU) concept, that is to develop a ‘European view’ of entrepreneurship research and education, fed by European culture and rooted in its diversity and specificity. Thus, the special issue is open to different perspectives and different key issues that are currently perceived as interesting and relevant by European scholars in the field. Furthermore, it aims to discuss innovations in European research methodologies, which often result from holistic and systemic approaches, and multi-disciplinary research (Fayolle and Kyrö, 2008; Fayolle et al., 2013; Santos et al., 2017), even borrowing ideas from other sciences, such as sociology, psychology, management, education or philosophy (Fayolle et al., 2015).

As we know (Landström and Harirchi, 2019), topics, theories, and methods become interesting among scholars in a specific place and in a specific moment, based on

individual and contextual conditions (e.g., institutional conditions and traditions at a research centre, department, or school and so on). Thus, collectively held perceptions of 'hot topics' and methodological trends are created. The idea of this special issue is to try to portrait some of the topics that European scholars consider as 'hot', better positioning the European entrepreneurship research within the international entrepreneurship debate.

The focus on very basic questions – namely, 'what', 'how' and 'why' do the European researchers study entrepreneurship? – may help us to have a view of the changes going on in terms of aims, approaches, targets and methodologies of the studies (Fayolle et al., 2005). As a result, we wish to contribute to the advancement of the European specific debate on entrepreneurship research.

Aiming also at emphasising new approaches and expanding the scope of methods used in entrepreneurship research (Dana and Dana, 2005; Dana and Dumez, 2015), this special issue welcomes qualitative as well as quantitative and mixed methods studies.

This special issue follows the idea of developing a 'European view' of entrepreneurship research, fed by European culture and rooted in its diversity and specificity. Thus, we have solicited original research on key issues that are currently perceived as interesting and relevant by European scholars. The selected contributions focus on three specific topics: entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial opportunity and academic entrepreneurship. They serve as an example of the vibrant entrepreneurship research community established in Europe. A brief description of the contributing papers in this special issue is provided here, besides a general framework on interestingness in entrepreneurship research.

2 Interestingness in entrepreneurship research

Over the last decades, entrepreneurship research has grown significantly, and today we can identify a global scholarly community researching many different aspects of entrepreneurship. The globalisation of the field has consequences for research, not least when it comes to what scholars in different parts of the world find interesting in terms of topics to study, the theories and concepts to apply, and the methodologies used in their research.

Collectively held perceptions of interestingness, and what is perceived as 'hot issues' in the field, are greatly affected by institutional conditions, for example, the perceptions prevailing at a department or research centre. At the same time, interestingness is also highly influenced by the professional norms in the field, for example, reflected in academic journals and represented by editors and reviews of the journals (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). As argued by Bartunek et al. (2006), there are reasons to believe that scholars in different parts of the world will have different criteria for scholarly interest. A number of studies (e.g., Gartner, 2013; Welter and Lasch, 2008) confirm this statement. Thus, there are reasons to assume that we can find some form of 'European-ness' in the perception of interestingness and hot issues among European entrepreneurship scholars.

On the other hand, in a more global scholarly community, where scholars around the world have many opportunities to meet, cross-national doctoral courses play an important role in disseminating knowledge across regions, and journals become a powerful force for learning and an exponent of common standards and institutional norms around the world, a strong international isomorphism of knowledge might occur (Aldrich, 2000). This tends to blur regional differences and making research more or less similar across

regions. The globalisation of research raises the concerns of the unique European perception of interestingness in entrepreneurship research.

In a study by Harirchi and Landström (2021) based on a unique database and web-based responses from 915 entrepreneurship scholars, the authors explored the differences in the perception of interestingness among entrepreneurship scholars in Europe, North America, and the rest of the world.

The study shows a strong international isomorphism among entrepreneurship scholars, that is, the perception of interestingness tends to be rather similar around the world. However, having said that, the study also reveals distinct European aspects of interestingness.

For instance, scholars in Europe, compared to their colleagues in the North America, tend to perceive topics related to resource acquisition (e.g., financial issues) and methodological robustness in terms of sophisticated quantitative analysis as less interesting, but perceive new challenging methodological approaches as well as strong knowledge accumulation (e.g., elaborated literature reviews) as more interesting.

Moreover, Europe is a heterogeneous continent, and the study shows differences in the perception of interestingness between different parts of Europe. For example, entrepreneurship scholars in Northern Europe tend to perceive methodological robustness as less interesting than their counterparts in the rest of Europe, while scholars in Central and Southern Europe appreciate knowledge accumulation when assessing the interestingness in entrepreneurship studies.

The conclusion is that the study reveals a mix of international isomorphism and a distinct perception of interestingness among entrepreneurship scholars in Europe. The present special issue wants to highlight the uniqueness of European entrepreneurship research by presenting different articles that stress some topics and methodological approaches that are perceived as interesting in the European context.

3 An overview of selected papers

From the about 20 papers initially submitted, the following six were accepted for publication in this special issue after a formal review process. Summaries of these contributions are presented below and in Table 1.

European entrepreneurship scholars show a great and rising interest towards the topic of entrepreneurial intentions. Two of the selected papers in this special issue discuss the topic from different perspectives and with diverse quantitative methods. The two studies contribute to the understanding of the environmental factors that affect the entrepreneurial intentions formation and translation into entrepreneurial activity.

The first paper, 'A breath of fresh air – social cognitive career theory in studying entrepreneurial intentions' by Magdalena Licznarska and Pawel Ziemianski, focuses on the process of formation of entrepreneurial intentions. The study expands the social cognitive career theory conceptualisation of environmental determinants of entrepreneurial intentions, investigating new contextual variables. The study is based on survey data from 438 students from Poland and makes use of hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

The second paper, 'Enactment of entrepreneurial intention: is gender egalitarianism a facilitator or an inhibitor?' by Chiara Cannavale, Lorenza Claudio, Giorgia Rivieccio and Iman Zohoorian Nadali, aims to investigate how entrepreneurial intentions are translated

into real entrepreneurial activity. Thus, the focus is on the intention-action relationship. More specifically, the authors explore if gender egalitarianism, in terms of values and practices, may affect the enactment of entrepreneurial intentions, and in turn, the entrepreneurial activity. The study applies a quantitative approach employing secondary data from 27 countries, gathered from GEM and GLOBE datasets.

Another topic that captures the interest of European entrepreneurship scholars is entrepreneurial opportunity. Two of the selected papers are focused on this topic, despite their different perspectives and different qualitative methodological approaches.

The paper ‘How is immigrant entrepreneurial opportunity formation influenced by interactions between home and host countries?’ by Kingsley C. Njoku and Thomas M. Cooney examines how the entrepreneurial opportunity formation process among different ethnic groups is influenced by their origins and the cultural values accustomed to them. The study is based on data collected from 20 entrepreneurs belonging to four different ethnic groups. Data gathering was done with an in-depth interview technique, thus adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach.

The other paper addressing the opportunity discovering process is ‘Exploring the collective dimension of agricultural entrepreneurship: the case of a wine cooperative in Italy’ by Antonella Garofano. Focusing on collective-owned firms, such as cooperatives, this study aims at providing a more nuanced perspective on how entrepreneurial opportunities are identified and pursued at the two distinct but interweaving levels of cooperative organisation, namely jointly-owned firm and owners-members. The paper focuses on the in-depth longitudinal case-study of a wine cooperative in the south of Italy with 1,000 members. Insights on how this form of collective entrepreneurship may support small farmers in recognising and exploiting business opportunities are provided.

The last two papers in this special issue address another topic that seems to be considered ‘hot’ by European scholars, namely academic entrepreneurship. Again, the two studies are very different in terms of perspectives and methods.

Table 1 Overview of the papers in the special issue

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Method</i>
Magdalena Licznarska, Pawel Ziemianski	Entrepreneurial intentions	Social cognitive career theory	Quantitative approach, survey study
Chiara Cannavale, Lorenza Claudio, Giorgia Riviaccio, Iman Zohoorian Nadali	Entrepreneurial intentions	Gender egalitarianism	Quantitative approach, dependence analysis
Kingsley C. Njoku, Thomas M. Cooney	Entrepreneurial opportunity	Immigrant entrepreneurship	Qualitative approach, in-depth interviews
Antonella Garofano	Entrepreneurial opportunity	Collective entrepreneurship	Qualitative approach, longitudinal case study
Michela-Cesarina Mason, Adriano Paggiaro, Gioele Zamparo, Francesca Visintin	Academic entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial identity, entrepreneurial bricolage, entrepreneurial orientation	Quantitative approach, survey study
Fabio Greco, Marco Tregua	Academic entrepreneurship	Start-up ecosystem	Qualitative approach, desk analysis and case studies

The article ‘Entrepreneurial scales in the Italian academia context: a comparison between university spin-offs and high-tech start-ups’ by Michela-Cesarina Mason, Adriano Paggiaro, Gioele Zamparo and Francesca Visintin focuses on three well-known theoretical constructs in entrepreneurship literature, namely entrepreneurial identity, entrepreneurial bricolage and entrepreneurial orientation, and aims to assess their potential use in studies focused on university spin-offs. Drawing on a national sample of 233 Italian university spin-offs and 267 Italian high-tech start-ups, used as a control group, the study provides new insights into the relationship between the above-cited constructs and the performance of university spin-offs.

The paper ‘It gives you wheels: the university-based accelerators in start-up ecosystems’ by Fabio Greco and Marco Tregua investigates the real impact of university-based accelerators on the development and growth of start-ups and on the viability of a start-up ecosystem. Based on a desk-research of several start-up ecosystems around the world and two on-field studies, this paper shows how university-based accelerators can offer a hard-to-replicate combination of suitable conditions for start-up acceleration, due to prestige in the business context, the operationalisation of models and methods, and the setting-up of a fertile ground for start-ups.

4 Conclusions

This special issue succeeded in attracting papers that reflect the topics and the methodological approaches that are perceived as interesting and challenging in the European context. Namely, it presents an overview of European research in entrepreneurship with a focus on three specific topics: entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial opportunity and academic entrepreneurship.

These contributions serve as an example of the vibrant entrepreneurship research community established in Europe. This academic community has long been consolidated, as the success of European-wide specific networks (such as the ESU network or the ECSB) and conferences (such as the ESU Conference and Doctoral Programme, RENT or 3E) clearly show.

We trust this special issue contributes to this process of visualisation of the ‘European approach’ to entrepreneurship and call for researchers in the continent to keep on contributing to its development. In this perspective, we hope this special issue will provide new insights and new ideas for future research. New research on the topics highlighted here and new methodological approaches from European scholars in the fields would comply with the main aims of this special issue.

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