

Scandinavian Journal of Management
Special Issue

Relevant Practice-based Research on Entrepreneurship in contexts

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In recent years, the rigour-relevance debate has called for entrepreneurship research leading to findings that can be translated into actionable insights relevant for stakeholders external to Higher Education, in particular, policy and business people (e.g., Dimov, 2020; Frank and Landstroem, 2016; Higgins, et al., 2019; Laveren et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2019). This call is also reflected in the requirements by the recent calls for research impact, for example, in the UK Research Assessment Exercises asking for impact case studies, which need to demonstrate how research findings and publications have affected society or more narrowly policy making. Balancing theoretical abstractions that are ‘generalizable’ across contexts on the one hand and generating knowledge that acknowledges and accounts for context in theorizing is a persisting challenge of conducting relevant entrepreneurship research (see Higgins et al., 2019; Welter and Gartner, 2016; Welter et al., 2019; Welter, 2011; Zahra & Wright, 2011). Different types of contextualized entrepreneurship research have partly addressed these issues. Researchers have been acknowledging that contexts are not only passive externalities but that entrepreneurship is shaping the contexts in which it occurs (Hill, 2018; Welter et al., 2019).

Researchers studying ‘entrepreneurship’ have been promoting the view that entrepreneurial activities are not a phenomenon restricted to Silicon Valley type business activities, but that they be found in many situations where people create novelty within a given context (Johannisson, 2011, 2018; Rindova et al., 2009; Steyaert, 2007). Practice theory informed research focuses on lived everyday activities in business (Higgins et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020; Welter and Gartner, 2016) and thus can offer findings in ways that are closer to the life worlds of practitioners (Hill, 2021; Parkkari and Verduijn, 2019). Informed by social theories such as of Giddens (1990), Schatzki (1996, 2002) and Bourdieu (1986, 1990), practice-based research recognises the need to overcome the agency–structure duality and focus on practices that enact structures and thus link the agency of the actor to the structures (MORE here to extend briefly). Practices (usually used in plural) are often defined as a set of interconnected ‘doings and sayings’, activities and forms of communication, carried out over time and in multiple sites (Schatzki, 2018, 2006; Nicolini, 2012). Practices are accomplished in contexts, thus local, even when ‘local’ refers to online contexts (Cyron, 2021).

Similar to management and organisation studies that have seen a ‘practice-turn’ in recent decades (e.g., Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Gherardi, 2000; Jarzabkowski et al., 2016; Nicolini, 2009; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012)), entrepreneurship research has recently seen a growing stream of research articles applying practice theory approaches (Champenois et al., 2020; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Johannisson, 2011; Sklaveniti and Steyaert, 2020; Thompson et al., 2020). Predominantly conceptual in nature, this research offers frameworks, lenses, and empirical studies to provide findings more relevant for society and business (Hill, 2018; Reid, 2020). Examples of empirical research include studies of practices in and for life-style entrepreneurship (Reid,

2020), social entrepreneuring (Johannisson, 2018), pitching to business angels (Teague et al., 2020), artisan entrepreneurs (Hill, 2021a; Pret et al., 2016) and culturally diverse understandings of 'opportunities' (Mainela et al., 2018). All theories of practice recognise the need to overcome the agency–structure duality and focus on practices that enact structures and thus link the agency of the actor to the structures.

Despite the recent achievements in entrepreneurship-as-practice research, we are calling for more empirical studies with a particular focus on how entrepreneuring practices are enacted and become imbricated in the social practices surrounding them. Research rooted in practice theory addresses predominantly *how* business activities are accomplished and refrains from simple cause-effect research questions. Practice informed studies hone in on the nexus of social relations and verbal, mental and physical activities and their outputs and outcomes (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012). Practice theory discussions challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions and unpack the hidden ones by focusing on micro-level activities of those who are 'doing business' (Hill, 2021b). The mapping of micro-activities and their analysis can lead to finding previously unnoticed patterns of actions or 'sayings'. We are particularly interested in empirical research that demonstrates how the findings can add value to business development, policy making and business support, not only for innovation.

We see several questions that are of interest here, but do not limit submissions to only these:

- How are large-scale social structures (eg. industry structures, societal structures, gender structures) instantiated in everyday business activities via practices?
- How do the instantiations of everyday business activities change the social structures?
- The answers aim to demonstrate how individuals and groups re-create, and thus bring into existence, the social structures that shape their activities and are shaped through referring to them.
- How are practices unfolding over time in contexts?
- How do new practices emerge and change? How and why do practices stop over time?
- How can rural enterprise be explained with reference to place-based practices?
- How do policies and policy changes on local, regional, national, or pan-national levels impact entrepreneuring?
- How can practice-theory-informed explanations contribute to policy formulation?
- How can rural enterprise be explained with reference to place-based practices?
- How do craft and artisan entrepreneurial practices differ from their industrial counterparts? How do entrepreneurs in the creative industries shape their everyday practices to accommodate business logics?
- How does digitalization shape entrepreneuring practices? How do people practice entrepreneurship in digital media? How do digital and non-digital practices interplay?
- What is the potential unique contribution of entrepreneurship-as-practice research to the relevance debate?

We are open to studies on various industry sectors including but not exclusively creative industries, manufacturing, health and social care, consultancy services, food production.

Timeline for the Special Issue:

Submission of full manuscripts:	1-9-2021
Submission opens:	1-7-2021
Publication of Special Issue:	Winter 2022

Call for papers

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- The team is very well networked and will advertise the SI in these ways:
- Entrepreneurship-as-practice community during the sixth conference in April 2021
- A short workshop during EAP6 on the paper development day
- The ICSB where Dr Hill is a speaker at two upcoming webinars, one of which is dedicated to practice theory-based entrepreneurship research in April
- The entrepreneurship researcher network of ISBE (general member newsletter, website)
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