

**SPECIAL ISSUE CALL FOR PAPERS**

**“The interplay of context and entrepreneurship: the new frontier for contextualization research”**

**Deadline: October 1, 2021**

**Guest Editors:**

Cyrine Ben-Hafaïedh, IESEG School of Management (LEM-CNRS), France

Mirela Xheneti, University of Sussex Business School, UK

Pekka Stenholm, University of Turku, Turku School of Economics, Finland

Robert Blackburn, University of Liverpool Management School, UK

Friederike Welter, Institut für Mittelstandsforschung (IfM) Bonn, Germany

David Urbano, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (CREIS), Spain

Contextualization in entrepreneurship research has received special scholarly attention with studies over the years challenging the mainstream Silicon Valley model of entrepreneurship, and acknowledging and researching both, the diversity of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial efforts in constructing and enacting contexts (see Welter, 2011; Welter, Baker, Audretsch, & Gartner, 2017; Welter & Gartner, 2016; Zahra, 2007; Zahra & Wright, 2011). After an initial focus on the economic (Nakara, Messeghem, & Ramarosan, 2019) and technological, other facets of context have been examined, including the historical (Wadhvani, Kirsch, Welter, Gartner, & Jones, 2020), spatial (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018), temporal (Lippmann & Aldrich, 2016), cultural (Morales, Holtschlag, Masuda, & Marquina, 2019; Shaw, Wilson, & Pret, 2017), social (Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Urbano, 2011; Welter & Xheneti, 2015) and institutional (Urbano & Alvarez, 2014; Urbano, Aparicio, & Audretsch, 2019).

Emerging as well as more mature areas in entrepreneurship and small business research are examined with a contextualization framework to show the role these areas have in the field (Belitski, Caiazza, & Lehmann, 2019; Wright, Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2014; Zahra, Wright, & Abdelgawad, 2014).

In parallel of the rise of contextualization in entrepreneurship research, concerns are also voiced. On the one hand, contextualization in entrepreneurship research brings with it ramifications for research methods and approaches (Zahra et al., 2014). On the other hand, contextualization could lead to an overly fragmented field and its possible disintegration (McMullen, Ingram, & Adams, 2020). Welter, Baker, and Wirsching (2019, p. 327) argue that contextualization would actually allow a better understanding of the bigger picture and call for “the emergence of sensible approaches to contextualization that provide guidance in balancing its benefits and costs”. In this Special Issue, we wish to contribute to tackling this challenge. More specifically, we argue that an investigation of the construction and enactment of contexts provides a path to leverage the identified tension. The aim of this Special Issue ties in with increasing calls in the entrepreneurship literature for going beyond agent centric views towards accounts that theorise the interconnections between agency and structure. For example, Garud, Gehman, and Giuliani (2014) when examining entrepreneurial innovation suggest a movement towards constitutive approaches. Likewise, Baker and Welter (2020) perceive a similar shift in the progress of contextualization in entrepreneurship research and emphasize the importance of “doing contexts”: the making, unmaking, and remaking of sites for entrepreneurial action. Context and entrepreneurship are interconnected pointing out the need to research the temporal and processual aspects of such interplay.

Shifting the focus of contextualization in entrepreneurship and small business research as suggested in this Call has important implications. First, it will provide stronger grounding

for entrepreneurship theories and concepts. For example, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is a strongly emergent concept (Stam & van de Ven, 2019; Theodoraki & Catanzaro, 2021) where entrepreneurship is considered to be both enabled and constrained by its context (Acs, Stam, Audretsch, & O'Connor, 2017). Whilst paying close attention to the features of particular locations including their institutional, economical socio-cultural and political characteristics, this approach increasingly recognises the role that various actors in the ecosystem play in developing the ecosystem (Stam & van de Ven, 2019). Audretsch and Belitski (2021) find close support for the role that entrepreneurial ecosystems play in the nature and contributions of entrepreneurship pointing out the close relationship between the regional ecosystem and entrepreneurial agency. Similarly, Stam & Welter (2020) have recently proposed that an ecosystem approach could highlight the geography of entrepreneurship and the role of entrepreneurial agency in place making. Notwithstanding this progress in understanding the interplay of context and entrepreneurship, the ecosystem approach still remains at the macro level when the importance of microdynamics is increasingly recognized in the light of movements such as digitalization (Sussan & Acs, 2017) and transnationalism of entrepreneurship (Drori, Honig, & Wright, 2009) which show how entrepreneurs can (more and more) forge their contexts.

Second, considering the interconnections of context and entrepreneurship will also contribute to set off criticism of hypercontextualisation and help progress in theorizing context in a more sensible way (Welter & Baker, 2020) using methods that are more attuned to capturing the processual nature of entrepreneurship. Overall, understanding how and why some agents are more successful at creating and enacting contexts via entrepreneurial action is crucial (McMullen et al., 2020) and would allow for a more balanced conceptualisation of both entrepreneurial agency and context.

Questions that might be examined in submissions to this Special Issue include, but are not limited to:

- How do entrepreneurs and/or other stakeholders collectively shape and transform their contexts?
- How does the digitalization of entrepreneurship impact the process of “doing contexts”?
- How does transnational entrepreneurship impact the process of “doing contexts”?
- How do entrepreneurship ecosystems reconfigure context and through what mechanisms does entrepreneurial agency affect the spaces and places of entrepreneurial ecosystems?
- How do exogenous shocks (such as crises, pandemics, etc.) impact the context-entrepreneurship relationship, and contribute in building a “new normal”?
- How does the impact of exogenous shocks differ—or not—from that of more progressive changes (such as climate and societal change)?
- How best can the interplay of contexts and the agency of entrepreneurs (dynamics, processes) be studied (research lenses, levels of analysis, etc.)?

Novel theorizations of context using insights from other disciplines such as sociology or geography, or using different methods are particularly welcome.

## References

- Acs, Z. J., Stam, E., Audretsch, D. B., & O’Connor, A. (2017). The lineages of the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach. *Small Business Economics*, 49(1), 1-10.
- Audretsch, D. B., & Belitski, M. (2021). Towards an entrepreneurial ecosystem typology for regional economic development: the role of creative class and entrepreneurship. *Regional Studies*, 1-22. doi:10.1080/00343404.2020.1854711
- Baker, T., & Welter, F. (2020). *Contextualizing Entrepreneurship Theory*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Belitski, M., Caiazza, R., & Lehmann, E. E. (2019). Knowledge frontiers and boundaries in entrepreneurship research. *Small Business Economics*. doi:10.1007/s11187-019-00187-0

- Drori, I., Honig, B., & Wright, M. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurship: An emergent field of study. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(5), 1001-1022.
- Garud, R., Gehman, J., & Giuliani, A. P. (2014). Contextualizing entrepreneurial innovation: A narrative perspective. *Research Policy*, 43(7), 1177-1188.
- Lippmann, S., & Aldrich, H. E. (2016). *The temporal dimension of context A research agenda for entrepreneurship and context*: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- McMullen, J. S., Ingram, K. M., & Adams, J. (2020). What Makes an Entrepreneurship Study Entrepreneurial? Toward A Unified Theory of Entrepreneurial Agency. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 0(0), 1042258720922460. doi:10.1177/1042258720922460
- Morales, C., Holtschlag, C., Masuda, A. D., & Marquina, P. (2019). In which cultural contexts do individual values explain entrepreneurship? An integrative values framework using Schwartz's theories. *International Small Business Journal*, 37(3), 241-267.
- Müller, S., & Korsgaard, S. (2018). Resources and bridging: the role of spatial context in rural entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 30(1-2), 224-255. doi:10.1080/08985626.2017.1402092
- Nakara, W. A., Messeghem, K., & Ramarosan, A. (2019). Innovation and entrepreneurship in a context of poverty: a multilevel approach. *Small Business Economics*. doi:10.1007/s11187-019-00281-3
- Shaw, E., Wilson, J., & Pret, T. (2017). The process of embedding a small firm in its industrial context. *International Small Business Journal*, 35(3), 219-243.
- Stam, E., & van de Ven, A. (2019). Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements. *Small Business Economics*. doi:10.1007/s11187-019-00270-6
- Sussan, F., & Acs, Z. J. (2017). The digital entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Small Business Economics*, 49(1), 55-73. doi:10.1007/s11187-017-9867-5
- Theodoraki, C., & Catanzaro, A. (2021). Widening the borders of entrepreneurial ecosystem through the international lens. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 1-24. doi:10.1007/s10961-021-09852-7
- Thornton, P. H., Ribeiro-Soriano, D., & Urbano, D. (2011). Socio-cultural factors and entrepreneurial activity: An overview. *International Small Business Journal*, 29(2), 105-118. doi:10.1177/0266242610391930
- Urbano, D., & Alvarez, C. (2014). Institutional dimensions and entrepreneurial activity: an international study. *Small Business Economics*, 42(4), 703-716.
- Urbano, D., Aparicio, S., & Audretsch, D. (2019). Twenty-five years of research on institutions, entrepreneurship, and economic growth: what has been learned? *Small Business Economics*, 53(1), 21-49.
- Wadhvani, R. D., Kirsch, D., Welter, F., Gartner, W. B., & Jones, G. G. (2020). Context, time, and change: Historical approaches to entrepreneurship research. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 14(1), 3-19.
- Welter, F. (2011). Contextualizing Entrepreneurship—Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 35(1), 165-184. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00427.x
- Welter, F., & Baker, T. (2020). Moving Contexts Onto New Roads: Clues From Other Disciplines. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 0(0), 1042258720930996. doi:10.1177/1042258720930996
- Welter, F., Baker, T., Audretsch, D. B., & Gartner, W. B. (2017). Everyday Entrepreneurship—A Call for Entrepreneurship Research to Embrace Entrepreneurial Diversity. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(3), 311-321. doi:10.1111/etap.12258

- Welter, F., Baker, T., & Wirsching, K. (2019). Three waves and counting: the rising tide of contextualization in entrepreneurship research. *Small Business Economics*, 52(2), 319-330. doi:10.1007/s11187-018-0094-5
- Welter, F., & Gartner, W. B. (2016). Advancing our research agenda for entrepreneurship and contexts. In F. Welter & W. B. Gartner (Eds.), *A research agenda for entrepreneurship and context* (pp. 156-160). Cheltenham: UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Welter, F., & Xheneti, M. (2015). Value for Whom? Exploring the Value of Informal Entrepreneurial Activities in Post-Socialist Contexts *Exploring Criminal and Illegal Enterprise: New Perspectives on Research, Policy & Practice* (Vol. 5, pp. 253-275): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Wright, M., Chrisman, J. J., Chua, J. H., & Steier, L. P. (2014). Family Enterprise and Context. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38(6), 1247-1260. doi:10.1111/etap.12122
- Zahra, S. A. (2007). Contextualizing theory building in entrepreneurship research. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22(3), 443-452. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2006.04.007>
- Zahra, S. A., & Wright, M. (2011). Entrepreneurship's Next Act. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 25(4), 67-83. doi:10.5465/amp.2010.0149
- Zahra, S. A., Wright, M., & Abdelgawad, S. G. (2014). Contextualization and the advancement of entrepreneurship research. *International Small Business Journal*, 32(5), 479-500.

### **Timeline:**

- Launch of the call on March 1, 2021
- Submission of extended abstracts / proposals May 15, 2021 by e-mail to [c.benhafaiedh@ieseg.fr](mailto:c.benhafaiedh@ieseg.fr)
- Submission of full papers October 1, 2021
- Invited manuscripts to participate in Paper Development Workshop ([ECSB XXXV RENT](#) hybrid pre-conference event) November 17, 2021. Participation in this workshop is not a condition for responding to the Call. Likewise, participation in this event does not guarantee publication in the Special Issue.
- Full submission revised paper February 15, 2022
- Revisions until July 15, 2022
- Submission of the final paper September 15, 2022
- SI online November-December 2022