



Institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities: A special issue on entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

This Special Issue's aim is to demonstrate that drawing on sociological research can further enrich entrepreneurship studies of institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities. We develop an organizing framework for our ten Special Issue papers that categorizes the pieces by community level and type, observed changes, form of entrepreneurial actor, institutional and entrepreneurial concepts and processes, and integrative methodologies. This set of categorizations helps us to identify components that scholars can use to build more mid-range theory around our special issue topics. The framework also helps us to isolate limitations in the Special Issue papers, thereby providing avenues for future research.

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1. Executive summary

In the current era, entrepreneurship is moving outwards to engage with other social science disciplines, just as these other disciplines are moving inward to engage with entrepreneurship. As part of this double movement, our Special Issue is devoted to bridging to one discipline—sociology—around three topics of interest to both entrepreneurship scholars and sociologists—*institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities*. By soliciting and publishing papers that combine entrepreneurship and sociological approaches to these topics, we hope to illustrate that such bridging moves can enrich both entrepreneurship and the other science disciplines to which it bridges.

As the first step in this particular case of bridging, we examine the conversations in entrepreneurship around our three Special Issue topics. To do so, we rely on reviews published in entrepreneurship, along with highly cited entrepreneurship articles on two or more of these topics. Reviews and research indicate that four relevant clusters of work exist: 1) networks and resources, 2) institutions and entrepreneurs, 3) societal consequences, and 4) liabilities of newness. The second cluster concerns us the most. Within it, entrepreneurship scholars have examined “settings”, “legitimacy”, and “institutional entrepreneurs” as main themes. Yet, in spite of this large body of work in entrepreneurship on these relevant domains, reviews have identified five perennial problems (research gaps) around our three topic areas, ranging from the lack of cultural context in studies to an over-emphasis on individual level agency.

Sociology contains on-going research conversations that might help entrepreneurship scholars to address these gaps. Again, relying on reviews and highly cited articles, we map out these conversations around our three topic areas. The richest and least often accessed involves community and culture; in contrast, sociological work on institutions and entrepreneurs is much better known and

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frequently used. Still, even at the intersection of these two topics, the burgeoning research in sociology and management on transnational institutions, institutional work, and practice has yet to be exploited by entrepreneurship scholars.

The ten Special Issue papers combine entrepreneurship and sociological approach to our three topic areas in unique ways, and thus offer models for bridging between these two areas of research. To unpack the Special Issue papers and relate them to one another, we use an organizing framework. This framework categories the paper in terms of levels and types of communities, the changes in institutions or communities, types of entrepreneurial actors, institutional and entrepreneurial concepts and processes, and integrative methodologies. Besides illuminating different mid-range theory devices that might be used in future work, the framework also helps to identify limitations with our compilation, thus additional avenues for research. Four limitations—and thus “opportunities”—were noticeable to us. First, entrepreneurship scholars and sociologists might benefit from doing either much more micro, practice-oriented, highly contextual work on the entrepreneurial processes or, at the other end of the spectrum, much more macro, cross-cultural and transnational institutional work. Second, both entrepreneurship scholars and sociologists might benefit from examining the formation of political groups and organizations as entrepreneurial outcomes—and investigating how politics is used as part of entrepreneurial action. Third, both groups of scholars might benefit from incorporating deeper methodological techniques on meaning, symbols and semiotic systems. Finally, both might benefit from the use of multi-method designs in order to make contextual effects more apparent and to capture the nuances of process models. We encourage further dialogue between entrepreneurship scholars and sociologists to help realize these benefits.

2. Introduction

The origin of this Special Issue lies with Dean Shepherd's, 2010 *Journal of Business Venturing* “Letter from the Editor.” In that letter, based on the premise that the study of entrepreneurship has become well-established, Shepherd argued that what the field needs now is renewed engagement with other behavioral disciplines: “[to] give voice to a dominant discipline, function, or context would drown out diversity and result in knowledge stagnation” (Shepherd, 2010:1). This outward turn of entrepreneurship as an academic field towards other disciplines in the arts and sciences has been matched by the inward turn in recent years of other disciplines towards entrepreneurship (e.g., see Arend, 2007). Together, these outward and inward moves may further elevate the field of entrepreneurship.

The aim of this Special Issue is to demonstrate the power of liaising with other disciplines by using one as an example—sociology—and by focusing on a single subset of topics that concern both sociologists and entrepreneurship scholars—institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities. By *institutions* we mean the routinized, taken for granted sets of ideas, beliefs and actions used in society, which includes both formal and informal institutions, and macro and micro institutional patterns (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). By *entrepreneurs*, we refer not only the concrete, individual entrepreneur as agent, but the wider and less agentic networks of actors generating new ventures, such as entrepreneurial teams, investors, and others engaged in distributed entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1988; Garud and Karnøe, 2003; Maguire et al., 2004). By *communities*, we mean enduring, but not explicitly instrumental, relationships among actors, often with geographic bounds (Freeman and Audio, 2006; Marquis et al., 2011). In the current era, communities include not only local and regional units in industrialized societies, but those within emerging and frequently impoverished nations (Prahalad, 2006), as well as transnational and global communities (Dejlic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006).

In the spring of 2010, we put forth a call for papers on “Institutions, Entrepreneurs, and Communities” reflective of these topics, their theoretical angles, and the connections among them. We requested papers on “how entrepreneurs affect institutions and community contexts as well as how institutional and community contexts are affected by entrepreneurs.” Fifty author groups contacted us, forty-two submitted papers, of which ten are represented in the Special Issue. All of the Special Issue papers routinely draw on informal and constructionist approaches to institutional theory (e.g., Dorado and Vantesca; Marti et al.), even those focused on the formal, regulatory side of institutions (e.g., Roman et al.). Most papers have at least one readily identifiable “entrepreneur,” although this may be an individual (Phillips et al.), a team (Wry and Lounsbury), a mobilized group (Marti et al.), or an organization (Ruebottom). The papers vary considerably in terms of their community settings—from small towns Guatemala (Khavul et al.), and India (Dorado and Vantesca) to cricket-playing counties in England (Wright and Zammuto), and from manufacturing districts in Eastern China (Tan) to R&D clusters in the US (Wry and Lounsbury). Six of the papers are written by scholars who rely heavily on sociology (Dorado and Vantesca; Khavul et al.; Marti et al.; Phillips and Tracey; Wright and Zammuto; Wry and Lounsbury); four by those who rely more on entrepreneurship theory (Roman et al.; Ruebottom; Stenholm et al.; Tan et al.). As a group, then, the papers provide a rich set of materials to bridge between sociology and entrepreneurship.

The remainder of this overview sets up the context for understanding these papers, unpacks them, and establishes their key connections. To help set up context, we first examine conversations in entrepreneurship around our Special Issue topics, including research gaps already identified by entrepreneurship scholars. Next, we turn to conversations in sociology around these same topics, considering how extant work helps fill some (but not all) of the aforementioned gaps. The heart of our overview is an organizing framework for assessing the Special Issue papers as a means of building more mid-range theory at the intersection of institutions, entrepreneurs and community. We finish by noting some limitations of our compilation, which may offer additional avenues for future research.

3. Current conversations in entrepreneurship and sociology

Viewing theory development and elaboration as evolving conversations is an approach that was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, for example in the work of Van Maanen (1988) and Weick (1995), building on the insights of Bourdieu (1991). The strength of this approach is that it allows for the changes in the big picture to be captured somewhat agnostically; its weakness is its limited utility

for paradigm building and mid-range theory construction (Pfeffer, 1993). We begin our overview with these broader conversations, then focus in on theoretical constructs and mechanisms that are involved in mid-range theory construction (Whetten, 1989).

3.1. Institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities as topics in entrepreneurship

The field of entrepreneurship, for us, refers to the very broad definition offered by Shane and Venkataraman (2000) as the “scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited” (p. 219). This definition denotes a wide variety of entrepreneurial operations, including production innovation, start-ups, new ventures, corporate venture spin-outs and spin-ins; and, more importantly, multiple levels of analysis from founder-focused, individual and dyadic levels up to field and international environment contexts.

Fine reviews of this “big tent” version of entrepreneurship already exist within the entrepreneurship literature. These offer the starting point for identifying current conversations. Using a prefix journal search algorithm, Schildt et al. (2006) examined publications in the major journals involving entrepreneurship.⁴ Among these clusters, the authors identified, three were directly related to sociology and cultural studies: 1) networks and entrepreneurs, 2) institutions and institutional entrepreneurship, and 3) societal consequences of entrepreneurship. A fourth, “liabilities of newness” was also sociological in nature, but less related to these other three nodes. Interestingly, “communities” and “regions” were apparent as themes as well, but did not form a unique cluster; instead, they were located in other groups, particularly “born global firms”, “regional development”, and “societal consequences.” We focus on conversations around the network-resource and institutions-entrepreneurs clusters, and then discuss how the societal consequences, liabilities, and community clusters and themes relate to these.

The conversations within the network and resource cluster appear to parallel those in sociology more broadly. Characteristics of entrepreneurial networks—their size, density, tie structure, change (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1985), the impact of the network on new ventures at various stages (Pollock et al., 2002; Stuart and Sorenson, 2003), resources (financial, social), reputation, and legitimacy (Birley, 1985; Shane and Cable, 2002) have all been examined, along with the subsequent change in such networks (also see Davidsson, 2005 for a review). Regional networks or communities were part of this group, including studies of technology innovation (e.g., Rothermael and Deeds, 2004) and industry generation (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2004; Powell et al., 1996).

A rich conversation exists around the institution and institutional entrepreneurship cluster, one based notion “social institutions” as expressed in DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Aldrich and Fiol (1994), key cites at the center of this group. Social institutions influence the liabilities of newness and entrepreneurs attempt to manage these liabilities. This institution-entrepreneur cluster has been further deconstructed by Bruton et al. (2010) in their review of institutional theory applied in entrepreneurship studies. Within the cluster, three more specific “streams” of research appears to exist: “settings,” “legitimacy,” and “entrepreneurs.” “Settings” refers to more formal, traditionally institutional settings, such as states and bureaucracies, not to the logics, embeddedness or the culture underpinning the entrepreneurial arrangement. State strength, market development, legal formalization, and accountability can be used as dimensions for understanding the support for and formation of entrepreneurial ventures (e.g., see Baumol et al., 2009; Peng, 2003).

“Legitimacy” refers Scott’s (2001) use of regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars. In the opinion of Bruton et al. (2010), the concepts have primarily been borrowed and not modified substantially for the entrepreneurial context. However, there is a great deal of work in the area over the last three years around such concepts. The research on entrepreneurial cognition and affectuation has been connected to cognitive legitimacy (see Sarasvathy, 2001) and work on formal institutional systems has begun to specify the types of regulative mechanism needed by entrepreneurs. The normative dimension of legitimacy has been most present in work on cultural entrepreneurship (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007) that focuses on how entrepreneurs gain legitimacy by articulating stories about themselves with appropriate institutional beliefs.

“Institutional entrepreneurs” includes institutional strategy and bricolage (Hardy and Maguire, 2007; Lawrence, 1999), institutional mobilization and change (Rao et al., 2003; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006), and network and embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985; Powell et al., 1996). Within entrepreneurship, per Shane and Venkataraman (2000), this stream is very much around how institutional entrepreneurs, using institutional means, recognize opportunities, acquire resources, and exploit options. In fact, there are dozens of partial replications of the basic premises of institutional change within different entrepreneurial contexts (e.g. Jennings et al., 2007 on institutional conformity vs. novelty on new law firm in a regional community). Entrepreneurship scholars have, at the very least, viewed these contexts as country cultural differences (Davidsson and Wiklund, 1997; Zacharakis et al., 2007), and also theorized them as institutional distance (Bruton et al., 2010; Busenitz et al., 2000). Some work on context has been around global firms and transnational differences (e.g., Drori et al., 2009).

In spite of these efforts within entrepreneurship to examine institutions and entrepreneurs in different contexts, problems still exist. While Schildt et al. (2006) did not focus on these explicitly, Bruton et al. (2010) did, identifying three: 1) the competing conceptualizations of institutions as formal vs. informal organizational arrangements, 2) the tendency to equate country and culture without examining the meaning and operation of culture in country contexts, and 3) the widespread use of single country (or community) studies of institutions and entrepreneurs. To these we would add two others: 4) the enduring tendency to reify the entrepreneur and firm as somewhat autonomous, highly agentic actors, compared to conceiving actor and firm as interdependent, distributed and collaborative entrepreneurial endeavors; and 5) the use of institutional concepts without attendant mid-range theories (e.g., about status or power or psychological distance) to help detail institutional mechanisms.

⁴ The search was done on the root “entre”, with the * as a wild card. It yielded 755 articles across 30 journals from 2000 thru 2004.

3.2. Institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities as topics in sociology

Sociology as a discipline contains conversations that partly address these five problems. By “sociology” we mean all of sociology from the societal level theories down to social psychological ones (Calhoun et al., 2005; Smelser, 1988), even if, due to the nature of our three topics, macro sociology is more of our focus. In addition, we include as “sociology” research in management that has helped develop or apply these sociological conceptions, though not necessarily to entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship. Very good reviews of these sociological approaches to entrepreneurship can be found in Aldrich and Fiol (1994), Freeman and Audio (2006), Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), Marquis et al. (2011), Ruef and Lounsbury (2007), Thornton (1999), Thornton and Flynn (2006), and Thornton et al. (2012)—sources that we rely upon below.

Sociological approaches to the topic “institution” begin somewhat similarly to approaches in entrepreneurship, but then become much more elaborate than is commonly recognized in entrepreneurship. As noted by Bruton et al. (2010), the most predominant definition of institution is still based on Scott (2001: 48): institutions are “social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience” and contain cognitive, normative, and regulative elements. Somewhat in contrast to the comments by Bruton et al. (2010), this definition means that institutions have both informal (flexible, cognitive and normative) and formal (more rigid regulative) sides. Still, since Friedland and Alford (1991) proposed that “logics” underpin institutions, there has been more emphasis on the ideational side of institutions. Recently, this notion of logics has been further clarified and elaborated to include “inter-institutional orders” (Thornton et al., 2012: 73–75). Inter-institutional orders have multiple levels of analysis and rely on organized and standardized arenas of social life; e.g., markets, family, and religion. An implication of this move to inter-institutional orders is that normative dimensions will become more *bona fide* objects of study. Another implication is that institutions vary greatly in their complexity, both horizontally and vertically (Greenwood et al., 2011), and to study institutional complexity requires comparative institutional designs, something also called upon by Bruton et al. (2010). Sociologists are now beginning to apply these notions of institutional orders and complexity to entrepreneurial phenomena (Zhao and Wry, 2011; and authors, this volume).

“Entrepreneurs” as a topic is treated somewhat differently in sociology than in entrepreneurship. In sociology, the individualist, trait-focused version of entrepreneurs that characterizes the “supply side” version of the field is eschewed, and the embeddedness version of institutional entrepreneurs, which characterizes the “demand side,” is emphasized (Thornton, 1999). The embeddedness of entrepreneurs is frequently captured using network analysis to characterize the structural and relational features (per Podolny and Page, 1998) of any entrepreneurial position (e.g., see Burt, 1992). As a result, entrepreneurs may have higher status or power or social capital, and therefore access to tangible resources. In addition, entrepreneurs may be part of social movements (Davis et al., 2005), and their roles in these movements help them change surrounding institutions (Rao et al., 2003). Entrepreneurs may also be carriers of ideas, diffuses innovations from one field to another via their network ties (Fligstein, 1997; Kraatz and Moore, 2002). Entrepreneurs who are involved in such institutional changes are frequently called “institutional entrepreneurs” (DiMaggio, 1988; Hardy and Maguire, 2007).

Recent work from a sociological angle on entrepreneurs has theorized entrepreneurs as embedded in groups or teams (Ruef, 2010). From this vantage, entrepreneurship appears to be *distributed* among several actors, with the locus of action switching back and forth as projects evolve (Delbridge and Edwards, 2008; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). As such, these approaches help resolve the “paradox of embeddedness” (Garud and Karnøe, 2003). A somewhat different but equally intriguing view on agency is found in “institutional work” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), which “describes the practices of individuals and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence et al., 2011: 52). From this vantage, entrepreneurship is inherently a complex, entwined set of social processes in which actors take on multiple roles and respond strategically and reflexively as part of innovation, often at the more micro level. Thus, innovation is frequently the result of bricolage (Baker and Nelson, 2005), managed narratives (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005), local negotiation (Maguire and Hardy, 2006) or practice development (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Smets et al., in press).

A less concurrent set of conversations between entrepreneurship and sociology has occurred around the notion of “community.” Within entrepreneurship, community has been part of research on agglomeration, region, regional development, geography, and “social consequences” (Schildt et al., 2006). Within sociology, community is a topic in its own right (Calhoun et al., 2005; Smelser, 1988). Communities are studied as vibrant settings for social life (Whyte, 1955), and as unique units of analysis, e.g., in human ecology (Hawley, 1950) and city systems theory (Berry and Kasarda, 1977). Communities have also been considered as one face of civil society and the nation state (De Toqueville, 1835; Tonnies, 1887). Still, sociologists have only modestly drawn on these well-developed ideas about community in studies of entrepreneurship. As Thornton and Flynn (2006) points out, research on entrepreneurship thus far has relied primarily on two conceptualizations of community: social networks or geography. In the case of social networks, industry communities, whether viewed structurally, as in Burt (1992) or as social constructions, per Porac et al. (1995), are used to define opportunity and its exploitation. More recently, Uzzi and Spiro (2005), like Powell and colleagues (1996), Hwang and Powell (2005), have considered how the networking activities themselves not only are affected by prior community but reconstitute communities, sometimes rapidly (as in their account of Broadway plays). Building on renewed interest in the study of both geographic and virtual communities, Marquis et al. (2011) and Thornton et al. (2012) make the case for conceptualizing community as logics, institutional orders and unique forms that shape organizational, and thus entrepreneurial, processes.

In the case of communities as geographic entities, sociologists have examined a variety of geographic types—agglomerations, clusters, interorganizational networks, cities, city systems, and even transnationally associated communities (Marquis et al., 2011). Freeman and Audio (2006) in their review of community ecology arrayed these types according to their degree of symbiosis (“complementarities”) within and across similar types and their degree of differentiation as a form (“type”). Clusters represent the most symbiotic and varied form, and thus have received a great deal of attention (Thornton and Flynn, 2006). They can constrain the

entrepreneurial activity within them, but some are based on more open architecture (Saxenian, 1996), allowing entrepreneurship to thrive (Wry et al., 2010). Government policy is frequently geared towards trying to stimulate these more virtuous clusters. While entrepreneurship scholars are quite aware of this line of thinking, they may be less aware that sociologists have gone on to identify community specific “lifestyle” (Florida, 2002) and normative subcultures (Marquis and Lounsbury, 2007) that allow these communities to thrive. In Thornton's words, this may be the “missing ingredient” in our understanding of entrepreneurial activity in clusters. We would note that this more cultural conceptualization of communities also addresses Bruton et al.'s concerns about the inadequate examination of culture in entrepreneurial contexts.

4. How our Special Issue articles contributes to current conversations

Our Special Issue builds on these conversations. Of the our three main topics, communities offers the largest body of theory that has yet to be applied and extended in the study of entrepreneurship; in contrast, institutions and entrepreneurs have been draw upon frequently. Therefore, in our organizing framework, shown in Fig. 1, we focus first on the levels and types of communities examined by Special Issue articles and group articles as row entries in community-related categories. The institutional and entrepreneurial elements relied upon in these community studies are examined together and presented in four columns: 1) the institutional or entrepreneurial changes; 2) the primary entrepreneurs; 3) the key institutional and entrepreneurial processes and concepts; and 4) integrative methodologies. These elements reflect standard mid-range theory devices: outcomes, actors, mechanisms, and methods (Suddaby, 2010; Whetten, 1989).

In the first column of Fig. 1, communities are arrayed by level of analysis (local, regional, transnational) and by type (industrial, sectorial, virtual). These are akin to what Marquis et al. (2011) list as community forms. Interestingly, as forms they also seem to be primarily symbiotic (complementary) and differentiated (multi-form) ecologies, refinements on particular class of communities in Freeman and Audio's (2007) terms. When we turn to work on communities in entrepreneurship, we find less awareness of such distinctions. Shane (2003), in his widely used, *A General Theory of Entrepreneurship*, includes industry and institutional contexts, but does not discuss community variations in any detail. Davidsson (2005), who is very sensitive to capturing systemic variation, also discusses industry and environment sampling frames, but without these levels and types. Acs and Audretsch (2005) in their Handbook of Entrepreneurship certainly signal that community and region needs far more study. But, as noted by Bruton et al (2010), there is still a lack in more recent entrepreneurship studies of highly contextualized, multi-venue settings. Using the levels and types (forms) of community presented in Fig. 1 might be useful for categorizing current studies and designing new research.

Turning to the column two in Fig. 1, we see several recognizable institutional and entrepreneurial outcomes. They range from new practice innovations (e.g., in furniture manufacturing) to venture formation and on to industry creation and the reconstitution of a community's culture. Scholars of entrepreneurship frequently focus on innovation (e.g., new firm technologies) and venture

Framework for Organizing the Special Issue Articles

	Main Inst. & Ent. Changes	Primary Entrepreneurs	Key Concepts* and Processes	Main Research Methodology
Local and Regional Communities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marti et al. (San Carlos, Argentina) Khavul et al. (Guatemalan towns and cities) Wright & Zammuto – (English counties) Dorado & Vantresca (Madurai, India) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurial culture creation Establishment of microfinancing Creation of the “Knock-Out Match” Overcoming “wicked problems” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priests & organizers Microfinance ents. and banks The cricket committee Visionaries, <i>crescive</i> ents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community building; creating <i>working spaces & subworlds</i> Four stage, multilevel process model of two linked fields Resources and institutional tactics, contingent on stage Legitimacy building & <i>crescive entrepreneurship</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longitudinal case study; part. obs. Longitudinal case study; interviews Longitudinal case study; interviews Multiple case examples
Industry and Sector Communities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tan et al. (Xindu Furniture Making Region) Ruebottom (Social service sector – virtual) Wry & Lounsbury (Nanotech sector – virtual) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New furniture method Formation of unique social ventures Nano field foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central firms in cluster Organizational leaders New technology ventures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position contingent competitive & institutional strategies Meta-narratives and rhetorical strategies (e.g. <i>typecasting</i>) <i>Category creation</i> and identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quant-qual. analysis of clusters Multiple case narrative analysis Hazard rate & Tobit models
National and Transnational Communities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillips et al. (European cities and virtual network) Roman et al. (EU countries) Stenholm et al. (Developed nations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International new venture network Self- vs. other-employment choice Rate & type of new venture formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savvy cross-cultural entrepreneur Embedded individual Founders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bricolage; network tie homophily; trust Micro and macro position, social and economic embeddedness Cognitive, normative, regulative and <i>conducive</i> legitimacy fallout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single case narrative analysis Overtime multinomial logits Structural equation model (SEM)

* Newish concepts are *italicized*.

Fig. 1. Framework for organizing the Special Issue articles.* Newish concepts are italicized.

formation, but less on the generation of radically new practices under highly constrained institutional conditions or of new fields with unique logics—i.e., on field level disruption. By combining entrepreneurship and institutional notions, we may come closer to the original intent of Schumpeter (1934), who saw innovation as part of “creative destruction.”

Our Special Issue also includes community as an outcome (unit) for study. Communities in the work of Lazuna et al. or Wright and Zammuto are not simply differentiated and interdependent, but have character and vary in their degree of robustness. The social innovation in places as disparate as Argentina's impoverished San Carlos de Bariloche district and the bucolic, cricket-playing boroughs of England is able to make each community more diverse and robust, improving the social lives of individuals within them. Similarly, the social innovations created service organizations studied by Ruebottom enhance the lives of the disenfranchised or disadvantaged in North America communities. Our Special Issue underscores the need for scholars to take social innovation and community health within it more seriously as entrepreneurial outcomes. In some ways, it is a preview to the next forthcoming special issue in JBV on such topics.

The third column of Fig. 1 displays the types of entrepreneurial actors focused upon by authors of Special Issue papers. These actors include the more agentic versions—“visionaries” (Dorado and Ventresca; Phillips et al.) and social organization “founders” (Ruebottom)—and the less agentic, yet recognizable, sources—“committee members” (Wright and Zammuto) and “category creators” (Wry and Lounsbury). Even the most agentic of these actors—the visionaries—are still considered to be embedded within networks, institutions, and communities. Similarly, less valorized agents, those who must choose between self- and other-employment are depicted as doing so within family structures (Roman et al.) and with an understanding of local and national rules and norms (Stenholm et al.). Putting agents into social context and examining embeddedness at different levels of analysis helps overcome the fourth gap in the entrepreneurship identified in Section 3.1.

The Special Issue also puts a spotlight on three somewhat newer types of entrepreneurs: social entrepreneurs, community representatives, and distributed entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs may simply be founders or visionaries, but ones who face the “wicked problems” created by the combination of social, economic and political conditions in community institutions (Dorado and Ventresca). Community representatives may become entrepreneurs by bridging between social worlds, such as the priests did in *Virgen Missionera*, when they linked the religious and local political organizations in San Carlos (Marti et al.) or the micro-financiers who straddle the banking and family domains (Khavul et al.). Distributed entrepreneurs refer to those who, via their networked position, offered complementary entrepreneurial activities to those in the network, making the networks and the individual joint loci of action, as we saw in homophilously tied Balkan entrepreneurial group (Phillips et al.). Scholars of entrepreneurship are only beginning to examine these less common types of entrepreneurs (Hall et al., 2010).

The key institutional and entrepreneurial concepts and processes examined by researchers are presented in fourth column of Fig. 1. Several are immediately recognizable. Stenholm et al. study standard forms of legitimacy (e.g., cognitive, normative and regulative). Along with micro, family and personal conditions, Roman et al. examine macro institutional conditions, including economic cycles and policy frameworks upon which employment choice is contingent. Still, other concepts and processes are less recognizable. Khavul et al. offer a four stage, multilevel process model across two linked fields. In addition to these institutional mechanisms, most articles draw on the notion of power. Some authors investigate not only power in individual decision making and social mobilization (Wright and Zammuto; Dorado and Ventresca, Marti et al.), but more subtle power strategies of narrative and rhetorical persuasion (Phillips et al.; Ruebottom), many reflecting the endogenous nature of power itself (e.g., Khavul et al.). A few newish concepts and processes appear to be somewhat new: *working spaces* and *subworlds* (Marti et al.), which allow local activists (priests and organizers) to co-create ventures with residents; *conducive legitimacy* (Stenholm et al.), which is the enabling conditions for start-ups (e.g., a country's laws); *category creation* by firm founders (Wry and Lounsbury), which draw upon prior categories and multiple underlying logics (Wry and Lounsbury); and *crecive entrepreneurship*, which predicates the form of engagement and decision making on the specific conditions underlying wicked problems and includes exit, voice, and loyalty as action options (per Hirschman). While scholars of entrepreneurship have used process models and considered the role of power for some time, they might benefit from using the more multi-level, integrative versions of the process and power models discussed above, as well as a few of the newer concepts.

The last column in Fig. 1 displays the research methodologies used. The most common methodology is the longitudinal case study (Marti et al.; Khavul et al.; Dorado and Vantresca; Wright and Zammuto; Ruebottom; Phillips et al.). Most of the case studies also employ some form of narrative analysis (e.g., see Marti et al., Phillips et al., Ruebottom). Still, several studies use cross-sectional or longitudinal, quantitative methods: e.g., structural equation models (Stenholm et al.), panel multinomial logits (Roman et al.), and hazard rate and Tobit analyses (Wry and Lounsbury). While all of these forms of analysis are familiar to entrepreneurship scholars, we think that how they are used—in depth and degree—may be instructive for entrepreneurship scholars. For instance, all the authors have tried very hard to contextualize their analyses by adding more background information and different forms of analyses. The longitudinal case studies rely on both archival and interview data. The quantitative macro studies rely on careful presentations of the community venues and further exploration of micro processes. These efforts to triangulate data and add alternative, complementary mechanisms are precisely what has been called for by entrepreneurship scholars (e.g., Davidsson, 2005; Shane, 2012). The use of multiple cases, especially at the country level, also addresses problem 3) raised by Bruton et al. (2010)—the single venue issue.

5. Limitations, new gaps and future research

Our review of the sociological approach and the Special Issue articles shows that progress has been made to address gaps in the entrepreneurship literature. Of course, sociological work and, more to the point, the articles in this Special Issue, have their own limitations. These limitations offer new gaps for future research. Four limitations concern us here: two theoretical, and two methodological.

The first limitation is the types of communities examined. A quick glance at Fig. 1 shows that insufficient attention is still given, on the one hand, to highly local communities, and, on the other, to the transnational level or inter-institutional orders. The Lazuna et al. and the Khavul et al. studies (see this volume) show that the richness of the entrepreneurial opportunity, the leveraging of scant resources, and temporary, multiplex political support can be aligned with cultural roles (priests helping the poor, microfinance helping the needy) to create positive change. Yet the nature of engagement vs. disengagement as social psychological processes needs to be further theorized (per Dorado and Vantresca) and the robustness of that created counterculture examined for a longer period of time, in this or in other micro-order research. At the other extreme, Stenholm et al. and Roman et al. (this volume) have considered multiple institutional dimensions of legitimacy (per [Friedland and Alford, 1991](#); [Scott, 2001](#)) and explored how legitimacy within countries based on these international sources affects new venture formation. But research in both sociology and entrepreneurship on our topics would benefit from further conceptualizing and modeling these various dimensions to show cross-national effects on entrepreneurial processes and outcomes (e.g., see [Zhao and Wry, 2011](#)).

The second limitation is around the study of power and politics in the Special Issue articles. Even though formal political institutions, regulatory frameworks, and policies that aid entrepreneurial activities were examined by some authors, the underlying politics, variations in political representation, and process of policy making, for the most part, were not. In a world where most organizations are in the service sector, where some of the largest organizations are run by governments, and new programs dictate the fate of economic firms, it makes sense to have more research on entrepreneurial activities in the political sector. We are not asking entrepreneurship scholars to become political scientists—political scientists care about the ideological content of political battles, which parties win, and political careers - entrepreneurship scholars do not. Instead, we think that it would be useful to use entrepreneurship notions of politics and community to help investigate the creation and operation of new programs and political units, while controlling for the standard economic features that normally concern us ([Hoffman, 2010](#)).

The third limitation is methodological. Ironically, it stems from one of the strengths of the Special Issue papers: many of the authors rely on some form of narrative theory, rhetoric, bricolage, and framing (see columns four and five of Fig. 1), yet these same did not tend to do in-depth textual analysis nor focus much on meaning. Digging into the semiotics of narratives is one of the recent advances sociological and management approaches to organizations ([Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006](#); [Suddaby et al., 2010](#)). It allows researchers to specify the conditions under which specific meaning and strategies will cohere and be successfully employed for institutional change. At the very least, then, it would seem that process models would be required to realize the full potential of these methodological tools in entrepreneurship analyses. To help address this issue, an upcoming Special Issue in JBV will be devoted qualitative analysis.

The fourth limitation is also methodological in nature. If we examine the array of techniques used in the Special Issue articles (Fig. 1), we see that most are not reflective of methods often used in regional or community studies. In those fields, the structure and operation of communities is, naturally, given its own prominence and mapped out using geographic displays, shift-share or flow analysis, and cartographic overlays. In their community ecology book, *Organizations Evolving* (2007), Aldrich and Ruef note that even more sociological studies of entrepreneurial activity could benefit from understanding where the ventures fit in communities: i.e., what the venture vs. community growth rates are, how more micro operations aggregate to more macro level ones, and whether to examine key community variables against those for other communities in the inter-community structure. The various Baum and colleague Manhattan hotel studies (e.g., [Baum and Haveman, 1997](#)) are positive steps in this direction, rely on visual displays of competitive and cooperative positions taken by hotels on the island. Equally useful are the multi-level, spatial analysis used in some political jurisdiction analyses (e.g., see [Schneiberg and Barley, 2001](#); [Strang and Meyer, 1993](#)).

6. Conclusion

In this Special Issue, we have taken up Editor Shepherd's challenge of liaising with other disciplines in order to further enrich entrepreneurship studies. We have only focused on one—sociology—and three bridging topics between it and entrepreneurship—institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities. Nevertheless, by narrowing our scope, we have been able to identify gaps in entrepreneurship research around these topics, some sociological research that partially addresses them, and then solicit articles combining both entrepreneurship and sociology in a way that not only makes progress in overcoming these research issues, but pushes the boundaries of both entrepreneurship and sociology outward. The limitations found in our various Special Issue articles also yields additional gaps for future research. To help fill them, we encourage scholars from entrepreneurship and sociology to keep dialoguing on institutions, entrepreneurs, and communities.

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