

THIERRY VERSTRAETE



**ESSAY ON THE SINGULARITY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AS A RESEARCH DOMAIN**



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Thierry Verstraete is Doctor of Administrative Science and holds an accreditation to supervise research, obtained at the Institute of Business Administration (Institut d'Administration des Entreprises), Lille University of Sciences and Technology (USTL). He is now Senior Lecturer at the Montesquieu University of Bordeaux IV, and director of the ADREG (<http://www.adreg.net>), part of the CLAREE Research Laboratory : ESA CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) 8020. He works also now in the CREGE, Bordeaux.

Before his academic career, the author ran several companies.

Vice-president of two scientific associations, the Academy of Entrepreneurship (*Académie de l'Entrepreneuriat*) and the International Association of Research on Entrepreneurship and Small Business (*Association Internationale de Recherche sur la PME et l'Entrepreneuriat*), he dedicates his research and teaching works to entrepreneurship.

To join him :

Université Montesquieu Bordeaux IV - Crege
avenue Léon Duguit
33604 PESSAC
France

Editors
Alain DESREUMAUX and Thierry VERSTRAETE

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T.V.

INTRODUCTION



The removal of inter-country barriers, the spread of technology, better access to information and the speed at which information now circulates have opened up a myriad of opportunities for entrepreneurship on newly internationalized markets. Without engaging in a detailed analysis of the strategies that allow firms to deal with the problems this situation has brought about, it is nevertheless possible to identify two general points. First, international business is something firms must face if they are to maintain or win a share of the market. And second, the international market provides an opportunity to engage in and develop business. Although not everything falls into the “threat/opportunity” categories, this separation does have its merits and is proposed in several analysis methods. Yet, it has been called into question too, and firms are increasingly invited to abandon their adaptation-based strategies in favour of more proactive models. The basic premise is that seeking a competitive advantage necessarily means implementing an “entrepreneurial strategy”. Meyer and Heparad (2000) regard entrepreneurship as the dominant logic (to use the term coined by Prahalad, Bettis, 1986; see also Bettis, Prahalad, 1995) that must prevail when seeking a competitive advantage.

This tends to support Drucker (1984), who said that firms, especially larger ones, cannot survive unless they acquire truly entrepreneurial competencies (p.194).

Ideas such as these are becoming more widespread, and the notion of “entrepreneurial strategy”, although not exactly new, is attracting a great deal of attention. It recently obtained a kind of recognition with the publication of two special editions of international journals (the July 2001 *Strategic Management Journal* and the February 2001 *Academy of Management Executive*) on the theme. Given the practical realities facing firms, and to encourage academics to produce knowledge that firms can actually use, Hitt, Ireland, Camp and Sexton (2001) compared entrepreneurship and strategic management in the following definition:

“For the purpose of the research included in this special issue, we define entrepreneurship as the identification and exploitation of previously unexploited opportunities. As such, entrepreneurial actions entail creating new resources or combining existing resources in new ways to develop and commercialize new products, move into new markets, and/or service new customers ... On the other hand, strategic management entails the set of commitments, decisions, and actions designed and executed to produce a competitive advantage and earn above-average return.” (p.481).

These same authors use the term *strategic entrepreneurship*¹ to refer to any entrepreneurial action taken from a strategic standpoint (or any strategic action with an entrepreneurial mindset), where the product is measured by the creation of wealth (for the firm), intellectual capital or social capital.

Viewed in this way, the parallel between entrepreneurship and strategic management is hardly surprising. However, to then suggest – as the paper by Hitt *et al.* almost does - that the field of entrepreneurship should be incorporated into the field of strategic management appears to be somewhat premature². These authors do in fact propose an integration of approaches (p. 480), which they also refer to as perspectives (p. 480 and 481), and their paper does appear to suggest that the field of entrepreneurship would benefit from being incorporated into the field of strategic management. Their remarks are ambiguous. They (2001) confuse terms that are not precise (e.g. “thinking”, “perspective”, “field”), leaving researchers puzzled, despite their conclusion that the concept (a term whose meaning is not clear either) of strategic entrepreneurship constitutes an invitation for discussion, and is also likely to enrich both fields of research. Moreover, if we look at their bibliography, the flagship journals of entrepreneurship research are conspicuous by their absence.

¹ These authors also speak of entrepreneurial strategies in their title, perhaps demonstrating the difficulty of selecting appropriate terminology. However, there is some question as to whether strategic entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial strategy are actually the same thing.

² On the basis of a definition, it would be equally possible, for example, to compare human resources management and strategic management, without suggesting that they be integrated. A definition will never express all the aspects to which a research field refers, and will always be insufficient to delimit its field of application.

Only once do they mention the *Journal of Business Venturing*, and other than some recent Handbook-type works, most of their references are taken from the *Strategic Management Journal*, the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Academy of Management Executive* and the *Academy of Management Review*. Also absent are the authors that entrepreneurship researchers consider essential. Obviously, their text is only an editorial, but in the end it seems as though the entire field of entrepreneurship research simply does not exist. Puzzling, to say the least! We felt it would be useful to clarify the situation, so that the current confusion does not lead forcibly to the premature conclusion mentioned earlier. It is our opinion that such an exercise is necessary, because in France entrepreneurship research is still at the emergent stage, and is on the point of moving forward.

Although it is not unreasonable to argue, when talking to business managers, that the task of leading an organization requires a certain integration of thinking, academics are able to look at the issue in a more developed way. Given that the existence of an entrepreneurship research field cannot be taken for granted, it seems appropriate at this point to look at its contribution to knowledge. There are, of course, a number of dedicated journals, a community of recognized researchers and certain other criteria whose presence does suggest that such a field exists independently of the field of strategic management. However, that existence has yet to be explicitly proved through a demonstration of its singularity. If its singularity cannot be shown beyond doubt, its existence as a separate field is probably unfounded, unless we bring in some social and political constructs that will only be addressed briefly here.

At this stage of the game, our goal is simply to throw some light on these various points. The problem is to decide whether entrepreneurship research is sufficiently singular to be considered as being separate from strategic management. If we refer to the mathematical theory of sets, the problem can be formulated as follows. Let E be the set of entrepreneurship research and SM the set of strategic management research. The task is to identify E and compare it to $E \cap SM$ (the intersection of set E and set SM). The demonstration, although based on solely qualitative criteria, could help show whether $E - [E \cap SM]$ occupies a large enough space compared to $E \cap SM$. If the answer is “yes”, E would have its own, separate existence in terms of the knowledge it contributes, whereas if the answer is “no”, it would be reasonable to suggest incorporation with strategic management, without necessarily concluding that $E \subset SM$ (i.e. E is included in SM). Moreover, for every emerging field, there are bound to be questions about the research project, since it is this that will determine its separation from other institutionalized research disciplines³.

The purpose of this essay is therefore to answer the following key question: does entrepreneurship have a theoretical space with its own singular features, and are its links with strategic management

³ The term “institutionalized” refers here to a formal, official entry in State regulatory texts. For example, if we look at the speciality subjects covered by higher education teacher training courses in France, strategic management appears on the list, but entrepreneurship does not. As well as being institutionalized, some fields or domains may also be “established” –in other words, while not acknowledged by State regulatory texts, their existence is accepted by a community of researchers (conferences, journals, etc.).

sufficient to justify the idea of integration? The second part of the question refers to the best possible conditions for the production of related knowledge. The answer will have an impact on the development of entrepreneurship research. The problem as set out here calls for a parallel question, namely: is entrepreneurship a research domain in the organizational sciences?⁴ Given its eclecticism and multidisciplinary aspect, the process of annexation that organizational science researchers appear to be engaged in needs to be validated.

We took a three-part approach in our investigation of the generic problem.

The first part shows the existence of a community of researchers working on the study and teaching of entrepreneurship, and then presents the singular objects or views of the research domain. It ends with proposal for a unifying project applicable to the French-speaking community, which appears to address entrepreneurship in its own, original way. The existence of a community of researchers, a certain singularity and a proposed research project clearly suggests that entrepreneurship may indeed be separate as a research field or domain. While this observation relates solely to the French-language context, it could also be extended.

⁴ In France, the recognized scientific discipline is known as “sciences de gestion”, which we have translated for the sake of convenience as “organizational sciences”. In reality, however, “sciences de gestion” has no equivalent in the USA, although it is similar in some respects to the administrative sciences and organizational studies.

However, this is insufficient to address the problem of recognition as an institutionalized specialty area. Entrepreneurship shares many objects, notions and concepts with strategic management. The second part of the essay comprises a discussion on the outcome of this closeness, namely the notion of entrepreneurial strategy. It reveals the necessary, if not obvious, collaboration between entrepreneurship researchers and strategic management researchers. This raises the question of whether or not entrepreneurship should be incorporated into strategic management in order to optimize its potential, even if this means reviving the issue of formal separation at some time in the future.

More broadly, and if we assume that entrepreneurship is indeed a research domain, into what scientific discipline could it be classified in the French-speaking world? The first two parts of the essay tend to suggest that the organizational sciences are best-placed to provide entrepreneurship with a context conducive to fulfilment of its potential for expression; however, researchers would have to accept this prospect and show an interest in it. In the first part of the essay, the links between entrepreneurship and the organizational sciences are outlined briefly, and are examined in detail in the third part.

The answers are by no means conclusive, and open up several avenues for subsequent discussion – Huff (1999) would use the term “conversation”. They constitute an invitation to the community of researchers to think about the context that would provide entrepreneurship as a research domain with the best possible conditions for its future development.

CHAPTER 1.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS RESEARCH DOMAIN OR FIELD



The appendix at the end of the text sets out the meanings ascribed to a certain number of important terms. If we look at this list, it seems appropriate to begin the “conversation” by asking whether entrepreneurship is an object, a notion, a concept a field or a research domain. There is no definitive answer to this question, because in fact it could be any one of them, depending on the researcher’s position. If we look at France in particular, however, we can draw two definite conclusions. First, entrepreneurship is not a scientific discipline, because there is no reference to it in National University Board documents. And nor is it a research discipline⁵. This being the case, this first chapter of this essay is concerned with the recognition of entrepreneurship as a research field or domain; this would

⁵ On this latter point, if it should claim to become one, there is also the question of the scientific discipline into which it would be classified. In reality, entrepreneurship can also be studied by psychologists, sociologists, historians and researchers from other scientific disciplines. This point will be discussed in the third chapter.

be a major step on the road to designating it as a discipline⁶. The term “domain” involves going beyond national boundaries, since it implies the existence of a community of international researchers.

Several conditions must be met in order for entrepreneurship to be acknowledged as a domain:

- The existence of a community of researchers who study and teach it;
- The existence of singular objects, notions or concepts, or at least a singular view of certain objects, notions or concepts, with which the research community is familiar and about which knowledge is produced;
- The possibility of establishing a true research project for the domain.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP : A COMMON SPACE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Entrepreneurship is first and foremost a practice. We are all familiar with entrepreneurs who are empirical illustrations of the phenomenon. It is also an educational subject. In other words, it would be possible to provide entrepreneurs with the knowledge they require to create an organization.

⁶ Because the terms “field” and “domain” have similar meanings, they are sometimes used interchangeably in the text. Their nuances are explained in detail in the Appendix.

Obviously, creation alone would not be enough, and the need to see the newly created organization survive over time calls upon certain aspects of management. Moreover, an entrepreneur can continue to create, using the newly created organization as a basis. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that entrepreneurship and management appear to have common roots. Hatuchel (2000) identifies two texts concerning the doctrines that constitute the basis of an educational project aimed at managers. The first, by Pierre Pezeu (1918), combines Taylorian principles with the command skills required by leaders. The second, by Pierre Jolly, is evocatively entitled *The Education of the Business Leader*. To paraphrase Hatuchel, entrepreneurship, like management, has progressed from being an educational project to a scientific project. There is also the somewhat provocative question as to whether the organizational sciences should in fact have been called the enterprise sciences instead. Managers, rather than confining themselves to administrative tasks (*cf.* the distinction proposed by Schumpeter between “administrative” and “entrepreneurial” functions) would instead be explicitly responsible for designing and developing organizations, relations with stakeholders, questions of positioning with regard to competitors, and everything that ensues from these responsibilities.

Practitioners can benefit from business preparation methods, and it naturally follows that courses designed to enrich entrepreneurs’ knowledge have been devised, along with research protocols to acquire appropriate content. The question of the status of entrepreneurship within the academic community can be clarified by examining the development of entrepreneurship teaching and research, which are closely linked. While it is difficult to make a global comparison, due to lack of information, the principal milestones in its introduction into the United States, and the developments occurring in

France, are available and clearly show the existence of a large community of teacher-researchers working on the subject.

The development of entrepreneurship in the United States, as described by Cooper, Markman and Niss (2000), began with the introduction of a dedicated course in 1947 at the Harvard Business School. In 1953, Peter Drucker introduced a unit entitled Entrepreneurship and Innovation at New York University. Originally, entrepreneurship was studied from the standpoint of management (Harvard) or innovation (Schumpeter's legacy), and was concerned basically with enterprise creation (this is still mostly the case). It also had some links with small business, which is not unreasonable because the early enterprises were usually small in size. The first St. Gall conference (in 1948) in Switzerland was on the subject of small business management (the conference is still held once every two years). The two fields subsequently split, although they still maintain close ties.

Cooper, Markman and Niss place the first conference on American soil in 1970 (Purdue University), and note the inclusion of entrepreneurship in the Academy of Management conference in 1974, following an initiative by Karl Vesper. The first truly international conference was held in Toronto in 1973, and attempts were made to create an association. Babson College played a significant role in establishing the field on the other side of the Atlantic. Its annual conferences began in 1981, and it has therefore been working on the subject of entrepreneurship for more than 20 years.

Cooper, Markman and Niss (2000) situate the first entrepreneurship publications under the auspices of the National Council for Small Business, in the *Journal of Small Business Management* (1963). In 1975, the *American Journal of Small Business* was created, and was later rechristened *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice* in 1988. This is one of the field's flagship publications, as is the *Journal of Business Venturing*, created in 1985 on an initiative of Ian MacMillan. Other, more recent journals have also risen to the fore (e.g. the *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship* and *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*). There are now more than ten English-language journals addressing subjects close to the theme of entrepreneurship (*Journal of Enterprising Culture*, the *Family Business Review* and others).

With regard to the situation in France, entrepreneurship teaching has obviously not developed as significantly as in the United States. According to Vesper⁷, Hills and Morris (1998), there were 29 institutions offering various types of entrepreneurship training in 1970, compared with more than 400 today. The number of awareness and training programs is still growing, as shown in a survey carried out by the CPU (Conference of French University Presidents), whose November 2000 entrepreneurship days were attended by the advisor to the Minister of National Education, the higher education manager, the technology manager from the Ministry of Research, several other prominent personalities, and a large number of teachers and teacher-researchers in the field of entrepreneurship. In 1999, the proceedings of the first conference of the Academy of Entrepreneurship contain detailed

⁷ In the USA, Vesper regularly carries out surveys of entrepreneurship education (1990; see also Vesper and Gartner, 1997).

reports illustrating the singular nature of the form and content of entrepreneurship education⁸. These documents, together with works in both French (Papin, 1993; Birley, Muzyka, 1998; Filion, 1999; see also the manuals published by the Agence Pour la Création d'Entreprise (Venture Creation Agency)) and English (Bygrave, 1997; Timmons, 1994; Gumpert, 1996; Sahlman, Stevenson, 1992; Kuratko, Hodgetts, 2001; etc.), confirm the separate nature of entrepreneurship education. It is tailored to the needs of the audience for which it is intended (actors promoting or deploying entrepreneurial projects, professionals and students undergoing basic training, with consideration for the origins and cognitive dispositions of the audiences; Saporta, Verstraete, 2000).

Although the popularity of the subject may be recent, academic interest is not. While programs focusing mainly on enterprise creation were not introduced until the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Bruyat, 1993; Fayolle, 1997, 1999), a subject that was merely embryonic at the time is now bubbling with enthusiasm (Schieb-Bienfait, 2000) and is expanding rapidly (especially if we consider other possible manifestations of the phenomenon, such as enterprise buy-outs).

Although some engineering institutions include entrepreneurship training in their curricula (Béranger, Chabral, Dambrine, 1998), it is in the area of management education and research that the interest is greatest. This is confirmed by the number of theses on the subject, papers in the proceedings of AIREPME conferences (the French acronym for the International Association of Entrepreneurship

⁸ <http://www.entrepreneuriat.com> ; see also the file coordinated by Fayolle, 2000

and Small Business Research, or *Association Internationale de Recherche en Entrepreneuriat et PME*) and AIMS conferences (the French acronym of the International Association of Strategic Management or *Association Internationale de Management Stratégique*), participants at the first two French national doctoral research tutoring sessions on entrepreneurship (the first held in Lille in 1999 and the second in Grenoble in 2000), training developed by the management or business universities and schools, and the origins of the initiators of the Academy of Entrepreneurship. In 1999, the FNEGE (French acronym of the National Foundation for the Teaching of Enterprise Management or *Fondation Nationale pour l'Enseignement de la Gestion des Entreprises*) recognized entrepreneurship and decided to award an annual prize for the best thesis in the domain. The first French language research journal on the subject was created in June 2001 (*the Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat*)⁹.

THE SINGULARITY OF THE OBJECTS OR VIEWS ON THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH DOMAIN

If a community of researchers forms associations and holds conferences around the subject of entrepreneurship, it is reasonable to suppose that the subject generates objects, notions and concepts that vary in their specificity, but are all studied in a singular way. It is not possible to describe the state

⁹ <http://www.revue-entrepreneuriat.com>

of the situation in a single chapter, because the literature is so abundant. Our aim here is more modest, and is limited to highlighting the singular aspect of entrepreneurship research, which we will describe only briefly, in order to situate the principal concerns of researchers. The first and most obvious element is the central role played by the entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur is the central actor in the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, even though the notion of team and the role of the environment are becoming increasingly important in the literature, in particular for regions of the world where the collective aspect has precedence over the individualistic nature of the entrepreneurial act (some countries of Africa, for example; see Saporta and Kombou, 2001; Hernandez, 1997; and the October 2001 issue of *Management International*; or some Asian countries too). Indeed, although it is important to remember the role of the environment in the emergence of entrepreneurial-type initiatives, such initiatives are always first and foremost the products of entrepreneurial individuals. The economics literature recognized this role somewhat late in the game. Some authors (Mathias, Sombart, Say, Cantillon, ...) did identify it much earlier, although they often used the term “entrepreneur” to mean “capitalist” (Say, von Thunen, Schumpeter or Cole). We will not be reviewing the economic history of entrepreneurs¹⁰, except to point out, like

¹⁰ See for example Boutillier and Uzunidis (1995), Coriat and Weinstein (1995), Filion (1997). It is important not to confuse the entrepreneurship research domain with theoretical economic trends focused on entrepreneurs. Although these latter do provide information that can be used by entrepreneurship researchers, their authors have very different aims, foundations and epistemological positions. While entrepreneurship researchers share the research subject, i.e. the entrepreneur, the two domains are quite separate.

Balakrishman, Gopakumar and Kanungo (1998), that from Cantillon to Kirzner, a variety of functions have been ascribed to entrepreneurs: risk-takers, decision-makers, organizers, innovators, users of production factors, arbiters, and so on. If we regard entrepreneurs as organization creators (Gartner, 1985; Bygrave and Hofer, 1991; Verstraete, 1997, 1999), these approaches can easily be combined¹¹. Schumpeter's new combination maker, Hayek and Kirzner's arbiter (arbiter of prices on a market), Knight's risk-taker and Leibenstein's network connector all come together in the creative act.

In entrepreneurship research, authors have tried to identify the characteristics of the entrepreneur. The literature contains a number of caricatures whose educational impacts are insufficient to mask their theoretical and methodological (and even ethical) limitations. Inneistic conceptions (social and cultural determinism, etc.) of the propensity for entrepreneurship fall into this category. Their deficiencies should not overshadow the utility of work aimed at identifying the personal and psychological characteristics of entrepreneurs, however. The inherent risk is to turn the entrepreneur into a "species", rather than a status or a function. Gartner (1988) criticized research into the psychological features of entrepreneurs, proposing instead a behaviourist reading of the phenomenon focused on individual actions. This position was contrary to that of Carland, Hoy and Carland (1984,

¹¹ Again, it is necessary to agree on the nature of the organization in this context. Although the term usually refers to a single organized entity, we have given it a broader meaning (Verstraete, 1999, 2001), some elements of which are discussed in a later section. This approach, like that of Gartner (1985), was based among others on the work of Weick (1979), but with different aims and results.

1988), who defended the wealth of teaching available in the psychological studies. They insisted on the need to explore individual need for achievement, need for independence, need for power and need for responsibility. The controversy eventually led to a certain shift of position and a combination of approaches. There is now widespread agreement that some features, while not exclusive to entrepreneurs, do appear to characterize entrepreneurial propensity (e.g. locus of control, which corresponds to the need and desire to control one's own "destiny"), and that the phenomenon will not manifest itself without development of the behaviours required for organizational emergence (especially the ability to convince stakeholders to provide the necessary resources), without an appropriate infrastructure (Van de Ven, 1995; Boutillier and Uzunidis, 2000; Julien; 2000), and without favourable input from social agents (family, educational system, etc.) The characteristics of the entrepreneur are contingent on time and place of origin (Filion, 1991, 1997; Verstraete, 1999). This combination of approaches is especially apparent in some of the field's typological constructions (for examples, see Marchesnay, 1998, 2000; Filion, 1997, 2000; Daval, Deschamps, Geindre, 1999, all of whom provide lists), and in work on motivation (Kets de Vries, 1977; Shaver, Scott, 1991; Kuratko, Hornsby, Naffziger, 1997; Naffziger, Hornsby, Kuratko, 1994); the emotional aspect has received very little attention in research into entrepreneurial socialization (Starr, Fondas, 1992; Pailot, 2000b, 2002).

Another research orientation concerns the influence of cognitivist theses. Like strategy, entrepreneurship has been infiltrated by a cognitive approach leading, for example to studies of decision-making (Stevenson, Gumpert, 1985; Smith, Gannon, Grimm, Mitchell, 1988). Such studies

can generate proposals for support elements such as vision development assistance for entrepreneurs (Cossette, 1994; Verstraete, 1997a). Mostly, however, they aim to identify the elements that differentiate entrepreneurs from “non-entrepreneurs” (Busenitz, Barney, 1990; Palich, Bagby, 1995; Baron, 1998; McGrath, MacMillan, Scheinberg, 1992; Carland, Hoy, Boulton, Carland, 1984; Chell, Haworth, Brearley, 1991). While the idea of using batteries of psychological tests to distinguish entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs is no longer fashionable (Gartner, 1985), in particular because there are enough observable differences between two given entrepreneurs to invalidate the hypothesis of a single category, a number of considerations, emerging in particular from political spheres, do raise the question of identifying potential entrepreneurship candidates – in other words, *nascent entrepreneurs*. These latter are distinguished from practising entrepreneurs. The literature (McMillan, 1986; Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, Hunt, 1991; Carter, Gartner, Reynolds, 1996; Reynolds, 1997; Alsos et Kolvereid, 1998) identifies three types of entrepreneurs. The practising entrepreneur has already created one or more organizations that have subsequently developed. A novice entrepreneur is a business first-timer, and a nascent or potential entrepreneur is not yet engaged in the entrepreneurial act, but is perceived as having the capacity to do so. It is this latter group that receives the most attention, to better identify the elements leading up to the entrepreneurial act. Indeed, universities now offer a range of resources to such people, in the form of awareness programs, training programs, information centres and technological entrepreneurship support, and even the development of research

by public institutions¹², on themes often associated with high growth firms (or gazelles, as they are more commonly called).

Work such as this, on the identification of business potential and the study of entrepreneurial paths, clearly shows that entrepreneurship researchers are interested in the entrepreneur as a person. For example, Alsos and Kolvereid (1998), in a study involving a Norwegian population of 9533 adults based on a distinction between novice founders, serial founders and parallel founders (i.e. people who undertake several projects at once), found differences in the creation process and proposed the idea that research should concentrate more on entrepreneurial paths and entrepreneurs' life cycles in order to derive lessons from them¹³.

¹² Teaching and technological entrepreneurship are two strong themes of the research domain. For a description of the French context of technological entrepreneurship, see Marion, Philippart, Verstraete (2000), and for the Canadian context see Blais (1997), and Bournois, Marion, Noël, Toulouse (1994). For information on teaching, see the proceedings of the first Academy of Entrepreneurship conference (Fontaine, Saporta, Verstraete, 1999), the special edition of *Gestion 2000* (Fayolle, 2000), Béchart (1998), Schieb-Bienfait (2000), and Séricourt and Verstraete (2000) for the distinction between awareness-raising, training, advice and support. Most of this work is concerned with higher education only ; there is a serious lack of work on other levels of education, especially the secondary level.

¹³ In strategic management, the focus appears to be more on organizational life cycles, as is the case for organizational theory.

In concentrating on entrepreneurial paths, researchers eventually began to speak of the “entrepreneurial career” (Bird, 1989)¹⁴. The role of the environment was still regarded as a major element in the entrepreneurial socialization process. Research into the type of environments conducive to the development of entrepreneurship were of great interest to political players and public institutions, who regard the entrepreneurial phenomenon as a wealth creator and job provider. The sociological perspective examines corresponding problems, focusing on the contexts within which the phenomenon emerges (Reynolds, 1991; Herron, Sapienza, Smith-Cook, 1991). Following Hennan and Freeman (1977), some authors adopted population ecology thinking (Aldrich, 1990, 1995) and concentrated on the role of the entrepreneur by giving priority to the history and the institutional, inter-organizational (relations between organization populations) and even the intra-organizational context (the conditions for the emergence of a new form within a given population).

In less evolutionist thinking, a more territorial type of approach tends to emerge (Marchesnay, 1998, 2000), to which industrial geographers could contribute. These approaches are aimed at understanding why certain regions of the world are more entrepreneurial than others (Reynolds, Storey, Westhead, 1994 for a comparison of France, Italy, Ireland and Great Britain; Julien, 2000), sometimes by focusing on a characteristic area (e.g. Silicon Valley, cf. Kenney, 2000). The emphasis is usually on three principal factors, namely the socio-cultural elements (in addition to membership of a defined

¹⁴ See also issue 19(2) of *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, 1994; in 1992, on an initiative by Dyer, an *Academy of Management* symposium was held on the subject of: *New Direction in Research into Entrepreneurial Careers*

territory, these include the ethnic dimension, which is the subject of some specialized journals), infrastructure (support institutions, educational institutions, financial institutions, etc.) and demography (population, business creation and failure, etc.). The relationship between the entrepreneur and the region, along with market globalization, are just some of the problems that fall under this heading. The role of information (Julien, 2000), space and time (Torrès, 2000a) has also been examined, for both rural entrepreneurship and global entrepreneurship.

Research into the emerging organization lies somewhere between the entrepreneur and the environment. It examines a number of different elements, but generally speaking relates to the practice of entrepreneurship, whether in terms of creating the configuration required to perform the enterprise's tasks and missions, or positioning the entrepreneur and the organization with regard to the stakeholders and competitors. In this respect, it relies heavily on organizational science specialties to throw light on the resources required for fulfilment of the project (financial, information, human, technological and cognitive resources, for example). The thinking lies at the interface of entrepreneurship and a specialty area. For example, Hills, LaForgue and Welsch coordinated a series of four books published by the University of Illinois in Chicago, following on from four conferences on the theme of *Research at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship Interface* (between 1990 and 1994), which ultimately led to the creation of the *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*. More broadly, entrepreneurship relies on other organizational science specialties, including:

- Enterprise finance, for the production of the business plan and for financial balance issues, and ultimately the survival of the organization;

- Market finance; the Internet start-up phenomenon has undoubtedly raised awareness among potential entrepreneurs of the need to incorporate knowledge, for example on the conditions of going public;

- Human resources management, to identify, recruit and disseminate skills, which are so important in the emergent phase;

- Marketing, among other things for the product or service positioning policy (product marketing or marketing mix), and in some cases for marketing related to promotion of the organization itself (public relations, institutional advertising, patronage, etc.);

- Management control and information systems, which tend to be left aside in entrepreneurship research, since they are thought to be the exclusive province of established organizations, whereas although it is important not to introduce a cumbersome management process too early in the organization's life, young organizations nevertheless need to be controlled by means of tools adapted to their situation;

- Strategic management, since according to popular wisdom, there is no favourable wind for people who do not know where they are going. Entrepreneurs must be able to shore up their intuition by heuristic or analytic strategic measures.

This cross-disciplinary aspect causes entrepreneurship research to call on the different areas of organizational science. Its singularity lies in the emphasis on the entrepreneur (or group of entrepreneurs) and the relationship between the entrepreneur and the organization. If there is indeed a research project that brings entrepreneurship researchers together, it should fall first and foremost into this dialectic.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A RESEARCH PROJECT

The main difficulty in identifying the framework for a research project or program lies in the many different ways in which entrepreneurship is expressed. This produces a large number of objects that are addressed in dedicated journals and conferences but not necessarily mentioned in the short “state of the art” section earlier in this essay. Examples would be research into networks, technology transfers, government policies to promote entrepreneurship, incubators, ethnic entrepreneurship, innovation, finance, internationalization, alliances, growth, franchises, entrepreneurship teaching, intrapreneurship or corporate entrepreneurship, support for creators and entrepreneurs, NICT, entrepreneurial processes (creation, recovery, spin-offs, etc.) and so on. Filion (1997) identified 25 dominant themes, and there are probably even more today, including start-ups. The cross-disciplinary aspect of entrepreneurship generates a plethora of possible viewpoints, which does not make it easy to construct a single, unifying theory, especially as it is so difficult to obtain a consensus when defending a given viewpoint or model. However, this difficulty – which is not necessarily a problem, according to Filion (1997) – is the same for strategic management (Martinet, 1997). To avoid damaging mixtures and a slide into interminable debate, what remains to be done after demonstrating the existence of a dedicated community of researchers and the singularity of their work is to propose a unifying research project.

It would be entirely reasonable to propose, as a basis for this project, and consequently for the domain, the dialectic or symbiotic relationship between the entrepreneur and the organization for which he or she provides the thrust or drive (action) – in other words, gives tangible existence.

The term “thrust” or “drive” is important in entrepreneurship. It does not refer necessarily or exclusively to a sharp, sudden force applied to modify a given state; here, it relates to the development of an activity or an enterprise in the sense of triggering a dynamic. Where the entrepreneur no longer provides the thrust that gives rise to the creation of an organization (timeframe is determined by size), he or she is no longer of interest in entrepreneurship research. Thus, not all managers are entrepreneurs; in other words, they are not entrepreneurs when they are not, or are no longer, a part of the creative process but are content with the “routine” of management. The members of the organization, in particular those responsible for preparing and implementing strategies, can, however, take over this role from the entrepreneur if they have the necessary power. This aspect constitutes one of the points of convergence between entrepreneurship research and strategic research. The shift from an individual strategy to an organizational strategy (Sammur, 1995; de La Ville, 1996, 2000, 2001; Fonrouge, 1999) could in fact be the bridge between entrepreneurship and strategic management. The boundaries between the two areas will always be fuzzy. It is not because its managers are no longer entrepreneurs that an entity created as a result of the entrepreneurship phenomenon is unable to take over from its creator in pursuing the thrust that characterizes the entrepreneurial act. Although it is important not to confuse entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial strategy, the latter can nevertheless be

regarded as the express desire of the entity or the people who govern it to deploy attitudes in keeping with the behaviour normally ascribed to entrepreneurs.

The truly specific aspect of entrepreneurship lies in the central role of the entrepreneur. Leaving aside the etymological aspect, it is reasonable to state that the entrepreneurial phenomenon obtains its thrust from the entrepreneur. However, the organization is also important, since it is the product of the phenomenon. In short (for further details, see Verstraete, 1999, 2001), entrepreneurship is concerned with the phenomenon resulting from a dialectic relationship between the entrepreneur and the organization for which he or she provides the thrust. It cannot be reduced to the entrepreneur alone, or to the organization alone, since the ties between the two are equally important. Thus, research into the entrepreneurial phenomenon requires three levels of analysis¹⁵, which are of key importance in understanding the phenomenon and are irrevocably linked as well as irreducible.

The first level is the cognitive level, which refers principally to the entrepreneur's knowledge, self-awareness, vision and reflexive and learning skills (in the sense proposed by Giddens, 1987). The individual's affect, emotions and background play a role in building this dimension centred on what we will refer to as "self-awareness". We have used the term "cognitive" rather than "individual" because more than one entrepreneur may provide the thrust. The cognitive level therefore covers the

¹⁵ In our previous work we spoke of "dimensions". After extensive discussion, however, it appears that the term "level" is more appropriate.

interactions between the entrepreneurs (including their cognitive interactions), but excludes employees and other actors involved in the phenomenon who are situated at the structural level (see later). The cognitive level refers exclusively to the entrepreneur(s) involved in a singular entrepreneurial phenomenon.

The second level is the praxeological level. It addresses problems relating not only to the design of the organization but also to the many different positions adopted by the entrepreneur and the organization in the spaces into which they insert themselves. It relates to “know-how”, in other words.

The third level is structural, and corresponds to the context within which the organization will emerge and with which the entrepreneur must deal in order to bring the environment into conformity with his or her own representation of it.

The three levels relate to the issues arising from the visions on which entrepreneurs base their actions as they strive to realize and position “their” structure within the environment. They also relate to the efforts entrepreneurs must make to convince their stakeholders to accept the contractual business register proposed. Within this approach, entrepreneurs are regarded as organization creators (Gartner, 1995; Verstraete, 1997b, 1999), and entrepreneurship as a dialectic between the entrepreneur and the organization, lasting for as long as the thrust keeps them in what might be described as a symbiotic relationship. An entity created as a result of the entrepreneurial phenomenon does not necessarily terminate the organization initiated by the entrepreneur. The emergence of an entity with an enterprise

structure, for example, may simply be a reference point in the organization, giving rise to the creation of several entities. Entrepreneurship involves creation – more specifically, creation of an organization in the form of a definitive structural arrangement with close ties to the entrepreneur’s vision. Thus, entrepreneurship is not necessarily concerned with small structures, even though the entrepreneur-organization relationship is most meaningful at this level and becomes difficult to manage after a certain size. It is for this reason that it would be useful to encourage corresponding behaviour in larger firms.

In some conditions, entrepreneurship can be extended to cover the development of organizations for which the entrepreneur previously provided the thrust. It is certainly not limited to enterprise creation, especially because – somewhat paradoxically, according to certain authors – not all enterprise creations are the result of entrepreneurial acts. Entrepreneurship can be expressed in a multitude of ways. In the model presented here, there is no obligation of growth, and no obligation of success, at least strictly speaking, although all entrepreneurs want to see their firms “work out”. What we mean is that the term “entrepreneurship” can be applied to phenomena where the thrust is provided by individuals working to ensure that an enterprise survives for as long as possible, even though it appears unlikely that it will recover in the long term. This is an interesting subject for debate.

Moreover, limiting the notion of thrust exclusively to the entrepreneur also appears restrictive if we look at the notion of “collective entrepreneurship”, i.e. entrepreneurship involving a group of

individuals. This in no way calls the model into question, provided all the individuals fall within the dialectic.

The three levels of analysis proposed earlier are just some of the orientations that may constitute a research project for the domain¹⁶. The paths addressed below are part of this, and require empirical investigation that has not, as yet, been addressed by the French-speaking research community. The related methodological questions will not be examined here due to lack of space, but most of the objects fit into the epistemological and methodological position of the authors, and would benefit from being examined from different standpoints, even if, as pointed out by Bouchikhi (1993), a constructivist posture appears to facilitate the study of entrepreneurship viewed as a process of complex interactions between the entrepreneur and the environment, not forgetting criteria such as luck and performance.

The cognitive level refers to the entrepreneur, and includes research aimed at providing information on entrepreneurs as people for educational and practical purposes. We still have a lot to learn about their paths, relations networks, profiles, behaviour, motivation and the learning they need in order to develop and master the entrepreneurial phenomenon. The thinking skill or reflexivity of entrepreneurs, in the sense given to the term by Giddens, is certainly one of the research objects that has not received sufficient attention in the past from researchers. The current theme of “improvisation” could be a way

¹⁶ In the Anglo-Saxon literature, the text by Low and MacMillan (1988) is perhaps the most frequently cited in this respect.

of understanding how reflexivity is expressed in today's hyper-competitive environments (Benavent, Verstraete, 2000). Because it involves emotion, it is not an easy subject, but it is likely to contribute greatly to our understanding of entrepreneurs and their organizations, and how the organizations are managed (Pailot, 1995, 1999, 2000a.). To some extent, the theme evokes managerial roots. There is also the theme of vision, which is essential in understanding the link between thought and action, and the concept of decision-making agenda as proposed by Gartner in the United States and Vidaillet (1996, 1997) in France, based on the work of Mintzberg and Stewart¹⁷. Research at the cognitive level could also be based on the categories proposed by Cossette (2000). Following on from work on organizational cognition (especially Scheider, Angelmar, 1993; and Meindl, Stubbart and Porac, 1994), Cossette draws a distinction between cognitive processes, products, styles and processes.

The structural level concerns the context within which the phenomenon is expressed. The more common term of "environment" is unsuitable if it is taken to mean whatever is exterior to the organization. The environment is in some respects the stage (*cf.* Weick's model) and the organizational structure is built into the broader structure around it (see Friedberg, 1993; see also Granovetter, 1985, whose notion of embedding could also be used, especially if the entrepreneur is regarded as a creator of networks). The changing nature of the context makes the notion of definitive knowledge unrealistic. The context or environment should be regarded as an organizational system

¹⁷ See also Gamot, Vidaillet (1998) for the integration of speech and thought.

into which the organization is built¹⁸. The infrastructure required to promote and support entrepreneurial behaviour is one of the themes still to be developed in entrepreneurship, and is currently receiving a great deal of attention from researchers, especially in terms of the role played by public institutions (*cf.* subsidies, incubation, level of protectionism, technology transfer, training and so on) and the private sector (finance, consulting, training, etc.) in providing various forms of assistance and resources. The information resource appears to be particularly crucial (Julien, 2000).

Clearly, contexts are not the same throughout the world, and elements are needed to understand how the entrepreneurial phenomenon is expressed in “regions” such as Africa, Asia and countries whose economies are in transition (e.g. privatization policies). The so-called “individualist entrepreneurship” model, where the primary values are personal success and wealth creation, would be difficult to express in such contexts. It is not a question of ignoring economic globalization, but of resisting the temptation of a single, established model that would serve only to further disadvantage developing economies.

The inclusion of the international dimension in entrepreneurship research is inevitable¹⁹, but it could – and perhaps should – move away from the normative models to contribute contextualized

¹⁸ See Chapter 6 of Verstraete, 1999 for further details.

¹⁹ See the special edition of *Management International*, November 2001.

knowledge. This awareness should help enhance relations between countries not applying the “one true thought” model.

The praxeological level provides the link between the other two levels. It is concerned with the action of positioning the entrepreneur and the organization within the broader organizational system around them, in order to obtain the resources required to realize the entrepreneur’s vision. This requires the implementation of a suitable configuration. We do not have enough information on how entrepreneurs structure their organizations or engage their environments. The processes have been modelled, and the models now need to be contextualized. While the phenomenon can be addressed in general terms, to identify its antecedents, when it is examined as a process the features of the context, the person engaging in the act and the nature of the project itself must also be considered. There is no single universal entrepreneurial process. Thus, both academics and the practitioners and students taking entrepreneurship courses need singular models describing the sequencing or interaction over time of the elements, tasks and activities that constitute the phenomenon. This need for contextualized process models raises questions concerning the methods and tools to be used by entrepreneurs to master the process – for example, project management or other techniques developed in the organizational science specialty areas. The enterprise creation process is clearly different from the enterprise buy-out process²⁰. Similarly, the enterprise creation process in Africa is different from the

²⁰ In both cases, the process is not necessarily the result of an entrepreneurial phenomenon. For buy-outs, see Deschamps (2000), Paturel (2000).

enterprise creation process in the United States, and the process of creating a high-technology firm differs considerably from that of creating a local service enterprise.

Since these levels are inseparable, their interactions also constitute analysis levels in entrepreneurship research. An example involving the cognitive and structural levels would be the use of the convention or social representation theories as relevant analysis prisms, combined with theories of identity, for understanding the entrepreneurial socialization process.

The analysis levels identified by Davidsson and Wiklund (2001) can be classified into the three levels proposed here²¹. We support their idea that the levels must be in step with the proposed conceptualization of entrepreneurship. The levels retained here for the research project or program fall directly into a previously proposed model (Verstraete, 1997, 1999, 2001), based on which the members of our research accreditation jury (Verstraete, 2000b) invited us to develop a unifying program or project²².

Clearly, the types of action performed in entrepreneurship require exchanges with other organizational science specialties, especially strategic management. The specific nature of

²¹ Due to translation and publication delays, edition 25(4) of ET&P was too late for the papers to be included, although they appear to support our remarks.

²² Thanks for their encouragement to: Bertrand Saporta, Michel Marchesnay, Robert Paturel, Pierre Louart and Alain Desreumaux.

entrepreneurship lies in how entrepreneurs position and configure the organizations they create, after having convinced the stakeholders, obtained resources and arranged them in a way that allows for realization of their business vision (Schumpeter spoke of exploitation). These actions condition the strategy, especially in the shift from individual to organizational strategy, and when the aim is to obtain a competitive advantage rather than to create (this is consistent with Hitt *et al.*). From the standpoint of entrepreneurship, strategy serves to realize the entrepreneur's vision; from the standpoint of strategy, creation is regarded as a way of obtaining a competitive advantage.

Whether it is a question of creating or obtaining a competitive advantage, the entrepreneur, the organization and the products or services offered must be positioned in relation to a large number of stakeholders and competitors. Positioning does not mean adaptation, since the underlying aim may be to change the development context to some extent. However, the stakeholders must be persuaded to support the firm's stance by purchasing products or services (clients), investing funds (financial partners), delivering materials or goods (suppliers) and so on. This requires the development of a separate policy for each stakeholder (purchase policy, wage policy, marketing policy, etc.; in other words, functional strategies) that will provide sustainable value so that the stakeholder remains faithful to the enterprise²³. The concept of organizational design may be useful here. Design involves creating a configuration to take over from the entrepreneur in the various positions mentioned earlier, with all

²³ Although it is tempting to apply a dual meaning to the term, i.e. the action and the entity that results, it is in fact generally used to refer to one or the other.

that this entails in terms of distributing tasks, skills, learning and so on. While the entrepreneur must use his or her network and relations, he or she cannot be entirely responsible for the performance and hence the sustainability of the organization, and cannot rely solely on himself or herself, especially when the goal is to grow the organization. The enterprise requires collective action, and not being aware of this can be extremely damaging to newly created organizations. It is one of the major elements explaining business failures. How many entrepreneurs are not sufficiently prepared for collective management? This deficiency is especially critical for innovative enterprises²⁴, where there is a need to develop creativity among employees so that they are not only in step with the prevailing mindset in an innovative organization, but are also – like the entrepreneur – able to detect business opportunities.

It may seem surprising that these three themes (innovation, creativity and business opportunities) were not identified in the earlier “state of the art” section. They are, of course, present in numerous texts, but unless one is extremely biased, it is difficult to say that they are specific to entrepreneurship. Innovation, for example, is of equal interest to strategy, and the same applies to the detection of business opportunities (present extensively in strategic analysis models) and creativity. These three themes are also core elements in the combination of entrepreneurship and strategy to form what are commonly known as “entrepreneurial strategies”. In this researcher’s view, the terminology is common to two domains, that of strategy and that of entrepreneurship. The next chapter of this essay

²⁴ Entrepreneurship does not necessarily involve innovation.

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attempts to define the boundaries of these domains, and reviews the entrepreneurship research project proposed here as a way of bringing them closer together.

CHAPTER 2.

ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES



The close relationship between entrepreneurship and strategic management is not new; the fields were first brought together by what was commonly referred to as corporate entrepreneurship and, to some extent, intrapreneurship. In the earlier chapter, we examined the meaning of the two terms, and in the next chapters we will be looking at some of the key concepts applied by partisans of “entrepreneurial strategy” deployment, within which innovation, creativity, business opportunity detection, value creation and certain other objects (notions and concepts) become precepts for strategic action. As the key influences of entrepreneurial strategies are described, the relationship between entrepreneurship and strategic management becomes clearer from another standpoint²⁵.

²⁵ Our most grateful thanks go to Taïeb Hafsi, Editor of *Management International*, for allowing us to reproduce the content of a paper to be published in his Journal in 2002 (vol 6 n2). More specifically, however, we thank him for the many constructive discussions we had together when this text was being written.

ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES, CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INTRAPRENEURSHIP

The literature on entrepreneurial strategies delivers a fundamental message that is more important than it first appears, namely that an enterprise must be entrepreneurial. The message presents two advantages. First, it denounces the bureaucratic inertia into which many organizational structures slide as they become unable to take the initiatives inherent in the term “enterprise”. The second is a break with certain strategic analysis models occasionally criticized as being unsuited to competitive environments. They come under pressure from the increasing speed at which information is exchanged, and market globalization (Bettis, Hitt, 1995; Ford, Gioia, 1995; Kuczmarski, 1996; Carrier, 1997; Hitt, Keats, DeMarie, 1998; Torrès, 2000a). The result is a growing number of opportunities and at the same time a relative singularity of competencies, for which some authors feel the “classical” strategic analysis models are inappropriate. Although somewhat premature (readers are invited to re-examine the original texts of the LCAG model authors to discover entrepreneurial incentives and cases not relating to large firms), the message emphasizes the need for entrepreneurial behaviour in established firms. The dedicated expression used to be “corporate entrepreneurship”, which was the subject of a special edition of the *Strategic Management Journal* a decade ago (Guth, Ginsberg, 1990; see also Sandberg, 1992; Barringer, Bluedorn, 1999). The prevailing idea of corporate entrepreneurship is that the organization can take over from the entrepreneur, or more broadly, that an established firm is well able to demonstrate entrepreneurial capacities. The term “corporate

entrepreneurship” can be defined as follows: *“The sum of a firm's innovation, risk taking, and proactiveness in foreign markets”* (Zahra, Garvis, 2000).

Two aspects stand out in this definition, namely innovation and the risk taken by established firms when they enter markets that are new to them (Miller, 1983; Covin, Slevin, 1991; Zahra, Jennings, Kuratko, 1999). Research has tended to concentrate on the factors likely to influence entrepreneurial activities in existing firms, and on how the distinct competitive attributes of smaller and/or younger firms can be expressed in larger firms. These attributes include:

- Culture (Kuratko, Hornsby, Naffziger, Montagno, 1993);
- The manager’s propensity for risk, the entrepreneurial behaviour of the manager and the employees, and the frequency of innovations (Covin, Slevin, 1991);
- The use of management tools, such as the marketing mix, for example (Barrett, Balloun, Weinstein, 2000);
- The nature of the environment, the attitude of members of the firm’s general management and the firm’s development stage, which has an impact on the usable resources (Toulouse, 1988).

The aim here is to go beyond creation and see how a given entrepreneurial behaviour allows a firm to obtain a competitive advantage (Covin, Slevin, 1991; Jennings, Lumpkin, 1989), especially by developing its competencies so that it is able to exploit the opportunities it detects (Zahra, Jennings, Kuratko, 1999). Sometimes, an employee with the necessary power and resources is asked to exploit a given opportunity. The term used to describe this process is “intrapreneurship”. Koenig describes

the underlying idea as follows: “It consists in developing an entrepreneurial climate within organizations threatened with paralysis by their own functional formalism. Intrapreneurship, a combination of fire and water, is therefore an attempt to inject the entrepreneurial virus into the ailing bodies of large bureaucratic firms” (1989, p.1599, our translation from the French). However, it is by no means the exclusive province of large firms. Carrier (1996, 2000) studied its application in SMEs, showing first that intrapreneurs can be very valuable allies for owner-managers or entrepreneurs, especially for everything connected with activity creation, and second, that SMEs are just as concerned as their larger counterparts with the question of innovation, due to the intensification of globalization and the onset of free trade.

For corporate entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and entrepreneurial strategy, there is one constant in the literature, namely innovation. Schumpeter’s work has had a fairly direct impact on the discourse of many authors, especially his conception of innovation – for evidence of this, see the definitions in the introduction to Hitt, Ireland, Camp and Sexton. The following basic review examines the relatively explicit influence of Schumpeterian thinking on the thinking of strategic management researchers with regard to entrepreneurial strategies.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF SCHUMPETERIAN THINKING

Schumpeterian thinking is generally reduced to making innovation the key to competitiveness and the entrepreneur the destroyer of economic balance (the famous creative destruction process), these two factors constituting the basis of economic development.

The analysis does not, *a priori*, serve the enterprise's strategy, although it does invite the enterprise to develop "strategic intentions" (1947, see page 123 of the 1990 French edition), and even though, with regard to the business cycle, Schumpeter submits that any attempt to do things differently in the domain of economic life should be regarded as an innovation likely to provide a temporary benefit, and profits, for a firm (1939, p.84).

Schumpeter's work takes a triple approach (economic, historical and sociological), theorizing among other things on the evolution of the capitalist system. In his theory of economic development (1935), Schumpeter delivers his conception of the enterprise and the entrepreneur:

- The enterprise is the accomplishment of new combinations and their realization in operations; these new combinations or realizations are in fact new consumer objects (products, services or new sources of raw materials), new production and transportation methods, new markets or new types of industrial organization;
- The entrepreneur is the activator or trigger of this accomplishment, although he or she is not necessarily either the owner of any or all the means used, or the discoverer or inventor of the

new combinations, and the accomplishment does not necessarily take place in what is known as a firm. In accomplishing a new combination, the entrepreneur generates value and makes a profit on it, especially when he or she is the first to do so (on this point, see 1935, p.1999).

Being an entrepreneur is a function, and usually a temporary one. It is only risky if the individual commits his or her own resources (thus combining the functions of entrepreneur and capitalist). It is not necessarily related to management needs. It is in this way that Schumpeter differentiates between entrepreneurs and managers, and it is here that lies the distinction, taken up later by Drucker (1964) and Chandler (1994), between the administrative function and the entrepreneurial function.²⁶

The entrepreneur accomplishes new combinations and loses entrepreneurial status when he or she is content merely to operate the enterprise created, but can recover that status at a later date.

Entrepreneurs do things other than those that are accomplished by normal behaviour (1935, p.116). They have a special view of the world and are able to act outside the routine. They do not follow a path, they build one, and they do not follow a plan, they devise one. They contribute something new that is difficult to impose. The difficulty lies first and foremost in the relative lack of information.

²⁶ Schumpeter's conception of management is limited to a mainly administrative function. This statement is questionable and could transform the entrepreneur into a mythical being. Bouchikhi (2002) criticizes the entrepreneur-manager dichotomy, arguing that it has no scientific legitimacy.

Entrepreneurs must work things out and demonstrate creativity. The following passage is interesting in this respect, when Schumpeter said that the actions and reactions of the proposed enterprise cannot be grasped in a way that allows them to be known and used in their entirety ... for success, everything depends on the viewpoint, the ability to see things in a way that can then be confirmed by experience (p.122). Schumpeter identifies another major difficulty concerning the behaviour of the agent, who is faced with the challenge of doing something new when it is easier to keep doing the usual thing. Schumpeter bases his arguments on the history of science to show the difficulty of assimilating a new scientific concept when the mind keeps coming back to the usual path. The desire for change must therefore be strong, and the agent must see real possibilities in the new combinations, not just a dream or game. For Schumpeter this freedom of spirit requires a strength far beyond that required in everyday life; it is, by nature, something both specific and rare (p.123). In other words, the spirit of enterprise and the ability to formulate a vision for the exploitation of opportunities are rare resources applied for specific, singular realizations outside the usual structures. The social environment reacts by opposing people who want to do new things in general, and new economic things in particular (p.123). The prospect of accomplishing new combinations means that stakeholders must face the unknown. However, once they have been persuaded, the accomplishment of new combinations initiates a dynamic movement of evolution by destroying the older elements and replacing them with new elements. It is here, in this movement, that lies the essence of "creative destruction" a long-term process engendered by the capitalist system. In this respect, according to Schumpeter's (1947) approach, it is more important to understand how the system creates and then destroys structures than how it manages existing structures.

For Schumpeter, innovation is a central element of capitalism, which itself is a type or method of economic transformation (1990, p.115). If Schumpeterian thinking is accepted as relevant, then it is hardly surprising that, in capitalist societies, innovation is regarded as a strategy in its own right. It is a process of materialization for creative ideas. Creativity produces something new that is implemented by innovation. Schumpeter believes this type of creativity belongs more to the inventor, and adds another type, that which allows an individual, the entrepreneur, to perceive the applications and business opportunities it is likely to engender. Again, the entrepreneur needs a fairly clear representation (vision) of how to exploit the opportunity and draw value from it, via the formulation of a business model. The following sections of this chapter present some of the meeting points of entrepreneurship and strategic management. There are others, including risk and uncertainty, but the notions and concepts retained are core elements in the current reconciliation of the entrepreneurship research domain and the strategic management discipline as part of the organizational sciences. The ties are very close, and each of the underlined terms plays an important role in recommendations concerning the deployment of entrepreneurial strategies.

THE FIRME MUST INNOVATE

Entrepreneurial strategies consist in developing the firm's competencies by devising new combinations (the firm's essence) that are quicker and better than those of its competitors. This statement is consistent with the positions taken by authors such as Hamel and Prahalad, D'Aveni,

Eisenhardt, and so on. When it enters the process of creative destruction, a firm gains an advantage by setting the rules of the game through innovation. It builds its own path rather than taking a path built by others. For firms that generate this kind of turbulence in the environment, there sometimes seems to be a kind of vicious circle that forces them always to produce new combinations. This, however, may actually be a strategy. It is a core element in the cultures of some firms where change is endemic (Brown, Eisenhardt, 1997)²⁷. Eisenhardt and Brown (1998) offer some examples, including Intel, Cisco Systems, Netscape, Gillette, Sony, 3M, and others. In a process known as *event pacing*, some companies sometimes change as a result of events that take place in the environment and modify the rules of the game (for example, consumer demand, availability of new technologies, a change of attitude on the part of a competitor, poor performance, etc.). Others, however, set their own program governed by a schedule of change; this is known as *time pacing*. For example, every 18 months Intel doubles the capacity of its microprocessors. The result is a sense of urgency that has the effect of bringing the employees together around a common project, and forcing them to anticipate and manage the transition. The company therefore “orchestrates” or “choreographs” the change, and its principal difficulty is to synchronize the pace of change to the assimilation capacities of the market (positioning) and of the organization (organizational design). The pace must be sufficiently sustained to ensure that the organization’s strategic behaviour is not dictated by events (event pacing vs. time pacing), but must allow sufficient flexibility to develop and capitalize the required skills. There is a

²⁷ This “culture” raises a number of problems, including weariness on the part of the actors, who disengage as a result of the pressure they are under. See chapter 10 of Alter (2000) for a description.

difference between speed and haste; but in high-speed industries, ongoing change is crucial (Bourgeois, Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; D'Aveni, 1994).

Not all environments are subject to a rapid pace of change. The permanent innovation advocated by some management gurus and aimed at transforming everyone into “revolutionaries” or even anarchists would simply destroy most of the self-employed and small and medium-sized enterprises that the stakeholders, especially consumers, need. It is surprising to see the frequency and extent of the ignorance surrounding the situation of the majority of our firms, i.e. the small and medium-sized (this was not the case in the early Harvard publications). The principal idea here is that it is better to set the rules of the game than to follow rules set by others (Hamel, Prahalad, 1994). The ability to do this is no longer the exclusive province of large firms, for a number of reasons. First, SMEs have the advantage of being much closer to their stakeholders (especially their employees) and their environment (a detailed explanation, with proximity as the key concept for SMEs, can be found in Torrès, 1999, 2000b). Eisenhardt, Brown and Neck (2000) showed that the development of new information technologies has given SMEs access to international markets to which they formerly did not have access due to a lack of information (see also Hitt, Reed, 2000). With B to B, information and communication technologies also facilitate network operations. At the same time, alliances are now a large part of what are known as new organizational forms, and help increase the capital stock as well as contributing to skill development and business opportunity detection (Benavent, Verstraete, 2000).

Firms can establish the rules of the game at different levels, and it is not necessarily a question of systematically revolutionizing the market. According to Kuratko and Hodgetts (2001), entrepreneurial strategies can include four types of innovation²⁸, namely invention, extension, duplication and synthesis. Innovation based on an invention is a fundamental break involving a new combination. Extension consists in finding new applications for existing combinations. Duplication involves reproducing an existing combination with the addition of a “personal touch”, and synthesis takes concepts from several different combinations and puts them to a new use. Alongside these proactive attitudes, it is still possible to react by adapting (the typology of Miles and Snow, 1978, is appropriate here). Each behaviour requires a certain level of creativity on the part of the employees – an essential factor for innovative organizations.

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTE CREATIVITY

Creativity is sometimes considered to be the genesis of entrepreneurship (Brazeal, Herbet, 1999). It triggers actions that challenge habits (Ford, 1996). Entrepreneurs apply their imagination to their business

²⁸ The innovation literature offers a plethora of typologies. We retained this one because it is based on the work of Kirton, which was tested empirically in an entrepreneurial context (Buttner, Gryskiewicz, 1993). For a discussion of innovation typologies, see Carrier and Garand (1996) and Loilier and Tellier (1999).

activities, driving their own creativity or that of other people (Nystrom, 1995). From this standpoint, entrepreneurship can be regarded as the projection and realization of new ideas by individuals able to use information and summon the resources required to implement their visions (*ibid.*). However, the ability to do this is not exclusive; creative potential exists throughout the firm, from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom (Osborn, 1988; Nilsson, 1994).

In a managerial context, creativity is the production, by an individual or group, of new and useful ideas relating to products, processes, procedures and services. Innovation gives concrete form to these ideas within the organization (Amabile, 1988). Logically, then, in firms where innovation is a major element of the culture, the employees must be made to be more creative (there are countless ways of doing this). From being basically idiosyncratic at the outset, creativity must become a collective process (see Ford and Gioia, 1995). Although it remains primarily an individual act dependent on the aptitudes and cognitive or emotional dispositions of a single individual, it is given concrete form by the social process of idea implementation constituted by innovation (Carrier, Garand, 1996).

Creativity takes on an entrepreneurial aspect when it involves developing the ability of individuals to imagine and detect business opportunities, and a strategic aspect when it involves devising an organizational context conducive to ongoing innovation. These aspects are illustrated in the model proposed by Amabile (1988, 1998), who identifies two families of criteria conducive to creativity in an organization. The first is the family of individuals; creativity results from their expertise (technical and intellectual knowledge), creative thinking (ability to solve problems or think up combinations to

exploit new ideas) and motivation. The second family relates to the organizational environment within which creativity must be expressed. The type of management to be developed depends on the latitude given to employees, the clarity of the projects to be carried out, the resources available, the challenge of the project, and so on (for an attempt at operationalizing the model, see Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, Herron, 1996).

Creativity is generally acknowledged as triggering innovation through the ideas it produces, and needs to be promoted and managed if the organization is to multiply its sources of innovation. This is one of the major success factors of organizations with entrepreneurial strategies. Innovation always begins with an incentive for creative thought (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, Herron, 1996). More broadly, by encouraging and developing the creativity of its employees, the organization expects them to be able to detect business opportunities.

EXPLOITING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Business opportunity detection is a vital component of strategic analysis (we need only think of the Harvard model). The same applies to the entrepreneurship literature. Hitt *et al.* (2001) ascribe the ability to detect business opportunities to what they refer to as “entrepreneurial perspective” (p. 481). According to Shane and Venkataraman (2000), entrepreneurship is based on the emergence of

business opportunities and the ability to detect them and summon the resources needed to exploit them. Thus, entrepreneurship is not just about creating an entity²⁹, but also – and primarily – involves detecting and exploiting opportunities. Bygrave and Hofer nevertheless add this: “*the entrepreneurial process involving all the functions, activities, and actions associated with the perceiving of opportunities and creation of organizations to pursue them*” (1991, p.14). An opportunity is defined as a possibility for exploiting a product or service that creates or contributes value for the end user (Timmons, 1994, 1997).

Certainly, the identification and exploitation of business opportunities is of interest to the field of entrepreneurship. However, as pointed out in the *Academy of Management Review* (January 2001) a year after Shane and Venkataraman’s paper was published, it is perhaps just as relevant to the field of strategic management. The SWOT model, although basically deductive, is also concerned with recognizing market opportunities (Zahra, Dess, 2001).

Opportunity exploitation lies at the junction of entrepreneurship and strategic management, and is thus a core element in entrepreneurial strategy. Gaining a competitive advantage necessarily involves detecting or building business opportunities. The intensification of globalization has brought both opportunities and threats (Hitt, Ricart, Nixon, 1998, in Hitt, Reed, 2000). They result from a new type

²⁹ From our standpoint, it is important to distinguish between creating an entity and creating an organization. The work of Shane and Venkataraman is concerned with creating an entity.

of competition generated by a lifting of national barriers in certain markets, the opening of national borders, and the speed of technological change and dissemination (Hitt, Reed, 2000). The resulting imbalances create business opportunities for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial firms.

Cycles used to be much longer than they are now. When an innovation appeared, the initiator had plenty of time to make it pay before it was imitated or taken up by competitors. A common way of maximizing profits was to rationalize wherever possible, among other things by implementing routines and procedures. However, due to a combination of market globalization and the availability of information, the process has gathered speed and business opportunities are snatched up much more quickly. Patents are not necessarily the best method of maintaining an advantage derived from an innovation. Patented inventions are quickly imitated or copied (Badaracco, 1991; E. Mansfield, M. Schwartz, S. Wagner 1981). Thus, other than in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors, patents are less common today because they are less effective (Bettis, M.A. Hitt, 1995). To maintain an advantage, the innovator firm must now exploit its rarest resources, namely its ability to create (find new ideas), innovate (transform its ideas into new combination) and undertake (activate the combinations) by exploiting the opportunities it creates. This type of advantages requires access to the relevant human resources and the ability to develop them into a competency that is difficult to imitate (*cf. the Resource Based View approach*). Learning, and to a lesser extent unlearning by questioning standardized schemas, is therefore the best type of investment for a firm wishing to promote creative opportunities. Whereas in most cases immaterial investment comes after material investment, entrepreneurial strategies place them at the same level and sometimes in reverse order.

Obviously, business leaders are not necessarily comfortable with a conception of management that raises the spectre of loss of control, especially by giving employees the latitude they need to be creative and take the initiative. At the same time as they allow latitude by developing entrepreneurial-type qualities in their workforce, leaders must also have a clear vision that the employees can use as a guide for action, and to some extent as a source of values to be shared. Collins and Lazier (1992) use the expressions *Touch the Spirit* and *Touching People's Spirit* to describe the element that is absolutely essential if a vision is to be shared within the organization – in other words, for an idiosyncratic vision to become an organizational concept or paradigm that will guide the members of the organization.

BUILDING A PARADIGMATIC BUSINESS VISION

In entrepreneurial contexts, vision is considered by many authors as an essential element of performance (Van de Ven, Huston, Schroeder, 1984; Ginn, Sexton, 1989; Bird, 1988; Carrière, 1991; Nkongolo-Bakenka, d'Amboise, Garnier, 1994; Fillion, 1991; Verstraete, 1999). Indeed, by emphasizing the impact of a clear, distributed vision on entity survival, these authors have established a link between individual schema and collective representation. In other words, the entrepreneur's vision must become a dominant logic (*cf.* Prahalad, Bettis, 1986; Bettis, Prahalad, 1995) or paradigm

(*cf.* Johnson, 1988, 1992), this latter referring to the idea of acceptance, by the employees or more broadly by all the stakeholders, of the entrepreneur's "strategic theory".

The vision is a representation, shared or not, of a future desired by the entrepreneur and/or the members of the organization. To select a direction, the leader must first have devised a mental image of a possible and desirable future state for the organization (Bennis, Nanus, 1985). The term "vision" refers to the entrepreneur's ability to anticipate and think about a future towards which he or she will work. Entrepreneurs are "visionaries", not in the divine or supernatural sense of the term, but in the more prosaic sense that they have a fairly clear picture in their minds of the organization to be created and the place it will occupy in the environment. Thus, the environment is also an important component of the vision, whether as an existing market or an imaginary future market (*cf.* Internet, for example). Without falling into the cognitive catchall criticized by Laroche and Nioche (1994), it is nevertheless true that, in younger and smaller entities, strategy, which can be defined as a desired configuration of the firm's future (Avenier, 1988, p.123), is mostly mental and not formalized. Thus, a strategic vision would be a mental construction dynamic of a desired, possible future for an enterprise (Carrière, 1991, p.304) or, according to Fillion (1991, 1995), an image projected into the future of the place to be occupied by the entity's products on the market and an image of the type of organization required to achieve this. In other words, the vision requires an organization, because realization of the vision is a collective task. It is up to the entrepreneur or the entity's management to apply the methods required to ensure that the vision becomes a shared representation (Weick, Bougon, 1990).

In management, the model of Weick (1979) is often used by researchers working on the concept of vision, especially to establish links between vision and action. According to Weick, the individual selects a series of schemas in the form of causal maps that, when compared against a situation, provide meaning and intelligibility³⁰ (in this sense, in Cossette's (2000, 1994) classification to which we referred earlier, the vision is a schema). The maps are the result of experience obtained through action³¹. Each actor in the organization formulates and owns a cognitive map of his or her organizational universe (Weick, Bougon, 1986). Learning depends on a cognitive interaction process leading to the sharing of ideas that, in turn, affect the individual schemas (Hedberg, 1981; Fiol, 1994; Allard-Poesi, 1997). Learning is thus the product of social and psychological negotiations, and raises the question of the individual-collective shift (Sims, Gioia, 1986; Huff, 1990; Eden, Spender, 1998; Van der Heijden, Eden, 1998) that the socio-cognitive approach in strategy only partially explains (Lauriol, 1998). To answer this question, entrepreneurship and strategic management researchers have some common ground to cover, in particular by building bridges between cognitive and strategic planning³², and between individual and collective learning.

³⁰ The maps do not refer to causality in the strict and narrow sense of the term. The links between concepts on a map take many different forms (Weick, Bougon, 1986; Huff, Nappareddy, Fletcher, 1990).

³¹ For an application of Weick's model to entrepreneurship, see Verstraete (1999), Gartner (1995).

³² The similarity between strategic planning and what psychologists refer to as cognitive planning is clear in Nguyen-Xuan, Richard, Hoc (1990).

OBTAINING VALUE

The concept of value has received a great deal of attention from all the organizational science specialties. From our own standpoint, we need only consult the titles of the special editions we have identified, or the articles they contain, to see the extent to which value creation seems to be a primary concern for firms applying entrepreneurial strategies³³. In all these works, entrepreneurship is regarded as a value creation process. In his thesis, Bruyat (1993) defines the field according to two dimensions, namely the creation of new value and the change triggered by the new value for the person who generated it. The greater the value created and the greater the change for the individual, the broader the consensus that appears to emerge from the research community to the effect that the object should be included in the field of entrepreneurship. The major problem with this type of approach is related to the definition of value. For example, the proceedings of the IAE Days³⁴ held in Nantes (Bréchet, 1998) clearly illustrate the many different meanings given to the term by the various specialty areas (finance, strategy, HRM, etc.) and even by the various scientific disciplines (economics, sociology, philosophy, etc.). Bréchet et Desreumaux (1998b) produced a table showing, for each specialty area of the

³³ For example, the *SMJ* issue of July 2001 is entitled *Strategic Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurial Strategies for Wealth Creation*

³⁴ The IAE Days (“Institut d’administration des entreprises”) are components of organizational science teaching and research for some French universities. Although independent, the universities have formed a network for this purpose.

organizational sciences, the value conception phase, the value production phase and the value assignment phase. Viewed in this way, value is the result of a management process that each enterprise function interprets in its own way, usually in relation to the stakeholder with which it is mainly involved (e.g. employees for HRM, shareholders for finance, customers for marketing), and on either side of these functions, each activity contributes value to the product offered in exchange (Porter, 1986). The concern is primarily economic, however, and corresponding theories have been devised to answer two major economic questions, namely how do societies create wealth and how is that wealth distributed? According to Kirchhoff (1994, 1997), entrepreneurship is a major wealth creation and wealth distribution mechanism³⁵. However, value creation involves all the organizational science specialties, and is dependent on managerial as well as entrepreneurial practices (Bréchet and Desreumaux, 1998b).

If we go beyond this conception to the organizational sciences, Comte-Sponville (1998), in an inaugural conference, discussed some of the meanings of value. Value can be economic, ethical, normative, metaphysical, legal and so on. In all cases, a link between desire and utility is required, and the question of “desirability” is a relevant one: is it because we desire it that it is worth something, or is it worth something because we desire it? (p.15). Value has a variety of facets because there are so many purposes. Desire tends to be associated with purpose. The author speaks of teleological pluralism. Is the question exclusive to philosophy, or is it also relevant to entrepreneurship

³⁵ There is a difference between value and wealth, and their common and theoretical meanings are not the same.

researchers? If we consider the social responsibility of entrepreneurs, it is clear that value is not just economic in nature³⁶. Despite these reservations, Bruyat's steps to delimit the field are legitimate with regard to the literature. In other words, Bruyat bases his work on two aspects that emerge from the literature, but never claims openly that they are specific to entrepreneurship (discussion with the author). His matrix can be used to identify different conceptions of entrepreneurship, but it does not claim to cover them all, and is not intended as a model³⁷.

In a literature that is rife with ideology and coloured by political expectations of economic and social development, entrepreneurship is closely linked to the creation of wealth and value. The editorial policies of some renowned entrepreneurship journals are unambiguous in this respect. Thus, in delimiting the field, Bruyat's examination of the literature led him to consider the scientific object as being related to the individual-value creation dialogue, with the relationship triggering a change (of status, responsibility, etc.) for the person responsible for the change. Entrepreneurship presupposes a

³⁶ It is interesting to look at work on insertion firms to understand how France has in some ways introduced a social aspect into entrepreneurship (Pailot-Zoonekind, 2000). A solely economic value would also be difficult to apply in regions of the world where individual and collective behaviour is guided by other notions of value, such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Saporta, Kombou, 2000). The October 2001 edition of *Management International* bears witness to this.

³⁷ In the second part of his doctoral thesis, Bruyat (1993; 2000) proposes a model of the enterprise creation process from the standpoint of supporting the creator. The basis of this thesis can be found in the first edition of the *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat*. In addition, on page 75 and following of the thesis, the author considers the public sector and non-profit organizations, thus extending the notion of value even further.

rupture, both for the object (value creation) and for the individual (change). The significance of value creation in the field of entrepreneurship is summarized in the following citation from Ronstadt: *“Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. This wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in term of equity, time, and/or career commitment of providing value for some product or service. The product or service itself may or may not be new or unique but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skills and resources.”* (1984, p.28). From a strategic standpoint, entrepreneurship can certainly be regarded as an attitude aimed at creating value on the basis of an innovation with good business potential, formulated within what is now generally referred to as the Business Model.

THE BUSINESS MODEL

The business model, or economic model, also lies at the crossroads of the fields of strategy and entrepreneurship. The current context of less time and more space (see Torrès, 2000a) makes it even more difficult to design models that reconcile so-called managerial practices with so-called entrepreneurial practices. In strategy, the term “model” has at least two meanings. The first relates to the notion of strategic models, referring to the analysis grids used by management to prepare strategies (e.g. the BCG matrix, M.E. Porter’s sector analysis grid, etc.). The second is concerned with what is now commonly known as the business model or economic model, a term used since the advent of the

start-up phenomenon that has spread to such a point that it is sometimes used instead of the term “strategy”. These two meanings are related. Used to prepare economic models, strategic models refer to contexts in which business is envisaged. These contexts change quickly, and so the analysis cannot be based sustainably on a strategic model presumed to be universal and a-temporal. Practice has shown that business models are enriched in a logic where the tool and the result of its use interact. Moreover, time has a detrimental effect on even the best-designed strategies (a quality necessarily expressed *a priori*), and even more so when speed is a factor (Benavent, Verstraete, 2000). When models are taken over by a significant number of competitors, all supposedly distinctive advantages suffer inevitably from a standardization of practices and reference points. There is therefore a need for an umbrella model that constantly triggers innovation. In recent times, models requiring firms to adapt to their environment and obtain a fit have been called into question. Approaches are becoming more ambitious, offering the possibility of shaping the development context. For managers, it is no longer a question of simply rationalizing and optimizing, but of committing the environment to make better use of resources. The notion of entrepreneurial strategy takes its full meaning from a combination of the “entrepreneurial” and the “managerial”.

CHAPTER 3.

THE PLACE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE FRENCH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LANDSCAPE



The reconciliation discussed earlier brings researchers up against two attitudes that were long taken as opposites, namely an entrepreneurial attitude based on initiatives and a managerial attitude based on rationalization and instrumentation of those initiatives (see Julien et Marchesnay, 1996, who speak of a shift from managerial capitalism to entrepreneurial capitalism, and the table presented by Cooper, Markman, Niss, 2000 p.123, referring to a shift from traditional management to entrepreneurial strategies). They should preferably be expressed by a single individual or by all the individuals in a firm. Strategically, the challenge is to combine the “entrepreneurial” aspect with the “managerial” aspect. For academic research, this raises a central question, that of the territory covered by the organizational sciences. The current conceptions of these sciences go beyond Schumpeter’s “administrative functions”, and the managerial functions have been besieged by the organizational aspect (this has been the subject of debate). This statement is confirmed both in the practice and teaching of management and in research. So what about the “entrepreneurial functions”? In Schumpeterian thinking, they do not come under the heading of administration, and yet – somewhat

paradoxically - management researchers borrow from administrative thinking to defend the need for entrepreneurial strategies. The first section of this chapter questions the positioning of entrepreneurship as one of the organizational sciences, and the second examines the socio-political conditions for its recognition.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE

The French term “sciences de gestion” refers to a phenomenon that is similar to what the Anglo-Saxons call *organizational studies*³⁸. Managers are particularly interested in understanding and controlling organizations, as shown by a number of necessarily recent essays on what is a relatively young discipline (Martinet, 1990; Desreumaux, 1992a; Savall, 1998; Bréchet, Desreumaux, 1998a). These two dimensions naturally lead organizational science researchers to study the problems generated by the design, government and direction of organizations with socio-economic objectives in order to improve their performance or at the very least ensure their survival. The praxeological nature of management is expressed by the organization, which underlies the action and manifests itself in a variety of ways, and its purposes, since the action is directed. There is a decade between two works on

³⁸ Before the French Ministry of Education and Research opted for the term “sciences de gestion” (management sciences), the term “sciences de l’organisation” (organizational sciences) was considered (Savall, 1984).

the epistemology of the organizational sciences in France (Martinet, 1990; David, Hatchuel, Laufer, 2000) and yet this aspect remains a priority (in the second work, through the notion of collective action).

The same focus on action is found in organizational studies, in particular in the priority given to the interactions between different organizational levels (Belhing, 1978; Chanlat, 1990; Desreumaux, 1992a). Belhing (1978; Belhing, Chester, 1976) identifies four levels of analysis (individuals, groups, organizations and societies), and proposes the following delimitation:

*"Organizational Studies is not set apart from the other social and behavioral sciences by the element of its domain; Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology also deal with societies, organizations, groups and individuals. Rather, it is in the fact that while these disciplines work primarily, within elements - Psychology at the individual level, Sociology at that of groups and organizations, and Anthropology more at the level of societies - Organizational Studies treat concerns that are primarily among levels that makes Organizational Studies unique"*³⁹.

The links between the levels of analysis, or the interaction, to use a term with a highly dynamic and systemic connotation, lie at the heart of the thinking of researchers studying organizations. Reference to the organizational sciences as the "action sciences" are not new, and continue to persist. Enterprise is becoming more dynamic, and the term itself now refers, more than ever before, to both the action and its result. The same applies to organization, which refers both to the activities and processes

³⁹ See also Chanlat (1990), who draws a distinction between individual, interaction, organization, society and world.

undertaken to achieve a purpose, and to the entity or form resulting from a combination of resources for that purpose. Researchers sometimes find it difficult to go beyond the analytical conceptions, when it would in fact be relevant to take a systemic position in order to accept the ambivalence (support for this position is far from unanimous, as shown by Jacot, 1994). The levels of study that purposeful collective action offers to managers could be analyzed as follows. They emerge from the interaction of various exercises related more or less explicitly to the area covered by the organizational sciences⁴⁰.

The first level is related to organizational phenomena. Other phenomena (ecological, demographic, etc.) may be of interest to managers, but collective action is expressed by social phenomena of an organizational nature. These phenomena trigger the creation of organized forms with socio-economic purposes. They are of different types – social movements leading to the introduction of a union into the firm, initiatives leading to the creation of associations and groups (professional, sporting, etc.), or the creation of firms, alliances and other basically reticular relations. The phenomena are different in terms of nature, but they do have some points in common, namely the fact of being born of collective action (even if that action was initiated by an individual, as is the case for the entrepreneurial phenomenon initiated by an entrepreneur, but the organization requires collective action) and the fact

⁴⁰ See, among others, Cohen (1989), Martinet (1990), Marchesnay (1991), Lebraty (1992), Audet and Déry (1996), Savall (1998), Hafsi (1997), Bréchet and Desreumaux (1998), David, Hatchuel, Laufer (2000). See also the proceedings of the 1984 conference organized by ISEOR.

of affecting the organized forms (themselves different) by creating, modifying or even destroying them.

The second level refers to the organizational forms generated or modified by the organizational phenomena. By analogy, and from an evolutionist perspective, the forms are studied as species. For example, managers may be interested in firms (large or small), associations or networks, and study their development within a social organization, learning about the power relationships deployed by these forms for their survival or development. This implies a prior demonstration, namely that a form must be identifiable as a species. The fact that forms do not have topological boundaries does not make it any easier to identify them. As pointed out by Bréchet (1994), the reality is not an organization with a perfectly defined boundary in space and over time, nor is it an entity that is completely and immediately recognizable and identifiable from the strategic and/or organizational standpoint. Where there are no species, organized forms can be identified through typologies or by institutionalization. The firm attracts a lot of attention, but is only one form of socio-economic organization. While there is no strict legal definition of an enterprise (see Supiot, 1994; Robé, 1999), the law nevertheless allows certain boundaries to be drawn where they do not physically exist. These “artificial” boundaries, in addition to defining the principles of responsibility and ownership (and therefore capital distribution), also temporarily and partially set a framework for action and contractualization of the organization by giving it relative stability. Forms also exist through the relative independence of their structures, although the structures themselves may be woven into a much broader umbrella structure, that of

society⁴¹. This independence is expressed by self-coordination, which takes us to the third level of organization.

The organization of organized forms. Generally, this means developing competencies in order to improve or at least maintain the performance of organized forms. We will not examine this level in detail, since research into structures and organizational design⁴² already gives a good idea of what it covers, what it involves in technical terms and the problems that arise when changes are made. The research in question often combines – in the systemic meaning of the term – a structural approach (i.e. a study of the boundaries, reservoirs, interactions and multidimensional elements making up the system) and a functional approach (analysis of flows, decision centres, response times, feedback, etc.). It may be concerned with reduced systems or with the entire social system.

These three levels generate two other levels. Thus, and fourth, given that the individual is always involved in the levels described earlier, it is useful to identify the place occupied and the role played by the individual in their emergence and development. The individual cannot be regarded solely as an agent. The first three levels exist only because individuals, either alone or as groups, have generated them⁴³, even if they are later excluded from the very thing they have helped organized, and even if the

⁴¹ See Chapter IV of Verstraete (1999)

⁴² For a summary, see Desreumaux (1992b)

⁴³ The term “individual” also includes groups of individuals.

other levels have an impact on the intentions developed. In return, obviously, the organizations and their interactions have an impact on the individuals concerned. This leads us to the fifth level.

This fifth level is concerned with the point identified as crucial in the research mentioned earlier, namely the interaction and embedding of the various levels. Let us look at a few examples. Changes in organizational method have an impact on the organized form by affecting its “boundaries”. The organizational method can generate organizational phenomena (e.g. an alienating organization type leading to social movements), and conversely an organizational phenomenon can affect the organizational method (e.g. a social movement can lead to a restructuring of working conditions). Innovation-related phenomena can generate new organizational forms and may also lead to a redistribution of competitive power. Economic globalization phenomena cause the development of groups of SMEs (in refocusing activities with a view to conquering or resisting world markets, the phenomena release business opportunities likely to be taken up by potential or established entrepreneurs) and alliances. Lastly, union movements change intra-firm relationships and thus, to some extent, its form.

Entrepreneurship is an organizational phenomenon (first level) driven by an individual (fourth level) or several individuals who join forces for that purpose, generating (fifth level) organized forms (second and third levels). It is therefore inseparably linked to the idea of creation.

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RESEARCH DOMAIN

The analysis levels identified in the preceding section are simply one standpoint among others in the organizational sciences. Our intention here is not to consider their epistemology; this is something to be left to the specialists, although it is important for researchers not to exclude such an exercise when they have questions concerning the place of the object (notion or concept) on which they are working within their particular scientific discipline. This standpoint is very broad and, if the territory covered by the notion of organization were to be extended, the inclusion of entrepreneurship in the organizational sciences would be difficult if credit were given to those who claim full disciplinary autonomy. Their arguments are usually based on the need for a multipolar view to understand the multidisciplinary of the phenomenon. There is nothing new (*cf.* Wilken 1979; Heron, Sapienza, Smith-Cook, 1991; MacMillan, Katz, 1992; Amit, Glosten, Muller, 1993) in saying that entrepreneurship is likely to interest psychologists (e.g. research into entrepreneur profiles or enterprise motivations), sociologists (e.g. entrepreneurial socialization and the role of entrepreneurs in society), historians (e.g. historical biographies), economists (whether the perspective is micro- or macro-economic, basically contractualist or conventionalist), anthropologists (e.g. entrepreneurial culture), industrial geographers

(e.g. districts, territorial development), and so on.⁴⁴ Entrepreneurship is studied more or less directly by researchers from different backgrounds who obviously give priority to a research standpoint consistent with the concerns of their scientific discipline. If we look at the terminology list in the appendix, it is for this reason that we hesitate to describe entrepreneurship as a research domain or field (although all the disciplines of the organizational sciences borrow from other scientific disciplines).

This epistemological situation requires some explanation with regard to the inclusion of entrepreneurship in the organizational sciences. For example, entrepreneurship is viewed here as an organizational phenomenon leading to the emergence of organized forms created for socio-economic purposes and requiring direction to arrive at the future state desired by those responsible for their development and/or governance. Thus, it is consistent with the problems facing managers and makes organizational science researchers responsible for understanding the conditions of emergence of the organizations in order to help with their direction (leaving aside the thesis of inertia). Such an understanding could have dual practical repercussions. First, it should promote creation (to develop jobs, to release value, to renew the socio-economic fabric and to respond to the new competitive order) by implementing suitable actions. Second, the conditions for creation have an impact on the way in which the organizational configuration evolves and develops towards the goals pursued. Again, this

⁴⁴ The brackets contain only a few examples, but the list could be much longer. Organizational science researchers regularly call on these disciplines; it is not something that is specific to entrepreneurship research. These same researchers, when they specialize in entrepreneurship, tend to work on the examples provided.

aspect introduces another similarity between entrepreneurship and strategic management, through collective action that, according to Hatchuel, is a core element of the organizational sciences (2000).

The conditions for creation are inseparable from the conditions for managing an organization, which become significantly more complex during development, especially for enterprises with high growth potential. Indeed, as we have seen, every organizational science specialty area is able to contribute valuable knowledge relating to the concretization and survival of the forms created through the entrepreneurial phenomenon. This cross-disciplinary aspect illustrates the permeability of the boundaries between entrepreneurship and strategic management. It is not possible to think of creating an organization without preparing for its development and survival, which involves acquiring advantages in a world driven by competition. Other than work by authors such as Hitt *et al.* (2001), entrepreneurship has been addressed within the scope of strategy in two types of research.

The first of these is the classification of schools of thought in strategy by Mintzberg (1990) and Mintzberg et Waters (1985). These authors take the stance that an entrepreneurial strategy results from the vision of a leader and is *a priori* deliberate in nature. However, they also allow for the emergent aspect, in that opportunities detected by the members of the organization can be traced back to emergent sources. Generally, the authors state that this type of strategy would suit firms positioned in niches, or younger, smaller organizations in which most of the decisions are made by or through the entrepreneur.

The second type is the work based more or less explicitly on the biological metaphor of the life cycle and on theories of enterprise development (see Desreumaux, 1992b). It makes more or less explicit use of the term “entrepreneurship” or its adjectival derivatives, and may be concerned with:

- one of the firm’s first development phases (Greiner, 1972; Adizes, 1979, 1991), some developmental theories include major explanations of organization trajectories, or organization populations (Boeker, 1989, 1991);
- a choice from a set of scenarios, only one of which leads to survival (Masuch, 1985);
- a choice between the stages at which the firm uses its contacts with outside elements to identify the means for its own development, and stages at which it falls back on its own means to incorporate the contributions made by its contacts, for example by acting on its structure (Scott, 1971; Basire, 1976; Murray, 1984);
- a phase in a recurrent cycle in which maintenance periods alternate with revitalizing creative or entrepreneurial periods (Aplin, Cosier, 1980; Vargas, 1984; Miller et Friesen, 1980).

All this work, related to some extent to research into enterprise development cycles, regards development as the result of an incremental process or as being punctuated by crises due either to a need to solve problems related to increasing size, or to a somewhat brutal process of innovation aimed at satisfying the consumer’s insatiable need for new products. The meeting point between firm life cycle and product life cycle lies as much in an enterprise strategy in which organization type is the key to competitiveness as in a perpetual innovation strategy resulting from actions on the market or reactions to it. Both are closely linked and position innovation as a central concept of

entrepreneurship, but not necessarily and not exclusively, since as we have seen, innovation is also a concern for the field of strategy. We hope, in this essay, that we have been able to illustrate the singular nature of entrepreneurship research, which has links with strategic management in the same way that all the organizational science specialties have links with one another.

In other words, if we look at the question raised in the introduction and during the first part of this essay, the answer is “yes”, entrepreneurship does exist as a research domain. Thus, entrepreneurship and strategic management researchers are correct in claiming the separate nature of their respective domains. However, the second part of the text clarifies some aspects of the singularity of entrepreneurship, precisely by presenting what is *not* singular – for example, innovation, value creation and so on, which are sometimes presented as the foundations on which entrepreneurship is based. These objects (or notions, or concepts) lie at the intersection of entrepreneurship and strategic management, and therefore illustrate the indissociable and complementary aspects of the two domains. As pointed out by Sandberg (1992), given that the strategic management domain is permeable and the entrepreneurship domain porous, and given that neither has a dominant paradigm, some duplication is inevitable. Hopefully, researchers will be able to exchange while acknowledging and respecting one another’s specificity. This mutual respect should not lead to mutual ignorance, however, as appears to be the case if we consult the bibliographies of books and papers. How many strategy authors are simply unaware of the work being done in entrepreneurship, and vice-versa? Even in the present paper, the strategy literature has not really been investigated sufficiently. It would in fact have been possible to prove the singularity of strategic management in order to distinguish it – or not – from

entrepreneurship. However, the question raised was whether or not entrepreneurship should be included in strategic management; nobody would dare consider the reverse. Lastly, although the definition of strategic management given by Hofer and Schendel (1978), which many strategists find acceptable, may be confusing, it could actually be regarded as an argument in favour of exchange⁴⁵.

The domains are separate but they have common fields (objects, concepts). The research project levels presented in an earlier section are conducive to comparison. The praxeological level is concerned with questions relating to organizational configuration and positioning, the latter relating as much to voluntary environmental commitment as to adaptation. Examination of the cognitive and structural levels has much to gain from inter-domain exchanges for the individual-collective shift. Here, the application of knowledge from other disciplines seems unavoidable. In this respect, entrepreneurship is consistent with the managerial reflex. However, if we place it within the organizational sciences, its specificity must still be acknowledged. Although we have shown that entrepreneurship can legitimately be regarded as a research domain or even a field, the question of its

⁴⁵ According to Hofer and Schendel, strategic management is: “*a process that deals with the entrepreneurial work of the organization, with organization renewal and growth, and more particularly, with developing and utilizing the strategy which is to guide the organization’s operations*” (1979, p.11). This process involves four levels of interest to strategy: the *enterprise* as a political and social institution, the *corporate strategy* (primary strategy), the *business strategy* (secondary strategy) and the *functional aera* (functional strategy). The above authors also note that: “*entrepreneurial choice is at the heart of the concept of strategy*” (p.6). As pointed out by Sandberg (1992), the use of the term “entrepreneurial” differs according to the meaning ascribed to it by entrepreneurship researchers.

institutionalization as a research discipline remains unanswered. It involves a number of principally socio-political aspects.

In addition to considerations relating purely to knowledge acquisition, it would be somewhat naïve to set aside those relating to sociology, especially the socio-political aspects leading to the institutionalization of a research field or domain. These aspects have an impact on the potential interpretation of the integration referred to by Hitt *et al.* The question is particularly relevant to the development of entrepreneurship research, which is still at the emergent stage in the French-speaking world, and especially in France. Thus, it is not enough to note the existence of a domain and then address its singularity; it is also necessary to think about the optimal conditions for its reception. These two aspects are consistent, in another form, with the basic question underlying this explanatory paper, namely, should the specific nature of entrepreneurship be acknowledged, or should entrepreneurship be classified under the heading of another specialty area, i.e. strategic management?

The work of Déry (1997) illustrates the issues at stake. In Déry's view, a research field can be regarded as a socio-cognitive space bringing together researchers working on the creation of knowledge about the objects of the said field, which becomes a social and cognitive space within which political plays are deployed for control over its constitution and development (this has been observed in entrepreneurship, as in every other field). Déry uses the image of concentric circles to show that the field of strategy has a core and peripheral elements. The further a researcher strays from the core, the more likely it is that his or her work will be regarded as "eccentric". If we compare

entrepreneurship with strategy, the term “eccentric” can be taken in both its accepted senses. For some, it is far removed from the core of the field of strategy, while for others it inclines towards heterodoxy.

Because it is difficult to move away from the central core of an institutionalized research field, this raises the question of the definition of discipline “geography” and the conditions under which a discourse will be accepted within the academic community. Extensions and renewals of research orientations are always conditioned by the institutional context within which academic knowledge is produced. In this respect, every research activity is structured by an epistemological and intellectual context that sets the dividing line between research that is possible and research that is not. This socio-political reality has an impact on the risks taken by researchers who elect to position themselves in an as-yet undefined domain in search of legitimacy, such as entrepreneurship. Let us be clear about this: it is less a question of saying whether or not entrepreneurship should be recognized as a research discipline in the organizational sciences based on this reality, than of saying simply that it is involved in the construction of knowledge. Beyond this non-negligible influence, we have raised the gnoseological question of whether the singularity of entrepreneurship research is sufficiently defined, and then examined its relationship with strategic management and its inclusion in the organizational sciences. In conclusion, we will say a few words about the debate still to come on the recognition of entrepreneurship as a research discipline – in other words, as an independent discipline within the organizational sciences, while admitting that it still perhaps lacks maturity, and stating our wish for a “conversation” on the best possible conditions for its induction.

CONCLUSION



Cliquet and Grégory (1999) state that the formation of a discipline⁴⁶ requires a sufficient conceptual and methodological corpus. But how do we define “sufficient”?

In qualitative terms, academics consider criteria such as publication types (books, papers) and where the publications appear. More generally, however, we know that recognition as a discipline differs according to epistemological position. For example, the conception will not be the same for realists and for constructivists, just as the methodological protocols used to argue the scientificness of the research are not the same. If we leave these questions to the epistemological experts, it is easy to observe the existence, in entrepreneurship, of a large, worldwide community of researchers and teachers who acknowledge and work on the subject; specialized conferences and journals presenting research results; and a singular, prevailing view of the research objects (notions, concepts). It thus has all the characteristics of a research field or domain. If we look at the French context in particular, however, it is still apparently not clear under which scientific discipline entrepreneurship should be

⁴⁶ The paper by Cliquet and Gregory is concerned with marketing, but the paper by Amadiou, Igalens, Rojot, Sire (1999) concerning human resources management, in the same book, is also relevant.

classified, since this has not been done officially. At most, the organizational sciences could be the discipline most suited to receive it. Failing a tangible demonstration of its interest for this domain, for example by elevating it to the status of research discipline, it would be relevant to ask whether in fact entrepreneurship research should be encouraged (in addition to the research activity, this includes recruiting young researchers and ensuring a career path for them, and creating research centres). It would also be relevant to ask whether another scientific discipline – and there are many able to do this – might not cannibalize this perspective even at the expense of distorting it.

Quantitatively, the number of theses (still too small), and especially the number of papers and publications on the theme, is growing. The Anglo-Saxon literature is extensive. In the French-speaking world, the community of entrepreneurship researchers is growing substantially, although the number of dedicated research centres is almost ridiculously small. The suddenness of the interest in the subject may appear surprising, but, as is often the case, when humans become aware of useful knowledge, it turns into something of a fad (Louart, 1999a, p.551). In France, entrepreneurship is currently receiving more attention than before, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon countries it has been of interest for several decades. Rather than being a passing fad or fashion, there are many valid reasons to justify its scientific consideration, as we have seen. Basically, we can also add questions related to the survival of young organizations, concerning the competencies of their creators; the contribution of the enterprise, in the dynamic sense of the term, to employment and competitiveness; problems of enterprise buy-outs, especially in SMEs, including the people taking over and their own capacities; the conditions favourable to transfers of technology; organizational development, since it seems

reasonable to include research into their creation; and so on. The many different forms of entrepreneurship in the field naturally encourage the development of research projects to study the phenomenon, and educational programs to teach it. This is only one step away from acknowledging entrepreneurship as a scientific discipline, and some people have perhaps taken that step too quickly. Given that entrepreneurship does not have its own section in France's CNU (Conseil National Universitaire, or National University Board), it cannot formally be regarded as an institutionalized discipline in that country. It can, however, be described as a research domain. It is now up to researchers to elevate it to the status of research discipline.

With regard to the current enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, researchers are especially responsible for contributing knowledge on the phenomenon's different forms of expression, so that the transfer to education and practice is based on a prudent appreciation that only a scientific process can provide (Paturel, 1998). Following on from this text, we invite researchers to engage in a "conversation" to offer entrepreneurship the best possible conditions for fulfilment, especially within the organizational sciences, and its cross-disciplinary nature might even suggest extending that conversation to include other disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology and more. Like the organizational sciences into which we have classified it, the entrepreneurship research domain is eclectic in nature in its quest for knowledge – an eclecticism that in no way denotes inconsistency.

Appendix

This appendix is designed to clarify the terminology used in this paper. It is not original, and it does leave aside some epistemological and methodological considerations, but its reductive nature should not hinder the interpretation of the paper's content. We are fully aware of the abundant literature addressing these issues; our aim is simply to clarify the meaning of the terms as they are used in this text.

Object	A more or less tangible element of knowledge contribution, conceived by the mind and relating to a given subject or theme.
Notion	An idea of an object.
Concept	The intellectual construction of an object.
Research field	A set of objects, notions and concepts studied by a community of researchers who have come together to develop academic knowledge on those objects, notions and concepts. The field is established by that community, which it acknowledges, by means of dedicated journals, conferences and symposiums. The cumulative and complementary nature of the research work crystallizes the field.
Research project	A guide for research activity in a research field, domain or discipline.
Research domain	A set similar in size to a field, i.e. able to contain all or part of several fields.
Research discipline	A field (or domain) formally recognized by institutions in their regulatory texts.

Scientific discipline ⁴⁷	A grouping of disciplines to form a section at the Conseil National Universitaire (in France).
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It is difficult to provide examples for all these terms, because what some people regard as a notion may be a concept or even a field for another person. For example, marketing is both a research field and a research discipline, and for specialists, “consumer behaviour” may be a field, whereas for others it is only an object. Depending on the representations, research activities and epistemological positions of the researcher, entrepreneurship can legitimately be regarded as a research object, notion, concept, field or domain.

Other terms could have been included in this table, such as “paradigm”, “educational discipline”, “model”, “theory” and so on. However, the purpose was not to propose a glossary of academic terms, but simply to clarify some of the more important terms used in this paper. Similarly, epistemological and methodological considerations have deliberately been left aside, because although important, they are not crucial to this text (they would have been covered if the text had included a section on the research activity itself).

⁴⁷ The term “scientific” will not be discussed because it refers to epistemological debates far removed from the subject of this text.

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Editors
Alain DESREUMAUX and Thierry VERSTRAETE

ESSAY ON THE SINGULARITY OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ASA RESEARCH DOMAIN

Thierry VERSTRAETE

Entrepreneurship is a media and political fad that can lead to a mixture of ideas. It is sometimes used in surprising adjectival forms. The expression "entrepreneurial strategy" seems nevertheless particularly pertinent, as shown in scientific reviews where special issues are dedicated to the subject. These articles nevertheless make ambiguous comments as to the integration of entrepreneurship with strategic management. This work is addressing these particular problems and aims to clarify the entrepreneurship domain.

Thierry Verstraete is Doctor of Management and Administrative Science and holds an accreditation to supervise research, obtained at the Institute of Business Administration (Institut d'Administration des Entreprises), Lille University of Sciences and Technology (USTL). He is now Senior Lecturer at the Montesquieu University of Bordeaux IV, and director of the ADREG (<http://www.adreg.net>), part of the CLAREE Research Laboratory : ESA CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) 8020. He works also now at the CREGE.

Before his academic career, the author ran several companies. Vice-president of two scientific associations, the Academy of Entrepreneurship (*Academie de l'Entrepreneuriat*) and the International Association of Research on Entrepreneurship and Small Business (*Association Internationale de Recherche sur la PME et l'Entrepreneuriat*), he dedicates his research and teaching works to entrepreneurship.

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