

Collective Entrepreneurship in the Contemporary European Services Industries

A Long Term Approach

Editors

Paloma Fernández Pérez & Elena San Román



Collective Entrepreneurship in the Contemporary European Services Industries

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Collective Entrepreneurship in the Contemporary European Services Industries: A Long Term Approach

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Preface

Collective Entrepreneurship and Services Industries in the Long Term

Paloma Fernández Pérez and Elena San Román

1. Service Industries

Over the last decades, the EU has become a ‘service economy’ as far as service sectors have developed faster than manufacturing. This means that the performance of the EU economy will largely rest on the performance of the service sector. As the EUROSTAT highlighted, in 2020 services accounted for 73% of the EU’s total gross value added, followed by industry and construction (25%) and agriculture (2%). In terms of employment, services represent an equal share of about 70% of total employment.¹

Service industry is an old and broad concept that includes a myriad of sectors. During the last decades, this industry has evolved including new activities, such as those called business services, consisting of a range of professional and support services to settled companies. These emerging activities coexist along with and complement other more traditional services, with a long historical trajectory that makes them especially suitable to be analyzed from an economic and business long-term perspective.

This book focuses on five of the traditional activities within the services industries: tourism, healthcare, trading, transport, and the sports industries. All these sectors constitute a heterogeneous set of activities that draws on very different scientific and organizational complexity. Yet, they all share some relevant tendencies which justify the interest and convenience of embracing an aggregate and comparative study from a business history perspective.

First, until the COVID-19 pandemic, the five activities had experienced a fast growth for decades and had constituted some of the most dynamic sub-sectors in the world economy. These are also sectors largely impacted by the pandemic although in a different direction. Health services have become one of the most important economic sectors, both to cope with the increase in the number of sick people and the need to find a vaccine for the virus. Trade and transport,

¹<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> (access 11/20/2022).

which draw on sophisticated networks that connect business and people globally, witnessed strong growth due to the new consumer and business needs associated with the global lockdown and the reduction of people's mobility. On the contrary, the lockdown triggered the biggest tourism crisis in the sector's history and also slowed down the development of sport and leisure businesses.

Second, the five sectors are highly labour-intensive and therefore fundamental for the employment of millions of people. This is particularly relevant considering the weakness and difficulties experienced by the Western labour markets in the last years and especially to build back the economy after the pandemic.

Third, they are activities with a long history, with origins dating back to the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Over the last decades, these activities have innovated and renewed themselves to meet the challenges that novel consumption patterns, and changes in the welfare state, in different expansive and recessive economic situations, have raised.

In this book, the chapters aim to provide a historical account, nurtured by existent theories of entrepreneurship, on how companies in the tourism, health-care, trade, sports and transport activities have grown, innovated and become international along the course of the twentieth century. The book helps identify the set of intra- and extra-organizational drivers that have explained their past growth and might also support their future competitiveness and expansion. All the chapters specifically build on understanding entrepreneurship as the result of actions undertaken by groups of individuals connected by formal and/or informal ties, the so called collective entrepreneurship approach.

2. Entrepreneurship as a Social, Collective Process

Entrepreneurship research, once mainly focused on the individual actor, is increasingly interested in the influences of socially embedded ties, entrepreneurial groups, and collective entrepreneurial action (Aldrich, 2005; Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Swedberg, 2000). Hence, instead of focusing on the cognitive and creative capabilities of single individuals, or examining just the process of creating new ventures, which were main concerns in previous research, the academic attention has shifted towards the interactions among a group of individuals engaged in an entrepreneurial project. This shift has a revolutionary character as it establishes a 'new' unit of analysis in the interdisciplinary field: the entrepreneurial group, its dynamics and its influence on how the venture develops over time.

This emerging trend, which highlights the social nature of the entrepreneurial process, is largely influenced by a tradition of network thinking in entrepreneurship research (Acs & Audretsch, 2010; Ferreira, Fernandes, & Kraus, 2017). Generally, entrepreneurial networks are understood as two or more individuals who jointly establish a business and are linked by formal or informal ties. Conceived in this way, entrepreneurship is therefore a process that relies on a social structure and the activation of socially embedded ties to make things happen (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Garud & Karnøe, 2003; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Kim & Aldrich, 2005).

Literature focused on entrepreneurial groups or networks is wide as debates have grown extensively over the last decades. Management scholars have played

a profound role in developing a powerful theoretical and empirical background that has been mainly focused on studying the influence of network structure and size as well as the type and strength of relationships being immersed in the performance and results of the entrepreneurial venture. Yet, what is now generally accepted is that we still do not know enough about how a network is actually formed, and how it develops and changes because few studies have addressed entrepreneurial networks as an evolutionary, historical, process (Anderson, Dodd, & Jack, 2010; Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). Literature also acknowledges the scarcity of studies exploring the relationship between networks and business results beyond the start-up phase (Renzulli & Aldrich, 2005), as well as the content and nature of the relationships rooted within a network (Rodan & Galunic, 2004). Regarding the strength of ties, discussion on the role and importance of strong ties not only in the establishment but also in the subsequent development of an organization remains (Newbert, Tornikoski, & Quigley, 2013).

Another important debate related to the role played by networks in the entrepreneurship process is the role played by networks in driving business innovation and internationalization (Fernández Pérez, 2021). Particularly interesting in this sense is the contribution made by Cantwell (2016) and his ideas on the importance of knowledge exchanges on innovation and internationalization. He emphasized how in those exchanges, networks and entrepreneurial groups are critical. However, we still do not know enough about the specific role played by collective entrepreneurship in innovation and internationalization.

In sum, one of the major challenges facing collective entrepreneurship research is to explore how entrepreneurs create groups and activate social networks, how they evolve over time and how the development of networks informs the performance of the business, in terms of its innovative capacity and its internationalization process. To explore this question, this book points to two key avenues: (i) qualitative historical perspectives that take into account the evolutionary character of the entrepreneurial process; and (ii) multidisciplinary approaches that bring together empirical results with the mainstreams in collective entrepreneurship theory, especially those regarding the role played by this collective entrepreneurship in innovation and internationalization. Historical case studies, of long tradition for business historians, are thus necessarily called to contribute, given their capacity to provide detailed descriptions of specific cases of enterprises and entrepreneurs, to recognize the influence of the past on present events, to provide an understanding of the space-time contexts surrounding entrepreneurship and to work with a wide range of both oral and written sources. The book combines this necessary traditional research focused on case studies with entrepreneurship theories on collective entrepreneurship in order to dig deeper into the study of the growth, innovation and internationalization of the services activities and businesses in the Western world.

3. An Approach to the Content

The different chapters show how collective entrepreneurship has played an important role in driving growth, innovation, and internationalization of public

and private companies in the service industries in a variety of countries such as Switzerland, the United Kingdom, or Spain. Indeed, some chapters show how entrepreneurs within both the domestic and international network act as gatekeepers providing other entrepreneurs with knowledge, reputation and experience which help identifying and exploiting opportunities. The book also suggests the importance of socially embedded ties and entrepreneurial groups as critical resources for sustaining an organization over time so that market constraints can be overcome and economic outcomes achieved.

'The Role of Business Services in the Development of European Commodity Trading Companies in the 20th Century', by Espen Storli, from NTNU in Norway, explores the apparent paradox of Switzerland's becoming the centre for international commodity trading in the Western world despite its lack of natural resources or maritime ports from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s. The collective nature of entrepreneurship appears in the dynamic interrelationship between the actors involved in international commodity trading.

The chapter 'Collective Entrepreneurship in the Spanish Hotel Industry: The Internationalization of a Domestic Cluster' by Jorge Hernández-Barahona, Teresa Mateo, Águeda Gil-López and Elena San Román, all from Universidad Complutense de Madrid, studies the tourism cluster of Majorca (Spain) and its connection with collective entrepreneurship. The authors explore the history of four world leading Spanish hotel companies, from their beginnings, in Majorca, in the 1950s, to their internationalization, in the 1980s and 1990s: Barceló, Meliá, Riu, and Iberostar. The chapter identifies common patterns of behaviour among the four companies over time, which in turn illustrate the dynamics of the tourism cluster and the role played by its context. The authors support the identification of Majorca as a tourism cluster and highlight several important characteristics of the island which reinforced and strengthened the cluster and boosted collective entrepreneurship through an intense flow of information between the companies.

The complexities of health systems in which collective entrepreneurship played different roles in the public and the private sector are also analyzed in the chapter 'Collective Entrepreneurship and the Development of Private Clinics in Geneva, 1860–2020'. Pierre-Yves Donzé, professor at Osaka University in Japan, analyses the long-term development of private clinics in Geneva to emphasize the nature of collective entrepreneurship carried out by medical doctors. As Donzé strongly demonstrates, over the long run doctors in Geneva were strongly attached to individual practice, but engaged in collective actions when it had become necessary to defend or promote their business.

Following in the health service, 'The Transfer of the North American Ideas of Hospital Management to Europe in the 20th Century: The Case of Spain' by Paloma Fernández Pérez, from Universitat de Barcelona in Spain, contributes to a better knowledge of the role played by collective entrepreneurship of scientists and doctors who transferred and adapted management ideas and technology from Western Europe and the United States to Spanish modern hospitals. Informal networks of doctors were key in this process. Some of them occupied official positions in the key public health administrations and were crucial to introducing the hospital accreditation systems, and the US ideas in Spain.

Gillet and Tennent's chapter offers a singular vision on collective entrepreneurship both because of the sector, leisure centres and specifically football clubs, and the analysis perspective chosen by the authors, focused on the interactions between the public sector and elite sports organizations working together in a remarkable collective entrepreneurial activity. The chapter analyses the entrepreneurship activity and the evolving policies of public services in leisure centre provision in England during the late twentieth century. The authors, from the University of York, build on [Houlihan \(1991\)](#) to identify the central role played by local authorities in sport provision. This was complimented and reinforced by an increasing cadre of leisure sector professionals ([Torkildsen, 2005](#), pp. 562–569) together with increasing architectural interest in the provision of leisure during the post-war reconstruction movement ([Saumarez Smith, 2019](#)).

Another interesting case on collective entrepreneurship is provided in the chapter 'Alliances as a Coopetitive Strategy of the Airlines: The Case of Iberia (1980–2020)', by Javier Vidal Olivares, from Universidad de Alicante. The end of market regulations initiated in 1978 by the United States gradually put an end to the previous system of bilateral agreements between airlines and paved the way for a wave of institutional changes at the international level. The new rules of the market regulation produced important changes in competition and the implementation of a new system of alliances, initially collaborative in nature but becoming more strategic as uncertainty increased since the beginning of the twenty-first century. As the chapter highlights, the use of a combination of strategies based on cooperation and competition, the so-called coopetition, were the response of important companies such as Air France or Qatar Airways to the market uncertainty ([Chiambaretto & Fernandez, 2016](#); [Chiambaretto & Wassmer, 2019](#)). It was also the case of Iberia, the Spanish flag carrier that succeeded using both, collaborative and competitive strategies, to merge into the IAG conglomerate (British Airways and Iberia) with other airlines.

The chapter 'Building an Enterprise for the Future Through Network Bricolage and Memories of the Past' by Águeda Gil-López (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain), Elena San Román (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain), Sarah L. Jack (Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden) and Ricardo Zózimo (Nova University, Portugal) explores how network bricolage, as a form of collective entrepreneurship, develops over time and influences the shape and form of an organization. The authors build on [Levi-Strauss' \(1966\)](#) idea of bricolage associated with creating something from nothing by making do with the resources at hand to grasp opportunities and solve problems ([Baker & Nelson, 2005](#); [Desa & Basu, 2013](#); [Kwong, Cheung, Mauzoor, & Rashid, 2019](#)). Thus, network bricolage describes how pre-existing networks are considered as a resource at hand for the entrepreneur ([Baker, Miner, & Eesley, 2003](#), p. 265). Using a historical organization study of SEUR, a Spanish courier company founded in 1942, this chapter shows how network bricolage is implemented as a dynamic process of collaborative efforts between bricoleurs who draw on their historical experience to build and develop an organization.

In 'The Asymmetry of Expectations on the Outcomes of Strategic Alliances Between Biotechnology Start-Ups and Pharmaceutical Corporations',

Felix Barahona Márquez (EU Mediterrani/Universitat de Barcelona), Susana Domingo Pérez (UPF Barcelona School of Management), Ernest Solé Udina (UPF Barcelona School of Management) focus on the relationship between biotechnology start-ups and larger pharmaceutical corporations when acting as partners in innovative strategic alliances. For three decades, these companies have become major players of innovation in the health sector and the development of many products is the result of the developed cooperation. However, the great differences between companies frequently lead to problems. The chapter reveals the concrete facts that can prevent reaching the proposed goals of these partners as well as the crucial importance of the human aspect to mitigate these potential problems.

The existence of internal and external factors that have an impact in organizations, with networks playing different roles inside or outside them, is analyzed in the chapter ‘Effects of the Subsidiaries’ Networks on the Service Multinationals Innovation Activity’, in which the professors of Universitat de Barcelona, Paloma Miravittles, Fariza Achcaoucaou and Tim Laurin Spieth, study how subsidiary embeddedness in internal and external networks to firms contributes to the innovative activities that generate creating competence and exploiting competence skills in the context of the service industry. The analysis of 137 foreign-owned subsidiaries in the service sector that perform innovation activities in contemporary Spain shows the positive impact of networks of the firm, inside and outside the firm, on the innovation of subsidiaries of multinational corporations.

In ‘The Collective Entrepreneurial Process: From Public Entrepreneurship to Collective Action for the Common Good’, by Lizbeth Arroyo and Jaume Valls-Pasola (Universitat de Barcelona) the authors analyze how public entrepreneurship boosts collective action, toward a common good. In this chapter a public entrepreneur triggered a collective action that led to the creation of the innovation community: The Coronavirus makers. This collaborative network groups together more than 20,000 researchers, developers, and engineers. They altruistically put their knowledge and resources at the service of the community to provide solutions for one of the healthcare system’s main problems at that time: the shortage of medical supplies to cope with the increasing number of COVID-19 cases. The collective action of the Coronavirus makers has impacted the health and wellbeing fields, the community and the values that should define social change and allow the construction of a more open, equitable and sustainable society. Potentially, these findings confirm that collective entrepreneurship may, especially in services for citizens, derive from a function of collective action.

In summary, this book highlights the importance of a new vision on entrepreneurship focused on processes and collaboration rather than on the individuals. Through the lens of collective entrepreneurship, processes can be also explored over time, and this allows us to better understand the creative activity that underlies the envisioning and the pursuing of opportunities. This approach also offers the opportunity to examine not only how actors are situated, but also how they navigate within the context and how they relate to it and to the networks in which their activity is embedded.

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