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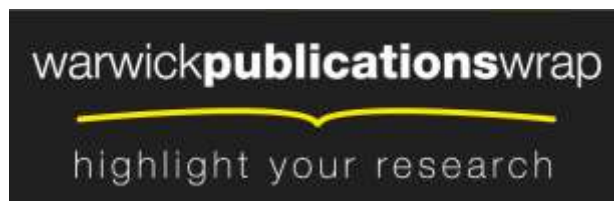
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Entrepreneurship as the structuration of individual and opportunity: A response using a critical realist perspective.

Comment on Sarason, Dean and Dillard.

Abstract

Sarason et al. (2006) build upon Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) framework of the interrelationship between opportunity and the entrepreneur, by proposing Giddens' structuration theory as the 'lens through which to view the entrepreneurial process' (2006: 286). In this comment we make four points. Although we agree that the nexus of entrepreneur and opportunity is one that requires understanding within the context of social structure and the individual agency. Our view of structure differs substantially from Giddens and by implication Sarason et al. (2006) we discuss the implications. Second, since strata in social reality have different ontologies we propose it follows that they are viewed as a dualism. Third, agents have causal power, and ultimate concerns which they try to fallibly to put into practice. We propose Entrepreneurship is the study of the interplay between the structures of a society and the agents within it the implications of fallibility is made explicit. Finally, we take issue with Sarason et al.'s argument for an interpretist epistemology

We conclude that it appears to us that structuration theory is not the most useful theory to handle the nexus of opportunity and entrepreneurship. Rather a critical realist perspective, like Archer's morphogenesis, may be more appropriate

Keywords: Structuration theory, Duality, Dualism, Critical Realism, Archer.

Executive summary

This Executive summary outlines our views on the paper recently published in the Journal of Business Venturing by Sarason, Dean and Dillard 'Entrepreneurship as the nexus of individual and opportunity: A structuration view',

Whilst the overall idea of using structure and agency to build on the nexus of entrepreneurs is good, we have some concerns about this particular interpretation of structure and agency and its role in the field of entrepreneurship. Structure and agency is a meta-theory that offers different deductive frameworks for the different levels of analysis. It enables analysis of the two aspects of social reality to be carried out without privileging either the social context in which individuals act, or the individuals who shape the social context and institutions around them.

In broad terms structure and agency can be defined as a debate that 'concerns the issue of to what extent we as actors have the ability to shape our destiny as against the extent to which our fate is determined by external forces.' McAnulla (2000: 271)

We consider this an excellent meta-theory within which to view the nexus between opportunity and the entrepreneur. We consider interaction between the entrepreneur and his or her structure as vital for recognising opportunity. Nevertheless we perceive that there are some frameworks that are more applicable than others, to look at the interaction between structure and agency.

In this paper we critique Sarason et al.'s (2006) adoption of structuration and introduce the critical realist approach of Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 2003). We make four substantive points, in contrast to Sarason et al.'s; firstly, we highlight our different views on structure; secondly, the theoretical difference between dualism and duality; thirdly, the fallibility of agents and; finally, a critique of Sarason et al.'s endorsement of an interpretist epistemology

Sarason et al. (2006) build upon Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) theory of entrepreneurship, perceiving it as a combination of (subjective) entrepreneurial actions that are jointly determined

with the interpretation of (objective) opportunities. In this sense, the issues are comparable to those in a critical realist approach to structure and agency. Consequently, their framework lends itself well to those meta-theories that are used to examine structure and agency such as structuration theory and critical realism (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 1995). Sarason et al (2006) adapt structuration theory for entrepreneurship.

Point one: different views of structure.

Our view of structure differs substantially from Giddens and by implication Sarason et al. (2006). For Giddens (1984) structure is virtual it is held in the minds of agents until instantiated in the actions of agents. Giddens redefined structure as rules and resources, which is seen as a narrow definition (Outhwaite, 1990). Rules could be defined as norms and social conventions, whereas resources are subdivided into two sections - that of allocated resources and non-material resources. We propose Archer's framework where structure is objective with, predominantly material, structural emergent properties. For Giddens, structures result from the present actions of agents; for Archer structures are the result of the actions of past agents.

Point two; outlines the major theoretical differences between duality and dualism

The Sarason et al. (2005) paper conflates entrepreneurship and opportunity within a duality. Giddens theorised that structure and agency are separate entities, two sides of the same coin. Empirically, each unit has to be held constant while viewing the other. This precludes interaction between the two. However Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach states the two entities can be separated in order to examine the interaction, which she considers vital for practical analysis. She is interested in how structure interacts with agency, which in turn reshapes structure. This theory allows for interaction between structure and agency, unlike structuration theory. The major criticism of Giddens being that agents cannot produce structures at will; some structures are

beyond the control of agents (Archer 1995). The result of this is that structuration cannot examine the nexus of entrepreneurship and opportunity.

Point three: The fallibility of agents

Of all the management sciences, entrepreneurship is probably the most agent-centred. Archer's (1995) agents have causal power, and ultimate concerns, which they try, fallibly, to put into practice. In comparison Giddens gives us the recursive knowledgeable agent produced via social practices and experiences. However the only way to study this is to talk to knowledgeable agents at different points in time. In addition Archer is also able to embrace the psychological aspects with use of her ultimate concerns. Though Archer's approach takes it as axiomatic that structures are objective, with independent causal powers, that constrain and enable the actions of agents; agents also have causal power. (Archer 2003) Archer's agents are able to view and react to the emergent properties of structures. In essence they are reflexive, as they come up against the constraints and enablements of society in accordance with their ultimate concerns, they have the ability to learn. In essence, entrepreneurship is the study of the interplay between the structures of a society and the agents within it. Entrepreneurs start businesses, fail, start another business or decide they do not possess the 'right stuff' (Audretsch, 2001). We propose Entrepreneurship is the study of the interplay between the structures of a society and the agents within it with the implications of fallibility made explicit.

Point four: Sarason et al.'s argument for an interpretist epistemology

Sarason et al. (2006) propose studying entrepreneurs using an interpretist epistemology. Their study of entrepreneurship is simply the study of entrepreneurs. The various strata of social reality are flattened to interpret social practices. The structuration approach circumscribes the methodological tools available.

In conclusion Shane and Venkataraman (2000) build upon previous literature consistent with the environmental and population ecologist studies, and in our view critical realism can build upon this. Structuration appears to us as not the most useful theory to handle the nexus of opportunity and entrepreneurship. Rather a critical realist perspective, like Archer's morphogenesis, may be more appropriate. It preferences neither structure nor agents; it enables explanation of the conditions and structures that have to be in place in order for entrepreneurship to occur; in a subject where the skills, experience and attitudes of individual entrepreneurs can remain dormant until certain combinations are aligned. Such an approach allows researchers to explain rather than simply understand.

Comment:

This is a comment on an article in the Journal of Business Venturing by Sarason, Dean and Dillard (2006) that highlights the value of using a meta-theory such as structure and agency as an overarching concept within which to view entrepreneurship. Sarason et al. (2006) build upon Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) framework of the interrelationship between opportunity and the entrepreneur, by proposing Giddens' structuration theory as the 'lens through which to view the entrepreneurial process' (2006: 286). However, in this comment we argue that the interpretist tradition presented by Sarason et al. (2006) adds an alternative perspective emphasising and prioritizing agents in the understanding of entrepreneurship. This is in contrast to Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) who highlight 'the joint characteristics of the opportunity and the nature of the individual' (p222) and by implication use the objective and subjective aspects of social reality to explain the nexus of entrepreneur and opportunity. In this paper we propose to preference neither structure nor agency enhancing the argument produced by Shane and Venkataraman we proposing a critical realist frame work which highlights the interaction between the two strata of social reality. Not surprisingly, the meta-theory of structure and agency has many variants, Giddens' is possibly the most well known. Entrepreneurship is presented by Sarason et al. (2006) as the co-occurrence and joint characteristics, or nexus of opportunity and the entrepreneur.

In this comment, we make four points. Although we agree that the nexus of entrepreneur and opportunity is one that requires understanding within the context of social systems and the individual agency, our view of structure differs substantially from Sarason et al. (2006). Second, since strata in social reality have differing ontologies it follows that they are viewed as a dualism. Third, agents have causal power, and ultimate concerns, which they try fallibly to put into practice. We propose that entrepreneurship is the study of the interplay between the structures of a society and the agents within it. Finally, we take issue with Sarason et al.'s argument for an interpretist epistemology. We propose Archer's critical realist framework, it is our belief that

Archer (1995) should be considered, as her alternative conception of structure and agency may be more appropriate to the debate¹. To illustrate our point we will concentrate on the two varying views of Giddens (1984), and Archer (1995). Archer's (1995) perspective in our view enables a more complete understanding of the nexus between entrepreneurship and opportunity, including the sources of opportunities, the processes of discovery and the set of agents who discover and exploit them.

Central to this theoretical debate are three perspectives; an integrating framework incorporating an Austrian influence and individual differences from Shane and Venkataraman (2000), structuration theory from Sarason et al (2006) and Archer's approach to critical realism in this comment: they are delineated highlighting their different ontologies, definitions of structure and agency and the concepts of dualism and duality. This has profound implications for the ability to understand the interplay between structure and agency.

The comment continues as follows: first, we revisit Shane and Venkataraman (2000) and then outline Sarason et al.'s structuration view. Then we argue that structuration theory is ill suited to the task of understanding entrepreneurship as a nexus of the individual and opportunity. We then introduce Archer (1995) critical realist framework as a more complete meta-theory for entrepreneurship research.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000) take a disequilibrium perspective inspired by Austrian theory. Building on this theory they add individual differences producing a subjective element to their framework. In addition they stress the role of information in the creation of new ventures. They

¹ Definitions of structure and agency are subject to different interpretations by writers such as Giddens (1984) and Archer (1995). Nonetheless a definition is offered by McAnulla (2002: 271) 'Fundamentally, the debate concerns the issue of to what extent we as actors have the ability to shape our destiny as against the extent to which our lives are structured in ways out of our control'.

build on an Austrian theory of opportunity. In Austrian theory a constant, if fluctuating, flow of opportunities are created by technological, political, social, regulatory and demographic change (Schumpeter 1934). Therefore, the entrepreneur is 'alert to opportunities' and opportunities are created externally.

The sort of entrepreneurship that concerns Shane and Venkataraman (2000) is that which creates new means-ends frameworks (Kirzner, 1997). Thus the entrepreneurs that interest them create Schumpeterian enterprises: highly innovative which result in new goods, services, raw materials or organizing methods (2000: 220). Shane and Venkataraman's contribution is to situate the entrepreneur within the context of the opportunities that they discover.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000) concentrate on the existence, discovery and exploitation of opportunities. As Shane and Venkataraman point out the numbers of people who engage in entrepreneurial behaviour or pass through the transitory process of entrepreneurship suggests that individual traits or preferences such as a tolerance for uncertainty or an internal locus of control, can only be partial explanations. Hence, entrepreneurship is the result of the individual agent and the position in which the agent finds themselves (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000: 218).

Shane and Venkataraman's framework is intended as complementary to; population level factors, to environmental carrying capacity and to institutional factors (Stinchcombe, 1965; Aldrich 1990; Singh and Lumsden 1990)

For Shane and Venkataraman (2000) entrepreneurship is a combination of (subjective) entrepreneurial actions that are jointly determined with the interpretation of (objective) opportunities. In this sense, the issues are analogous to those in a critical realist approach to structure and agency. Consequently, their framework lends itself well to those meta-theories that

are intended to examine structure and agency such as structuration theory and realist social theory (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 1995). Sarason looks at structuration theory which we now examine.

Sarason

Sarason et al, 2006 offer a structuration view of entrepreneurship suggesting that the enterprise and social systems co-exist. Using Giddens (1991) they suggest that a society's structure is virtual until it is instantiated by the actions of agents. Within a structuration framework, Sarason et al., (2006) suggest that the two aspects of entrepreneurship and opportunity are treated as a duality. Structure is held in the memory of agent's minds and the agent is knowledgeable about society, this implies an anti-foundationalist ontology. Methodologically, either structure or agency has to be held constant while viewing the other, this precludes analysing interaction between the two. Giddens redefined what is meant by structure. He defined structure as rules and resources, which is seen as a narrow definition (Outhwaite, 1990). Rules could be defined as norms and social conventions, whereas resources are subdivided into two sections - that of allocated resources and non-material resources. In this he is criticised for making structure something that is not what social scientists would conventionally recognize (Layder, 1994). Hay (1995) goes on to claim "no dualism, in fact, ever existed between the concepts that Giddens deploys" (Hay, 1995: 198). Giddens argues that structures both constrain and enable individuals (Giddens, 1991:171). In order to incorporate social groups like families, action groups, and organization he introduces systems (Sibeon, 2004). 'Systems are reproduced relations between actors or collectives, organised as regular social practices'. (Giddens, 1979)

Sarason attempt to offer a view that is consistent with and builds upon Shane and Venkataraman (2000), their claim is that structuration offers a better meta-theory through which to view this

interaction. There is a well-known sociological critique of Giddens² based upon a criticism of central conflation and the flattening of social phenomena implied in the focus on social practices.

The Sarason et al., 2006 perspective is a narrow view of entrepreneurship. The emphasis on the knowledgeable agent is justified partly on the basis of the type of entrepreneurship that they choose to study which is the creation of new means-ends forms. This is in accord with Shane and Venkataraman (2000) but this approach suggests that more imitative businesses are excluded; yet new industries are filled with imitative firms. Studies of the birth of new firm populations such as the automotive industry group firms together on the basis of firms having similar properties (Carroll and Hannan, 2000). It is harder to maintain that opportunities are not ‘out-there’ in the case of imitative ventures. In addition Sarason et al. (2006) make no reference to the particular sources of opportunities such as changes in technology, politics, demographics, and culture.

The methodological implications of Sarason et al., 2006 are profound in that each opportunity is unique to the entrepreneur, which renders large-scale survey data as problematic³. They argue for longitudinal studies using qualitative research methods that seek to understand rather than predict. These would be interviews with individuals, on a recursive basis comparing snapshots of time, without the ability to view interaction with the environment. From their perspective there is an inability to be able to explain the influence and interaction of the individual, rather they seek to interpret the entrepreneurial technique. Sarason’s approach seems to be unable to build on much of what we have already explained in entrepreneurship. However, both Archer (1995) and Shane and Venkataraman (2000) suggested that their view is complementary to population level factors.

² See Chapter 4 Archer (1995)

³ We thank an anonymous review for making this point.

In Sarason's paper opportunity plays the role of structure. This does not allow for the analysis of the structural emergent properties that create the opportunities, for example population level factors. Critical realists would argue an opportunity could exist independently of the entrepreneur. For example, a change in the tax system may create opportunities; however, Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) suggest 'recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities is a subjective process, the opportunities themselves are objective phenomena that are not known to all parties at all times.' From their perspective and a critical realist perspective deregulation and technological changes like the Internet have created opportunities. These opportunities exist regardless of whether they are acted upon by an agent. Entrepreneurs view the structural changes, act on them (or not) and then change the existing structure to their advantage; an example of this may be the dot.com boom in the late 1990s, where the influx of so many entrepreneurs legitimated the Internet industry.

It is at this point that in our opinion duality becomes a less attractive proposition. Many criticisms of Giddens centre on his philosophical definition of 'duality'. Duality suggests that structure and agency are two separate entities; Giddens perceives structure as virtual, only present through the action of agents. Giddens' metaphor of duality as two sides of the same coin precludes the ability to analyse both at the same time. Our reading of Giddens implies that it is not possible to study the interplay between opportunity and entrepreneurship, as this interaction necessitates analysis of the interplay between structure and agency. From Giddens' perspective this is ontologically impossible, for Giddens, and Sarason et al, (2006), social reality is constructed by human actors through social interaction and discourse.

Structuration theory lacks the ability to view the interaction between structure and agency rendering it incomplete as a theory to handle the nexus of opportunity and entrepreneurship. On the one hand, we can see the rules and resources being transformative where actors enjoy a high

degree of freedom; on the other a picture of social life where actors unconsciously reproduce the rules and resources, which results in the reproduction of social systems. A difficulty with using Giddens empirically is that duality is a constriction. When Giddens examines the social system, he brackets off the dimension of agency, which is rather like a functionalist account. When social interactions are considered then institutions are bracketed off. As Thrift (1985) puts it, structuration is all micro-situations and world-empires with nothing in between. Layder (1997) argues: 'Thus instead of both incorporating both agency and structure, Giddens' conception of the duality of structure dissolves them into each other while the analytic focus is trained on social practices. This is the worst of both worlds since the independent properties of both action and structure are lost to analysis and as a result, the exact linkages between the two cannot be traced over time' (Layder, 1997: 247). Moreover, the implications of the duality are that it is impossible to think of some structural properties as more resilient or resistant to change than others (Archer, 1990). It is relatively easy to change the law concerning discrimination in the hiring of employees (organisational goals) but much harder to change entrenched behaviour in recruitment for example.

Archer

Following Bhasker (1978), Archer (1995) produces an explanatory methodology to counter any form of conflation between structure and agency. Archer argues that there is a slight difference between the UK and the US. She suggests that the US is traditionally more concerned with size as a single observable property; her view is that observable differences are not indicative of a particular group's size or even that a group's size will constitute a different level of social reality. Unlike other theorists, she views structure and agency as relative and not fixed, micro and macro are relative and one stratum could be micro to an other macro strata; however that same macro strata may be micro to an alternative strata. Archer views macro and micro as simply different versions of the same debate - thereby she removes the need for mezzo (Sibeon, 2004). Giddens

and Archer are using a meta theory that enables the same unit of analysis for all levels of explanation in social reality. Unlike Giddens who believes both strata are subjective, Archer points out that the different strata have distinct properties and powers, and that examining the relationship between the two is crucial to an understanding of them. In advancing a causal explanation of social life, Archer (1995) argues that there are strata in social life at the levels of agency, structure and culture⁴.

Critical realists like Archer (1995) view the concepts of structure and agency as an analytical dualism. This is possible because 'structure' and 'agency' function in stages over different periods of time.

Archer views structure as objective, possessing emergent properties their '*...Primary dependence [is] upon material resources, both physical and human*' (Archer 1995 p175), structures exist as 'emergent' properties created by past agents. 'social structure is the resultant that nobody ever wants in exactly its current form, which is precisely what fosters continuing morphogenesis' (Archer, 2000:469) which explains the recursive nature of society. For Giddens structure is subjective, it consists of rules and resources and is the medium by which power is activated. Although he believes structures are created by agents these are current agents as opposed to Archer's previous ones. Giddens theory puts a greater responsibility on the agent, since the agent who instantiates structure has to have a deep knowledge of that structure. Structuration theory suggests that actors have a 'wide-ranging, yet intimate and subtle, knowledge of the society of which he or she is a member' (1991: 73). In contrast, Archer (2003) suggests that actors have life histories that show many changes as they formulate projects (including entrepreneurship) that bring into play the enablements and constraints of their situation. Reflecting upon these experiences the agent acquires knowledge about their society. Archer states 'It is simply untrue

⁴ See Archer (1996) Archer proposes culture as a key concept equivalent to structure and agency

that we are all very knowledgeable about our society, contrary to what has been reiterated over the last few decades' (2003: 253).

Methodologically, Giddens gives us the recursive knowledgeable agent produced via social practices and experiences. However the only way to study this is to talk to knowledgeable agents at different points in time. In contrast Archer who embraces a wide variety of methods that encompass interpretive methods, is also able to study the objects and structures for the causal explanations of society. The empirical evidence concerning patterns of entrepreneurship seems much more like the Archer's framework. Entrepreneurs start businesses, fail, start another business or decide they do not possess the 'right stuff' (Audretsch, 2001). In addition Archer is also able to embrace the psychological aspects with use of her ultimate concerns. These are a subdivision of the individual agent Archer (2003) would first suggest that life-projects depend on an individual's ultimate concerns: For example while studying a family of identical triplets, it may become evident that the ultimate concerns of these individuals may vary, the first might choose to give up work and have a family, the second might choose to focus on work and the third might choose to do work for a charity in order to focus on their views of society

Giddens views the knowledgeable agent and rules and resources as part of the same duality. For him the agent can recursively learn from within this duality. Archer's framework allows us to view the fallible agent, both their successes and the failures, this allows for a more complete explanation of the objective reality of, for example, serial entrepreneurs and the interaction between them and their environment. This allows for the incorporation of work from the previous literature like population level factors (Shane and Venkataraman (2000)). It enables an explanation of a wide variety of entrepreneurship. It allows for reflexivity and the influence of ultimate concerns that are outside the individual. It also becomes possible to tease out the different

processes used in different geographical locations, where the environment causes agents to act in a particular way (see Porter, 2000).

Archer (2003) gives agents an independent power to act, she distinguishes agency analytically between people who are represented as: primary agents, social agents, and actors, and introducing corporate agents as groups. Her social agents include an emergent personality, the social expectations imposed on that person, and the social actor introduces the role that individuals play. This enables her to separate the personal and social identity, that is to say the private consciousness is not the same as the public self, which in turn allows for reflexivity (see Archer, 2003). Archer (1995) attacks Giddens for restricting agents to a purely social individual, removing their ability to stand outside the person and be reflexive. Essentially, this provides an over-social view of the person since the structures of society are held within the agent; moreover, a distinction between the self and society would resurface the dualisms that structuration wants to avoid. The consequence is that structuration's agents are devoid of individual psychology.

Archer views non-conflationary theorising as crucial in order to understand the interaction and relationship between different elements of society: neither a collective nor an individual can change society to their own requirements, society changes, but the changes suit no single person or groups' ideal. Downward conflation is when agency is regarded as an epiphenomena to structure. Upward conflation is when structure is rendered impotent, viewed as a combination of individuals' activities. It does not allow structure the influence to enable or constrain. Analytical dualism is non-conflationary it emphasises the linkages and facilitates the ability to separate the impacts of each facet that joins and interacts between the two strata. Since Archer separates structure and agency her meta-theory allows for the interaction between the two strata, neither of which becomes subdivided. Archer re-centres agents and promotes structure to the point that

neither one has precedence. She is interested in how structure interacts with agency, which in turn reshapes structure.

In contrast, structuration by positing a duality between structure and agency fails to deal with the issue of when the circumstances favour determinism and when the circumstances favour voluntarism (Archer, 1990). Archer argues that this problem of not being able to disentangle voluntarism and determinism is the result of the duality of structure and agency because 'the two sides of the 'duality of structure' embody them respectively. They are simply clamped together in a conceptual vice' (Archer, 1990: 78).

Archer views time as a variable not as a medium in which events take place; (Archer, 1996: pxxiv) this, she considers explains the tension between being conditioned to do things in one way but being able to visualize doing them another way. Structure changes and agents act over different periods of time. Agents may instigate a cause, although structures create the generative mechanisms within which the actions are situated. In essence all agents start from within a pre-existing structure, this position then enables or constrains any possible action. Archer recommends the use of her model of the morphogenetic cycle, over time, which is based on two proposals:

- A structure pre-dates an action.
- The action results in a structural elaboration that post-dates those actions (Archer 1995: 76).

Morphogenesis is about changing form, a cause and effect, which is never static.

Giddens relies on the 'the events' to mark time this is done with different but connected fragments of time, as opposed to Archer's longitudinal approach. Archer notes that changes to structure and the actions of agents operate over different time periods whereas for Giddens changes to structure and the actions of agents are locked together in the 'duality'.

Table: Comparing Giddens and Archer

Factor	Giddens	Archer
Ontology	Anti-foundationalist	Foundationalist
Epistemological position	Interpretist (Archer terms Giddens's an elusionist., due to central conflation)	Critical realist
Structure *Giddens does not separate the different facets, this has been done artificially for the purpose of analysis.	Structure is reproduced practice, Rules and resources, instantiated by agents. However structure is redefined and termed systems and social practices	Structure is a social reality, a single stratum; it is the product of emergent properties of agents' structure has causal powers independent of the agent.
Agency	Some agents are more knowledgeable than other agents	Agents act they instigate a cause, they are both fallible and reflexive
Methodology	Quantitative	Quantitative and qualitative
Situating the Entrepreneurial process	Opportunities (subjective) are unique	Ventures (objective) are unique
Doctrine of analysis	Dualism	Duality

Time	Instantiated at one moment in time by agents	Structure changes and agents act over different time periods
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Conclusion

We agree that the nexus of entrepreneur and opportunity is one that requires understanding within the context of social systems and the individual agency. We also agree that the process of entrepreneurship involves the dynamic interplay of structure and the entrepreneur however, this interplay cannot be viewed within the methodological constrictions of structuration.

In our view, structuration theory removes the vital analytical device to view the interaction between agency and structure. The domain of entrepreneurship is one in which social aspects, like networks, are important. It is because individuals and structure are separable and emergent over time that we need to distinguish between them, at an analytical level. For example, the music industry is characterised by a pre-existing structure of dominant major record labels. Entrepreneur Michael Robertson founded MP3.com to make music more efficiently available over the Internet in mp3 format (Burke and Montgomery, 2002). Although the company was eventually sold, there is little doubt that the impact of firms such as MP3.com and others involved in the downloading of music has significantly changed the way in which the industry music works⁵. Morphogenesis is

⁵ We believe that this change is better handled within the realist perspective because

1. The opportunity and technology to exchange files was already there. People were already trading mp3 files at the time.
2. The record industry had pre-existing systems of human relations with existing social positions (Archer, 1995). The Recording Industry Association of America took out lawsuits against those involved in file sharing. That is to say their influence was greater than other participants. These pre-existing systems had *independent causal powers* that pre-date the occupants of the positions in the organisation and are therefore not simply social practices instantiated by agents (see Archer 1995: 106). Archer argues that Giddens deliberately developed a non-relational description of structure in order to avoid non-agents having causal powers.
3. The innovation was a reaction to the high cost of launching music artists particularly as the radio stations had centralised, therefore the structure was changing creating an opportunity.

about changing form, the relationship and its consequence, its cause and effect, not however, whether the actual relationship is perceived by the agent.

Sarason et al. (2006) study the entrepreneurs using an interpretist epistemology. Their study of entrepreneurship is simply the study of entrepreneurs. The various strata of social reality are flattened to interpret social practices. The structuration approach circumscribes the methodological tools available; whereas Shane and Venkataraman (2000) build upon previous literature consistent with the environmental and population ecologist studies. This is more consistent with Archer's approach where, quantitative methods may be used in conjunction with qualitative methods, in order to explain and interpret the interplay between entrepreneurs and structure.

Since strata in social life have different ontologies it follows that they might be viewed as a dualism. They cannot be reduced to one feature of social life. As we have set out above Giddens' duality means that the entrepreneur and opportunity cannot be understood separately and distinct from one another. Thus, Sarason et al. say, 'The interactive coming together of entrepreneur and opportunity is conceptualised as a duality whereby the entrepreneur and opportunity cannot exist independently; and therefore cannot be understood separate and distinct from each other' Sarason et al., 2006: 287, italics added).

Of all the management sciences, entrepreneurship is surely the most agent-centred. Though Archer's approach takes it as axiomatic that structures are objective, with independent causal powers, that constrain and enable the actions of agents; agents have causal power, they also have ultimate concerns that they try, fallibly, to put into practice. (Archer 2003) Archer's agents are

4. The project was enabled by a number of actors and technologies coming together and the ability of Michael Robinson to access the resources that depended upon pre-existing technology networks. His action was not just instantiated.

able to view and react to the emergent properties of structures. They are reflexive, as they come up against the constraints and enablements of society in accordance with their ultimate concerns they have the ability to learn. It is this process that results in change or stasis. In essence, entrepreneurship is the study of the interplay between the structures of a society and the agents within it.

It appears to us that structuration theory is not the most useful theory to handle the nexus of opportunity and entrepreneurship. Rather a critical realist perspective, like Archer's morphogenesis, may be more appropriate. We propose Archer's framework as an excellent perspective for the study of entrepreneurship. It preferences neither strata of social reality; it enables explanation of both causal, emergent and latent powers and the possibilities these sanction, whether acted upon or not, and it allows analysis for those conditions and structures that have to be in place in order for these events to happen; in a subject where the skills, experience and attitudes of individual entrepreneurs can remain dormant until certain combinations are aligned. Such an approach seems tailor made for the study of entrepreneurship allowing researchers to explain rather than simply understand.

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