


Chapter 6

The Influence of the Local Ecosystem on Entrepreneurial Intentions: A Study With Entrepreneurs and Potential Entrepreneurs of Beja (Portugal) and Huelva (Spain)

Sandra Saúde

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0935-1133>

Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Portugal & Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Patrícia Hermozilha

Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Portugal & Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Juan Diego Borrero

Huelva University, Spain

ABSTRACT

This chapter focusses on the influence of the local ecosystem on entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs (in specific, higher education management students) of Beja (Portugal) and Huelva (Spain). The study explored the influence and support of the surrounding ecosystem on entrepreneurial initiative. Data were collected through a questionnaire from two samples of 184 entrepreneurs (100 from Huelva and 84 from Beja) and 205 business management students (107 from Huelva and 98 from Beja). In spite of the diversity of the existing structures and support, the evidence showed that, contrary to the needs of the socioeconomic sustainability of Beja and Huelva, the local ecosystems are not recognized as favourable or encouraging the EI. There are no articulated strategies between the different institutional supporting actors and the creation of a new business is perceived as a very difficult path.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1981-3.ch006

INTRODUCTION

The reflection focus of this chapter is on the relationship between *local ecosystems and entrepreneurial intentions*, based on the results obtained in a project carried out in Beja (Portugal) and Huelva (Spain) which aimed to characterize the perceived influence of ecosystems and surrounding structures (official structures including higher education institutions) on the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, such as new companies and new business ideas. For this purpose, the project analysed the opinions of:

- Entrepreneurs with companies created within five years previous to the date of the study, in the municipalities of Beja and Huelva, and
- Business management students at the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (IPBeja) and Huelva University (UHuelva).

Their opinion was solicited on the role of and the support provided by local structures to the dynamics of business creation and/or as promoters of entrepreneurial ideas. In a comprehensive perspective, the focus is on the analysis of the factors that influence the development of entrepreneurial intention (EI).

Entrepreneurship and the creation of new businesses are actually considered an important engine for growth, shaping not only the economic environment (Thai & Turkina, 2014), but also empowering the creativity and innovation power of individuals and organisations. Current governments, and their political actors, are increasingly aware of the social and economic benefits that come from creating and promoting new business (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Li, 2010). This fact is particularly relevant especially in contexts marked by a high rate of unemployment and economic decline, which explains why numerous governments have shown increasing interest in the development of measures and creation of supporting structures to enhance entrepreneurial dynamics and intentions (Parker, 2009). It is considered necessary to develop a favourable and entrepreneurial-oriented culture that encourages risk and empowers decision-making, where the various institutions responsible for the formation and socialization of individuals play a fundamental role. The social and cultural context can play a relevant role in entrepreneurial dynamics if entrepreneurship is dynamised and fostered (Lackéus, 2015).

The question of how to encourage entrepreneurship has raised intensive academic interest and generated extensive research and debate (Redford, 2013). Entrepreneurs should not be seen as isolated and autonomous decision makers, but as actors who are influenced by micro- and macro-involving contexts (Millán, Congregado, & Román, 2010).

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) confirms that the surrounding social environment plays a crucial role in shaping individual behaviour and knowledge. By structuring beliefs, values, and attitudes, the social and cultural environment influences the conduct and decisions of individuals, consequently determining entrepreneurial thoughts and actions (Dubini, 1989; Kent, 1984). In the context of entrepreneurial attitudes, various studies have shown that cultural variables influence entrepreneurship more than economic variables, since the former tend to be more permanent than the latter (García-Cabrera & García-Soto, 2008). Cultural values represent traits deeply rooted in the population and change relatively slowly (Hofstede, 1993; Ulhaner & Thurik, 2007), leaving a lasting imprint on entrepreneurial practices and on the profiles of business activity (Hechavarría, 2016).

Another important factor is the surrounding institutional environment. The creation of networks of collective action is an increasingly critical element in structuring current societal dynamics. Over the last years, networks, in their different forms and typologies, have expanded extraordinarily. Within the scope

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-influence-of-the-local-ecosystem-on-entrepreneurial-intentions/249917

Related Content

Exploring the Enablers of Digital Transformation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Sachithra Lokugeand Sophia Xiaoxia Duan (2023). *Handbook of Research on Business Model Innovation Through Disruption and Digitalization* (pp. 136-156).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-the-enablers-of-digital-transformation-in-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises/319629

A Proposal for the Transformation of Fossil Fuel Energy Economies to Hydrogen Economies Through Social Entrepreneurship

Jossie Esteban Garzón Baqueroand Daniela Bellon Monsalve (2021). *Entrepreneurial Innovation for Securing Long-Term Growth in a Short-Term Economy* (pp. 48-70).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-proposal-for-the-transformation-of-fossil-fuel-energy-economies-to-hydrogen-economies-through-social-entrepreneurship/272285

Teaching Entrepreneurship: Towards a Proposal of an Educational Program in Third Level (Tertiary) Education

Jorge Alberto Gámez Gutiérrezand Jossie Esteban Garzón Baquero (2017). *Entrepreneurship: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 315-334).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/teaching-entrepreneurship/179668

R&D Activities in Family Firms

Inna Sousa Paivaand Isabel Costa Lourenço (2015). *Handbook of Research on Internationalization of Entrepreneurial Innovation in the Global Economy* (pp. 330-351).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/rd-activities-in-family-firms/127756

Legitimacy of Crowdfunding: How Legitimacy Influences Performance of Crowdfunding Campaigns for Video Games

Jiyoung Cha (2019). *International Journal of Media Management and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 31-47).

www.irma-international.org/article/legitimacy-of-crowdfunding/232701