

NARSC 2023
Call for Submissions
Special Sessions on

Contextual Understanding of Places in Ageing and Entrepreneurship

Selected paper will be invited to the special issue in the
[*Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*](#)
(Impact Factor of 2022-2023: 6.408)

Background

Entrepreneurship is a multi-level phenomenon (Davidsson, 2016). It is the result of the interplay among individual attributes, experiences and the surrounding environments (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020; Stam, 2010). Rapid population aging, as observed in many higher- as well as lower-income countries in recent years, is changing entrepreneurship at all levels. At the individual level, aging exerts considerable effect on individuals' deterioration of cognitive functioning (Brännback & Carsrud, 2019), age discrimination and social exclusion (Kibler, Wainwright, Kautonen & Blackburn, 2015), time allocation and utility (Levesque and Minniti 2006), and entrepreneurial behaviours as a result of challenges for health and well beings (Hatak & Zhou, 2021). In the meantime, entrepreneurship presents opportunities for older people to extend working lives, reduce social exclusion, support healthy ageing (Pitt-Catsoupes, McNamara, James and Halvorsen, 2017; Stypinska, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2018) and contribute to social security fund and local economy (Zhang, 2008).

At the regional level, critical demographic transition in the ageing countries is altering the geographical context of entrepreneurship and regional development (Mayer & Leick, 2019) with youth emigration (Gløersen et al., 2016), or national/international immigration (Johansson, Nilsson & Westlund, 2018). The changing regional context may influence the opportunities and challenges associated with entrepreneurship at older ages in different types of regions (Delfmann, Koster, McCann & Van Dijk, 2014), and different types of entrepreneurs (Zhang & Acs, 2018). This implies that there might be different ways of enacting entrepreneurship that suit ageing population better.

Still, the current understandings and narratives of what entrepreneurship entails in the literature of ageing and entrepreneurship is lacking in several respects.

First, it is unclear how places contextualise the discovery and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities among older people. The capability of discovering (and exploiting) entrepreneurial opportunities may be conditioned by the nature of social environments (e.g. place-based social networks) they are embedded in. Further, social environments are not something that exist on their own but are instead reshaped in the venturing practices of older-age entrepreneurs. The importance of social environments individuals belong to over their lifetime thus cannot be underestimated as they may generate inequalities of entrepreneurial opportunities, capabilities and action as individuals age.

Second, the literature is unclear about the complex interplay between person-related factors, including demographic and socioeconomic attributes, and experiences (individual level) and context attributes, including the spatial context (meso-/macro-level of geographic areas). This interplay differs from one region to another (Obschonka et al. 2013; Tamásy 2006) due to the role of regionally embedded psychological traits for entrepreneurial activities (Liñán, Urbano &

Guerrero, 2011; Obschonka & Stuetzer 2017). It also differs from individual to individual in their culture-related entrepreneurial experiences (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020; Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). The contextual attributes of regions, e.g., rural areas, remote urban regions, and urbans in core regions, are further shaped by the varying patterns of demographic transition. Additionally, digitization and the changing work patterns spurred in the time of Covid-19 have again reshaped regional contexts that will impact ageing and entrepreneurship in regions.

Third, the literature is unclear to how entrepreneurship as a means of active ageing can strengthen the human and structural resilience of regions, particularly ageing places. One of the broader contexts for explaining policy-makers' interest in the emergence of third age entrepreneurship is the active ageing/successful ageing narratives present in the international policy documents (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012). The active ageing narrative portrays third age entrepreneurs as one who would enjoy higher late-life satisfaction through active maintenance of roles in the social systems and continuing involvement in meaningful entrepreneurial action. However, ageing is a place-related phenomenon in which social systems of places vary in supporting active ageing. Ageing is also seen as an inevitable, mutual withdrawal or disengagement which is immune to mediating circumstances or variations by race, ethnicity, gender or class (Cumming and Henry, 1961; Hochschild, 1975). This implies that the promotion of entrepreneurship among ageing individuals needs to take into consideration the experiences of senior entrepreneurs in particular regional and social-cultural contexts. It also implies that it is uncertain that the promotion of entrepreneurship among ageing individuals can be productive as the force of disengagement may inevitably outweigh the force of engagement to drive older entrepreneurs to exit from entrepreneurial activities. A contextual understanding of places in active ageing and entrepreneurship may reconcile different approaches, help shape policy-making beyond the current (simplistic) narrative of entrepreneurship as an alternative to retirement and guide empirical work (Matos, Amaral & Baptista, 2018; Zhao, O'Connor, Wu & Lumpkin, 2021).

Objectives and Relevance

At the centre of this special issue is a context perspective of the conceptualisation and empirical understanding of the relationship between ageing and entrepreneurship. This is to acknowledge that a complex combination of contextual factors (regional, cultural, social) and person-related determinants affect older people's entrepreneurial decisions, behaviour, and experiences (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020; Sternberg, 2021). So, the special issue calls for contextualisation of ageing and entrepreneurship research through a multi-level approach, ranging from the macro level (e.g. countries or subnational regions), through the meso level (e.g. the social-cultural environment), to the individual level. Thus, the special issue will further advance our understanding of ageing and entrepreneurship in uncovering the effects of contextual factors and highlights how enacting entrepreneurship among older people is embedded in and affected by regional contexts.

Topics/issues of interest include, but are not limited to:

- What are the circumstances that affect widening or withdrawing entrepreneurial endeavours that people engage in as they grow older in different regional contexts? To what extent is the capability of discovering (and exploiting) entrepreneurial opportunities conditioned by the nature of socio-geographic environments older people are embedded in? How do the venturing practices of older-age entrepreneurs reshape their places? How do socio-geographic environments individuals belong to over their lifetime lead to their different lifetime trajectories and eventually may generate inequalities of entrepreneurial opportunities, capabilities and action as individuals age? What explains the differences of ageing and entrepreneurship between regions, e.g. rural areas, remote urban regions, and urbans in core regions?

- How does spatial embeddedness provide senior entrepreneurs with both opportunities and boundaries for entrepreneurial action? How do the multifacts of embeddedness (i.e. social, spatial, institutional, cognitive, and virtuel) shape the behaviours and experiences of senior entrepreneurs? How does enacting entrepreneurship among older people reconfigurates regional dimensions of embeddedness?
- How important are regional networks for entrepreneurial discovery and exploitation? Are regional networks really exogenous, or are they affected by the ageing process itself? How do regional networks affect the array of personal and social resources available to individuals as their age, and how does the latter affect entrepreneurial experiences? To what extent may regional networks influence entrepreneurship-related lifestyle choices later in life and through which mechanisms?
- How does the interplay among entrepreneurial attitudes and experiences within the region, regional social-cultural environment, and the regional variation in patterns of demographic transition affect the relationship between ageing and entrepreneurship? How do digitization and the changing work patterns reshape regional context and impact ageing and entrepreneurship in regions nexus? How does digital divide affect third age entrepreneurship in rural areas?
- How does senior entrepreneurship help prevent the loss of valuable expertise while strengthening regional resilience? How are these potential benefits at regional level affected by contextual factors? Do digital technologies (social media, big data, internet of things, neural networks, blockchain, artificial intelligence) facilitate or impede senior entrepreneurship, leading to regional convergence or divergence of entrepreneurship?

We welcome papers with rigorous quantitative or qualitative research designs and a clear theoretical and/or empirical contribution that can help reconcile different theoretical perspectives and results. Selected papers will be invited to the special issue in the [*Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*](#) (Impact Factor of 2022-2023: 6.408), edited by Zoltan Acs, Jun Li, Vania Sena, Ting Zhang, Ondřej Dvouletý, and Lucia Garcia-Lorenzo. This special issue represents a unique opportunity to develop a novel theoretical and empirical understanding of the complex interaction between ageing and entrepreneurship in a regional context.

If you are interested in presenting your research in this special session, please submit an abstract (2,000 to 5,500 characters and spaces) through the conference portal. Information on how to do that can be found here. Upon submitting your abstract, you will receive an abstract ID number (e.g. P12345). Please send your abstract ID number and a copy of your abstract (with name, email, and affiliation for all authors to Ting Zhang at tzhang@ubalt.edu no later than June 30, 2023.