

INTRODUCTION

Bernard Guesnier

Université de Poitiers
Poitiers
France

Entrepreneurship Dynamics and the Renewal of Productive Systems

The XLVth annual conference of the French Language Association of Regional Science (*Association de Science Régionale de Langue Française - ASRDLF -*), organized with great success by the Research Centre on Territorial Development (*Centre de Recherche sur le Développement Territorial – CRDT*), was held at the University of Québec at Rimouski (UQAR) from the 25th to the 27th of August 2008. Its main theme was: ‘Territories and Territorial Public Action: New Resources for Regional Development’. Within this framework J. Bonnet, M. Dejardin and B. Guesnier proposed a special session on the theme: ‘Entrepreneurship Dynamics and the Renewal of Productive Systems’. The papers from that session are presented in this special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Regional Science (CJRS)*. Each of these ten articles was assessed by two members of a reviewers’ committee and then revised accordingly by the authors. They explore various relationships and interrelationships between entrepreneurship dynamics, the dynamics of productive systems and territorial dynamics.

One way to approach entrepreneurship dynamics consists in emphasizing what they represent in terms of creation, evolution and change, as well as in terms of the cessation of economic activities. These dynamics extend to the creation of new organizations, the development of existing organizations, and do not exclude them shutting down. They are, then, by definition at the heart of the explanation of the renewal of productive systems.

Entrepreneurship dynamics can be related to regional and spatial dynamics, which include the local factors that contribute to territorial specificities and differentiation. First, these dynamics take on considerable importance for understanding the variety of trajectories of productive systems. Then, if the study of the entrepreneurship dynamics allows us to discern the very direct origins of the renewal of productive systems, it also informs us about the mechanisms at work in the creation of specific territorial resources.

On the one hand, we can consider that entrepreneurship participates in building a territory and maintaining its dynamics by renewing the productive system; on the other hand, we can consider that, thanks to partnership governance, public and private actors can make their territories competitive by mobilizing their resources. Thus, entrepreneurship and territory have to enter into a synergic relationship: it is a question of continuously improving coordination and cooperation, by crossing ‘boundaries’ and by opening up skills.

The contributions have been grouped into two parts. The first one is entitled ‘Entrepreneurship and regional development: theories and relations of causality’. This approaches various theoretical aspects of the role of new business start-up in territorial development and deals with the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth from both a theoretical and empirical angle, so as to better understand how territories benefit from entrepreneurship in order to develop. The second part is entitled

‘Territorial resources: potentialities, competitiveness, governance’; and investigates the reverse relationship, in which the phenomenon of territorial supply influences entrepreneurship. Territory is a social construct, a phenomenon which catalyses initiatives of actors who are at the origin of more or less rival projects and activities. Its competitiveness is linked to its mixed private-public partnership governance. A learning territory has to develop the cognitive abilities of its actors and concern itself with their training.

I. Entrepreneurship and Regional Development: Theories and Relations of Causality

What role for the entrepreneur in the theories of GDP growth of French regions?

Facchini and Koning

The purpose of the article of Facchini and Koning is to clarify how the introduction of the theory of the entrepreneur adds to explanations of regional growth put forward by the various schools of thought, whether it is the neo-classic model, the radical heterodoxy or the theory of the base. The theoretical content of this article offers an interesting introduction to the various aspects presented by empirical work.

The entrepreneurship dynamics of the French territory (ies): between entrepreneurial firms and entrepreneurship linked to the residential economy

Bonnet

Having reminded us of the lack of innovative new business start-ups through the territories of France, Bonnet attempts to show the influence of spatial characteristics on entrepreneurship. In particular, he demonstrates a decreasing rate of start-ups connected with distance from urban areas but he also underlines, conversely, the importance of tourist amenities in the attractiveness of some territories.

Evolution of new business start-ups in the territory of Dunkirk (Northern France) between 1993 and 2005

Boutillier

The concept of the potential resources of someone who creates a business refers to the knowledge, and the financial and relational resources of the person starting up a business. Using a series of interviews, Boutillier analyses the specific difficulty in starting up a business in a context of high unemployment: in this case the Dunkirk and the North – Pas-de-Calais region. Those persons starting up a business are people with a low level of formal education whose work experience is limited to being a worker or an employee and whose financial resources are limited. It is clear that the resources of the entrepreneur depend to a large extent on the resources of the environment in which such a person is located.

The creation of firms and their territorial relationships

Dejardin

Dejardin examines the treatment that the issue of new business start-ups and their connections with territory has received in the domain of regional economy. He lays out a synthesis of the explanatory arguments of territorial differentiations in relation to new business creation. The question of interrelationships – some of which might be important – seems to have been neglected. His critical appreciation leads him to formulate a number of research perspectives that relate to a more dynamic vision, considering new business start-ups and their effects, including feed-back effects, both spatially and temporally.

The determinants of entrepreneurship dynamics in French regions (1994-2003)

Binet, Facchini and Koning

Binet, Facchini and Koning attempt to assess the factors determining new business start-ups in the regions of France. They observe that new business start-ups are self-explanatory thanks to an autoregressive model which confirms the hypothesis of a cumulative process. They also observe that two variables play a positive role, namely unemployment and disposable income whereas the size of companies acts as a barrier to entry. Finally, they consider that institutional and cultural factors must be taken into account, thus offering a valuable transition towards the second part of this special issue.

II. Territorial resources, potentialities, competitiveness, governance

Innovative environment, relations of proximity and entrepreneurship. An analysis of a fertile alchemy

Uzunidis

To a certain extent, Uzunidis proposes an answer to the problem of the deficit of business creations: he supports the idea that institutions play significant roles in the organization and the evolution of territorial socio-economic structures and so provides an answer to the deficit of innovative new business start-ups recalled by Bonnet. From a policy of subsidies for territorial development to a policy of creation of Competitiveness Poles through to the promotion of Local Productive Systems, public authorities have been aiming for several years at enhancing the value of territorial resources. The coordination between companies, the cooperation between public and private actors, universities, laboratories, large companies, small and medium-sized enterprises and public institutions aim at promoting networks and entrepreneurship.

Local development beyond metropolitan development: which factors? The 'Comparative advantages' of non metropolitan areas

Doré

It is true that the performances of some territories are attributable to the realization of a polarization which is widely confirmed by the arguments of various economic theories. Doré, in this article, proposes the examination, in parallel, of the factors favorable to the dispersal of economic activities in spaces which are not very dense but which are endowed with original material or immaterial resources capable of creating value added. Thus,

heritage, countryside, local culture and living environment may become specific assets facilitating entrepreneurship by local actors who developing products with local labels (Geographically Identified Labels or Appellation Géographique Contrôlée - AGP), by neo-residents who innovate in the supply and production of services or products, or also by companies relocating having been attracted by the quality of life available.

Vineyard land use change in residential use: An empirical investigation of the Bordeaux urban

Pérez et Gaussier

Territory, because of its natural characteristics or of its geographical location, can be sought after by diverse actors whose interests are not convergent. This use conflict over the same space-territory is illustrated by the analysis of the evolution of the suburbs of the city of Bordeaux undertaken by Pérez and Gaussier. The analysis raises the issue of the maintenance of entrepreneurial activity compatible with the locality (the vine growing activity, traditionally developed on this territory) while at the same time as being confronted with the strong pressure of needs and of demands for land for expansion of urban development.

Territorial resources and trajectories of development

Guesnier

The geographical proximity of an original resource such as the ocean offering multiple opportunities in terms of transport-traffic-maritime trade, fishing-related activities, sailing and tourism, amongst other opportunities, is favourable for entrepreneurship. The activation of this territorial proximity constitutes a real chance for development, be it translated in cognitive, organizational or institutional proximity, thus facilitating an innovating entrepreneurship around this oceanic proximity, very strongly encouraged by local governance. The complex interactions between these forms of proximity have managed to make La Rochelle an attractive, successful and competitive territory in the nautical industry: this innovative territory seems indeed to have become, over the years, a learning territory.

Economic and territorial intelligence in the service of a strategy of regional development: The delicate question of the training of the actors

Mallovan and Marcon

Strengthening social capital by the training of actors in charge of development is doubtless the first condition for a territory to be really one of learning and capable of encouraging innovative entrepreneurship. The French-Quebec collaboration which has developed thanks to these two specialists with training in economic intelligence – M. Mallovan, professor in information sciences at the University of Moncton (New Brunswick), and C. Marcon, lecturer in information and communication sciences at the University of Poitiers – underscores the existence of a gap that needs to be filled. Territorial economic information is still an open field for research. The actors of a territory need to be trained in diagnosis, in interpretation and finally, in the research for and the choice of solutions.