

Book Review

Book Author: Anders Örténblad (Editor) **Book Title:** *Against Entrepreneurship: A Critical Examination* **Year of Publication:** 2020 **Publisher:** Palgrave Macmillan
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Against Entrepreneurship: A Critical Examination

Against Entrepreneurship, A Critical Examination edited by Anders Örténblad brings together 15 essays opposing mainstream and normative ideas of entrepreneurship. The volume assembles contributions from various perspectives discussing critiques of entrepreneurship in terms of “risks”, overly optimistic images and responsible entrepreneurship. In the opening chapter, “Background and Introduction: How Could Anyone Be Against Entrepreneurship?”, Anders Örténblad takes the opportunity to address positive conceptions of entrepreneurship in order to initiate an exploration. In this first chapter, Örténblad guides the reader through the concept of entrepreneurship, providing a valuable foundation for the discussions in the volume. His introductory chapter argues clearly for the need to critique the often mainstream and positively charged notions of entrepreneurship in order to offer a balance to the frequently one-sided debate on entrepreneurship.

Against the entrepreneurship discourse

The first chapters challenge the discourse of entrepreneurship through aspects such as the term entrepreneurship itself, neoliberal and capitalist notions and the focus on entrepreneurial opportunities. In chapter 2, “Self-employment and entrepreneurship: not only productive but also unproductive and destructive”, Dieter Bögenhold discusses different meanings and definitions of entrepreneurship. However, his aim is not to provide a single definition of entrepreneurship, but rather to criticise the inconsistency in the different meanings and definitions for which the concept of entrepreneurship is used. He argues that the various definitions linked to the concept are often misleading in relation to the notion of entrepreneurship. In chapter 3, Daniel Ericsson focuses on the discourse of entrepreneurship from a Marxist perspective. In “Notes on a fetishist war machine”, he argues that the discourse of entrepreneurship contributes to turning “everything” into entrepreneurship and that, without focusing on consequences, the current reproduction of entrepreneurship is reason to be against entrepreneurship. In chapter 4, “Keep the machine running: entrepreneurship as a practice of control in the neoliberal economy”, the authors Kenneth Mølbjerg Jørgensen and Ann Starbæk Bager argue that one reason to challenge the entrepreneurship discourse is that it takes economic and societal problems created by neo-liberal ideas and transforms them into market opportunities. As a result, this also leads to opportunities to create narratives which protect corporations from taking responsibility for the issues they have created. In chapter 5, “Fetishizing the entrepreneurship”, the author Frederik Hertel joins forces with Ericsson's Marxist perspective in arguing that one reason to be against the entrepreneurship discourse is that it highlights the entrepreneur through social relations while marginalising employees. The discourse of entrepreneurship consequently tends to legitimise the logic of profit maximation, which can lead to inequality and ecological crises. In chapter 6, “Entrepreneurship ad absurdum”, the author Anna-Maria Mur-

tola argues that the entrepreneurship discourse has come to colonise our lives. She discusses how the idea that entrepreneurship is an imperative, where everything is an opportunity, hides underlying asymmetries of power and privilege, addressing the fact that being entrepreneurial is often related to specific contexts and within specified limits.

Against both discourse and practice

The chapters in the mid-section of the book provide arguments against both the discourse and the practice of entrepreneurship.

In chapter 7, “Against entrepreneurship: unveiling social inequalities for minority entrepreneurship,” Kiran Trehan, Priyanka Vedi and Alex Kevill challenge the positive rhetoric surrounding entrepreneurship, arguing that for some groups entrepreneurship becomes a necessity rather than a choice due to structural and economic discrimination. They describe how discrimination of ethnic minorities in the labour market pushes migrants into self-employment. This push often leads to unstable living conditions, with minority entrepreneurs becoming trapped in order to survive, with few to no opportunities to scale up and thrive. The overly positive image of entrepreneurship is also questioned by Fabiola H. Gerpott and Alfred Kieser in chapter 8, “The fairy tale of the successful entrepreneur: reasons and remedies for the prevalent ideology of entrepreneurship”. Gerpott and Kieser criticise the mythical aspects of how entrepreneurs become heroes and celebrated role models of entrepreneurial identity. They argue that one reason to be opposed to entrepreneurship is the grand promises of economic wealth, even though most start-ups tend to fail. In chapter 9, “From entrepreneurship to eco-preneurship”, the authors Ove Jakobsen and Vivi M.L. Storsletten contrast two different perspectives on entrepreneurship: one anchored in mechanistic market economy and the other in organic, ecological economics. They argue against definitions of entrepreneurship based on a market business model driven by profit and instead lead with an idea of “eco-preneurships” based on cooperation between nature and humanity, which provides opportunities to create businesses that are socially and ecologically responsible.

Against the practice of entrepreneurship

The last section of the book cites examples of improper working conditions, irresponsible practices and risks relating to entrepreneurship practices.

In Chapter 10, “Entrepreneurial insouciance (or imperiousness), the big risk shift and the entrepreneurship interregnum,” Philip Cooke argues that entrepreneurship has come to be associated with lawlessness and arrogant, unconcerned and unsafe working conditions where employees and people outside the organisation are not properly looked after, and neither is the environment. In Chapter 11, “The dark side of entrepreneurial passion: restraining employee innovative behaviour?” the authors Eeva Aromaa, Ulla Hytti and Satu Aaltonen continue to discuss the risk for employees in entrepreneurial organisations. They argue that most studies on entrepreneurship focus on positive outcomes in the manifestation of entrepreneurial passion. On the other hand, they state that these manifestations may restrain innovative employee behaviour and make employees’ passive. Aromaa et al. find that the description of entrepreneurship as a passionate accomplishment conflicts with the understanding that employees can be restrained by the owner or manager’s entrepreneurial passion. In Chapter 12, “In defence of the comfort zone: against the hegemony of creative destruction”, Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera continue to argue against the hegemony of entrepreneurship and focus on the perspectives of people in and relating to entrepreneurial organisations. They argue that ideas based on pushing people to step outside their comfort zones in order to create value tend to glorify instability for individuals, organ-

isations and society. In chapter 13, “Entrepreneurship addiction and the negative mental health consequences of entrepreneurial engagement among some entrepreneurs” the author April J. Spivick argues that one reason to be against entrepreneurship is that it provides autonomy and entrepreneurial passion such that it may become addictive. In chapter 14, “Against irresponsible entrepreneurship: a dual perspective on the impact of entrepreneurship on firm survival”, Denise Fleck focuses on how entrepreneurship affects organisations’ survival in two different ways: it contributes to innovation and organisational renewal, and it is a threat to organisational existence. Chapter 15, “The dark side of entrepreneurship: the role of the dark side of personality”, continues the argument against entrepreneurship, suggesting that the same personality traits possessed by some entrepreneurs may also be harmful to organisations and their employees. In the book’s afterword, Pascal Day reflects on being for or against entrepreneurship. He argues that the act of being against is not a static position. He suggests that the academic discourse has evolved in recent years relating to social, political and ethical issues, which also requires a rethinking of the general parameters of critique.

Conclusion

So why be against entrepreneurship? And why collect together 15 chapters with arguments against entrepreneurship? As with all hegemonic concepts that become linked with aspects of success and almost impossible to critique, it needs to be challenged and deconstructed for its consequences, intended and unintended. This book does this in arguing that entrepreneurship is not all about innovation, self-empowerment and success stories, rather that entrepreneurship comes with control and expressions of power, with the fairy tales of success hiding darker sides of entrepreneurial behaviour and damage to individuals, organisations and society. The chapters address aspects ranging from the idolisation of personal traits such as ADHD and adverse mental health consequences, to recognising the negative economic, environmental and social effects of entrepreneurial discourse and practice.

The risk of editing a volume with several chapters is that it could result in chapters that are too disparate or too similar. The structure, consisting of a journey from discourse to practice, provides the book with a rhetorical argument such that it becomes neither. Instead, it gives the reader a broader understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship from multiple levels. The perspective from discourse to practice is executed in such a way that, together with the case-based illustrations, it helps even the more uninitiated reader to access the book’s arguments. It makes it a valuable addition to both the academic field of entrepreneurship, and for students and practitioners. I believe that for students, it may also serve as excellent teaching material for exploring critical thinking relating to “great” management ideas. Overall, it provides an excellent example of how to criticise idealised concepts that have become mainstream, positive and associated with uncritical images. *Against entrepreneurship* could also serve as a valuable reminder for policymakers and practitioners. Coming from the field of labour market integration for people born abroad, the plethora of initiatives to support entrepreneurship for minority groups is sometimes overwhelming. That is just one example of when the insights and arguments found in this volume might be helpful in nuancing and dismantling the entrepreneurial hegemony as a given for a successful solution.

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