



Call for papers – Rencontres de St-Gall 2022  
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## **Entrepreneurship as superpower or destructive force? Disentangling and contextualizing the bright, constructive and dark, destructive sides of entrepreneurship**

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Entrepreneurship research and teaching tends to view new business creation and entrepreneurial activity as something primarily (or even exclusively) positive. Indeed, the success of innovative new firms and the increasing dominance of young companies in stock indices, such as the S&P 500, all point to the positive impact of entrepreneurship and its role as new economic ‘superpower’. As a result, we as researchers strive to inform entrepreneurs, their families, and stakeholders as well as policy makers about how to facilitate processes and practices to generate even more entrepreneurial activity (Shepherd, 2019; Bergmann et al., 2018). This includes individual benefits such as monetary success and well-being (Hatak & Zhou, 2021; Stephan, 2018; Stephan, Rauch & Hatak, 2022), work-family enrichment; organizational benefits such as sustainability through succession (Zellweger, 2017), and organizational designs that can be used as templates for an entrepreneurial future of work; and social and economic benefits such as innovation, competitiveness, job creation, and wealth (Acs, 2006; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999).

At the same time, we know that a large proportion of entrepreneurs is not doing particularly well – at the level of the person, the organization and/or the societal and institutional level – so that research limited to the “good” seems to poorly reflect the overall population of entrepreneurs and the wider entrepreneurship phenomenon – just think of the dismal success rates of new ventures (Aldrich & Ruef, 2018).

If research largely focuses on the bright sides of entrepreneurship, it has little to say to a large portion of the population, including entrepreneurs’ families and the broader environment in which the entrepreneurs are embedded. In addition, for entrepreneurship research to continue to be interesting, it is important to challenge conventional wisdom – and this can be achieved by exploring for whom, when, where and why the good becomes bad, and the bad becomes good. At the individual level, many characteristics that are desirable for entrepreneurship could be counterproductive in particular environments (e.g., family, industry, country) or with stakeholders such as investors or business partners who do not regard them as favourable for meaningful cooperation. For example, entrepreneurial passion fosters persistence and sustained focus critical to success. Yet, intense positive feelings for founding and developing that are appropriate in the start-up stage (Cardon et al., 2009) may become a burden to the

entrepreneur's family as they may lead to work-family conflicts, ultimately resulting in loneliness in the family sphere. Similarly, the entrepreneur's need for autonomy may become a burden to the organization as it reduces information flow, leads to lonely decision making, and hampers the attraction and retaining of capable employees and managers (Kets de Vries, 1985; Schulze & Zellweger, 2021). Furthermore, while the entrepreneurs' need for achievement is generally predictive of success, it may be less of a good thing in country contexts that are characterized by socially supportive cultures, potentially impairing trust-based inter-organizational cooperation and fruitful relations with stakeholders. We also observe a similar phenomenon for socially undesirable characteristics (e.g., mental health disorders, dark triad traits; viewed negatively by most individuals in society), such that these preconditions might compromise occupational and family effectiveness in general, but enhance functioning in entrepreneurship (Wiklund et al., 2018).

Similar to the focus on the bright sides of entrepreneurship at the individual and organizational levels, scholars have focused on predicting and explaining the constructive side of entrepreneurship at the societal level. However, entrepreneurship may have harmful outcomes for economies and societies as well (Baumol, 1990; Shepherd, 2019). For example, while innovation generally is considered as a good thing, the disruption of whole industries through innovative entrepreneurship implies job losses that most likely cannot be compensated for by the innovative start-up alone (see e.g., Uber, Netflix, Apple), and after all may weaken economic competitiveness if incumbent firms cannot adjust to disruptive competitors because of institutional framework conditions. The situation may be exacerbated when ventures engage in innovation offshoring, and ultimately re-locate their headquarters to tax havens. Moreover, in the course of exploiting short-term cost-benefit ratios, entrepreneurship may come along with negative impacts for environmental sustainability and thereby nature and climate. In addition, entrepreneurial success may stimulate the development of pro-entrepreneurial regulations which might limit worker rights and security, potentially increasing inequality in society. Indeed, there is a lively debate about the relationship between entrepreneurship and inequality (Packard & Bylund, 2018). Finally, success in entrepreneurship may have detrimental effects on the family in which the entrepreneur is embedded, including the request for unpaid work by family members, forced succession among children, and work issues translating into the family sphere leading to conflicts (e.g., divorce). In order to better understand the destructive side of entrepreneurship and thereby be in a better position to avoid such destruction in the future, we need to dig deeper into the prevalence, scope and costs as well as antecedents and contingencies of such damage (Shepherd, 2019).

At the Rencontres de St-Gall 2022, we aim to push the boundaries of existing theories and provide new insights by disentangling and contextualizing the bright, constructive and dark, destructive sides of entrepreneurship. We welcome conceptual and empirical papers that shed light on the kaleidoscopic nature of the entrepreneurship phenomenon, putting particular emphasis on the different contexts and levels where, and at which, the bright sides turn dark, and vice versa, and the constructive side of entrepreneurship becomes destructive (e.g., family, task environment such as industry or immediate work environment, non-task environment such as cognitive, regulative, and normative institutions). We encourage contributions which adopt lenses from adjacent disciplines, such psychology, economics, and sociology to generate a more holistic and thereby relevant understanding of the phenomenon.

The deadline for submission of full papers and discussion statements is 30 June 2022.



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