

PhD proposal

Female social entrepreneurship

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Introduction

In this PhD research proposal we want to give an extra stimulus to the field of **entrepreneurship for disadvantaged people** across the globe. Women, youth, unemployed, immigrants, refugees and people with disabilities are still under-represented and disadvantaged in the labor market (OECD, 2017). Supporting them with training, coaching and mentoring to become more entrepreneurial, or to independently startup and sustain a business, can help them to create their own and maybe additional jobs, but also to equip them with more skills and experience to go into a paid job. Increasing the possibility of economic independence, increasing their social network and strengthening personal empowerment, will improve not only their lives, but also these of their families and communities, in fact advancing the whole society. Not only in ways of economic value creation (e.g. job creation, profit), but also social value creation (e.g. employing disadvantaged people, impactful products), and personal value creation (e.g. personal income, independence, personal development). Given this widespread range of effects of entrepreneurship, different academic disciplines are involved in the study of entrepreneurship, such as e.g. economic sciences, social sciences and psychology.

At the same time there is increasing attention to **social value creation** of entrepreneurs in Europe (EmpowHer, 2019). This raises the question of what exactly social entrepreneurship is. There is no generally accepted definition, but often it is mentioned that social entrepreneurs focus - more than mainstream entrepreneurs - on creating social value (e.g. improving human or environmental wellbeing), rather than creating economic value (e.g. shareholder value, profits), through creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner. Nowadays, social issues and challenges are more and more perceived as business opportunities. Socially responsible enterprises and social businesses are frontrunners in having a sustainable, economically viable business while serving positive impact on society and at the same time being very innovative (Huysentruyt, 2014). The gender gap in social entrepreneurial activities is significantly smaller than the 2:1 gender gap in mainstream entrepreneurial activities in some economies (Bosma et al., 2015). The suggested reasons for this gender differences are that women in general are more altruistic and socially minded, and that women are more reluctant to engage in competitive contexts (Huysentruyt, 2014). But, as studies indicate (e.g. EmpowHer, 2019; Huysentruyt, 2014) there is a need for more research into women-led social enterprises.

Research topics¹

In academia refugee and migrant entrepreneurship is still understudied, just as female social entrepreneurship. In this PhD research proposal we focus on the impact of women social entrepreneurs with a migrant and refugee background. The aim of the research will be:

To increase scientific knowledge about female social entrepreneurs (with special attention to women with a migrant and refugee background in the Middle East and Northern Africa), in order for them to create more social and economic value for themselves and their community.

The main attention in the literature on women entrepreneurship until today, is on the obstacles and challenges in the macroeconomic context. It is interesting however, to also look at the social context and the individual level of women entrepreneurs, as they are not a homogeneous group, but very heterogeneous in nature (Bruin, Brush & Welter 2006). Besides, there are always women entrepreneurs doing well, the best practices, and it is very interesting to see what we can learn from them. This individual level and the topic of psychology of entrepreneurship is fairly new in academia, but contains important keys to stimulate women entrepreneurs across the globe. More specifically the overarching research question will be:

Which factors influence the economic, social and personal value creation of female social entrepreneurs, with a migrant and refugee background, in the Middle East and Northern Africa, and how are these dimensions related?

The research with a PhD student will focus on the following topics:

Economic value creation

In this domain the research will be concentrated around the business life cycle of social entrepreneurship and how companies can be sustainable for the future. This raises the question about what we can learn from those who have a successful enterprise in a new homeland and how other newcomers can benefit from their experience. The research questions therefore are:

- a. *What are the phases of the business life cycle for female social entrepreneurs?*
- b. *What are the dimensions of economic value creation female social entrepreneurs want to and do achieve, in the different stages of the business life cycle?*
- c. *Which women entrepreneurs are best practices and what can we learn from them?*
- d. *What is their (theoretical) contribution to the different levels of entrepreneurship research: the individual level, the new venture level and the community and external environment level?*

Social value creation

In this research area there will be a focus on the importance of social value creation of female social entrepreneurs with a migrant or refugee background. In other words, the attention will be on what and how the women contribute to the society of their new country of residence. This is of special importance for this group of women as they have to start without social relations and network in their new country of residence and it is interesting

¹ Discussions are underway to set up an externally funded chair in Women entrepreneurship. It may speak for itself that the future chair will be invited/involved in (co)supervising this PhD-research project.

to study what they can contribute socially. On this topic it is also relevant to study the best practices. If important factors can be discovered, appropriate interventions can be developed and possibly validated in the research. The research questions are:

- a. *What are the dimensions of social value creation female social entrepreneurs want to and do achieve, in the different stages of the business life cycle?*
- b. *What is the role of social and business networks in creating economic and social value?*
- c. *Which women entrepreneurs are best practices and what can we learn from them?*

Personal value creation

Key to business development is personal development (Rauch & Frese, 2007) and for this research it is valuable to study topics like the influence of personal resources (e.g. resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional stability; Xanthopoulou et al. 2007, 2009) on successful social enterprising. Via developing specific interventions on stimulating personal resources and attitudes, and studying these, we can learn which interventions work best to stimulate female social entrepreneurs to establish a sustainable business model.

The research questions are:

- a. *What are the dimensions of personal value creation female social entrepreneurs want to and do achieve, in the different stages of the business life cycle?*
- b. *What is the role of personal resources in creating economic and social value?*
- c. *Which women entrepreneurs are best practices and what can we learn from them?*

The relationship between economic, social and personal value creation

Economic, social and personal value creation are all outcomes of the social enterprising activities of female migrant and refugee entrepreneurs. It is interesting to study the relationship between these outcomes and therefore the research question is:

What are the relationships between economic, social and personal value creation for female social entrepreneurs in the different stages of the business life cycle? How do these relate to the so-called resource-based view (RBV) and the female new venture creation?

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