

EDITORIAL— ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND BOUNDARIES: TOWARDS A RELATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Editorial— Entrepreneurship beyond boundaries: Towards a relational entrepreneurship perspective

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1. Entrepreneurship at a Crossroads

For much of the last four decades, entrepreneurship research has been organised around a relatively stable set of analytical coordinates. The entrepreneur, the firm, the opportunity, and the market constituted the principal units through which entrepreneurial phenomena were interpreted. This perspective generated an extensive body of knowledge and profoundly shaped our understanding of innovation, venture creation, and economic development.

Today, the environments in which entrepreneurship unfolds have become considerably more complex.

Climate change, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, demographic transitions, platform economies, health-care innovation, territorial governance, and sustainability challenges increasingly transcend the analytical capacity of isolated firms or individual entrepreneurs. Contemporary entrepreneurial phenomena emerge through interactions between organisations, technologies, institutions, territories, communities, and governance systems that continuously influence one another.

Entrepreneurship is therefore entering a new intellectual phase.

Rather than being understood exclusively as the creation of new ventures, entrepreneurship increasingly represents the capacity to mobilise distributed knowledge, coordinate diverse actors, and generate sustainable value across complex socio-technical ecosystems.

The contributions assembled in this issue collectively point towards what may be developed as a relational entrepreneurship perspective—one that places relational architectures, rather than isolated entrepreneurial actors, at the centre of entrepreneurial value creation.

This perspective does not reject the classical contributions of Schumpeter, Kirzner, Drucker, or the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature. Rather, it extends them by recognising that opportunities, innovation, and competitive advantage increasingly emerge through relational configurations that connect organisations, institutions, technologies, and territories. It is a recognition that the phenomena we study have outgrown the frameworks we inherited—and that theory, like entrepreneurship itself, must be willing to evolve.

2. This Issue: Relational Entrepreneurship in Practice

The contributions assembled in this issue illustrate—from different angles and with different methods—the relational logic that runs through this editorial.

One contribution reminds us that digital innovation cannot be separated from the ethical recognition of the person. The transition from person-centred to person-based care is not merely a clinical refinement—it is a philosophical repo-

sitioning that challenges us to ground innovation in human dignity rather than procedural compliance, as discussed by Costa Gomes in this issue. In an era of accelerating technological change, this ethical grounding becomes not optional but foundational.

Another contribution demonstrates that digital transformation in community pharmacy is ultimately a problem of governance rather than technology. The Quintuple Helix framework reveals that transformation emerges through the interaction between leadership, culture, strategic management, customer experience, and sustainability—not through technological adoption alone, as demonstrated by Martins in this issue. Innovation, it appears, is never merely about tools; it is always about people, relationships, and the institutional contexts that enable or constrain their agency.

A third contribution reconceptualises organisational boundaries through the biological notion of the holobiont, challenging the assumption that organisations should be understood as closed, jurisdictional entities. Boundaries, in this view, are not drawn once and defended, but continuously negotiated through symbiotic interaction. Organisational identity is not a stable property to be protected but an emergent outcome of co-evolutionary processes, as proposed by Yazıcı in this issue.

Further contributions extend this relational logic across different domains. Intangible cultural heritage reveals how cultural identity, linguistic proximity, and entrepreneurial opportunity become inseparable in island territories, as examined by dos Santos, Silva and Nunes in this issue. An artificial shipwreck in Tenerife demonstrates how a single submerged asset can activate value chains linking diving, training, conservation, and local entrepreneurship, as illustrated by López-Arquillo, Reyes and Burzaco in this issue.

The conceptualisation of corrective digital intermediaries—platforms that convert passengers' latent legal entitlements into enforced outcomes—identifies a new category of digital venture whose opportunities emerge from institutional failures rather than traditional market gaps. Camacho and Mota, in their contribution to this issue, demonstrate how these firms operate outside the conventional tourism value chain, responding to different problems, occupying different phases of the consumption cycle, and creating value through different mechanisms than distribution platforms. Their four-layer generative mechanism—structural volatility, regulatory entitlement, enforcement gap, and platform scalability—illuminates how entrepreneurial opportunities can emerge at the intersection of market failure and institutional design, reinforcing the relational logic that runs through this issue.

The Integrated RIS4 Synthesis Model further demonstrates that territorial innovation increasingly depends upon collaborative governance structures capable of connecting institutions, regional assets, and sustainability objectives, as discussed by Vieira in this issue.

What unites these contributions—spanning bioethics, digital transformation, cultural heritage, blue entrepreneurship, organizational theory, regulatory entrepreneurship, and regional innovation—is a shared recognition that entrepreneurship is never merely an economic phenomenon. It is always also a social, ethical, and ecological phenomenon, embedded in relationships of power, trust, and mutual dependence.

3. Towards Relational Entrepreneurship

Taken together, these converging insights suggest that entrepreneurship research must attend more systematically to the relational architectures through which value is created. The traditional boundaries separating firms from environments, technology from society, innovation from ethics, and economic development from territorial sustainability are becoming increasingly permeable.

Relational entrepreneurship—as a perspective—does not replace existing theories but repositions them. It suggests that competitive advantage increasingly emerges not from what organisations possess, but from the quality of the relationships and ecosystems in which they participate, as suggested by Yazıcı in this issue.

This perspective has significant implications for how we understand entrepreneurial ecosystems. If value is co-created through interaction, then the quality of relationships—trust, mutual transformation, distributed governance—becomes as important as the quantity of resources. The resilience of entrepreneurial systems depends less on the strength of individual actors than on the diversity and depth of their symbiotic engagements (Graça & Leite, 2026).

This also has implications for how we evaluate entrepreneurial success. Traditional metrics—profit, growth, survival—capture only part of what matters. If entrepreneurship is fundamentally relational, then success must also be measured by the quality of the relationships it sustains: the trust it builds, the communities it strengthens, the ecological systems it regenerates, and the human dignity it respects (Costa Gomes, 2023).

This perspective resonates with Granovetter's (1985) argument that economic action is socially embedded, extending the notion of embeddedness towards entrepreneurial systems characterised by co-evolution, governance, and distributed value creation. This evolution is also consistent with the gradual shift from firm-centred competition towards ecosystem-based value creation (Moore, 1993).

A relational entrepreneurship perspective also invites new methodological approaches capable of capturing interaction, co-evolution, and multi-level dynamics, complementing the traditional focus on individual entrepreneurs or single firms. This methodological pluralism—embracing network analysis, process studies, comparative case designs, and longitudinal approaches—is essential for understanding how entrepreneurial

value emerges through relational configurations rather than isolated actions.

4. An Emerging Research Agenda

The articles in this issue do not merely illustrate these arguments; they also suggest directions for future inquiry.

If relational entrepreneurship is a generative perspective, then several questions become pressing. How do entrepreneurial relationships become constitutive—transforming participants rather than merely connecting them, as suggested by Yazıcı and Costa Gomes in this issue? Under what conditions do relational architectures generate resilience rather than fragility, as explored by Vieira and by Camacho and Mota? How do governance structures shape the quality of symbiotic engagements, as discussed by Martins and Costa Gomes? And how can we design entrepreneurial ecosystems that are not only efficient but also just, inclusive, and ecologically sustainable, as illustrated by the contributions of dos Santos and colleagues, López-Arquillo and colleagues, and Camacho and Mota?

These questions are not merely academic. They speak directly to the challenges facing entrepreneurial ecosystems in an era of rapid technological change, deepening ecological crisis, and widening social inequality. The frameworks developed in these pages—the holobiont theory of organizational boundaries, the corrective digital intermediary, the integrated RIS4 synthesis model, the quintuple helix in community pharmacy—offer tools for addressing these challenges.

The geographical diversity of this issue—with authors from Portugal, Turkey and Spain—reflects the journal's growing international reach and its capacity to attract contributions from different scholarly traditions and institutional contexts. The theoretical diversity is equally significant. From bioethics to biomimetics, from cultural heritage to regulatory entrepreneurship, the contributions to this issue demonstrate that entrepreneurship research is not a single discipline but a meeting point for multiple intellectual traditions. It is precisely at these intersections that the most interesting questions emerge.

5. Conclusion: The Next Frontier of Entrepreneurship Research

Entrepreneurship has always been concerned with creating new possibilities. The challenge before contemporary scholarship is to understand how those possibilities emerge within increasingly interconnected systems where technological progress, institutional capacity, ecological sustainability, and human dignity are inseparable.

If the twentieth century sought to explain how entrepreneurs create firms, the twenty-first century will increasingly be judged by its ability to explain how entrepreneurial systems create sustainable futures. The transition is not from one or-

organisational form to another but from one way of seeing organisations to another.

The contributions assembled in this issue represent one contribution to that broader conversation. The frameworks developed in these pages—the holobiont theory of organizational boundaries, the corrective digital intermediary, the integrated RIS4 synthesis model, the quintuple helix in community pharmacy—are not merely academic exercises. They are tools for understanding and shaping a world in which entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as a relational, responsible, and regenerative phenomenon.

If entrepreneurship research is to remain relevant in the decades ahead, it must increasingly explain not only how entrepreneurs create value, but how relationships, institutions, and ecosystems sustain it. That, perhaps, is the next frontier of entrepreneurship research.

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Ethical Statement

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