

## Preface

This book came into being because of my participation in the European large-scale project AEGIS “Advancing knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship and innovation for economic growth and social well-being in Europe” (2009-2012) for the work package on the sectoral dimension of low-tech sectors. The project gets in line with the recent debate on knowledge and the revival of entrepreneurship in economics. Its main idea is related to the perception of Knowledge-Intensive Entrepreneurship (KIE) as a necessary mechanism or agent of change mediating between the creation of knowledge and innovation and their transformation into economic activity. It seeks to move away from a person-centric view of entrepreneurship and considers entrepreneurs as generating and using knowledge, inserted in networks, systems, institutions and society and involved in dynamic processes of innovation and transformation. Entrepreneurship shapes and is shaped by the broader social context – including customs, culture, and institutions. Thereby knowledge does not necessarily originate from ‘knowledge organizations’ (universities, R&D organizations, etc.) alone but also from users and from related joint activities in production and use through different spillovers. Across sectors and countries the AEGIS project addresses competences and incentives that promote the generation of knowledge from suppliers, users as well as from related activities and its transformation into innovation, economic value added, and social benefits. For the first time the characteristics, scope and incentives of this specific form of entrepreneurship were not only examined in high-technology and service industries but also in low-technology industries.

Besides our first essay collection resulting from the work package on the low-tech sectoral dimension (Hirsch-Kreinsen/Schwinge 2014), this book offers rich insights in the interdisciplinary roots on the debate of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship in the specific sectoral context of low-tech industries as well as in sophisticated empirical findings from profound case studies, using the example of the German textile industry; not least because the investigation of KIE case studies in this sectoral environment resulted in the insight that systemic and structural analyses are not sufficient to understand the process of KIE in such a context. Rather, sociological theory, like the actor oriented institutional approach, is suited to gain knowledge about the interrelation of KIE and its social environment, which is the specific contribution of this book.

Despite my interest and expertise in innovation and network studies, I was not able to make use of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship and low-tech sectors when I heard about those young strands of research some years ago. I started my work as a greenhorn in this respect and faced troubles in linking these two fields of research, given their different interdisciplinary assumptions of innovation and entrepreneurship that seem to be paradox at first glance. However, the impartiality of a greenhorn par-

ticularly helped me to solve this conceptual paradox and empirically explore indeed paradox conditions for this deviating entrepreneurship from an established institutional environment. Considering the ongoing transformation not only of traditional industries but also of science towards transformative, transdisciplinary research, I am deeply grateful for this learning process and the people I met during this time.

For this reason, I would like to particularly thank my supervisor Hartmut Hirsch-Kreinsen who gave me the opportunity and time for this enlightening experience and work. Likewise, I would like to thank Carsten Kampe who introduced me to the world of science. I am also grateful for the work with my second supervisor Andreas Hack. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues Katrin Hahn, Stephanie Steden and Jörg Abel and the colloquium of the Chair of Economic and Industrial Sociology at TU Dortmund University for their various support and inspirations. My further gratitude is directed at Bo Carlsson for his precious feedback during the DRUID Academy in 2012 as well as to the inspiring exchange and good times with my partners from the AEGIS project: Attila Havas, Bram Timmermans, Christian Østergaard, Esin Yoruk, Eun Kyung Park, Jon Mikel Zabala Iturriagagoitia and Slavo Radošević. Particularly, I would like to thank my interviewees for their time and essential contribution to this work. With respect to the formal organization and editing of this book, I would like to especially thank Gundula Wilke and the student assistants from the Chair of Economic and Industrial Sociology for their proofreading, Jens Wilke und Olaf Erkens from the IT support of the faculty as well as Christian Rammer from the Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) for the friendly provision with data.

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Isabel Schwinge, Dortmund, June 2015

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