

Volume 10 Issue 1
03 / 2012
tamarajournal.com



Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry

Tamara

Restorying Entrepreneurship in a Changing World

Lorraine Warren

University of Southampton, UK
l.warren@soton.ac.uk

Robert Smith

The Robert Gordon University, UK
r.smith-a@rgu.ac.uk

Special Issue on Restorying Entrepreneurship in a Changing World
Editorial paper

In the period which preceded this special edition we had both been experimenting with narrative scholarship. In our collective readings we came across the useful concept of restorying (Boje, 2001). It struck us that what we were often attempting to do through our work was in fact to restory, or tell different stories of entrepreneurship. This is not an unusual stance to take and a classic article which does just this is that of Reich (1987) – *Entrepreneurship Reconsidered: The Team as Hero*. Indeed, Lewis and Llewellyn (2004) suggest that the enterprise culture prevalent in Western society is a moral crusade that validates the power and capacities of individual entrepreneurs to change institutions and organisations in accordance with a belief in the modernist project of improvement through economic growth. As a result, there is a long tradition in the Western media of valorising entrepreneurs as mavericks, hero figures and lone wolves admired as much for their cunning as for their qualities as serious self-made (usually) men (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005).

Consequentially, entrepreneur stories are circulated widely in the public consciousness, as heroic tales of obstacles overcome and bureaucracies toppled in pursuit of new market landscapes. For some entrepreneurs this storying brings with it an acceptance of what might be deemed brutal behaviour were it not for the magic cloak of entrepreneurial licence. For example, Alan Sugar's catchphrase 'You're Fired!' has become part of the lexicon in the UK and the US; Dragon's Den programmes, notionally about the funding of ideas from business neophytes, descend into sneering and mockery if the unfortunate inventor's ideas are deemed unsuitable. Michael O'Leary, the hardline cost-cutter of Ryanair still attracts respect, albeit that his cost cuts can impact negatively on his own customers (Warren and Anderson, 2008/2010). In our work together we sought to situate the entrepreneur in different contexts such as in fraternal settings (Warren and Smith, 2009) which go against the grain of heroic entrepreneurial narrative.

However, it is interesting to consider how long such accounts of entrepreneurial identity remain legitimate now that they are increasingly associated with the kind of reckless practices that have caused the current economic crisis. It could be argued that the current situation has arisen through a combination of deregulation and the validation of buccaneering or 'entrepreneurial' behaviours at all levels of industry, from CEO to home-owner. We believed then and still do that the climate may now be right therefore, for a re-storying of entrepreneurship. Of course, there are already ante-narratives that challenge this perspective, such as the notions of philanthropic endeavour epitomized by Bill Gates (Boje and Smith, 2010) and those who are perceived as un-heroic for whatever cultural reason e.g. Vance Miller (Warren and Smith, 2010).

Moreover, values-driven entrepreneurship and lesser-known tales of local activities that bring about social and community change albeit on a small scale all play a part in restorying the entrepreneurial tale. Thus, in this special issue we invited contributions that consider how alternative accounts of entrepreneurship may shape or be shaped by a changing economic order. We suggested that topics might include: corporate theatrics and spectacles; globalization; modes of communication; technological change; expressions of humour; leisure and play modes of resistance; cultural movements; social upheaval.

We were encouraged by the creative manner in which our contributors rose to our challenge, not always within our themes, but in their own ways each contributor has helped in what we refer to as “*rewriting entrepreneurship*” to borrow a term from (Hjorth, 2001). Daring to be qualitatively different (Smith and Anderson, 2007) is a rare quality. Recently one of us had the pleasure of witnessing a play presented at the ‘Building capacity in the new ‘European’ School of Entrepreneurship’ conference in Newcastle, England organized by Simon Down. The play or drama told or enacted the story of the research. The ‘actors’ and Chris Steyaert performed the research story and did it with aplomb. However, it was obvious from watching the facial expressions of the audience that not all of the academics present appreciated the restoried script for participating in a conference. Later discussions (held in the pub over a pint) revolved around whether it was a presentation, or not. Those involved in the conversation held passionate and almost irreconcilable views. All were friends and serious scholars of entrepreneurship. This powerful example of the danger of seeking to restory the accepted is narrated in the spirit of this call. There is no right, or wrong answer. Like, art, there is an aesthetic element to academic scholarship. It often appeals to one, or it does not. As editors we appeal to you as readers to read the material in the spirit of adventurous scholarship in which it was written, reviewed and edited.

Although theatrics and spectacles do not feature in this compilation directly it is in many respects a piece of directed theatre – a carefully, edited and reviewed ensemble. The only upheaval we encountered was in relation to editorial argument and angst as to what common thread held the eclectic contributions together. What we have learned in editing this special edition is that there is a limit to how much one can restory entrepreneurship whilst remaining within the context of the academic paper and what is acceptable to reviewers and readers alike. For this reason we present in Part 1, four papers which remain within the context of what are recognized as standard academic papers and one reflective essay. These are:-

Karin Berglund and Caroline Wigren - Societal Entrepreneurship: The shaping of a different story of entrepreneurship

Melanie Lawler – The role of story in leadership change: A look at the impact of restorying on transition for leaders.

Lynette Claire – Re-Storying the Entrepreneurial Ideal: Lifestyle Entrepreneurs as Hero?

Craig Engstrom - An Autoethnographic Account of Prosaic Entrepreneurship.

Mary Brown – *Restorying Priests as Entrepreneurs: a reflective essay on entrepreneurial leadership in the Scottish Episcopal Church.*

Granted the content of the papers is far from the standard fare we have come to expect. Because we as editors, and our authors in seeking to address the editorial comments and often conflicting advice of reviewers, often felt restricted by the accepted orthodoxy of the academic framework we took the bold, but risky, decision to encourage scholars to restory their knowledge outwith the conventional framework. Thus in the second part of the special edition on restorying mechanisms we present a variety of different styles of writing – a research note, a drama, a piece of creative writing and even poetry.

Zuleika Beavan and Bob Jerrard – Restorying the Musician as Entrepreneur: A Research Note

Tony Watson - The entrepreneur’s proposal: a small drama

Anne Smith – Exploring a creative space for researcher expression in textual and contextual entrepreneurship research studies

Diane Slaney - Reflections on restorying entrepreneurial experience via the poetry diary of an entrepreneur

We end the edition with a book review on auto-ethnography.

The first three papers listed (Berglund and Wigren; Lawler, and Claire) presented us with few editorial concerns. The context and discourse of the papers was easily recognized as a fit within the realm of entrepreneurship studies and the business/organizational worlds, by ourselves and by our reviewers. When we received the first submission from Craig Engstrom on autoethnography (Muncey, 2010) we were immediately struck by the fact that neither of us had read an actual auto-ethnographic monograph in an entrepreneurship journal. Granted we had read papers and book chapters where reference had been made to autoethnography in the methodology section or in passing (See Johannisson, 2002; Berglund, 2007). Yet as experienced reviewers and guest editors we found much to criticize. Our initial and critical list of queries would have likely ensured a rejection in other journals. However, we were mindful that there was also much that we liked too and did not want to task Craig with writing a different piece of work. We were acutely aware that in choosing to adopt a path less well travelled, i.e. auto-ethnography/entrepreneurship that whoever blazed the trail was inevitably likely to raise some quite difficult issues that it would be unfair to expect any author to address them all in one paper. We made a

decision to respect and support authors who were trying to write differently. We decided to deal only with critical issues. These were mainly structural and related to the difficulty of moving between story and academic analysis. This is a difficult task to master – hence the introduction of the storyboxes to separate the actual story from the academic restorying and introspective analysis. The piece is in our opinion quite sophisticated and includes antenarrative (Boje, 2001 and 2008; Boje, Rosile and Gardner, 2004). Yet it deals with entrepreneurship at a prosaic, everyday level. What we were also amazed at was how easily we as authors are socialized into dropping socially constructed storylines into our stories to legitimize them without thinking.

This part of the issue concludes with a fascinating and distinctive piece from Mary Brown, which contributes by restorying entrepreneurship into a setting where it is rarely applied: through restorying clerical enterprise into the recognised framework of the entrepreneur story. It contributes by restorying entrepreneurship into a setting where it is rarely applied and by restorying clerical enterprise into the recognised framework of the entrepreneur story. Although the contribution are eclectic, we believe that they do successfully restory entrepreneurship in different forms and contexts and that they continue the tradition and high standards expected of a Tamara paper.

Turning to Part Two, the research note by Zuleika Beavan and Bob Jerrard on Restorying Musicians as entrepreneurs in a way continues the theme of the previous contribution by Mary Brown in that it (re)contextualizes the restorying process in a different occupational setting whilst doing so within the context of entrepreneurship research.

When we as editors first received the drama from Tony Watson in the form of a play we were initially conflicted and set about it with editorial gusto, applying our learned editorial and reviewing logic and were none too kind to the offering. Delete this, move this part here and refer to “so and so”, we directed. However, we quickly realized that in our desire to restory the article we had inadvertently committed the academic anachronism of judging the writing using the same metrics ‘as if’ it were a standard journal article. There are precedents for using drama in entrepreneurship research as in the article by Fletcher and Watson, (2007), in their Management Learning article about entrepreneurial learning. In the course of their research Fletcher and Watson made a film with professional actors on the small family business theme. They presented a dialogic, drama-like narrative which demonstrates how entrepreneurship narratives are negotiated (and thus restoried). Narrative is after all a product of a relational process and relational becoming. Hamilton and Smith (2003) also re-scripted the responses of respondents in a family business case study to present them as a play, not to force or falsify truth but because the husband and wife respondents communicated with each other in the manner of a play with one often completing the sentence started by the other. Tony Watson’s engaging “off-the-wall” article is a small piece of creative writing (like the Guardian’s old plays in 1000 words). Rereading it calmly and carefully several times we soon realized that playfully and skillfully Tony had restoried the responses of the rejected (entrepreneurial) suitor Geoffrey almost verbatim from comments made to him by an entrepreneur respondent Jim Watson. Cleverly, this allows real live research to be performed and recontextualised in a different narrative genre. In this manner it almost acts like a research parable because it has a moral in that the clever entrepreneur should not boast of being an entrepreneur. The lesson of the play is to point to some resistance ‘out there’ in the culture of everyday people to the entrepreneurial label. What Watson wants to convey is that he is engaging in an ‘anti-entrepreneur’ re-storying which everyday people do and not engaging in a theoretical academic restorying. Thus Watson suggests we drop ‘entrepreneur’ as an academic concept and concentrate, instead, on ‘entrepreneurial action’. The piece was very carefully crafted to stand in its own terms as an expression of the ‘ethnographic imagination’ (A deliberate play on Mills’ term ‘sociological imagination’). Our authorial and editorial differences were resolved via email and telephone conversations. Restoried articles such as this one and the others which follow do not arrive fully formed as do orthodox journal offerings, but have to be coaxed and encouraged. The point is that readers have to be free to interpret the drama as it unfolds. This can be an uneasy period for both author and editor as they wonder what a reviewer will make of it. The authorial postscript allows the author to contextualise his ‘little play’ by demonstrating its link into ongoing research. There is the danger that this will create expectations of the usual academic dressing such as the mention of things like methodology and theory. We (editors, authors and reviewers) are, of course, agreed that all these expectations are vitally important and can only be adequately dealt with at length in a standard academic article. Instead we must learn to accept a modicum of academic gloss in the form of the citations and references at the end of the article as well as the explanation and justification of what Tony Watson himself referred to as ‘ethnographic fiction science’. As Tony Watson articulates the problem lies in that once one is forced to write at length about ‘fictionalising’ in ethnography and about how this can be theorized in respect of the entrepreneurship literature one loses the magic of drama. What one produces is a standard academic paper. In claiming his authorial voice, Tony Watson is presenting a restoried version of real life research in a more readable manner using the rhetorical principle of the fiction ‘surprise’. In drama, following narrative traditions, nor does one provide background information on the cast or members of the dramatis personae. As Tony Watson himself articulated “It is of the essence in play writing / wrighting that the

audience must be enabled to infer *for themselves* from the action and dialogue itself ‘what the people are like’. Finally, the mechanism of the play is central in permitting the author to retain the use of the first person voice in his writing. It is a fair point that authors are hampered in narrating if they cannot use the word ‘I’.

As editors we were keen to encourage creative writing. This was a key theme which emerged from the submission by Anne Smith, where an argument is created for creative writing as a potential tool for sense-making in academic writing. If so, it could inhabit a space specifically in communicating textual and contextual studies as a form of restoried entrepreneurship. Finally, Diane Slaney explores the value of using traditional forms of poetry to underpin and also restory everyday entrepreneurial experience. In concluding with these three distinctive pieces we thus offer readers a triage of new writing genres. We end by saluting our contributors for taking us on a journey beyond our initial destination of restorying entrepreneurship for a changing world, and pointing the way to new forms of storying for entrepreneurship.

References

- Berglund, H. (2007). Researching Entrepreneurship as Lived Experience. In H. Neergaard & J. P. Ulhoi (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship* (pp. 75-93). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Boje, D. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communicational Research*. New York: Sage.
- Boje, D., Rosile, G. A., & Gardner, C. L. (2004, August 9th). *Antenarrative, Narratives and Anaemic Stories*. Paper at the All Academy Symposium “Actionable Knowledge as the Power to Narrate”, New Orleans meeting of the Academy of Management.
- Boje, D. (2001). *Storytelling Organisations*. New York: Sage.
- Boje, D., & Smith, R. (2010). Re-storying and visualising the changing entrepreneurial identities of Bill Gates and Richard Branson. *Culture & Organization*, 16, 307-331.
- Fletcher, D., & Watson, T. (2007). Entrepreneurship, Management Learning and Negotiated Narratives: ‘Making it Otherwise for Us—Otherwise for Them’. *Management Learning*, 38, 9-26.
- Hamilton, E., & Smith, R. (2003). *The Entrepreneur: A Silent Entrepreneurial Narrative*. Paper presented at the annual SBED conference.
- Hjorth, D. (2001). *Rewriting Entrepreneurship: Enterprise discourse and entrepreneurship in the case of re-organising ES. Växjö* : Växjö University Press.
- Johannisson, B. (2002, September). *Enacting Entrepreneurship – Using Auto Ethnography to Study Organization Creation*. Paper presented at the conference Ethnographic Organizational Studies, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland.
- Lewis, P., & Llewellyn, N. (2004). Enterprise and entrepreneurial identity. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 5, 5-7.
- Nicholson, L., & Anderson, A. R. (2005). News and Nuances of the Entrepreneurial Myth and Metaphor: Linguistic Games in Entrepreneurial Sense-Making and Sense-Giving. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29, 153–172.
- Reich, R. B. (1987). Entrepreneurship Reconsidered: The Team as Hero. *Harvard Business Review*, May-June.
- Smith, R., & Anderson, A.R. (2007). *Daring to be different: A dialogue on the problems of getting qualitative work published*. In H. Neergaard & J. P. Ulhoi (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship* (pp. 434-459). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Warren, L., & Smith, R. (2009). Fraternity, Legitimacy and (his)tory: Deconstructing the collective presentation of entrepreneur stories as excess. *Tamara Journal for Critical Organisation Inquiry*, 8, 48-58.