

# Entrepreneurship in older age – panacea for ageing workforce or a new fictitious social role for older adults?

The analysis of European policies for senior entrepreneurship.

Justyna Stypińska  
Freie Universität Berlin

# MOMENT

Making of Mature Entrepreneurs

## Making of Mature Entrepreneurs: Life Course Perspective on the Entrepreneurship in Older Age in Germany and Poland

**Project Leader:**  
**Freie Universität Berlin**  
Dr. Justyna Stypińska

**Project Partner:**  
**University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg**  
Prof. Annette Franke

**Co-operation Partners:**  
**Jagiellonian University Kraków**  
Prof. Jolanta Perek-Białas, Dr. Konrad Turek

**Project duration:** 01.2017-12.2019

**Funding:**  
German Scientific Foundation (DFG)

# Shortly about the project..

- Life course perspective
- Comparative perspective (Poland, Germany: West, East) on the individual and institutional factors shaping senior entrepreneurship
- The Work Packages:
  - Policy Analysis (German, Polish, European Policies on senior entrepreneurship)
  - Qualitative interviews with older entrepreneurs
  - Expert Interviews
  - Secondary Data Analysis \*\*

# Theoretical framework (1)

## Concept of *enterprising self*

(Ainsworth and Hardy 2008; Bröckling 2005; Bröckling 2015; Bührmann 2005; Groß 2016)

- „as a way of understanding the modern **acts of subjectivization**”, “presupposition about human nature as entrepreneurial, i.e. as active, innovative, creative, flexible, competitive, free, and highly self- reliant” (Groß 2016)
- “process of producing a **model for people to show them what they are or what they are supposed to be**. It tells them how to work on their self in order to become what they ought to become” (Bröckling 2015)
- “involves **normative demands and role models, as well as institutional arrangements, social technologies and technologies of self**, according to which people are expected to regulate their behaviour” (Bröckling 2015: 12).
- With being a highly-politicalised issue entrepreneurial activity is **less a fact, and more a field of force**
- On the one hand, **it can strengthen the self-confidence and self-efficacy**, but it may also **increase the feeling of powerlessness and exclusion**. It may set free creativity, but it may also generate anger and frustration (Bröckling 2007).

# Theoretical framework (2)

## Perspective of critical gerontology and critical age studies

(Baars et al. 2006; Estes 1999; Katz and Calasanti 2014; Krekula 2007, Krekula and Johannson 2017)

- the premise **that age and ageing are socially constructed**, where the **role of state and economy** play the key role, and where age is understood as a principle of social organization and social control (Baars et al. 2006; Krekula and Johannson 2017)
- looks at how the structural **inequalities related to race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, and disability** can influence the experiences of aging and the lives of older adults (Estes and Minkler 1999; Katz and Calasanti 2014).
- tries to shift the focus **away from the model of individual responsibility for ageing** (Rowe and Kahn 1997) **into a direction of “response-ability”** and recognising “the capacity of individuals for building on their strengths and meeting the challenges posed by the environment” (Minkler in: Holstein, Minkler 2003: 790).
- **critical age studies** shift focus from enclosed categorisations to **relational aspects which emphasise how age categorisations are constructed in relation to each other** (Krekula and Johannson 2017)
- Krekula and Johannson (2017) describe three starting points in critical age studies: the idea that age is an organising principle, that age is done and that age is a power relation

# Research questions

- **How is senior entrepreneurship represented in the European policies?**
  - In which policy frameworks is senior entrepreneurship embedded?
  - What are the dominant narratives of senior entrepreneurship in the European policies?
- **Thesis:**
  - *senior entrepreneurship as presented in policy texts is a form of enforcement of entrepreneurial self, and as such is a field of force, where mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion operate*

# Methodological approach

- **The critical analysis of policy texts** (Bacchi 2008, Biggs 2001 , Moulaert and Biggs 2012 Katz, 2014 , Taylor 1997)
- The approach departs from the conviction that policy texts “constitute nodal points or networks of signifying practice generally; networks of discourse which constitute a field of power and knowledge” (Houl, 1984 in Taylor 1997, p. 26).
- Policies are not to be understood as “attempted solutions” to certain “problems”, but should be rather approached as “**competing interpretations and representations of political issues**” (Bacchi 2008, p. 2)
- **Two tiers of analysis:**
  - **Identification of policy frameworks**
  - **Identification of dominant narratives**
  - Three “themes” were chosen on the basis of which texts passages were collected for the analysis. First, descriptions of the socio-demographic characteristics of the senior entrepreneurs, as well as their social, cultural and financial capital. Secondly, accounts explaining the role of senior entrepreneurship for society, polity, economy and the ageing population itself. Thirdly, the passages describing the types of businesses and measures of success
  - The choice of these themes was informed by the research question.
  - Analysing those themes, the attention was paid to what critical gerontology refers to as “the power of narrative” – to what extent do those narratives have inclusive or exclusive character.
- Policy documents of European Union and OECD

# Policy documents

|   | Title   | Year of publication | Published by   | Type of document                              | Legal Clause * |
|---|---|---------------------|--|---|----------------|
| 1 | “Policy Brief on Senior Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial Activities in Europe”           | 2012                | European Commission, OECD                                | Policy Brief                                  | yes            |
| 2 | “Senior entrepreneurship”   | 2012                | OECD   | A background paper                            | yes            |
| 3 | “Microfinance as a support to senior entrepreneurship and to the transfer of competences” | 2012                | European Commission, European Microfinance Network (EMN) | Research analysis with policy recommendations | yes            |
| 4 | “Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe”      | 2013                | European Commission                                      | Action Plan                                   | no             |
| 5 | “The Missing Entrepreneurs: Policies for Self-employment and Entrepreneurship”            | 2013, 2014, 2015    | OECD Publishing  | Policy analysis report                        | yes            |
| 6 | “Senior Entrepreneurship Good Practices Manual”   | 2016                | European Commission                                      | Manual of good practices                      | yes            |



# Senior entrepreneurship within European Policy Frameworks

- Active Ageing
  - Inclusive Entrepreneurship
- Two central frameworks for senior entrepreneurship can be identified: one under the paradigm of “active ageing” and promotion of economic activity among older adults, and the second under a paradigm of “inclusive entrepreneurship”, where efforts are made to increase the overall number of entrepreneurs in European countries.
  - Sometimes a sharp differentiation between the two frameworks was not possible, as they overlap in several documents, for example in “Policy Brief on Senior Entrepreneurship” from 2012. The categorization should thus be approached flexibly.

# Dominant narratives of senior entrepreneurship

In the result of critical policy text analysis, two major and two sub-narratives were identified, where, it is argued, the mechanisms of exclusion operate:

- 1) the narrative of a hegemonic entrepreneur(ship)
- 2) the narrative of economization of the senior entrepreneurship, with two sub narratives:
  - 2a) growth orientation,
  - 2b) measures of success

# 1. Hegemonic model of entrepreneurship

## 1. Hierarchical and homogenous structure

- “Inclusive entrepreneurship” framework of EC/OECD acknowledges that “there is a common perception that the typical entrepreneur in the European Union (EU) is **white, male, and wealthy**” (OECD/ The European Commission 2014).
  - senior entrepreneurs are pictured as **vulnerable, disadvantaged, marginalized and under-represented group**, which should now be incorporated into the mainstream of entrepreneurship
  - While recognizing the variety of marginalized groups within the dominant entrepreneurial discourse, the documents fail to acknowledge the diversity of the group of senior entrepreneurs themselves.
  - The model of senior entrepreneurs is thus a **homogenous** one, where **intersectional identities are not recognized**

## 2. Domination of managerial/professional entrepreneurship

- On the other hand, the policy documents focusing exclusively on senior entrepreneurship do recognize that the group of older entrepreneurs is **not a homogenous one**, but **the categorizations and typologies created reflect only the relations and functionality of the businesses and do not take into consideration the socio-economic statuses or inequalities stemming from various life course trajectories**
  - “Manual” (2016) and includes the **4 types of entrepreneurial roles for older adults**, i.e.: **entrepreneurs, freelancers, investors or mentors**.
  - The roles are framed as “strategic or technical consultants or investors”, “supporting the establishment or development of businesses”, “advisors or trainers”, “professional mentors” (European Commission 2016).
  - These descriptions are **pointers for a high professionalization of the ideal type of a senior entrepreneur**, where possession of wide range of prior capitals is necessary, be it economic, social, cultural or managerial capital. Skills and education, being proxies for social class, are also important determinants of the entrepreneurial success.

## 2. *The economization of senior entrepreneurship*

- Portrayal of the role of senior entrepreneurs in predominantly **economic terms**
- Both policy frameworks are permeated with a vision of the group **of senior entrepreneurs as being “untapped resources” or “capital”, which could and should be “utilized” or “capitalized” so that they can make a valuable contribution to the economy and society.** Even though the policies highlight the two dimensions of senior entrepreneurship – the social and economic – it is only the economic dimension which is being emphasized.
- **Role of crisis:** “ due to the crisis, many countries have reduced social spending, specifically in pensions and healthcare systems. Economies have suffered and **public finances have become more difficult to balance (...)** **Nowadays, senior entrepreneurship is seen as one of the means to countervail this situation” (Entreneurship 2020 Action Plan, 2013)**

# Economization: sub-narratives

- ***(2a) The growth paradigm***
- Perpetuation of an assumption that **growth** (profit maximization and job creation) is indisputable. The first recommendation of the “Missing entrepreneur” report advises to: **“Focus growth support on those individuals who are motivated for growth”** (OECD/European Union 2015).
  - Whereas senior entrepreneurs themselves say “The pressure to become millionaires would kill us” (Weber and Schaper 2007: 17).
  - older ones are not only less growth-oriented, but more co-operative than younger
  - Social enterprises
- ***(2b) Measures of success***
- The 2012 “Policy Brief” : “There are different ways to measure success of a business: **survival, sales, employment creation and profitability are all common measures**” (OECD/European Union 2012: 12).
  - non-pecuniary rewards of business, “giving back to society” (Botham and Graves 2009).
  - desire for personal involvement, responsibility and the independent quality and style of life

# Conclusions

- The models of the senior entrepreneur as framed in the European policies **fulfil entirely the set of prerequisites for the enterprising self as highly normative power structure supported by institutional arrangements (Bröckling 2007)**. The entrepreneur as an ultimate version of an *entrepreneurial self* becomes the imperative role model for the “new economy” (post-crisis) (EU 2013).
- **one dominant model of entrepreneurship**, namely growth – oriented enterprise, where the notion of successful entrepreneurs is constructed along the commercial requirements of a business. The images of successful senior entrepreneurs are sketched **around the characteristics of a hegemonic Schumpeterian ideal type of entrepreneur**, leaving little space for modifications
  - Large discrepancies in entrepreneurial intentions among older persons are further exacerbated by different national and institutional contexts
  - Accumulated **advantages** and disadvantages of a life course
- **“A specter is haunting modernity (*our old age*) —the specter of entrepreneurship”** (da Costa and Silva Saraiva 2012: 588).

# Bibliography

- Ainsworth, S., & Hardy, C. (2008). The Enterprising Self: An Unsuitable Job for an Older Worker. *Organization*, doi.org/10.1177/1350508408088536
- Biggs, S. (2001). Toward critical narrativity stories of aging in contemporary social policy. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 15(4), 303–316. doi:10.1016/S0890-4065(01)00025-1
- Bröckling, U. (2005). Gendering the Enterprising Self: Subjectification Programs and Gender Differences in Guides to Success. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, (11), 7–25.
- Bröckling, U. (2007). *Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Bröckling, U. (2015). *The Entrepreneurial Self. Fabricating a new type of subject*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2
- Estes, C. (1999). Critical gerontology and the new political economy of aging. In *Critical gerontology: Perspectives from political and moral economy* (pp. 17–35). New York: Baywood Publishing.
- Estes, C., & Minkler, M. (1999). *Critical gerontology: Perspectives from political and moral economy*. (C. Estes & M. Minkler, Eds.). New York: Baywood Publishing.
- Katz, S. (2014). What Is Age Studies? *Age Culture Humanities*. Resource document. <http://ageculturehumanities.org/WP/what-is-age-studies/>
- Katz, S., & Calasanti, T. (2014). Critical perspectives on successful aging: Does it “appeal more than it illuminates”? *Gerontologist*, <http://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu027>
- Kautonen, T. (2008). Understanding the older entrepreneur: Comparing third age and prime age entrepreneurs in Finland. *International Journal of Business*, 3(3), 3–13.
- Kautonen, T. (2013). *Senior Entrepreneurship*. Turku: OECD.
- Krekula, C. (2007). The Intersection of Age and Gender: Reworking Gender Theory and Social Gerontology. *Current Sociology*, doi.org/10.1177/0011392107073299
- Krekula, C., & Johansson, B. (2017). *Kritiska åldersstudier (Critical age studies)*. Malmö: Studentlitteratur.
- OECD/ The European Commission. (2014). *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2014. Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship in Europe*. OECD Publishing. doi.org/10.1787/9789264188167-en
- OECD/European Union. (2012). *Policy Brief on Senior Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial Activities in Europe*. Luxembourg: OECD Publishing.
- OECD/European Union. (2015). *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2015. Policies for self-employment and entrepreneurship*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <http://doi.org/10.1787/9789264188167-en>
- Rowe, J., & Kahn, R. L. (1997). Successful aging. *The Forum*, 14(9), 46–48.
- Schott, T., Rogoff, E., Herrington, M., & Kew, P. (2017). *Senior entrepreneurship. Special Topic Report 2016-2017*.