Female Entrepreneurship in the Creative Economy

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to bring a deeper understanding of the crossings between the different types of entrepreneurship. We are especially focused on females by bringing the crossings with social and creative entrepreneurship to understand their common grounding - beyond profit orientation. Starting from the literature review, our goal is to offer conceptual similarities and differences between the three types of entrepreneurship. Our central hypothesis is that all three types of entrepreneurship hold the same fundamental grounding reflected through their mission and vision – beyond profit orientation. The literature review will be crossed with empirical findings from cultural and creative industries on the example of fashion and design industry actors in the Belgrade design district. Such an approach will contribute to mapping and deeper understanding of existing female creative entrepreneurship, which is gender-sensitive, responsible, and share the mission and vision that goes beyond profit orientation.

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We came to the empirical findings from our interviews and focus group discussion. The vast majority of examined samples of entrepreneurial organizations within the Belgrade Design District see themselves as responsible entrepreneurs. According to their daily, monthly and yearly practices, most of them fit under all three types of entrepreneurship – by contributing from the sphere of fashion and crafts (wider creative and cultural industries). On the example of Belgrade’s fashion and craft design sector, we can conclude that all three types of entrepreneurship overlap - as socially responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship led by creativity, innovation and experimental work.

**KEYWORDS:** female entrepreneurship, creative and cultural entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, social economy, economy for the commons

**Introduction**

In the last two decades, with especially noticeable incensement, we witnessed the growing interest in the research and practice of academics, NGOs and broader audiences in various forms of entrepreneurship – beyond profit orientation. The particular types of entrepreneurship now hold an essential role in addressing social challenges and issues. They cannot fit into the general entrepreneurship typology. Still, they share a common grounding in contributing the social, then economic reproduction, by solving social issues, where the profit is a side effect rather than a goal per se. These forms of entrepreneurship allow us to capture their gentle differences and similarities. By addressing the social, environmental, systemic, identity, cultural, gender, class, power relations, etc., enterprises’ contribution to a fairer society is great. These issues directly or indirectly influence the sustainability paradigm- in the permanent crisis context that explains the state of current global economic systems.

We intend to provide the overall picture for at least three types of entrepreneurship – beyond profit orientation, based on the state of art review literature for each, to capture their gentle differences, similarities and overlapping fields. This approach assumes a methodological path from the particular to the general. More precisely, we will start with an independent systematic literature review for each type of selected form of entrepreneurship. The Grounded theory will support this step, which assumes exploratory, inductive qualitative research. Secondly, crossing the academic findings with practice, involving the policy framework, on the example of creative and cultural industries (CCI) (precisely fashion and
craft design in Serbia) will allow us to prove or disprove the hypothesis by answering the research questions and filling the knowledge gaps.

We conclude that all three types of entrepreneurship contribute directly to transforming the entrepreneurial ecosystem by going beyond the profit orientation. In such terms, value creation addressing - is essential to their mission to solve systemic issues while contributing as a control factor to the sustainability paradigm.

In this paper, we aim to respond to the following queries:

a) What are the main similarities and differences between the three types particular entrepreneurship?

b) How do the main theoretical streams (for each of the three types) conceptualize and define cultural, female and social entrepreneurship? Are these concepts strictly or more fluid by nature?

c) What plays a role in conceptualizations? Are there specific schools of thought; How to fill the academic gaps?

d) How do the practitioners contribute to the economy for commons and sustainability as a paradigm? How do actors match themselves with types of entrepreneurship?

Exploring Entrepreneurship Concepts Based on Selected Types: Female, Social and Creative

In this part of the paper, our idea is to explore previous relevant theoretical research to bring a more profound understanding regarding the different conceptualizations in entrepreneurship. Each of those types - female, social and creative, are seen as sub-frameworks of the "general" knowledge of entrepreneurship. The growing interest in literature and practice that often overlaps in practical terms also connects all three types. Also, each kind of entrepreneurship's conceptualization is evolving more flexibly, than strictly. Furthermore, there is no universal definition for any of the three types of entrepreneurship. Instead, the theoretical schools of thought and variations of the research scopes allow us to perceive the sensitivities and complexities in knowledge analysis. The particular interest entrepreneurship types are interdisciplinary fields where the conclusions and understandings appear trans-disciplinary. The entrepreneurial ecosystem and capital conceptualizations go far beyond financial and economic analysis. In other words, these forms of entrepreneurship brought knowledge
decolonization and, at the same time, discourse integration that presupposes dealing with community, natural, cultural, human, social, and political capital(s) as equally important in analytical terms. As such - the scope of entrepreneurship we deal with, bridges socio-humanistic scientific fields, including sociology, anthropology, political sciences, management, economics, finance, marketing and communications, cultural, environmental sciences, etc.

**Female Entrepreneurship – Theory Bases, Streams and Findings**

One of the most essential at the same time challenging contemporary issues is addressing social and environmental concerns - as a growing trend in the academic world and practice. To underline planetary social, economic and ecological deviations such as inequality, poverty, care work, material and eco-footprint, and other global disadvantages are topical areas of social entrepreneurship. As such, different business proposals are seen as spaces for change. Our position regards the topic of female entrepreneurship as it represents an extension of social entrepreneurship by involving different positionalities (especially gender) while addressing structural, systemic issues to contribute their unbalances through innovations towards the desirable social transformation. Also, the variations from practice show that it may be economic or non-economic, for-profit or nonprofit, by contributing the social and environmental issues through altruistic, philanthropic and solidarity visions (Portales, 2019). It is about achieving social change based on the recognized problem and associated actions taken to solve it expressed explicitly in the organizational mission to sustain and create social value (Dees, 1998; Portales, 2019). The goal of value creation is social impact, with solid inclusion of community and marginalized groups. Valorization is measured by the achieved social impact or change, pushing further the limits to seek how to scale the model (Barki et al., 2015). Chahine (2023) defines social entrepreneurship as the process by which successful, ground-breaking, and long-lasting solutions are developed to address social and environmental concerns (Chahine, 2023).

Beyond wealth creation in social entrepreneurship, female business owners frequently place emphasis on the non-economic aims of assisting others and adding value to the community and society (Brush, 1992; Levie & Hart, 2011; Sullivan & Meek, 2012). In certain economic, political, and social circumstances, enterprise operations may reproduce the societal gender hierarchies that now exist (Gawell & Sudin, 2014; Muntean &
The alteration of women’s economic, social, psychological, political, and legal issues is a key component of empowerment. The economic empowerment of women is also a subject of social equity and human rights (Pavlović et al., 2022).

Theoretically, female entrepreneurship draws from a variety of fields. It refers to empirical findings from earlier studies in the fields of psychology, sociology, management theory, economics, and feminist theory (Ahl, 2002).

According to the research focus, some scholars noticed the general research streams in female entrepreneurship. One of the freshest elaborations (Cardella et al., 2020) offered six cluster research streams (respecting the most cited) in addition to the following topics: barriers to women entrepreneurship (Al-Shami et al., 2017); the role of human and social capital in the growth of women enterprises (Brush et al, 2017); culture and gender difference (Stedham & Wieland, 2017); family support and maternity management (Jaafar et al., 2015); linking social entrepreneurship and women empowerment (Berglund et al., 2018).

Applying feminist theoretic lenses is crucial to understanding and operating with dichotomies in entrepreneurship. This approach involves the conceptualizations and confrontations of archetypal female and male principles, seen as photogenic stereotypes to depict ever-existing gender antagonism. While the entrepreneur (even social) is described as heroic, ambitious, courageous, strong and enterprising masculine, at the same time, it tends to reconcile feminine principles by highlighting the concerns with exclusion, marginalization, suffering, care, unpaid work, empathy etc. (Martin & Osberg, 2007). This happens by questioning whether occupations are masculine, feminine, or gender neutral (Loza de Siles, 2011). There is a strong match in terms of feminist theoretical streams that deal with female entrepreneurship.

Ahl (2002) gave a framework based on research conducted at the beginning of the 2000s, by recognizing feminist theoretical streams starting from women in management, social feminism, liberal and social feminism, socialist/Marxist feminism, and social constructionist approach (Ahl, 2002), which are still relevant fundamental positions for the research phenomenon.

By shifting the focus from entrepreneurship as positive economic activity to entrepreneurship as social transformation, authors working on a critical feminist theoretical exercise frequently broaden the purview of entrepreneurship theory and research (Calás et al., 2009). More specifically, the conventional viewpoint defines entrepreneurship as a nexus of
opportunities, entrepreneurial individuals and teams, and manner of organization within the broader context of wider settings that promotes economic growth (Busenitz et al., 2003).

Since equal access to economic activity is a matter of (missing) equality human rights, some feminist theoretical streams (liberal, psychoanalytic, and radical) believe that increased women's participation in economic activities will lead to social change (Brush et al., 2004, Carter & Williams, 2003, Greene et al., 1999, Lykes & Coquillon, 2007).

Finally, the socialist and postcolonial feminism perspectives start to form the goal – of social change where entrepreneurship is a set of activities and processes to meet the goal by involving the cultural context that structurally determines these processes (Calás et al., 2009).

The liberal feminist streams draw attention to the difficulties experienced by women by offering remedies aimed at lessening behaviors and prejudices that obstruct gender equality (Offen, 1988; Clark Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015). By concentrating on the structural configurations and cultural presumptions that serve to reproduce gender disparities, the socialist feminist theoretical position moves beyond individualism. The global/postcolonial feminist theories, on the other hand, focus on how neoliberal economic ideology and practices result in a gendered political economy and entrepreneur subject (Clark Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015).

Feminist theories are seen as fundamental to analyzing and understanding female entrepreneurship, as a prerequisite to understanding the gentle differences and similarities with other entrepreneurial forms. Feminist theoretical streams provide an understanding of complex traits that distinguish entrepreneurial work as ways in which it is placed within gendered processes that form and are shaped through linkages between occupation, organizational structure, and labor sex (Mirchandani, 1999). We join many authors who believe it is impossible to deal with female or women's entrepreneurship without involving feminist theoretical frameworks, which are different but find the same denominator regarding the female position. The essential thesis of all feminist theories, which focus on social transformation and capture historically created disadvantaged women's positions, is that the gender question is important to how society is structured (Calas & Smircich, 2006; Calás et al., 2009). Feminist theories seek ways to deconstruct the structural, systemic conditions (based on inequalities) by recognizing female entrepreneurs as agents of social change,
which can produce and transform society in more sustainable, ethical and desirable ways.

The female appears to be an expanded form of social entrepreneurship because of its narrower focus on gender biases and gendered economic structures as potential barriers to women participating in society and business on an equal footing with men (Clark Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015). Moreover, the same authors suggested that gender integrative conceptualization is important in redesigning entrepreneurial ecosystems, which will promote gender equality. Mentioned conceptualization moves beyond simple awareness of gender injustices and inequities, but rather transforms institutions that provide essential entrepreneurial support by implicating shared caregiving labor and commitment, instead of being assigned to women (Clark Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015).

Although the research field and phenomenon are multilayered and vibrant, future research shall bring a continual deeper analysis by capturing relations between work-life balance and women's entrepreneurship (Zerwas, 2019) towards the other relevant correlations and causalities. They shall involve crossings with the quality of life, life satisfaction, life expectancy, material footprint, and eco-footprint - to capture the distribution of inequalities in the dichotomist world discourse. It assumes to involve positionality, gender, culture, Global North – Global South, Centre-Periphery, developed-developing countries, exogenous-endogenous knowledge, etc., to bring a more profound understanding of the local vs. global context in more profound ways.

In the developing world, there are great benefits to supporting female entrepreneurs. In order to advance on many crucial fronts, such as stimulating economic growth and household welfare, promoting uniqueness, and advancing the objective of women's empowerment globally, it is important to support women in starting and growing their businesses (Moreno-Gavara & Jiménez-Zarco, 2017). It remains a challenging task for women to start and maintain successful business operations, even in the creative industry. A mere third of small enterprises globally are owned and operated by women, according to a wealth of statistics. Thus, according to theoretical and empirical evidence (Moreno-Gavara & Jiménez-Zarco, 2017), female entrepreneurs face trouble securing financing. Financial institutions are inaccessible to 70% of small businesses with female owners in underdeveloped countries, making funding a considerable difficulty (Santos et al., 2021).
Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurship - Theory Bases, Streams and Findings

Research on the development of the creative industries over the past 25 years has primarily focused on quantifying the economic growth and exports of this sector, as well as the employment distribution, and has not considered gender viewpoints on the development of the creative sector (Mikić, 2020).

In modern literature, different terms can be found to denote the decade in which creativity takes as an economically relevant factor that affects the transformation of social and economic structures, such as the creative economy, the experience economy, the symbolic economy, the economy of added value, etc. Familiar to all these neologisms is that they describe, from different aspects, new economic tendencies, the essence of which is a comprehensive transformation of the economy in which creative resources experience massive economic valorization and in which cultural and symbolic features increasingly influence economic creativity.

Numerous attempts have been made to define the scope of the creative economy and specify the areas it covers. Nevertheless, it is evident that on the international professional and research scene, there is a consensus that a more significant part of the creative economy consists of creative industries understood in a broader or narrower sense. In the simplest terms, it can be defined as an economy based on creativity. This term denotes ways of using creativity, knowledge and skills to produce new values (symbolic, cultural, social, economic etc.), as well as institutional structures and processes through which creativity materializes value or achieves cultural strength or establishment of importance depending on the culture (Mikić, 2015).

Creative economy, apart from the creative sector, includes every other activity and activity in which existence, skills and solutions are used in a new way and where there is a high degree of aestheticization and commercialization of production (Hartley, 2007).

Creative entrepreneurship describes entrepreneurial activity in the creative industry and refers to investing in the talent of the entrepreneur or others. There is a broad consensus that creativity involves novelty, efficacy, and value (Colin, 2017). The new economic trend is shifting away from knowledge-based activities, toward more creative and innovative entrepreneurship (Santos et al., 2021). Someone that establishes a business model in the creative industry, one of the fastest-growing industries, is
referred to as a creative entrepreneur. Accordingly, creative entrepreneurship is the practice of starting a business in a creative industry, such as art, architecture, literature, performing arts, music, film, or software. It can also include gaming, urban regeneration, art and design, photography, industrial innovation and artificial intelligence, mass media (paper, audio, or video), fashion and design, traditional crafts, monuments, cultural tourism and more (Santos et al., 2021). Additionally, creative entrepreneurship: (1) entails as an activity that explores intellectual property, talent, and individual creativity; (2) is an activity that connects intellectual property to the economic sector as the entrepreneur utilizes his talent; (3) results in products that have significant expressive value, which can be considered as social, aesthetic, spiritual, historical, symbolic, and authenticity value (Santos et al., 2021).

Managing the company on both the financial and artistic levels is the most challenging problem a creative entrepreneur could encounter (Moreno-Gavara & Jiménez-Zarco, 2017). Entrepreneurial and creative or cultural talents are connected through creative entrepreneurship. The fact that there is an unpredictably high demand, an infinite diversity, and difficulty identifying the abilities necessary to make the items is another fundamental problem with the cultural industries (Santos et al., 2021).

With a percentage of GDP ranging from 3.4% to 7.1%, the creative industries form a significant part of the Serbian economy. They are expanding more rapidly than the rest of the economy. More than 125,000 people are employed by the sectors over 30,000 registered enterprises, about 53.8% of them are between the ages of 20 and 45, have a bachelor's degree, and between 40 and 45 percent of them are women (Kovačević, 2021). It is evident that creative industries, like any other economic sector, create gross added value, generate employment, improve the balance of payments, and contribute to the growth of export revenues (Rikalović, 2013). The increased interest in the development CCI sector and the creation of public policy measures appeared because of the vital role that this sector plays - as one of the most important agents of socialization, the transmission of cultural ethos, symbolic messages, construction of value patterns, protection and improvement of cultural expressions, etc. (Mikić, 2016).
Empirical Findings on Female Entrepreneurship in the Creative Sector - Belgrade Design District Case Study Analysis

We conducted an empirical analysis from the 20th of January to the 1st of March. The first round involved a semi-structural survey on the snowball sample, which included 33 Belgrade Design District actors, to deepen the understanding of the current fashion and crafts cluster. From the first round, we got fully responded surveys from 22 people. Our survey structure included three parts: 1) Demographical data, 2) Quality and type of work, values and satisfaction, and 3) Types of entrepreneurships.

In the second round, we conducted a focus group with 11 actors. The goal was to bring more firm conclusions regarding their motivations, attitudes, entrepreneurship types, contributions to the broader local community, and audience-based questions for the discussions and values they addressed, but also to understand some specific attitudes from the sector about the sector.

In our sample, 100% were female, where 64% belonged to the age group between 35-49 years old, while 36% were between 18-34 years old, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Age distribution](Source: Author's empirical research contribution)

Regarding the highest level of professional education, 85.3% of them are holders of M.A. degrees and graduated (4 years of study), 6.3% while the others equally contribute to the bachelor and high school degrees, as shown in Figure 2.
They were asked to indicate their sector; 85% work in the private sector, while others are equally distributed in the public and civil sectors, as shown in Figure 3. Most of those who chose the public sector explained that their primary job is in the public sector, while they do creative fashion and crafts as a hobby.

The second group of questions showed us their attitudes regarding the quality and type of work, values and satisfaction.

Furthermore, by explaining their work status, 47.6% answered that they are employed (regardless of the type of contract), 38.1% were self-
employed, while the other 14.3% declared themselves unemployed, as shown in Figure 4. The self-employed category hires seasonally (less than three people).

![Figure 4: Type of employment](image)

Source: Author's empirical research contributions

The second group of questions was related to the quality and type of the work, values and satisfaction.

Above 90% of respondents answered to work in flexible working patterns, as shown in Figure 5. More precisely, when we asked them to discuss and explain what is meant by flexible work patterns, they explained:

"I can freely decide on the duration and place of work" (…) "Free working time means a lot to me because I can dedicate myself to work, family, hobbies etc." (…) "Adjusting my working time and private obligations is essential because I live alone with two children" (…) "I have the freedom to set the work assignments and deadlines for myself" (…) "I set my own rules, by taking frequent breaks – I am more productive and effective" (…) "The freedom to arrange my work to coordinate my rhythm of life and family obligations" (…) "I like that I can "break my own" schedule in the period of life and job I do" (…) "It fits my other primary job, collaborations, costumer assistance and monitoring".
We can conclude that flexible work patterns meant the freedom to balance work and private time, as fundamentally important for those entrepreneurs. Furthermore, 80% of them answered that the best suitable workplace is their atelier/workshop, while 25% also added the gallery as a second choice. Only 20% answered that the best workplace is their home. Moreover, when asked about average daily working hours, 57.4% responded that they usually work more than six and less than 8 hours per day, while 33.3% said they generally work more than 8 hours, while 9.3% work less than 6 hours per day.

Regarding the satisfaction of earned income from entrepreneurship activity, 71.4% said they were neutral. In comparison, 25.6% were satisfied with the income from their entrepreneurship activity, as shown in Figure 6. When asked to explain what their earnings provide, about 50% of them in the focus group discussion agreed that the earnings cover the cost of living, while slightly less than 25% said that earnings ensure a dignified life.

Other answers regarding the earnings that appeared from the entrepreneurship activities depend on life dynamics: "It is necessary for household (of 4 members) to have at least two working members who earn 1000e net per capita, to meet the decent life in Belgrade" (...) "Depending from month to month, I work in school, and here, my husband also participate, we are five family members" (...) "My income covers only working costs, after purchasing materials and paying bills, what I left is usually 0, but I have primary earnings from programming" (...) "I still do not manage to cover my living expenses".
Other questions involved issues regarding discrimination, where 90% of them have never felt discriminated against based on gender. However, more than 70% believe workplace discrimination is usually related to gender, identity, values, class, race, and ethnicity. Still, they agreed that job discrimination in creative work is not a common phenomenon. Moreover, gender equality is present in their field of work, or even "female domination, that appears due to the nature of fashion and craft industry". Around 90% see their field of work as first place cooperation, secondly healthy competition and joint work, while less than 10% see it as unhealthy competition. The way they see to contribute a better world is reflected in more than 80% of answers, as they pointed out the topics by which they "call the change": creative and traditional knowledge and crafts keepers; circular work, recycling, environmentally friendly products; pointing out on the importance of domestic and high-quality production; showing that female artists can live from their (job) creation.

Most of them agree that their work creates cultural values and leads to cultural changes." By motivating people to recognize the quality, craftwork and uniqueness of the products that capture artistic values" (...) "the quality and originality of my products allow people to see a difference in comparison to a big mass production brand" (...) "it motivates people further creative and cultural practical action".

Finally, more than 50% agreed that their entrepreneurship primarily contributes positively (by creating values and benefits) to 1) cultural issues (11 of 22); then 2) social issues (10 of 22). They also agreed that it positively contributes to the environmental sphere (8 of 22), seeing minor contributions to economic problems (11).
They are all familiar with social, female and creative and cultural entrepreneurship. Multiple answers were possible when we gave them a few definitions to connect them with their practice. The results showed that more than 70% crossed their everyday work with female entrepreneurship definitions, around 65% crossed their day-to-day work with cultural and creative entrepreneurship, and less than 40% found some matching with social entrepreneurship definitions.

More precisely, they were asked to tick the most, the middle and the least entrepreneurship to match with one they are engaged mostly by doing their business (among offered were: traditional entrepreneurship and business, social, female and creative with multiple two answers). The semi-structural answers were positively correlated with focus group discussion answers. Eleven said that their work refers mainly to creative entrepreneurship, and immediately after, ten saw they contributed second place to female entrepreneurship. Nine see their average contribution to social entrepreneurship, while three see the average contribution to female entrepreneurship. Finally, nine answered that their work has the least common with traditional business entrepreneurship.

During the focus group discussion, all of them agreed that they are practicing creativity while addressing at the same time social, gender and environmental issues. Eventually, if they had to choose only one, focus group discussion shows the solid unanimous consensus is that they are/feel themselves as creative entrepreneurs.

**Conclusion**

Following our research questions, we can conclude that all three types of entrepreneurship female, social and creative hold the same denominator: they go far beyond profit orientation.

The scope of social entrepreneurship integrates different forms of concepts, definitions and capitals (cultural, social, human, natural, political capital etc.). What appeals to cultural capital can also be applied to social and natural capital, respecting their common nature.

Moreover, in the constitution of new knowledge non for profit entrepreneurship, the quest for evidence should be traced among the scientific proof that relies on the ability of local communities, to be more closely connected with the specific context of local culture and nature.
We think that all the marginalized and "silent voices" shall be heard in addressing contemporary and systemic structural issues. The solid contribution of the previous is given through the feminist theories, which went beyond the statistical quantification of existing female leadership roles towards the critical structural analysis.

Our findings, based on empirical analysis, and results based on answers, show that there is a positive relation between theoretical frameworks and practice. Also, we conclude that actors in female and creative entrepreneurship in Serbia hold the understanding between gentle differences in terms of non-for-profit entrepreneurship. Vast of most of them share an interest in contributing to the economy for commons in the future.

We conducted the research analysis through the lenses of creative work:

1) Most of the actors from the fashion and craft domain of CCI in Belgrade are female (according to our research, 100% of them are female).

2) The flexibility of work to achieve the work-life balance is very important.

3) More than half agreed that their business contribution is led by creativity but also contributes to self-employment, critical social topics and local development.

4) They all see themselves as female creative entrepreneurs, but also as actors who address the topical social and environmental issues by calling on behavioral anti-consumerist change.

5) Their values correlate positively with all types of non-for-profit entrepreneurship (solidarity, sharing, commons, joint creation, equality, freedom). They contribute to a healthy working atmosphere, empathy, care, fair trade, and mutual satisfaction through their work.

6) Most agree that their work creates cultural values, leading to cultural and social changes.

All three mentioned types of entrepreneurship hold the most an essential grounding by going far beyond profit orientation. Each of the types holds a specific character, with a narrower focus on specific problems they deal with.
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