

Motivations for Copreneurship Within the Czech Republic Context

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Abstract

There has been a surge of interest in small entrepreneurial businesses as an antidote to global economic malaise, and women have figured prominently in such narratives. Yet, much business research remains male- and western-centric. When researched, women' motivations and behaviour are often classified in simplistic categorical schema: women are portrayed as either pushed out of the labour market, for example, by job loss or discrimination, or pulled into entrepreneurship with the hope for better work-family balance. Such research fails to understand how motivations may include push and pull factors. Moreover, their decisions may be influenced by changing family and socio-economic contexts. Societal conditions shape business opportunities and motivations. We utilize a structured agency perspective to understand women's motivations for entering businesses with male romantic partners in a transitional country. Copreneurships foreground the blending of business and family responsibilities.

We interviewed both partners in twelve copreneur couples in the Czech Republic (CR). One prior study of CR copreneurs suggests that these businesses outperform non-family businesses on several profitability dimensions. We examine their motivations for entrepreneurship and for business partnership with mates. This study allows us to locate women's copreneurship "choices" within the contexts of their family situations and the structural conditions for business and family life in the CR. We find that some women left the labour force because of an unfriendly environment after having children, but many were simultaneously attracted to entrepreneurship by traditional goals, e.g., being your own boss. Differing national gender norms, state family and taxation policies, and shifting labour market and business opportunities shaped a convergence of push and pull motivations over the life course of these women entrepreneurs. Men differed from women in that they rarely referenced caring responsibilities in their discussion of motivations for copreneurship. For women, motherhood clearly included both paid work and primary childcare.

Key words: copreneurship, gender and entrepreneurship, transitional economies