



WOMEN'S RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP – AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE GENDER DIMENSION

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Abstract: Contemporary social trends in the reconstruction of rural space, rurality and rural development impose the need for an adequate response and the willingness of local actors to actively engage in the development of the local community by mobilizing available resources, minimizing costs and maximizing productivity (which is viewed here from a sociological, not purely economic perspective). In modern societies, we are witnessing the changes that are taking place in the transformation of the rural into a modern economy, through the modernization of agricultural production, but also the expansion of the role and importance of rurality and the rural area. However, the postmodernization of rurality is accompanied by the diversification of the rural economy, but also by the need to create and implement gender-sensitive policy measures. In conditions where women, as part of the general population, comprise half of the world's population, their socio-economic development and capacity for entrepreneurship is increasingly attracting the attention of various scientific disciplines. The significance of the concept of (neo)endogenous rural development from the perspective of gender-sensitive rural policies is reflected in the expansion of the development capacities of human capital (rural women), and thus of a particular rural area.

Keywords: Female rural entrepreneurship, rural structure, gender regimes, diversification of the rural economy

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous and dynamic changes in rural structures, such as the diversification of the rural economy, technical and technological innovations and the recreation of rural space by the actors themselves (neo-endogenous conception of rural development), open up a new, theoretical and practical concept of rural entrepreneurship. In particular, new theoretical trends in redefining the concept of rural entrepreneurship relate to its gender dimension, i.e. the concept of female rural entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a complex (sociological) phenomenon that in many ways influences the reproduction of rural everyday life and lifestyle, and acquires special significance in the conditions of transformed rurality and multifunctional

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rural space and economy. The rural space acquires the prefix "multi" and becomes a meeting place and a place for various combinations of entrepreneurial activities, both in primary agricultural production and in all other sectors, especially in the service sector.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The paper was created on the basis of the scientific-research work on the preparation of the doctoral dissertation "Rural women and the development of rural tourism in AP Vojvodina" and represents a comparative and critical analysis of available sources regarding the phenomenon of female rural entrepreneurship and its sociological, but also broader socio-economic implications. The data and methodology are part of a wider research - whether and in what way there is a connection between the development of female rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism, and for the purposes of this work, a part of the analysis of the very concept of the gender dimension of rural entrepreneurship has been set aside.

3. SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF (RURAL) ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is defined as more or less autonomous (conscious) human action in socio-economic processes, with the aim of making the most rational use of available economic factors and bearing full responsibility for one's own participation in these processes (Milošević, 1997). Scientific knowledge about entrepreneurship (Bolčić, 2003) aims to identify those entrepreneurial traits that allow individuals who possess them to be recognized in different social contexts, as well as historical periods. We can highlight six basic characteristics of entrepreneurs: the need for achievement and success, creativity and initiative, risk-taking, self-confidence and courage, needs for independence and autonomy and motivation, energy and engagement (Bolčić, 2003). Based on this, it can be concluded that an entrepreneur makes risky economic decisions, assesses risk, tries to control it and takes responsibility for that risk in business (Bolčić, 2003). Entrepreneurial activity is thus manifested in establishing and dynamizing enterprises, in finding an adequate combination of production factors, in bringing economically relevant innovations into business life, and in taking risks for such decisions (Bolčić, 2003). It is also worth mentioning the view that systematic, not random, innovations are important for successful entrepreneurs, i.e. purposeful and organized search for changes that turn materials into resources (Bolčić, 2003). Entrepreneurship is "a dynamic process of vision, creation and change, and its most important ingredients require a willingness to take risks, the ability to form an effective team, creativity in the use of resources and basic skills in formulating a business plan" (Kuratko, 2005). On the other hand, "entrepreneurship is an important mechanism for generating economic activity and growth in rural areas. It is therefore important to understand the circumstances that enable and/or constrain entrepreneurial activity in rural areas (Korsgaard et al., 2015a). Rural entrepreneurship can be analyzed from two aspects: 1. the way in which space affects spatial resources for rural entrepreneurship; 2. the way in which spatial bridging can be discussed (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). The authors also develop a typology of rural entrepreneurs, and particularly emphasize the importance of the findings for micro-level analysis and the study of non-local circulation of values, which in this case can enrich local rural economies. Rural entrepreneurship, in the changed conditions of rural reproduction, is also understood as a response to numerous challenges and potential development problems of local communities (e.g. lack of innovation, jobs, income, quality of life, social vitality). However, space/location is a source of meaning and social life for rural entrepreneurs, and not primarily just profit – the need for personal or broader social and cultural

fulfillment is a motive that particularly distinguishes this type of entrepreneur (Korsgaard et al., 2015a).

New trends in the analysis of rural entrepreneurship emphasize its connection with the general process of globalization and analyze different aspects of this relationship: 1. the discourse and practice of rural entrepreneurship are seen as a complement to classical rural development strategies; 2. rural entrepreneur networks must be activated through social and local communities (globalization "from below"); 3. the government as an institution is still the main carrier of rural development policies (contradictions with entrepreneurship based on capitalist foundations); 4. rural development is a labor-oriented project, unlike rural entrepreneurship which is a capitalist-oriented multidimensional phenomenon; 5. rural, new concepts of rural development (multifunctional agriculture) and social movements should overcome traditional dichotomies such as rural-urban; 6. rural entrepreneurship should be linked in the long term with rural social movements and new development concepts (Shahraki & Heydari, 2019).

4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP BETWEEN STEREOTYPES AND GENDER REGIMES

Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been stereotyped as a male domain (Heilman, 2001; Powell et al., 2002; Marlow & Carter, 2004), and the skills and attributes that women bring to the job are often considered less valuable (Marlow, 2002; Hampton et al., 2009). In conditions where women make up half of the world's population, their socio-economic development and capacity for entrepreneurship must not be left out of scientific research, but also of application models for implementing strategies and support measures. Although the issue of motivation for entrepreneurship, from the perspective of gender regimes in rural development concepts and entrepreneurial behavior research, has long been neglected, recent trends show a strong interest in this issue. Women's entrepreneurship shares certain similarities with entrepreneurship in general, but there are also many aspects that make it unique - differences in motivation and goals between men and women, personal aspirations, preparation, organization and decision-making regarding the use and distribution of resources, as well as the way in which human capital is organized, strategic choices and structural barriers in the environment (Greene et al., 2003). The findings of Buttner and Moore suggest that the most important entrepreneurial motivation among women entrepreneurs was the desire for challenge and self-determination, but also the desire for a balance between family and work responsibilities (Buttner & Moore, 1997). There are also opinions that, although a certain number of female entrepreneurs share similar motives with their male counterparts, there are also those who are primarily driven by the desire to balance family and business obligations and introduce a dose of flexibility into their work schedule (McGowan et al., 2012). These women and their motives have not received sufficient research attention, and the results of such analyses can be useful in many ways. Popović Pantić (2014) points out that in societies that have gone through or are still going through a transition process, entrepreneurship often becomes entrepreneurship out of necessity, and it is mostly women who fall into this category. Babović (2014), however, distinguishes between entrepreneurs who enter business out of "economic necessity" and those who seek "business opportunities", while Čikić and Nedeljković (2019) conclude that, although entrepreneurs are motivated by many factors among women entrepreneurs, the most pronounced are those related to the feeling and need to contribute to family reproduction and meeting life's needs. In addition, a motive that falls into the non-financial category also appears. It is about the "desire to combine work and pleasure" (Čikić & Nedeljković, 2019), but also about the feeling of "independence".

5. MOTIVATION FOR AN ENTREPRENEURIAL TYPE OF BUSINESS

When it comes to the issue of motivation for entrepreneurship, there is one particularly noticeable gender difference that, by the nature of things, stems from the different family roles of men and women. Women are more motivated than men with the same education to become entrepreneurs due to autonomy and the ability to balance work and family responsibilities, while men are more likely to strive for wealth creation and economic and social advancement (Stanković & Markov, 2011). On the other hand, based on the data available to these two authors, it is observed that women start the majority of their businesses in typically “female fields”, such as trade, food production, accommodation and personal services, which are designated as peripheral niches (Stanković & Markov, 2011). Based on this thinking, we can conclude that women manage to find their “place under the sun” and achieve profit and productivity in areas that may be less interesting to men. However, a major problem remains the level of their income, which is lower than average incomes in traditionally male sectors. Other authors agree that women and men have different motives for venturing into entrepreneurship. According to some research, women in such cases are more driven by social factors and ensuring a balance between work and family obligations, while men are attracted by financial security and profit (Zlatkov Cvetković, 2015).

On the other hand, research has shown that the position of women who want to engage in entrepreneurship in rural areas is more difficult (Munitlak Ivanović et al., 2016). Thus, Babović (2012), analyzing what the profile of a Serbian entrepreneur actually looks like, finds that these women encounter problems of gender role limitations, which is further accentuated in rural areas. Women are perceived as less capable, successful and competent in what they do compared to their male colleagues. All this further affects the less favorable socio-economic position of female entrepreneurs in rural areas. However, Babović (2012) states that female entrepreneurs, although fewer in number, are still more creative compared to their colleagues and that this can be a very important characteristic and an opportunity to expand their businesses. However, according to this author, there is also data that out of the total number of businesses started, a greater number of women have failed than men, which requires that this topic be approached much more seriously, with adequate support from all stakeholders involved. The literature also calls for a more realistic view of the motivation factors for starting businesses among women entrepreneurs and their reasons for balancing private and business obligations (Winn, 2004), as well as the need to include and respect the spatial, historical, temporal, institutional, social, and any other context within which women's entrepreneurship takes place in research (Welter, 2011; Welter et al., 2014). Other authors also emphasize the importance of context in interpreting rural behavior and activity (Gaddefors & Anderson, 2019), while some case studies suggest that understanding the contextual aspect of women's entrepreneurship is increasingly important in contemporary literature. The concept of social capital is also introduced as an important correlation (Neumeyer et al., 2019), which can be an indicator for determining the differences between women and men in the sphere of entrepreneurship. The results of the study show that men in entrepreneurship show a greater degree of ability to convert social capital into a more aggressive management approach aimed at growth, while women are more focused on building a distinctive lifestyle and the survival of the enterprise. The importance of social capital has been noted earlier by sociologists who have investigated the functioning of microenterprises. Woolcock (2001) argues that through various forms of social capital and the diffusion of personal contacts and relationships with other business actors, micro-firms overcome limitations and shortcomings in other aspects, such as financial ones. By using social capital, they better cope with business risks and compete with

larger entrepreneurs. Studies of entrepreneurs in rural areas show how social connections and participation in community networks can provide entrepreneurs with access to local resources, but also how communities, in turn, will support their activities for the benefit of the local environment (Korsgaard et al., 2015b). Although each entrepreneurial venture was different, what they had in common was the meaning that locality had for them – as a community and as a place (McKeever et al., 2015). The local community, in the case of the research on entrepreneurial activities conducted by these authors, is understood as the key to the success of their businesses. However, other authors also point out that, although social capital is a frequently used variable in describing entrepreneurial behavior and success, empirical data does not always support this claim and that the attention of rural policymakers should be directed towards local rural networks from which entrepreneurs will draw the necessary (non-)material resources (Smallbone, 2009). Therefore, it is emphasized that entrepreneurship, from a gender perspective, is not only a topic of increasing academic interest, but also a development issue for many nations (Link & Strong, 2016). In addition, the need for networking appears as an important variable for the success of female entrepreneurship. “Networking has long been recognized as an essential entrepreneurial skill that is crucial for identifying opportunities and accessing strategic resources needed to develop new and existing ventures” (Hampton et al., 2009), and research focusing on the gender domain in entrepreneurial fields is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers. The literature also presents an explanatory model that attempts to answer the question of why women decide to become entrepreneurs (Orhan & Scott, 2001), as one of several attempts to conceptualize their motives through the theory of push and pull factors (Segal et al., 2005), which may also include a comparative approach through the category of gender (Kirkwood, 2009). One of the findings highlights the view that the assumption that women become entrepreneurs out of necessity is debatable and that other factors and secondary motives should be included in the analysis (Orhan & Scott, 2001).

6. WOMEN’S RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP – A STEP TOWARDS A DEFINITION AND SOME SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

How to properly define the concept of women's entrepreneurship and is it even possible to arrive at a single and comprehensive formulation? Although the most adequate definition of female entrepreneurship, according to most authors, is one that includes entrepreneurs who simultaneously own more than 50% of a company (regardless of how they acquired ownership) and who manage their own company, however, the most widely accepted in domestic literature is the one in which the ownership criterion is significantly relaxed, referring to entrepreneurs who own at least 1% of the company's capital and who manage the company (Popović Pantić, 2014). Babović (2012) points out that "all women who own (any share) of a company are recognized as entrepreneurs, provided that they also perform a leading management role in that company, regardless of the way in which they acquired ownership of that company." In today's world, as Stanković and Markov (2011) point out, there is an evident gender asymmetry in the ownership structure of entrepreneurial companies, which is reflected in the far smaller number of women in decision-making and commanding positions. There are several problems that, as a rule, women entrepreneurs face when they aim to establish and develop their own businesses, companies, and various ways of making a living. These are problems in securing and mobilizing resources and financial capital, exercising the right to credit and obtaining guarantees, investing capital, and the discriminatory behavior of bankers, i.e. their prejudice that women are rarely successful in business and are not sufficiently prepared to take risks (Stanković & Markov, 2011).

Some authors suggest distinguishing between two types of female entrepreneurs. These are the traditional and the modern type (Zlatkov Cvetković, 2015). Traditional entrepreneurs are seen as independent entrepreneurs who extend their competences and knowledge from the household to the market, while modern female entrepreneurs tend to see their business as a career and thus penetrate traditionally male areas of business. On the other hand, we also believe that there are three main groups of female entrepreneurs: 1. classical (motive - autonomy); 2. forced (external negative motivation); 3. family-work entrepreneurs (need for family work and balance) (Zlatkov Cvetković, 2015).

The rural female population is very ready to accept new knowledge, innovations, opportunities for entrepreneurship development and new work roles (Blagojević, 2010), and therefore, it is of utmost importance to provide them with continuous and systematic support, both through various training programs, as well as through incentive measures for self-employment, the development of one's own agribusiness, as well as other options that diversification of the rural economy provides us with in modern rural development. Women's rural entrepreneurship is a special type of entrepreneurship that takes place in conditions of transformed rurality and rural space, and which is based on the principles of a diversified rural economy and multifunctional agriculture, carried out by creative, versatile and innovative individuals with their present awareness of the needs for gender-sensitive (balanced) rural development. Women's entrepreneurship is also understood as: 1. a development opportunity for the recovery of villages and the increase of their social vitality; 2. a possibility of a source of primary or additional income for vulnerable and less employable categories of the population in rural areas (youth, women); 3. a way to improve the quality of life; 4. a response to negative demographic and migration trends; 5. an opportunity to change power relations and decision-making positions in the local community, family and household; 6. a source of knowledge, innovation and information dissemination.

7. CONCLUSION

Women's rural entrepreneurship is not a magic wand, nor an all-powerful solution to all the problems of rural community that have accumulated over decades. It can be a powerful and effective tool, but it all depends on how, in what way and in accordance with what we use it. The success and future of women's rural entrepreneurship is not spared from all the complex problems facing rural communities, and it seems to be burdened not only by space, but also by limitations stemming from the gender development dimension. Given that entrepreneurship is associated with increasing equality between socioeconomic and demographic groups in society, the development of female entrepreneurship emphasizes the importance of access to valuable resources in society and encouraging women to receive education and training to work in non-traditional sectors, which will enable them to better position themselves in high-growth industries (Sullivan & Meek, 2012).

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