

Book review

Łukasz Trembaczowski, *Zaufanie i ryzyko w doświadczeniu przedsiębiorców* [*Trust and Risk in Entrepreneurial Experience*]
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Both trust and risk are issues widely discussed in the contemporary sociology, but researchers usually investigate each of them separately. So far in empirical research done in Poland no one has analysed both phenomena from the entrepreneurs' perspective. In his book *Zaufanie i ryzyko w doświadczeniu przedsiębiorców* (*Trust and Risk in Entrepreneurial Experience*, Katowice, University of Silesia Press 2016) Łukasz Trembaczowski conducts such an analysis. The purpose of the book is, as the title states, investigation of trust and risk from the perspective of modern entrepreneurs.

The monograph, consisting of two proportional parts, is of theoretical and empirical nature. In the first chapter the author focuses on the concept of risk which is presented from various theoretical perspectives including: psychological theory, culture theory, functionalist and systemic theory and constructivist theory. He also discusses the notion of 'risk society' using Giddens's and Beck's approaches and concentrates, in particular, on the presentation of the psychological theory and Studentski's theoretical concept constituting a part of this theory. However, the author makes no attempt to analyse this phenomenon from the perspective of the Post-Fordist economy but instead he adopts Giddens and Beck's approach.

The second chapter is devoted to the sociological analysis of the trust theory. Just like the first chapter it starts with a general overview concerning trust and then moves on to more in-depth considerations. While presenting contemporary sociological

theories of trust, the author emphasises that it is not his intention to give a profound insight into these analyses but rather focus on the most influential (in his opinion) views i.e. the rational choice theory, the social capital concept and trust theories and the Sztopka theory of trust and theory of trust in the modern perspective, where he refers to Giddens. The last paragraph of this chapter compares the concept of trust and risk, and emphasises their mutual direct correlation with human activity and subjectivity.

The theoretical part of the book concludes with the chapter devoted to the analysis of the position and the role of private entrepreneurs in Poland. In this chapter the author provides a brief historical overview of how entrepreneurs functioned during the time of the partitions of Poland (prior to 1918), interwar period (1918–1939), World War II, the times of the state socialism, and finally the post-1989 transformations followed by the changes entailed by joining the European Union. Subsequently the author moves on to the issue of defining the term ‘entrepreneur’, but at this point, while analysing multiple meaning of this notion the author fails to recognise the term ‘female entrepreneur’ referring to a woman working at this position. In the last paragraph of this chapter the author briefly discusses the role of entrepreneurs in the structure of the Polish society. Synthetic nature of analyses allows to show the basic historical conditioning affecting the creation and shape of this social group in Poland, also after 1989.

The empirical part of the monograph begins with methodological discussion and provides a brief description of the investigated population. Data from quantitative research presented concerns entrepreneurs employing minimum one employee who at present conduct business activities in one of the cities in the Silesia province. The author carried out the research using the survey method and with the standardised interview technique in two separate periods: in 2007 and in 2013. Such periodisation allows for capturing certain dynamics of the analysed phenomena.

The analysis of the research findings starts with the presentation of data related to trust. These findings reveal whom entrepreneurs trust, what are their expectations related to trust, what are entrepreneurs’ criteria of credibility and how the entrepreneurs participating in the research handle situations with little or no trust towards some objects. While analysing the objects of trust the author showed interest not only in the trust connected with professional life, but also the trust connected with private life. In the institutional dimension of the public life there is a consistent high level of trust in institutions such as the bank, the Constitutional Tribunal, the army, the school or the court. However, the level of trust in both chambers of the Parliament, media, the government and ZUS [i.e. Social Security Institution] is

relatively low. In 2013 in comparison with 2007 there was a decline in the level of trust in legal, banking and market systems, which would be worthwhile of further investigations .

It would be useful to examine this issue in more depth by qualitative research. In the analysis of trust in private life connected with personal relationships in both waves of the research, a steady trend was observed, indicating the entrepreneurs trust their spouses (partners), than their parents, who are followed by their children. What seems interesting, is the fact that trust in co-workers and neighbours appears to be relatively low in a consistent way.

As for expectations of the entrepreneurs under scrutiny towards the entrusted people, they vary in each type of relationships. Thus in the case of family members or friends they include mainly 'soft expectations' (truthfulness, helpfulness), whereas in professional contexts connected with business activity a 'hard expectations' prevail (including effectiveness) over the soft ones, which appear to be of secondary importance. In professional roles and relationships (for example, in relationships with medial doctors or lawyers), two kinds of expectations are emphasised and clearly expressed: hard expectations (including competences) and soft expectations (including honesty) but the former markedly dominate.

The author analyses factors affecting credibility, referring to the traits of the object of trust and those connected with characteristics of situation affecting credibility assessment. In the analysis of the object of trust the entrepreneurs participating in the research rely first on the object's assessment expressed by their acquaintances. Only then they take into account the object's success, its current achievements or behaviour. In the entrepreneurs' opinion, recurring situational traits observed in both waves of the research affecting credibility include a rapport with a business partner, which is more important to them than the force of the law (possibility of the law enforcement or signing a contract).

All the discussed empirical analyses refer to Sztompka's theory of trust, which was also used in the analysis of the secondary trust objects, expectations for the trust partner, criteria for assessing credibility of the object of trust and functional substitutes of trust. The analysis of these functional substitutes of trust conducted by Trembaczowski both in 2007 and 2013 indicates that entrepreneurs frequently agree with the opinion that it is acceptable to enforce their rights, even if it means the use of force. This view is enduring, (observed in both waves of the research), and worthy of further, more in-depth research.

Optimistic is that according to the research bribery matters little to entrepreneurs, who also disagree with the opinion that work can be done and organised efficiently only in a family circle.

The last chapter of the monograph presents research findings related to risk. Psychological theory of risk, due to which the author shows the perception of risk in the entrepreneurs' perspective, constitutes the basis for these analyses. The discussed research findings inform us which of the presented risk factors are perceived as large-scale factors: the ones causing fear or those connected with the unknown market. In order to analyse them, the author uses complex statistical two-factor analysis due to which he compares: the size of risk and the sense of the evoked fear, size of an unknown risk and a large-scale risk. The results of the analyses are each time presented on graphs.

As for the conscious risk factors (i.e. under the control of the entrepreneur) the author mentions the following: investments, credits, signing the contracts. Besides, there is also a possibility of assessing consequences of the risk involved, which distinguishes it from unknown risk, also involving specific kinds of staff-related risk. In the analysis of the content of such staff-related risk, there seems to be a some information deficit, due to the fact the research is exclusively quantitative of. In the analyses of the unknown risk conducted in 2013, the highest risk results from misleading or untrue information, which in turn evokes moderate anxiety in the research group. The risk of bankruptcy is seen as more serious, although its range is not precisely assessed. The fear of going bankrupt is also stronger than the fear of losing financial liquidity, which seems obvious because the latter problem, if happens, may be only temporary. Changes of law trigger fear concerning its enforcement (plus tax audits) and are perceived as a large-scale risk in both waves of the research. Between 2007 and 2013 there was an increase in the competition-related risk of, which might prove the entrepreneurs' better knowledge of the invisible "hand of the market" and it can be connected with the empirical findings discussed in the previous chapter related to the declining trust in the market system.

The author separately analyses the perceived risk in terms of entrepreneurs' subjective characteristics including gender, age and the level of education. In both waves of the research gender determines the risk perception. In 2013 women claimed that the highest risk resulted from the increase of the competition in the labour market whereas the men attributed this risk to political decisions that are harmful to business. The 2007 findings i revealed similar tendencies of both genders in indicating, politically-motivated decisions harmful to business as the source of the strongest risk perceived, but that kind of risk was more often emphasised by women.

Even those selectively cited findings indicate significance of looking at business decisions from a gender perspective in, assuming that the acknowledging differences in the risk perception may contribute to taking more effective decisions. The research not only proves that in comparison with women men tend to perceive risk as lower, but also emphasises dynamics and changes in threats perceived.

In both waves of the research there are correlations of the risk perceived and the respondents' age, and the younger they are the less risky the majority of threats they see. However, as the author acknowledges himself, apart from the observed relationship between age and the risk perceived, other variables affecting such relationships, for example, age-related experiences (which was beyond the scope of the conducted research) might as well be taken into consideration.

In the research on the risk perception the author also takes into account the level of education. He adds, however, that the share of entrepreneurs with higher education in the sample (in both waves) is much higher than in the whole society. The research shows also various risk perceptions depending on the level of education and its dynamic over time. In both waves the research reveals that entrepreneurs with master tertiary education tend to see a high risk in taking political decisions harmful to business. The book's structure (two compatible parts: theoretical and empirical), corresponds to the author's postulate of developing a coherent concept of trust and risk and its application in research. However, this postulate still poses a research challenge. Nevertheless, it is the first research into the situation of the Polish entrepreneurs. Although the research was conducted on the basis of two different yet corresponding concepts of trust and risk, it could be regarded as successful empirical way of collecting entrepreneurs' opinions. Another advantage of the research stems from the fact it was completed over two waves, which allows to capture dynamics of change in the examined area over time. Therefore, reading the monograph is worth recommending to anyone interested in Polish market economy. The book may also become a source of inspiration for further research and theoretical analyses of the topics it deals with.

Sławomira Kamińska-Berezowska, Institute of Sociology, University of Silesia
slawomira.kaminska-berezowska@us.edu.pl