



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Perceptions of entrepreneurs among polish students

Starnawska, Marzena

Gdańsk University of Technology

2010

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/37987/>

MPRA Paper No. 37987, posted 19 Apr 2012 14:20 UTC

Perceptions of entrepreneurs among Polish students –entrepreneurs' alternative constructions from different, not mainstream research perspective

What do children of the transition think?

Marzena Starnawska, PhD
Gdansk University of Technology,

Key words: entrepreneurship, transition economies, Poland, entrepreneur

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present how we can approach and explore the field of entrepreneurship phenomenon in an alternative way. We do this by employing constructivist philosophical position than is gaining more acceptance in business and management research. We hope to outline how we can approach topic of entrepreneurship using alternative, not mainstream method,

This is done with the use of visual data gathered among Gdansk University of Technology among students who were asked to present their constructions of an entrepreneur. The data presented here is part of a wider research project, focused on semiotics of symbols present in the pictorial representations of entrepreneurs.

When an individual is being described as 'entrepreneurial' or 'enterprising' this is usually taken as a compliment. Nevertheless, these words have different meanings for different people. One of the first academics who encompassed the negative notions of being enterprising in the field of entrepreneurship was Baumol (1990) who analyzed perceptions of entrepreneurs from historical perspective. He has distinguished three types of entrepreneurship: productive, unproductive and destructive. The alternative understandings and meanings of entrepreneurship have recently emerged in the field of entrepreneurship, especially the ones situated in the interpretative paradigm. They have been explained and explored under the theme of '*entrepreneurship beyond the boundaries*'¹.

Entrepreneurs' perceptions and image – literature review

The literature on how entrepreneurs are perceived in the society in Polish context is very scarce. Therefore, our review, is not selective, but displays how little academic research is made on the image of entrepreneurs. We reach for what the popular media say about entrepreneur. Both–academic literature and populist constructions such as biographies, autobiographies, media and novels as, are building blocks of how we see entrepreneurs, what entrepreneurship is for us. Such social constructions are mental maps, mutually supportive social scripts (Smith, 2006) in which we live the experience of entrepreneurship. In this paper, our understanding of what entrepreneurial construct is like, we do not aim to provide all-encompassing model. We rather take few elements of such constructs, related to the culture of entrepreneurship in a chosen context. But the concept of culture is so broad, that we are only able to touch upon some of its facets and make attempts at making tentative conclusions here.

Glinka² (2008) has provided a very valuable overview of entrepreneurs' imaginations in Polish context. Her research shows, that there is a lot of pessimism and criticism towards economic changes in Poland. She claims that many of the pathologies such as corruption, exploitation, frauds and tax avoidance are natural element of how her interviewees see how the economic system works in its natural way. Of course, there are some positive examples of entrepreneurs noted, with respondents reporting that there are 'exceptions to a rule'. But the overall dominating stereotype of an entrepreneur is a negative one. Such negative image of entrepreneurs is also characteristic for Polish students. Their opinions about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Poland were compared with foreign students' answers. Although there have been some similarities how Poles, Americans, Germans and French view them, significant differences are more distinguished. Foreign students more often expressed positive view about an economy when compared with Polish students. Polish respondents were also more willing to talk negatively about their country and its economic system. Finally, students' imaginations about entrepreneurs, who they are, what their names are strongly shaped by popular media, where, as they claim, there are many negative stories related to corruption, frauds, swindling linked with the most popular

¹ Special issue of Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship 'Exploring Entrepreneurship Beyond the Boundaries, 22(1), 2009.

² This is a sound study on entrepreneurship perception in Poland. We would like to summarize more research results here, but because of publication size constraints we are not able to do it.

entrepreneurs in Poland. Students themselves emphasize the negative constructions of entrepreneurs in the media.

Also there is another argument made by Cierniak-Szóstak (2006) on the image of Polish entrepreneur. She claims that this image is heterogenous and is shaped a variety of factors such as social position, level of education, personal experiences. At the same time, the negative image is purported by media such as TV and the press.

In the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor study made in Poland in 2004, we can see that there are both positive and negative opinions about entrepreneurs. Respondents were prompted to answer if they agree with the following statement. *'In Poland, majority of people, think that those who have become successful by doing their own business, are gaining respect and high social status'*³. The 'yes' answers are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Image of entrepreneurs according to age groups

<i>'In Poland, majority of people, think that those who have become successful by doing their own business, are gaining respect and high social status' – confirmatory answers (in %)</i>		
Age group	Men	Women
18-24	29,7	70,2
25-34	50,0	55,2
35-44	52,0	54,1
45-54	45,0	51,7
55-64	35,4	60,2
Average	49,3	57,6

Source: Baćłowski K., Korczega M. and Zbierowski P. (2005), 'Studium przedsiębiorczości w Polsce w roku 2004' Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Fundacja Edukacyjna Bachalski, Poznań - GEM report for Poland, pp. 40-41.

On average women in all groups express more positive evaluation of entrepreneurs than men. But what is more interesting for the purpose of our analysis, is that there are still high values of 'No' answers. And differences between men and women are much stronger among youngest respondents, who happen to be the age group of our sample. So for example in the age group between 18 and 24, only roughly 30% of men agreed with the proposed statement whereas at the same time more than 70% of women did so. Overall, women display slightly higher positive evaluation of entrepreneurs.

Why the generation born in the transition period ('children of transformation') have become so skeptical towards entrepreneurship? Why men are more critical?

GEM study also allowed for seeing differences in perception of entrepreneurs among different income groups. What we can see here, is that respondents with lower incomes agree with the earlier statement more often than respondents with higher incomes.

Table 2: Image of entrepreneurs – according to income groups

<i>'In Poland, majority of people, think that those who have become successful by doing their own business, are gaining respect and high social status' – (in %)</i>		
Income level	Yes	No
No income	59,5	29,5
Below 1000 PLN	57,6	34,4
1001-2000 PLN	52,7	39,5
2001-3500 PLN	38,2	52,2
3501-5500 PLN	45,3	50,9
Above 5500 PLN	41,2	50
Refused to answer	47,2	36,2

Source: Baćłowski K., Korczega M. and Zbierowski P. (2005), 'Studium przedsiębiorczości w Polsce w roku 2004' Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Fundacja Edukacyjna Bachalski, Poznań - GEM report for Poland, pp. 41-42

³ For the purpose of this paper, we call this question 'entrepreneurs' image statement'

This data was confirmed in the analysis of attitudes in different voivodeships according to their level of economic development. The provinces with lower levels of development display more positive attitudes and evaluations of an entrepreneur.

At the same time, entrepreneurs' responses to the discussed question show that there equal distribution of positive versus negative opinions of how entrepreneurs in Poland are socially perceived.

Table 3: The image of entrepreneurs among entrepreneurs

<i>'In Poland, majority of people, think that those who have become successful by doing their own business, are gaining respect and high social status' – confirmatory answers (in %)</i>	
Future entrepreneurs making attempts at starting their own business	50
Entrepreneurs who have run their own business for less than 3,5 years	51,9
Entrepreneurs who have run their own business for more than 3,5 years	47,6

Source: Baćłowski K., Korczega M. and Zbierowski P. (2005), 'Studium przedsiębiorczości w Polsce w roku 2004' Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Fundacja Edukacyjna Bachalski, Poznań - GEM report for Poland, p.42

As it can be seen from the data above, roughly 50% of responding entrepreneurs or future entrepreneurs agreed with the discussed statement. Still, there is another side to the answers to the question, why the share of answers is so low. The data indicates that again, about 50% of entrepreneurs did not agree with the image statement.

Entrepreneurs are not highly ranked in Poland in comparison with other professions. The data on the survey made by CBOS⁴ in 2009 is that an entrepreneur deserves high respect for 54 % of respondents, for 34% deserves moderate respect, and for 7 percent little respect (17th position among 33 professions). Other professions in the ranking such as the manager of a factory (16th place) or an owner of the small shop (20th) have been very closely situated to one another in the ranking. These

This overview of scarce publications on the image of entrepreneurs, provides an argument about the permeating negative perception and image of an entrepreneur in Polish mindset. This is truly surprising if we see the results of Glinka's (2008) study made among students. How the young generation of people, who has not directly experienced the realities of previous economic system, can hold negative perceptions of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. We call them 'children of transition' as they were born in the transition period i.e. at the end of 80's and beginning of 90's. Therefore, perhaps more idiosyncratic view of individuals' context is needed to see, in what way and how their opinions about entrepreneurs are shaped. We talk here about the lived experience of entrepreneurship. An attempt to encompass all elements constituting entrepreneurial ideology is a very challenging task. So we move here between what students learn about entrepreneurs

Research methods applied in the context of philosophical position

In our paper we situate our study in social constructionist paradigm. First of all, we hope to outline how we can approach topic of entrepreneurship using alternative, not mainstream method. We also present how differently the same set of data can be potentially approached using two different methods. This is particularly important to emphasize because methodological triangulation is a useful way of ensuring the validity and reliability

Constructionism claims that our understanding of the world is concerned with subjective and shared meanings. This position is that entrepreneurship as well as entrepreneurs are subjectively understood, interpreted and inter-subjectively understood and interpreted by individuals. Individuals interpret and construct the reality and in the meantime such interpretations and constructions are embedded in the existing, taken for granted cultural norms (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009). Such beliefs and constructions are present not in academic books and universal truths about entrepreneurships, but are constantly constructed by academics, politicians and entrepreneurs/practitioners themselves! Lindgren and Packendorff (2009) summarize such takenforgrantedness as *'examples of such popular – but still often implicit – beliefs concern where to find entrepreneurship (certain sectors and industries in the economy), what entrepreneurship means (starting firms and making them grow fast), who is an entrepreneur (a charismatic man) and the mindset of that entrepreneur (risk and achievement orientation)'*.

It means that entrepreneurship is constructed in the process of social interaction between individual people and the research should be aimed at understanding these interactions. (Fletcher, 2006; Dodd and Anderson 2007; Anderson and Starnawska 2008) and their manifestations, embodiments.

⁴ Public Opinion Research Centre, a survey on a representative sample of adult Polish citizens (1050) in 2008.

This perspective to entrepreneurship has evolved from the tiredness of positivistic paradigm in entrepreneurship research. It looks at entrepreneurship phenomenon into fragmentary fields. Academics make attempts to understand entrepreneurship, its richness, diversity and complexity of how an individual can be entrepreneurial. However, it turns out to be ‘intellectual onion’ when ‘*when you start to peel it apart you are left with nothing and come away in tears*’. Therefore, there are attempts at encompassing entrepreneurship as broadly as possible like for example ‘*extraction and creation of value from an environment*’ (Anderson 2001) referring to behaviors. On the other hand we encounter many focused on outcomes, but like Davidsson (2002) says, we should be very careful about narrowing our interests to outcomes like for example star-ups, because we may omit other crucial elements of enterprising process, like failure. So many attempts made at grasping entrepreneurship, end up in the limits of trying to provide definitions in the positivistic paradigm.

Constructivism allows us to admit that individuals define themselves and at the same time are defined by others – in relation to expectations about how to think or behave

The claim is that social constructivism perspective allows for critical treatment of taken for granted assumptions of entrepreneurship per se. This allows for taking into consideration alternative views, neglected phenomena and allows for questioning dominant definitions, methodologies of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

If we assume, that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are constructed socially, we will dwell into trying to understand how and why entrepreneurs, opportunities, entrepreneurship are constructed in the process of social interaction between people. The point of interest will not be how and why entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs or opportunities arise. Moreover, as Lindgren and Packendorff (2009) remind, it is not necessary to employ fixed operationalized concepts in deductive studies as knowledge and concepts themselves are an outcome of social interaction.

For the pictorial representations of entrepreneur’s perceptions among students we have employed an analysis of visual materials. We have used content analysis, allowing for the treatment of visual data in the same way as data gathered via interviews, data as documents and any other qualitative data. Here the frequencies of expressions or symbols are counted. Also, we have employed semiotics analysis where it is important to understand the settings of visual materials – their cultural and social background. It is also important to see how such pictorial representations take place, what meaning they have and how we can interpret this meaning. Visual materials are studied as representations of something in their own right.

Constructions of entrepreneurship present in not only in academic literature but also in biographies, novels, media, television or newspapers, are ‘social scripts’ influencing how we view the experience of entrepreneur. Although our sample of students has been asked to draw entrepreneurs and how they see them –we asked them to produce their own constructions, this data is still valuable. As visual representations are manifestations of what they try to say and how they think about entrepreneurs. We think that students’ constructions can reflect the ideology of entrepreneurship coming from many different social scripts. Moreover, taking constructionist perspective, we admit that individuals create the world and knowledge they live in, therefore, how they see entrepreneurs may allow to foresee what entrepreneurs they will be.

The visual data is treated as a direct representation of the reality. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) add that such data is both: the truth itself and construction of truth because they work as clear evidence in certain situation and are an outcome of deliberate construction of reality by an individual. Therefore, we can analyse visual data from using both approaches a qualitative and quantitative one. It must be remembered though, that there is no universal method of approaching and analyzing visual data and no clear, rigid rules of how we should work with them. Researchers employ their own, ad hoc solutions suited to their own research aims Heath and Hindmarsch (2002).

The application of semiotic analysis - unusual research technique in the field of entrepreneurship research - varies strongly from dominant methodologies in researching entrepreneurship perceptions. In our exploration of entrepreneurship images among students we have gathered very intriguing outcomes

A lot of meaning of entrepreneurship is taken for granted as it is situated in the academic discourse. Yet, we have another side of the story, with more common understanding of entrepreneurship as being enterprising. The analysis of symbols hidden in texts (which are pictures, carrier signs, films) helps us to deconstruct the nature of this *takenforgrantedness*. Meaning is linked to signs and expressions as they are constituents of underlying rules.

The signs we look for and analyze in semiotics are not graphical representations, messages. A sign can be anything that have been given a meaning such as for example people, animals, logos and more.

Signs have four main characteristics (Silverman, 2007). He notes that signs can have meaning only in the relation with and differences from other signs.

- they combine the signifier (which can be an image or a word) and the signified (a concept) and like we will see in the case of our data, the symbol of US dollar ‘\$’ in the context of entrepreneur perception can be the signifier of wealth,
- also signs are not independent, they are a part of a wider system from which they derive the meaning, so ‘\$’ is one of many symbols as connotations of certain currencies such as ‘£’, ‘€’ or ‘¥’.
- sign in a linguistic form is very often arbitrary and so different languages use different terms for concepts, therefore Polish readers will not be surprised that at the beginning of 90’s ‘entrepreneur’ as a concept did not exist, as an ‘entrepreneur’ was termed as ‘businessman’,
- sign in a linguistic form can be compiled from two parts – there are combinatory options so for example an entrepreneur can be constructed as the one looking down on this employees from his desk, or as one socializing with them, or working with them; and there are contrasting options called paradigmatic for example in our data a student draws an entrepreneur as a devil, an entrepreneur is identified by the fact that they are not angel.

Semiotics has moved into two directions. Saussure’s focuses on the rules behind the language that allow it to operate. So in case of his approach the focus is on grammar rather than the usage of words. He distinguishes language from a speech, where the former is the system of language, based on some rules and grammar and the latter are ‘speech acts’. Saussure gives an example of chess play, where rules of the game constitute the language and the moves in the play are elements of speech (parole). The main task of the analysis, is not to descriptive the moves but to learn about the rules of the game. Contemporary semiotics has been moving away from Saussurian methods.. There is a lot of interest in what signs actually do. This stands as a good rationale for employing social constructionist approach. Anderson and Smith (2006) summarize that semiotics has many different elements that make it confusing as much as many approaches to entrepreneurship phenomenon. On the other hand, Peirce – who took another direction of semiotics, as reported by Berger (2004) provides three dimensions of a sign – an iconic aspect – where the signification is manifested by the resemblance to something else, the iconic aspect of a sign can be easily seen and pictures and statues work as examples here. Another dimension suggested by Peirce was a symbolic one, where its significance comes from conventions present in the culture, and an individual needs to learn it to understand it. Here flags work as a good example. The last dimension is related to index. It gains meaning when one can figure out the causal connection like in the case of smoke and fire. Within certain cultures or sub-cultures, signs develop and constitute a shared meaning among their members. So items and artifacts become signs shared and revered by one culture not the other. (Smith and Anderson, 2006). A semiotic system is made by a variety of elements: language, myths, images, sounds, objects and acts. Therefore, semiotic analysis can use all sorts of data for the analysis. For the purpose of our paper, we have selected pictorial images of entrepreneurs, drawn by university students. The signs studied here could possibly invoke different meanings in different subjects (researcher’s subjectivity) but also the same task of drawing entrepreneurs exercised in different setting, may bring different or similar signs, that are sending an entirely different message about the image of entrepreneurs.

Sources of data

We have approached a sample of 116 students from Gdansk University of Technology. These students are between 20-22 years old. The sample consists of Faculty of Management and Economics and Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. There have been 73 students from the former and 43 from the latter. Unequal distribution of the sample across the faculties is a result of different student group size at the two faculties. Students were approached on the start of their tutorial classes at the beginning of December 2009. They were asked to draw an entrepreneur. Afterwards, those who agreed to participate in the study, have been asked to submit their contact details and permission for publication of their drawings. Four students refused to take part in the study. As a part of a bigger research project, we followed and reached for some of the students to run a series of unstructured interviews in a narrative style. Because of the size constraints of this publication we limited our analysis to exemplary content analysis as well as semiotic approach. All the drawings and sketches have been scanned, and are stored in the databank, but again, for the purpose of this publication we select just a few of them, to provide a variety of alternative constructions of entrepreneurs in students’ eyes.

Through several comparisons of the drawings, we have first of all listed the content codes that would be used analysis. We had no hypotheses we wanted to prove or disprove. The way the codes have gone through the process of creation is presented in the following table.

Table 4: Emerging categories in content analysis

Gender of entrepreneur	We initially worked out two options entrepreneur presented as male and female. Throughout the analysis, we added additional categories such as gender unrecognized (impossible to check the gender) and
------------------------	---

	non-person construction of an entrepreneur (no gender element explored because a few entrepreneurs were presented as a monster with many hands, a tree or as a heart).
The dynamics/static in entrepreneur's behaviour	The preliminary categories were to check whether an entrepreneur was sitting or standing. We have realized though, that it is better to see if their behaviour is passive or active, what dynamics in their behaviour are. We have ended suggesting the following options: standing-doing nothing (passive); standing but thinking or speaking (active); sitting doing nothing (passive); sitting but acting (active).
Presence of other individuals	At the beginning we planned to distinguish representations where an entrepreneur is on their own or with other people. Later we extended the second alternative made additional category – what are the relationships between an entrepreneur and other people like.
Relationships with other people	These can be categorized as hierarchical or egalitarian.
Entrepreneur's dress code	Dress-code category can carry many important signs displaying elements of wealth manifestation. Therefore first we distinguished between formal and informal dress code. Next, we proposed additional category for drawings, on what signs help in the construction of entrepreneurs.
Objects entrepreneur carries or is surrounded by	In case of any objects we have proposed office related objects (mobile, case, notepad, laptop computer) and other objects (car, jewellery, drugs, fashion accessories, money)

Source: own analysis

An iterative check-ups of what individual pictures contain drive us to much more complex codes of whether the construction is meant to be a joke or is it a neutral presentation of an entrepreneur. We could also include some more like the variety and quantity of gadgets entrepreneurs use or are surrounded by.

Table 5: The codes with their alternatives have been used for the purpose of content analysis.

		Number of visualizations with particular categories	Percentage
Entrepreneur's gender	Male	89	77%
	Female	11	9%
	No gender displayed	13	11%
	Other	3	3%
Entrepreneur's behaviour dynamics	Sitting or standing (passive) doing nothing	58	50%
	Sitting or standing (active) thinking, analyzing	34	29%
	Moving	21	18%
	Other	3	3%
Entrepreneur's relationships with other people	Individual on their own	100	86%
	With other people - egalitarian	4	3%
	With other people - hierarchical	11	9%
	Other	1	1%
Entrepreneur's dress code	Formal	64	55%
	Casual	18	16%
	No dress code displayed	29	25%
	Other	5	4%
Objects entrepreneur carries	Office related (mobile, computer, notepad, case)	89	77%
	Non office related	20	17%
	Money, currencies	28	24%

Source: own analysis.

In the content analysis we can distinguish between the 'manifest' and 'latent' content in visual data (Ball and Smith, 2001). For coding and providing clear categories, all data have 'manifest' elements, like in our case of entrepreneurs drawn, an entrepreneur as a woman or as a type of relationships with people as hierarchical or egalitarian. What is ignored and often forgone, is the 'latent' content i.e. what is exactly behind certain content. For example, the fact that an entrepreneur from picture 5 does the shopping may hold no relevant message if treated as 'manifest' content. We can draw all sorts of conclusions, based on the fact that shopping is a time consuming activity, and it expresses being busy. But the wider look at an individual from this picture, allows the researcher, coming from the same cultural context, deconstruct the 'latent' content. Why would an entrepreneur would be willing to shopping in a discount shop? Cannot he do the shopping in a typical supermarket? Why, at

the same time, he is wearing branded clothes? Why is he looking more like a criminal? Only good understanding of the 'latent' content can lead us to interesting questions and bring interesting data.

The semiotics presented in our paper, work as a tool for exploring more deeply the meaning of '\$' signs in pictures of entrepreneurs. The 'manifest' content may indicate that entrepreneur uses, spends, invests money as well as may indicate the wealth of an individual. However, 'latent' content analysis should attempt to reveal what is the 'latent' meaning of '\$'. The identification of the latent meaning will not be possible neither for the researcher nor for the subject unless they appreciate the existence of the latent meaning.

Therefore, we could ask questions, why such drawings have been presented, what was the purpose of the extreme representations (see for example picture 4), why such signs, not others have been selected for the manifestation of who is an entrepreneur for students? Content analysis is quite often used as an introductory research method to following analyses. One of them can be semiotic analysis which we present here below.

From the sample of 116 pictures delivered by students of Gdansk University, we have chosen 16 pictures, that could help us demonstrate how semiotic analysis can be used.

Picture 1: 'give the money back to me!'



Source: Own research

Picture 2: 'Give me the dosh. you mortal'



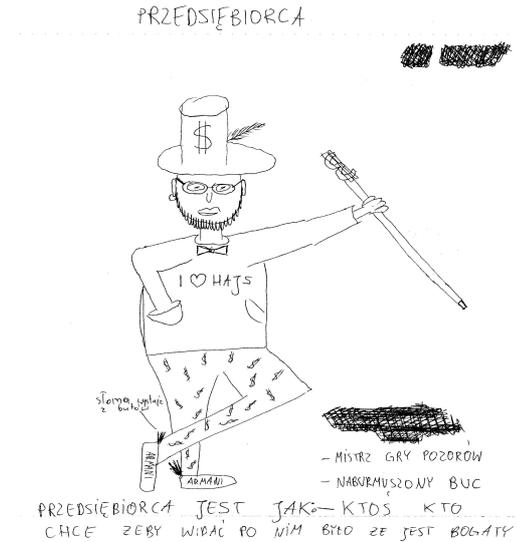
Source: Own research

Picture 3: 'resourceful man'



Source: Own research

Picture 4: 'I ♥ Hajs'



Source: Own research

Picture 5: 'discount shopping'



Source: Own research

Picture 6: 'VIP'



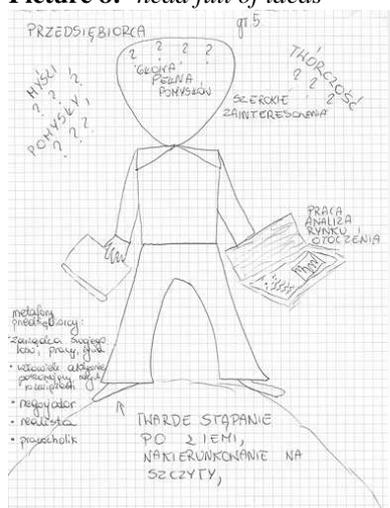
Source: Own research

Picture 7: 'spiv'



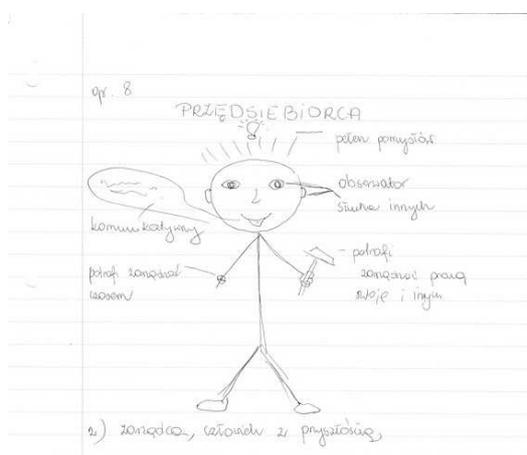
Source: Own research

Picture 8: 'head full of ideas'



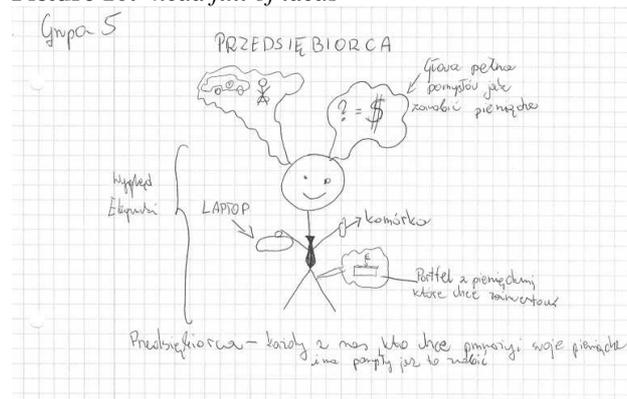
Source: Own research

Picture 9: Entrepreneur with a hammer



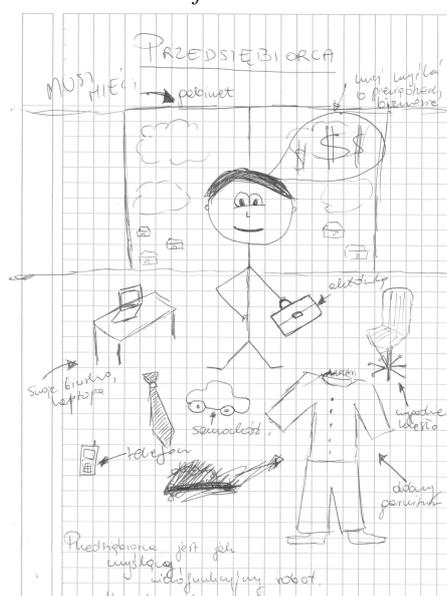
Source: Own research

Picture 10: 'head full of ideas'



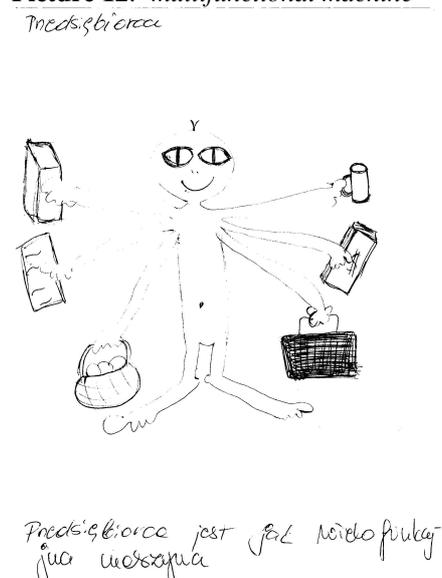
Source: Own research

Picture 11: 'multifunctional robot'



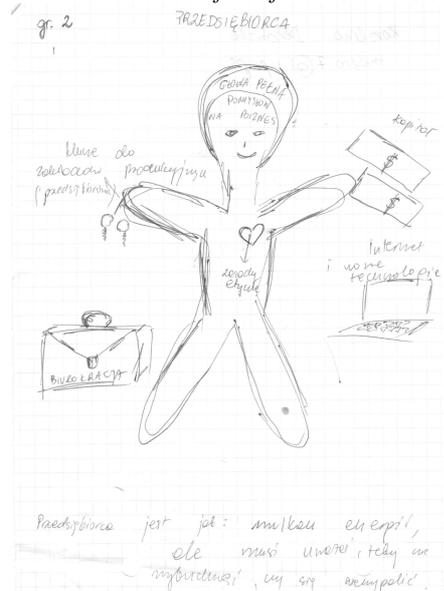
Source: Own research

Picture 12: 'multifunctional machine'



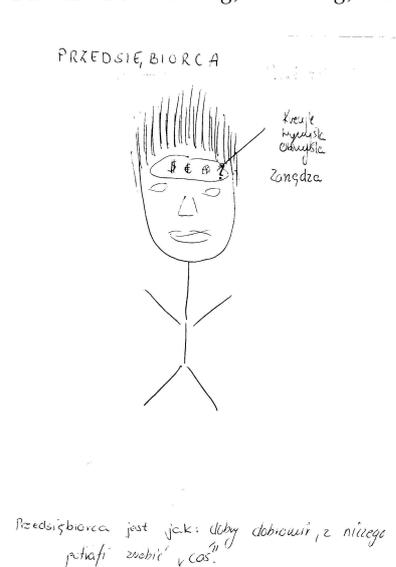
Source: Own research

Picture 13: 'Head full of business ideas'



Source: Own research

Picture 14: 'creating, inventing, thinking'



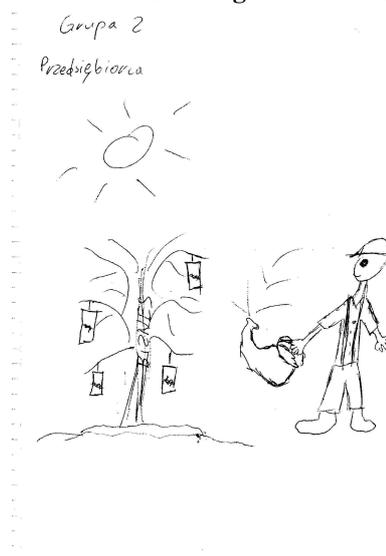
Source: Own research

Picture 15: 'teacher'



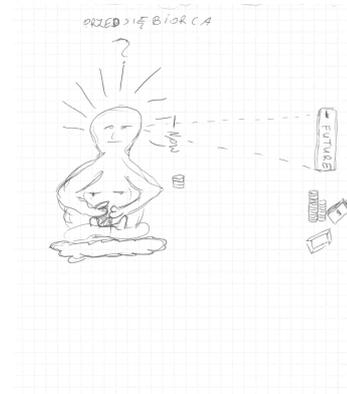
Source: Own research

Picture 16: Growing the business



Source: Own research

Picture 17: Goddess



Source: Own research

We should also remind, that we are not employing language semiotic analysis, but we focus on pictures and their contents as signs. For a semiotician, the whole world is a system of signs. Signs only exist, and have meaning because of relations. The most common relationship is oppositional. Therefore, if there is 'rich' it only has meaning if there is 'poor'. Therefore, concepts themselves are not defined by their content but relations within some kind of a system. If we look at our pictures, we can see that many entrepreneurs have been drawn as males. This may have its explanations in the fact, that 'entrepreneur' as a word has a masculine form in Polish language, and we do not use in everyday language any familiar words that would indicate the gender of an entrepreneur. But semiotics allows us to see, that there are men drawn and they are identified by the fact that they are not women. In 11 cases we encountered females. In 13 cases no gender was displayed, yet we can see, that lack of gender display can be identified by the fact that some students wanted to indicate the gender. What is more, in 3 pictures there were no person constructions of an entrepreneur in a form of a tree, a heart and a little goddess.

As we can see in some pictures there are elements of satire and jokes, even irony in the way entrepreneur is presented (picture 1, picture 2, picture 3, picture 4, picture 5), again, we can only see that this meaning was generated because there is an alternative, with a neutral representation of an entrepreneur. The same comparison could be discussed, as regards negative images of an entrepreneur. Although, we have encountered not too many of these throughout our set of images, they still are there because we could also talk about positive images of entrepreneurs in students' opinions and constructions. So the evil (picture 2) exists because there is an opposite meaning to it. In the same picture 2, there is a mortal, which represents some meaning because there are immortal ones (like the one in picture 17). There are some immortal, unrecognizable forces that provide entrepreneurs with power and make them successful. Some powers are overused and here we refer back about examples of corruption, perhaps even fraudery, where research confirms, that many famous entrepreneurs are somehow related to different political and other scandals. But also, these forces may suggest that an entrepreneur is equipped with a special, unique advantage, that cannot be held by many. Again, goddesses are just few, there are many mortals.

From the analysis of the pictures, we can see that there is also a lot of multitasking and pluriactivity involved. This can have two explanations. First of all, entrepreneurs are managers performing many functions related to their business. But the meaning we can derive here too, is that they do many jobs and invest in many places. So their pluriactivity stands in opposition to single task orientation.

There is a very interesting outcome of our study on pictorial representations of entrepreneurs. We have registered 26 drawings with currencies such as US dollars, Euros and PLN. It is interesting, though, to note that only 3 drawings contain Polish currency and '\$' symbol is present in abundance in many (24) drawings. If we take a closer look at picture 14, we can see, that the three ideas revolving in an entrepreneur's head are US dollars, Euro and a property. What meaning US dollars can give to us? The natural interpretation would be, that foreign currencies manifest the willingness to investment, are symbol of wealth. How US dollars can possibly work as symbols of wealth? Dollar symbol has become a very important element of mental maps, and even though the USA is going through economic crisis, the symbol means wealth and money, especially in Polish cultural setting. Young students, who were born in transition period, cannot have experienced the cherishment for US dollars in the command economy market, before the transition started. Nevertheless, this iconic and indexical aspect of the sign is worth further exploration in the follow – up in depth interviews.

Our entrepreneurs use all sorts of weapons, such a baseball bat (picture 1), a sword (picture 4) and a gun hidden in a guitar case. They can be used for defense or attack. Interpretation of meaning may be more complex here. Entrepreneurs may indicate to be the rulers of the world, above the rest 'give me the dosh you mortal' (picture 2, picture 1), and in this way capitalizing on their power and becoming wealthier. The pictures display also many additional gadgets, many of them luxury ones, belonging to category of branded products. Yet again, high-street value brands, can be contrasted with brands of discount shops. The students' interpretations of entrepreneur indicate that they want to manifest their way and they do not always manage to do so. Picture 5 is a classic example of an entrepreneur who has climbed up the economic ladder but is lagging behind with respect to social ladder. So such entrepreneurs have a lot of money, they want to show off and manifest their wealth (also picture 3 and picture 4).

Also, we can try to take the meaning that there are individual entrepreneurs and also entrepreneurs with other people. The first meaning can only be identified if we see the whole system of possible constructions. What is more, there are relations of power expressed (picture 15) and they only exist as meaning, because there are ones which are egalitarian ones. Overall, we have registered 4 egalitarian situations and 11 hierarchical relationships with other people in the business.

As researchers adopting this alternative approach, we are aware of some potential problems that have arisen from the analysis of pictorial representations of entrepreneurs. Some of the students were unwilling to provide the pictures, obviously none were put under any pressure to do so, but have been encouraged to do so strongly. As an element of courtesy they have provided the researchers with their pictures, but have not expressed much enthusiasm in presenting their constructions of entrepreneurs. Sometimes, they claimed that they lacked drawing skills. Also, some incorporated words into their drawings and some not. We should emphasize, that the main set of problems concerns interpretation, as second hand accounts of researchers' interpretations of the pictorial representations may lead to misinterpretations (Stiles, 2004). Therefore, it would be useful to employ semi-structured interviews to provide explanations for the semiotics present in the pictures and to discuss the context of individuals engaged in the research (their life history). Stiles (2004) reports that issues that emerged in the pictorial representations have never actually emerged in verbal questioning. Individuals questioned admitted that they have not considered concepts that they have provided in the pictorial representations before.

Discussion

Like we can see, the alternative research technique, based on the semiotic analysis of visual data has allowed us, to deliver very impressive and meaningful constructions of entrepreneurs in students' eyes. This technique is very much different from the popular methods analyzing pre-entrepreneurial behaviours, attitudes to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs through surveys, where respondents need to indicate on Likert scale to what extent they agree with certain statements about entrepreneur. When we consider the academic discourse on entrepreneurship, in reference to education, we rarely see examples where alternative constructions of entrepreneurship are presented. In our review on English textbooks on entrepreneurship and small business we have found one example. It is in an excellent text by Storey and Greene (2010) who talk about Baumol's (1990) paper on productive-unproductive-destructive entrepreneurship. Also, Burns (2007) reminds an old adage 'if you scratch entrepreneur you will find a spiv' but does not expand on it. However, as there are very few academic resources published in Poland for the purpose of entrepreneurship education, our 'transformation generation' is left with nothing, but presentations of business people in popular media.

The referred GEM report on entrepreneurial activity in Poland, includes the data gathered among experts giving their opinions on entrepreneurship status in Poland. Experts agree that '*young generation, now teenagers, or ones in their 20's will become the engines of progress soon*'. '*They already live in the EU with a different awareness of living in a better world. They are convinced that they can and are able to do things, that the world is open for them*'. But at the same time, not all experts are willing to confirm that entrepreneurs who are successful in their business command common respect, 48% of the experts disagreed with the image statement.

References

1. Antonopoulos G.A. and Mitra J. (2009) 'The Hidden Enterprise of Bootlegging Cigarettes out of Greece', *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, 22(1), 1-8
2. Anderson, A.R. (2000), 'Paradox in the Periphery: an Entrepreneurial Reconception', *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 12(1), 91-110.
3. Anderson, A.R. and Starnawska, M., (2008), 'Research practices in entrepreneurship; problems of definition, description and meaning', *International Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(4).
4. Baćłowski K., Korczega M. and Zbierowski P. (2005), 'Studium przedsiębiorczości w Polsce w roku 2004' *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Fundacja Edukacyjna Bachalski, Poznań*
5. Ball M. And Smith G. (1992) *Analysing Visual Data*, Sage Publications
6. Banks, M. (2007) *Using Visual Methods in Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications
7. Baumol, W.J. (1990) 'Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive, and Destructive' *Journal of Political Economy*, 98(5), 893-921
8. Bell, P. (2001) 'Content analysis of Visual Images' in: *Handbook of Visual Analysis*, T. Van Leeuwen, C. Jewitt (eds.), Sage Publications, pp. 10-34
9. Berger A.A. (2004) *Media Analysis Techniques*, Sage Publications
10. Berger, P. and Luckman, T. (1983) *Społeczne tworzenie rzeczywistości*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa, (Polish edition)
11. Burns, P. (2007) *Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke
12. Chell, E., Pittaway, L. (1998), 'The social constructionism of entrepreneurship', paper presented at ISBA Conference, Durham, November.
13. Cierniak-Szóstak E. (2006) Wizerunek polskiego przedsiębiorcy jako element legitymizacji/delegitymizacji nowego ładu, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego* 8(1), Rzeszów.

14. Davidsson, P. (2003), 'The Domain of Entrepreneurship Research: Some Suggestions', in: *Advances in Entrepreneurship, Firm Emergence and Growth*, Vol 6, JAI Press, pp 2-90.
15. Drakopoulou-Dodd, S. and Anderson, A.R., (2007), 'Mumpsimus and the mything of the individualistic entrepreneur', *International Journal of Small Business*, 25(4), 341-360.
16. Eriksson P. and Kovalainen A. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, Sage Publications,
17. Fletcher, D. E. (2006) 'Entrepreneurial processes and the social construction of opportunity' *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 18(5), 421-440.
18. Gell A., (1998) *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Claredon
19. Glinka, B. (2008) *Kulturowe uwarunkowania przedsiębiorczości w Polsce*, PWE, Warszawa.
20. Heath C. and Hindmarch J. (2002) 'Analysing interaction: video, ethnography and situated conduct' in *Qualitative research in action*, T. May (ed.), London, Sage Publications.
21. Lindgren M. and Packendorff J., (2009), 'Social constructionism and entrepreneurship. Basic assumptions and consequences for theory and research' *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 15(1), 25-47
22. Martz W.B. Jr, Neil T.C. and Biscaccianti A. (2003) 'Student perception of entrepreneurs: a cultural perspective' *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 7, 67-86
23. *Opinie o bogactwie i ludziach bogatych. Komunikat z badań.*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa, czerwiec 2007. http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/raporty_2007.php accessed on 12 May 2010.
24. *Prestiż zawodów. Komunikat z badań.* Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa , styczeń 2009, Warszawa. www.cbos.pl/SPISKM.POL/2009/K_008_09.PDF accessed on 12 May 2010
25. Silverman, D. (2007) *Interpreting qualitative data. Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, Sage Publications
26. Smith, R., (2006) *Entrepreneur as socially constructed*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, the UK.
27. Smith R., (2008) 'Have you heard the one about the entrepreneur? Curiosity and entrepreneur jokes' mimeo
28. Smith R. and Anderson A.R. (year) 'Recognizing meaning: semiotics in entrepreneurial research' in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship Research*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, 169-192
29. Starnawska, M. (2009), 'The way things are done here – Polish entrepreneurship – having endowed heritage or burden?' in: *What do we know /and would like to know/ about entrepreneurship in Poland*, J.E. Wasilczuk (ed.), GUT, Gdańsk.
30. Stiles, D. R. (2004) 'Pictorial representation' in: *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, Cassel C. and Symon G. (eds.). Sage Publications
31. *Świadomość ekonomiczna społeczeństwa i wizerunek biznesu*, Kolarska-Bobińska L. (ed.), ISPWarszawa 2004
32. Wade G., Smith R. and Anderson A.R. (2003) 'Becoming, Being and Belonging Entrepreneurial Establishment: Alternative views of the social construction of entrepreneurship' Manchester Metropolitan University Business School Working paper Series (online), <http://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/e-space/handle/2173/1792> accessed 12 March 2010