

Micro Data on Entrepreneurship: Munich and Leipzig Founder Studies

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship has become a central issue in a variety of academic disciplines such as industrial and regional economics, labor economics, sociology, organizational theory, and psychology. International journals (e.g. *Small Business Economics*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*) have been established and contributions to them attract readers in academia and policy as well. The issue of creating new businesses is important for the ongoing debate on political strategies to support economic growth and innovation and to reduce unemployment. It is obvious that this debate should be informed by empirical studies on entrepreneurship.

However, empirical work in this interdisciplinary field is often troubled by data problems. Studies are frequently based on small numbers or few industries. On the other hand, entrepreneurship data that cover many industries are usually derived from official or commercial registers and therefore restricted to a small number of variables (for two examples in this series see Wagner 2000, and Almus et al. 2000). Finally, research on new businesses is mainly based on cross sectional designs (exceptions are the two data sets just mentioned). Therefore, studies on entrepreneurial success often face severe selection problems because only surviving firms are sampled.

The data sets described in this paper avoid these shortcomings since they have been gathered with a representative sampling strategy from total cohorts of newly founded firms in two German regions (upper Bavaria with the central city of Munich and the western part of Saxonia with Leipzig as the central town). Several years after founding not only founders of still existing enterprises but also those of firms meanwhile closed were confronted with extensive face to face interviews thus avoiding survivor bias. In short, the Munich and Leipzig Founder Studies offer rich data on cohorts of newly founded businesses in two German regions. In addition, both data sets are available as public use files.