

South African Entrepreneurs Looking Global South: Another Bric in the Wall?

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South Africa's recent strengthening of economic ties with China, India and Brazil seems to legitimate President Zuma's call for Indian and Chinese investments and the growing claims of the South African Government to join the group of BRIC economies. One can interpret the latter as finally untamed. I do propose to look at a group of actors with the most important role to play for economic development and finally job creation: private sector entrepreneurs. How do strengthened "South-South" relations manifest themselves in South African private business practices at the micro scale of the entrepreneur? Indeed, an economic footprint of new actors is very real in a growing number of large Chinese, Indian and Brazilian companies that have been attracted by the market potential and the advanced infrastructure of South Africa. South African responses and self-confidence are illustrated in two 300-member business delegations which accompanied President Zuma's state visits to India in June and to China in August 2010. How active is South African business in creating new relations with partners 'over there'?

Are there signs of an untamed positioning of private business in the competitive space and what is the base for business' perceptions of their current position?

How do South Africa's private sector entrepreneurs apart from those in the few, long established Multinational Companies position themselves in a New Growth Coupling and how do they benefit from their current strategies?

Who does and who does not successfully participate in making the business connections to China, India and Brazil?

Empirically my PhD-project looks at entrepreneurial capabilities of personal networking to mobilize social capital. Further it focuses on decision-making on the mode of entry into difficult BRIC markets and entrepreneurs' talent for creation of joint ventures or strategic alliances etc. "Thick descriptions" on the subjective perspective of entrepreneurs are thought to illustrate to what extent there are signs of being untamed.

An approach, I label Social Geography of Entrepreneurship responds to the call for a more nuanced understanding of how entrepreneurs work creatively within transnational spatial contexts and how they develop social and economic capabilities to "stretch" their entrepreneurial space. Asking how entrepreneurial space is constructed, lived and filled with meaning will hopefully provide insights into the current diversity and challenges of South African reactions to the increasing economic impact of Southern traders and investors.