

Translation in Action. Global and Local Templates in Technology Entrepreneurship

von Klaus Weber

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A cultural dimension of economic globalization is the proliferation of seemingly universal templates for economic action. One example is “technology-based entrepreneurship,” which is increasingly presented as a recipe for international development and national competitiveness. But what does it mean to perform technology entrepreneurship? The lecture develops a micro-phenomenological answer to this question. The case of the nascent Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in Nairobi, Kenya, shows how participants construct contradictory ideal-typical representations (templates) of entrepreneurship that are coded as global and local. Ethnographic and semiotic methods are used to understand the contrasting content of these templates, and the strategies that participants adopt to manage resulting tensions in interactions with each other.

Each strategy, however, gives rise to unintended consequences that prevent the resolution of tensions that are ultimately grounded in differences at the institutional rather than pragmatic level.
