

The Socio-emotional Configuration of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

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The configuration of entrepreneurial ecosystems (EEs) influences how entrepreneurs access resources. Sociological approaches look at social capital and the development of networks, yet very few studies analyse how the socio-emotional characteristics of EEs affect the way entrepreneurs define their ventures and get access to support. By analysing ritualised business practices, this paper explores the connections of a publishing cluster to other EE elements. Archival data and 33 interviews helped examine how culture shapes social interaction in specific business contexts, perpetuating a cohesive ethos and market logics. These findings suggest that entrepreneurs go through an *acclimatisation process* that consists of an adjustment of business initiatives to cultural factors, encouraging the creation of links between EE elements. Its relational configuration is established through specific interaction ritual chains (IRC) that establish and spread the meaning of ritualistic business practices. The socio-emotional configuration of EEs is guided by the entrepreneurial culture of the region in which it is based, and leads to the manifestation of a common identity that encompass the business practices and outcomes supported in the EE.

Keywords: entrepreneurial ecosystems; interaction ritual chains; emotions.

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1 Introduction

Entrepreneurial ecosystems, or EEs (Moore, 1993), provide us with a framework to analyse the reciprocal influence of entrepreneurial behaviour and the environment (Autio, Thomas and Gann, 2016; Feldman, 2014). They embody ‘a set of interdependent actors and factors that are governed in such a way that they enable

productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory' (Stam, 2015). This theoretical construct is frequently reviewed (Alvedalen and Boschma, 2017; Scaringella and Radziwon, 2018; Wurth, Stam and Spiegel, 2022) as it is a powerful tool to understand economic development (e.g. Audretsch and Belitski 2017; Bhawe and Zahra 2019; Mason and Brown, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2018), be this technology-led (e.g. Adner, 2006), or knowledge-based (e.g. van der Borghet, Cloudt, and Romme 2012). The configuration of EEs (e.g. Spiegel, 2017; Stam, 2015) affects the economic and social fabric of geographical regions and, along the same lines, the cultural characteristics of these regions have an effect on the entrepreneurial process that has not been sufficiently explored in the literature.

This gap opens up the opportunity to bring together literature streams, apparently disconnected, and explore the role that culture plays in the socialisation of entrepreneurial projects and the configuration of EEs, tackling an over-institutionalised view of this phenomenon (Qian, Acs and Stough, 2013). EEs need policies that are custom-made to local conditions and entrepreneurial culture (Brown and Mason, 2017) rather than one-size-fits-all initiatives. Social dynamics in the region affect entrepreneurial action (Isenberg, 2010), relationships between stakeholders (Theodoraki et al., 2017) and the existence of "entrepreneurial connectors" (Mason and Brown, 2014). Culture, being this the culture of a place, industry or people, is one of the contexts in which entrepreneurship occurs and it has a strong influence on the innovation practices of individual actors (Pret and Carter, 2017). It is defined as the expected behaviours, values and beliefs sufficiently common to distinguish people of one category from another (Hofstede, 2001) and its shared in a given geographical region. Apart from some exceptions (e.g. Aoyama, 2009; Fritsch and Wyrwich, 2014), the literature on EEs tends to provide cross-sectional examinations of culture, failing to

explain how it contributes to the creation and maintenance of path dependencies between institutions and firms, shaping the evolution of economic systems and their configurations (Borissenko and Boschma, 2016; Castaño, Mendez and Galindo, 2015).

When exploring the geographies of entrepreneurship, studies tend to explore the emergence and perpetuation of an entrepreneurial culture by focusing in the effects of culture in our cognition and decision-making processes (e.g. Laskovaia et al., 2017), overlooking its socio-emotional dimension. Using a micro-sociology perspective, this explores the emergence and development of entrepreneurial culture through interaction ritual chains (IRC). IRC are the assumed rules, expectations and practices specific to places and circumstances (Collins, 2004), here used to explain how entrepreneurial cultures guide the relational configuration of EEs by perpetuating business practices (Goss, 2005; 2008) as well as the pursuit of business opportunities compatible with the cultural context (Fernández Liñán, and Santos, 2009). As a result, the social hierarchy or interaction order (Goffman, 1983) shapes the interdependence of ecosystem elements, creating ties and social boundaries among networks and different pathways in the flow of resources.

Building on relational theory, this paper brings up the historical dimension in the relationships between entrepreneurs and their institutional environment by looking at business practices that have been perpetuated by IRC. This framework links the path-dependency dimension of business relationships and the entrepreneurial culture of a region, that constitute the socio-emotional structure of an EE. The cultural attributes of an EE refer to those socially accepted business practices, norms and beliefs about entrepreneurship within a region (Spigel, 2017). These assumptions drive the relational and material configuration of EEs, building pathways of collaboration and support that relay upon the navigation of IRC. Entrepreneurs adapt themselves to comply with the

implicit rules of these rituals that connect members of different clusters and networks, acquiring new status and power that help them mobilise resources (Doern and Goss, 2012).

Navigating IRC requires exposure to the entrepreneurial culture of the region and alignment to its ethos. The time and space in which these IRC occur become an analytical and policy tools that help us unpack the different contexts in which individuals interact. In this case, the paper adopts a cluster perspective and identifies the IRC linked to the entrepreneurial culture of a specific industry and geographical region (Porter, 1998; Spiegel, 2022). An emphasis on an individual cluster and location serves to illustrate how relational theory can help us understand innovation system dynamics that are unique to the pursuit of business opportunities in specific regions and industries. This paper answers the following research questions:

- What are the underlying mechanisms through which entrepreneurial culture guides EE configuration?
- How can the socio-emotional configuration of EEs differentiate them conceptually from other economic and innovation systems?

Entrepreneurial culture and EE configuration shape not only decision-making, but also the expectations of how entrepreneurs should interact. Social and business practices are passed on to the next generation of entrepreneurs as community norms and conventions that are key to be included in the interaction order.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Culture

The soft power that emerges from IRC makes emotions an alternative lens to look

further into the sociological conceptualisation of EEs (Bericat, 2016). Entrepreneurs, clusters and institutions are bounded by cultural values that go beyond spatial proximity (Pret and Carter, 2017), requiring an embeddedness within other social systems to ensure successful collaborations. These interdependencies drive the evolution of EEs, with culture being one of the strongest contextual factors in the creation of support structures (Feldman, 2001; Huggins and Thompson, 2014). Additionally, culture is also difficult to change; it helps identify the business practices of local communities (Boschma, 2005) and how they create social capital (Spigel, 2013). Culture provides entrepreneurs with a history of IRC and reveals patterns of entrepreneurial action based on the adherence to local values and norms. Learning how to align entrepreneurial action with the ethos of local communities happens during the acquisition of social capital (Bischoff, 2021; Spigel, 2017; 2017b). Support structures create additional value by enabling social interaction between entrepreneurs and gatekeepers that may secure them access to information and resources (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011; Pugh et al., 2018; Thurik, Stam, Audretsch, 2013). The acceptance of social norms is part of a 'social climate' (Schumpeter, 1934) that indicates the conventions that need to be observed (Laskovaia, Shirokova, and Morris, 2017; Nissan, Galindo, and Picazo, 2012; North, 1990). IRC (Doern & Goss, 2014; Goss, 2005; 2007) are used to navigate different relational systems (Aldrich and Yang, 2014; Aoyama, 2009; Doloreux and Parto, 2005; Hoang and Antoncic, 2003). These interactions are context-specific and not generalizable to others (Kwon, Heflin, and Ruef, 2013), as the repetition of IRC perpetuate business practices, creating a local entrepreneurial culture that identifies the EE.

Culture brings together communities that share values and identity traits, such as ethnicity or religion (e.g. Donaldson, 2021). However, the relevance of these traits will

depend on how the context activates these or other overlapping identities (Burke, 2004; Merolla et al. 2012). The observation and questioning of the interaction order generate new socio-emotional dynamics and interdependencies (Goss, 2005) that alter the interaction order and lead to changes in status and power for different actors. Constraints to the interaction order (Summers-Effler, 2006; Turner, 2008) produce changes in the links between different relational systems (Adler and Kwon, 2002; De Carolis and Saporito 2006; Goss, 2008; Goss and Sadler-Smith, 2018), consolidating business practices that, through repetition, become part of specific contexts. The following section explores how the socio-emotional configuration of EEs influences entrepreneurial action (Civera and Freeman, 2019; Dilli and Westerhuis, 2018; Neumeyer and Santos, 2018).

2.2 Relational Theory and EEs Interdependencies

Studies show how socially-bound groups back each other when they share characteristics, such as being of the same gender (Brooks et al., 2014; Hampton, McGowan, and Cooper, 2011; Manolova et al., 2007), ethnicity (Edelman et al., 2010; Kwon, Heflin, and Ruef, 2013), social class (Cederberg et al., 2019), religion (Audretsch, Boente, and Tamvada., 2013), national culture (Ledeneva, 2006) or working in the same type of business (Shepherd, 2016). Nested industries rely heavily on their socio-emotional configuration and networks. For instance, the creative industries rely on personal and professional networks that support the creation of new ventures and collaborative agreements (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). Additionally, the symbolic and affective value of entrepreneurs' outcomes (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2013) allows them to make genuine contributions in terms of social and economic value (see Potts et al., 2008 for an exploration of the creative industries).

The position of actors in the interaction order is manifested in a collective emotion or political sentiment that guides social interaction (von Scheve and Ismer, 2013). Norms around the manifestation of emotions, such as anger or pride, influence business practices, including mentoring (Stam and Spiegel, 2016), acquiring social skills (Baron and Markman, 2000) and the creation of safety nets (Theodoraki, Messeghem, and Rice, 2018). IRC allow entrepreneurs to adjust themselves to their social circumstances.

2.3 Emotions and the Configuration of EEs

Emotions are not completely psychological or sociological (Aksan et al., 2009). When individuals claim to belong to a group, they are willing to adhere to its norms and expectations, and emotions indicate the extent to which there is a right level of fit. They help us to map out our position in the interaction order, indicating the micro-politics we need to navigate to achieve certain social status (Stets and Turner, 2008). Emotions have also been found to be quite instrumental, often used to capitalise on positive reactions (Kato and Wiklund, 2011) and suppress negative ones in order to gain support and access to resources. The cultural attributes of an EE also guides risk-taking and trust-building (De Leersnyder, Boiger, and Mesquita, 2013), encouraging the expression of certain emotions over others. As IRC are continuous relational micro-processes that serve as the foundations of macro-level structures, they provide a historical and evolutionary perspective on the socio-emotional configuration of EEs.

3 Methodology

This study focuses on Edinburgh, with a focal point in its publishing cluster. Publishing is one of the pillars of the creative economy, making it a node that connects many different clusters and industries (e.g. Heebels, 2013; Heebels and Boschma, 2011).

The first step of data collection consisted of mapping out the most relevant clusters within and around publishing and the IRC connecting them, enabling the exploration of the EE configuration. Interviews were structured in two rounds. The first round focused on institutions participating in the design and implementation of cultural policies, as well as organisations related to publishing that do not belong to the cluster, such as festival organisers, NGOs and public libraries. The second round of interviews included participants directly related to the production of books, professional associations, bookshops, writers and publishers. The publishers that feature in this study are micro and small companies, covering a variety of markets including children books, young adult fiction, comics, schoolbooks, poetry collections, academic publishing and religious texts, as well as trade fiction and non-fiction.

[Table 1 near here]

A total of 33 interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded using NVivo. All interview scripts were read at least four times, and emotions expressed were classified according to the taxonomy elaborated by Willcox (1982), which shows primary and secondary emotions and the transitions among them according to their intensity and valence. The subjects that elicited these emotions were identified, and a second round of analysis clustered the emerging themes around the different types of participants. Additionally, emotions were assigned to the situations in which they occurred. Finally, the main IRC that connected EE elements were identified.

[Table 2 near here]

4 Findings: Entrepreneurial Rituals; Balancing Status and Power.

These findings show that entrepreneurs go through a *process of acclimatisation* to the EE when pursuing business opportunities. This process allows them to co-adapt and co-evolve with other EE elements and it is heavily influenced by the culture of the place,

which sets the ethos of the industry by repeating IRC that guide and perpetuate those business practices accepted in the industry (Goss, 2005).

Three types of social interaction rituals have been identified: *initiation rituals*, *production rituals* and *trading rituals*. *Initiation rituals* are starting points of social interaction, and they include the presentation of business opportunities and the negotiation of access to key actors and resources, such as funding, awards, residencies, representation and other forms of support. In the publishing industry, these rituals consist of creating alliances between quangos, publishers, literary agencies and writers. *Production rituals* refer to the agreements by which collaborative interactions are formalised, normally through contracts and verbal agreements. They usually imply the negotiation of monetary and relational terms, and are characterised by great levels of tension and power asymmetries that need to be resolved. Finally, *trading rituals* involve the presentation of the production outcomes to actors that have not being involved in the production rituals, such as external clients and the public. These rituals include agreements and points of friction between different networks, leading to an overall political sentiment that guides their business practices. The perpetuation of these micro-processes is sustained by the EE's relational structure, and its history of IRC become part of the culture of the place (Goss and Sadler-Smith, 2018).

Initiation, production and trading rituals are extremely important in the *process of acclimatisation* as they are used to convey the initial business idea, find support to materialise and conceptualise it, and present the final product to others. A successful *process of acclimatisation* has a strong influence on the professional and economic returns of its participants, especially for those who are more invested in the previous rituals. Its outcome is based on these three IRC and culminates in the co-creation of *commercial categories*, which are the public representations of EE business outcomes.

The *process of acclimatisation* and its resulting business outcomes are here explored under the term *commercial categories*. The exchange of symbolic and material power during the IRC is reflected in the perceived quality and success resulting from entrepreneurial action, which shapes and perpetuates the business practices that are part of the cultural attributes of the EE.

[Figure 1 near here]

The IRC identified receive plenty of attention and involve high levels of emotional energy from all participants. Entrepreneurs transition through the different rituals, which converge in relational and professional outputs that are the result of common business goals and a negotiated ethos. This section provides a detailed account of the social interaction rituals identified and shows the political sentiments expressed by the participants.

4.1 Initiation Rituals

Over the last decade, many of Scotland's large publishing houses have moved to London, and this process has made room for independent publishers to flourish in recent years (Creative Scotland, 2015). As the major funder of literary magazines and books, the Scottish Arts Council, now Creative Scotland, has been key in the rehabilitation and sustainability of the publishing ecosystem (Potter, 2007). Despite efforts to provide clear and transparent funding guidelines, Creative Scotland has not been immune to criticism; some have accused it of making bad decisions, which have encouraged a publishing culture too focused on grants rather than commercial success.

Publishing Scotland is another important source of support, especially when it comes to the marketing and promotion of books in the rest of the UK and beyond. Other key organisations under the umbrella of Creative Scotland include the Scottish Book Trust (a national agency promoting reading and writing), the Gaelic Books Council, the

Scottish Poetry Library, the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Association for Scottish Literary Studies (ASLS), with the latter promoting the scholarly study of Scottish literature and language (Scottish Centre for the Book, 2012; Potter, 2007).

The relational dynamics between Creative Scotland and its umbrella organisations have a strong impact on publishers' emotions, as they signal their potential profitability and reputation. The right positioning and status give them access to focal actors and alternatives sources of support, improving their chances to succeed. Despite the potential accessibility to grants and bursaries that recognise niche player's potential, the situation is not easy for many publishers, who consider their ability to raise funds only as good as the person in the institution willing to support them.

Publishers use creative writing courses and formal training as another way to approach potential collaborators, as they increase a writer's perceived status, pointing at a serious intention to hone their craft rather than being opportunistic J.K. Rowlings-to-be. They also rely on strong ties and follow the recommendations made by trusted colleagues to select collaborators.

Writers also ask funding agencies for support and receive bursaries that allow them to concentrate on their work until the book is completed. An employee of a quango reflects on the fact that newcomers to the industry, both publishers and writers, pass from having the supportive reviews of their closer circles to hearing professionally informed literary- and business-based critiques to their proposals, and need to develop a thick skin. Agencies are open to contributing funding but the benefits of these investments are also calculated in terms of spillover to other industries, including hospitality, tourism and consumption of other creative industries.

The bursaries and funding given to writers have also been criticised, with some arguing that writers do not deserve a subsidy just because they want to make a living out

of writing (Potter, 2007). Additionally, most authors discovered by smaller Scottish publishers tend to leave for larger London-based publishers who can afford better contracts, distribution and promotion. These circumstances have fuelled discussions considering the extent to which writers who have received subsidies should return the money after obtaining a good contract, although not everyone agrees.

4.2 Production Rituals

When asking publishers about where they find books that are worth being produced, they admit to relying on traditional channels like literary agents and avoiding self-published authors. They are inclined to follow recommendations or even commission works through their personal networks:

Publisher 4: It is much more networking. It is the old publishing approach, if I want to get a book published on a particular topic... I will ask someone whom I know if they know anyone working in that (academic) area. Then, I will go to that person and say I am looking for someone to write on this particular subject. Do you know anyone? It is like following a piece of string and eventually someone says, yes, that sounds interesting. I will write it.

Other stakeholders confirmed these difficulties; publishers rely on strong ties and follow the recommendations of trusted colleagues:

Literary agent: So I can say to a publisher, they are a brand new author and they can go in for various book awards. There is no history and no skeletons in the cupboard (self-published work). As soon as they have had the disappointing sales of your first book, or second book, it is so much harder for me as an agent to make that case to a publisher. I can hear them, on the phone, tapping away into Nielson

book scan. Then they will say, the first did not sell very well, I will have to say that this is their breakthrough book because of x, y, z.

The production rituals between publishers and writers are characterised by profound power asymmetries. Selection seems to be based primarily on the alignment stories have with the ethos of the publishers. Publishers and literary agents need to connect to the story, as book production, distribution and commercialisation are lengthy processes and require high emotional investment. Writers are the clear antagonists. They look for formulas that may result in economic profit and control over production, leaving aside other types of remunerations that could be negotiated, such as the use of offices and equipment as well as access to training. Instead, contracts revolve around advances and royalties, with most of the bargaining power lying on one side. Publishers set the rules and are not willing to deal with egos; and so, for writers, it is very difficult to speak up and improve their remuneration conditions. An NGO representative describes these interactions as full of mistrust. Writers hope to initiate a dialogue about how this issue could be mitigated by changes in cultural policies like the legislation of the price of books (e.g. the end of the Net Book Agreement) or the regulation of the remuneration of writers:

Writer 1: All the language is still there, and they are still saying, "We love our writers and it's so important, we wouldn't be anything without their books". Actually, if you look at the way those publishing houses behave, where the money goes, [it] is very corporate largely publishing now. Publishing houses pay their teamers more than what they pay to the vast majority of their writers. If you look at writers going in, with a genre book perhaps, they might get £2,000 or £3,000 as an advance if they are lucky even with a big publisher... To get really tiny

advances they may work for a year or two on that book, and they are paying their own staff the living wage.

When it comes to the specific content publishers are interested in, they admit taking gambles on books that are not money-spinners but help preserve a catalogue of Scottish classics and themes that are considered of local interest. They do it because otherwise these titles would get lost. Therefore, they have a vital role in the Scottish cultural scene because they allow new generations to discover and read about their heritage and this is pointed out as one of their key motivations.

4.3 Trading Rituals

Quangos and publishers discuss the importance of networking and collaborating even though it is something that does not happen often at a regional level, at least in a formal way. Most publishers position themselves as part of literary niches that belong to larger networks of specialised publishers beyond the Scottish borders. The prevalence of this membership above other overlapping identities prevents them from joining formal networks and trade associations, which is detrimental to the positioning of their work at an international level. Many of them have been described as lifestyle publishers:

Quango 2: There needs to be more of an appetite for growth and I think if we get more of that ... more entrepreneurialism and more strategic thinking about how business is actually grown rather than just thinking is this book does well, the other, that's really good for me. Then I think that will help.

The country has had issues differentiating its literary production from that of neighbouring countries in the past. Scotland does not have a separate ISBN from the rest of the UK, and successful companies like MacMillan and Collins are now based in England and have become subsidiaries of larger companies. These mergers debilitated

the Scottish publishers' identity, although they played an important role in the devolution movement and the resurrection of the Scottish collective sense of confidence (Varga, 2007), which is expressed also in its pro-independence politics:

Publisher 4: For a long time throughout the empire, the more Scottish you were, the more British you were. There was of course this slight problem that people in England meant to say Britain but said England, which they still do. Also overseas, it has been one of the issues.

Publisher 12: Yes, I think what happened in the early nineties was transformational. It actually transformed Scotland culturally and more. Before 1992, what happened was Scots had an inferiority complex. Publishing was very important. Looking back politically, everything that has happened in Scotland was because of the early nineties. That made the ground for the writers and poets and thinkers and cultural people that led the crowd, not the politicians. Now people are very strident about being Scots. That was not the case before then.

Nowadays, Scottish literature has an international agenda and publishers realise the potential of their collectiveness. However, critical voices pointed at a potential over-reliance on a kitsch form of *Scottishness* that might be detrimental to the representation of the cultural depth of its literary production (Boyd, 2014). The circumstances are still challenging for those small presses that need to increase the projection of their books beyond the Scottish market. Cultural barriers to trade in the rest of the UK or overseas would have very negative effects in the industry for which international trade is a key entrepreneurial asset (Noorda, 2020).

4.4 Commercial Categories

However, different actors within the publishing network struggle to define what makes them *Scottish* publishers. They make reference to the place where they were born, the place where they live, the context in which the stories they publish are based, yet there are discrepancies even when trying to assess the relevance of these characteristics when it comes to defining Scottish literature. Comparing the following quotes makes it more evident:

NGO 13: Those battles are long gone. If you have come and made Scotland your home, we are flattered. We want you to be part of Scotland.

Quango 2: We do not talk about Scottish authors; we talk about authors who live in Scotland... So, most publishers would see that they have a responsibility to help authors living in Scotland.

Bookstore 1: The first rule is if they are Scottish.

At a local level, bookstores have an overwhelming power when it comes to the construction of commercial categories for literary production. The criteria to categorise fiction books is mainly based on the author's characteristics, as the publisher is not considered the main target in marketing terms. When it comes to non-fiction, publishers are displayed in the Scottish literature section when their books explore subjects related to Scotland. Bookstore managers rely on the judgement of their product managers, who classify books depending on their commercial potential. The final categorisation, however, is dependent on the sales of the book, confirming the subconscious belief that quality equals sales.

Many of the participants of this study preferred to stick together within the category of Scottish literature, independent of the genre, nationality and context of the book. The rationale behind this was that, although it may be detrimental to their individual sales, it gives them a high degree of distinctiveness. This would be harder to achieve if their books were placed on random shelves according to other characteristics. However, the result of trading rituals and the creation of commercial categories continues being controversial, awakening mixed feelings among the participants interviewed:

Publisher 8: We are an international publisher that happens to be situated within Edinburgh. Because Edinburgh as a publishing scene is overwhelmingly literary... we are non-fiction, we are not really so much part of it.

Publisher 7: We are part of increasingly creating a wider international recognition of the distinction between English literature, British literature, Scottish literature...

Bookstore 1: It is a fine line between the general fiction department and the Scottish fiction department. There is a bit of a battle always going on... They tend to end up in the Scottish section... people, when they go big, they will end up in ... the bestseller chart or the tables... It is down to the buyer. Their word is final... The big rule – do not piss off the bookseller that is meant to sell your book, because they are not going to. Just do not.

Literary awards are another trading ritual used to increase the status of winners and their visibility within the industry. These networks are closely tied and the lack of diversity – particularly the predominance of white middle-class writers – has been well documented (Squires, 2017). Participation in literary awards and events such as the Literary Shop, organised by the City of Literature as part of the Edinburgh International

Book Festival, are not only a sign of quality, but also a recognition of a writer's marketing potential. Based on informal agreements and personal networks, these events mobilise writers who contribute their time to building a sense of community around these venues.

This phenomenon has a long tradition and involves different literary genres. These events are a way to increase foot traffic; they are also an opportunity to scout literary talent, especially for literary magazines. Fringe events can be considered both an initiation and trading ritual. Publishers look at PR and marketing skills as a decisive factor for a writer to succeed, and that is why they pressure authors to take part in events and be active on social media. These requests provoke mixed emotions among writers, who describe public relations as a painful learning process but also a way to signpost their potential.

Publishers' challenging entry barriers and demands of promotional skills have led some authors to create alternative networks of self-published and digitally published authors. These networks are populated by newcomers to the industry that join these trading rituals hoping to get a deal with a traditional publisher. However, most actors consider self-publishing a souk of vanity as these books often lack quality. One can recognise the lack of rigor in these works and publishing professionals generally refuse to work with them.

Nevertheless, bookstores give these independent authors the opportunity to display their books on their shelves. They agree to take the stock free of charge for a few months, then calculate the sales and pay authors their royalties. Bookstores only have to face the storage cost while, once again, the author needs to deal with the book promotion. Bookstores benefit from the sales of books to the writers' family and friends and usually focus on authors that belong to their communities to benefit from the proximity of their acquaintances.

Findings show IRC perpetuate the way in which business opportunities are pursued. Entrepreneurs gravitate towards the different networks in search for support, negotiating business practices and exchanging emotional energy with other actors and networks, which leads to a certain pattern of social interaction and a collective political sentiment. IRC are also an anchor to their cultural identity; entrepreneurs project their cultural values and increase the power of those supporting them, improving the assessment of their initiatives and the support they could potentially access.

5 Discussion

EEs are economic systems that emerge at the intersection of a number of contexts, having unique geographical, material, social and cultural characteristics. As a result of the potential of EEs to contribute to economic growth and regional development, entrepreneurial activity is frequently analysed from a macro and meso-level perspective, and a focus on providing institutions with recommendations to facilitate policymaking (e.g. Cao and Shi, 2021). A focus in the interplay between the social context and entrepreneur answers the call to shift from static conceptualisations of EEs to process analysis that capture the underlying mechanisms facilitating the emergence of these phenomena (Spigel and Harrison, 2018). This paper develops a theoretical framework that proposes how entrepreneurial culture affects the way entrepreneurs access support (Roundy, Bradshaw and Brockman, 2018), through IRC. Social interaction is key in the emergence and perpetuation of business processes in a given region, and IRC guide the configuration of EEs and the socialisation of ideas, knowledge and resources.

It has been discussed that EEs differ from clusters in the fact that entrepreneurs drawn to EEs are looking for knowledge is not technical or industry-specific (Stam and Spigel, 2016), therefore EEs generate a unique sort of interactions that clusters cannot provide.

A micro-sociology perspective, however, allows to identify the underlying mechanisms by which culture guides the configuration of EEs, such as the identification with specific industry networks and consequent membership, which provides entrepreneurs with a specific place in the interaction order, as well as access to social occasions in which they can get access to support. Thus, it is here argued that EEs differ from other economic systems such as industrial districts (Marshall, 1920), clusters (Porter, 1998) and innovative milieus (Crevoisier, 2004) in that they can be conceptualised as a set of actors, networks and institutions with a shared entrepreneurial culture that emerges as a common political sentiment that position them in the interaction order, enabling access to IRC that secure access to knowledge and resources.

IRC are linked to the geographical region in which EEs emerge, configuring its socio-emotional characteristics. EEs are driven by cultural and social norms that emerge as patterns of thinking, feeling and acting that are characteristics of groups of individuals interacting in specific regions (Hofstede 1991, 2003). The consolidation of business processes become part of the entrepreneurial culture of the region (Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002; Hayton and Cacciotti, 2013). EE's interaction order (Goffman, 1983) organises the flow of knowledge and resources (Spigel, 2017) through the configuration of IRC patterns (Goss, 2005; 2008) that encourage participants to follow certain rules (Aoyama, 2009) and signpost the political sentiment prevailing in the different networks.

The cultural attributes of EEs establish a relational organisation that links its different elements through specific IRC. This study has identified repeated patterns of social interaction related to three specific business practices related to the assessment of opportunities (Ledeneva, 2006) in a specific region and industry, answering calls to provide stronger theoretical foundations to the conceptualisation of EEs.

In terms of relational theory, this study contributes to IRC (Collins, 2004) by exploring how these can be contextualised according to the expectations of the participants in the rituals. *Initiation rituals* are used to convey business ideas and find partners and resources to materialise projects. *Production rituals* are used to level the playing field and achieve agreements that decrease power asymmetries, in turn setting the basis for collaboration. *Trading rituals* are used to present business outcomes in or to the public. The knowledge resulting from the *process of acclimatisation* is passed on to colleagues and newcomers to the industry, generating a political sentiment that represents the culture that guides and support entrepreneurial action (Pathak, 2021).

The industry manages its socio-emotional configuration by creating *commercial categories*, which are the expectations of business outputs to communicate their culture and ethos (Doern et al., 2013). It is an expression of business initiatives that will be perpetuated. Entrepreneurs need to be clearly aligned to this ethos in order to be perceived as potential role models and brokers (Daskalaki, 2010). They should pursue business opportunities that transcend the cultural boundaries of their EE, representing more universal values that would be appealing to greater markets and increase its perceived power and status.

6 Conclusion

This paper explores the socio-emotional characteristics of EEs to enhance our understanding of the interdependencies of its different elements (Stam, 2015; Spigel, 2016; 2017; Bischoff, 2021; Audretsch, 2022). It focuses on those micro-processes that facilitate the construction of social structures supportive of entrepreneurial action. It builds from relational theory (Collins, 2004; Goffman, 1983; Goss, 2005; 2008) to identify key IRC that create and perpetuate business practices, and offers a longitudinal

conceptualisation of EEs as systems embedded in multiple contexts, differentiating them from other economic systems.

Culture has been discussed as a tool to guide entrepreneurs to make adjustments in their business practices to find their place in the interaction order (Goffman, 1983). The design of policies that target entrepreneurs would benefit from a deeper understanding of the socio-emotional boundaries around clusters and networks, as well as an identification of the main IRC connecting them as a way to strengthen the flow of knowledge and resources.

The paper also contributes to the identification of IRC associated with different stages of the entrepreneurial process and shows how they guide and support entrepreneurs through their journey. Capturing the political sentiment of participants sheds light into how *commercial categories* are constructed, helping us understand the role emotions play in the creation of a common business ethos.

This paper also opens avenues for future research. The exploration of the socio-emotional side of entrepreneurship enhances the definition, differentiation and understanding of their contributions to culture through the social values embedded in their practices (Wurth, Stam and Spigel, 2022). Targeting micro-processes could help customise policies and incentivise entrepreneurial action in a way that improves the organic evolution of EEs via knowledge spillovers (Audretsch and Peña-Legazkue, 2012) and inter-EE agreements and collaborations (van der Borgh, Cloudt and Romme, 2012).

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