Liminal Entrepreneuring: The Creative Practices of Nascent Necessity Entrepreneurs.

Abstract

This paper contributes to creative entrepreneurship studies through exploring 'liminal entrepreneuring', i.e., the organization-creation entrepreneurial practices and narratives of individuals living in precarious conditions. Drawing on a processual approach to entrepreneurship and Turner's liminality concept, we study the transition from un(der)employment to entrepreneurship of 50 nascent necessity entrepreneurs (NNEs) in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. The paper asks how these agents develop creative entrepreneuring practices in their efforts to overcome their condition of 'necessity'. The analysis shows how, in their everyday liminal entrepreneuring, NNEs disassemble their identities and social positions, experiment with new relationships and alternative visions of themselves and (re)connect with entrepreneuring ideas and practices in a new way, using imagination and organization-creation practices to reconstruct both self and context in the process. The results question and expand the notion of entrepreneuring in times of socio-economic stress.

Key words: Liminality, creative entrepreneuring, organization-creation, nascent necessity entrepreneurs, narratives, economic crisis.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a process of organization-creation (Hjorth & Gartner, 2012) as it affirms the new, forcing the development of organizing processes for the new to work. This

organization-creation element in entrepreneurship stresses intensity, potentiality and movement , disturbing the 'reigning order' and demanding a new organization (Hjorth 2003, p. 5). Entrepreneurship is therefore about the emergence of creative organizing actions, yet current research tends to focus on examining its fixed qualities, thereby rendering invisible what goes on during 'in-between' entrepreneuring processes (Cardon, Wincent, Singh & Drnovsek, 2009; Hjorth, 2005). It is in this 'betwixt and between', however, where we can better observe how creative organizing actions, play, and improvisational entrepreneurial processes occur.

Recent research has expanded our understanding of entrepreneurship as a creative endeavour by focusing not so much on what is inside entrepreneurs or how the environment can enable or constrain them in being creative, but on how this organization-creation process develops in interactions between would-be entrepreneurs and their social and institutional contexts (Hjorth, Holt & Steyaert, 2015). This alternative perspective recognises entrepreneurship as a diverse processual phenomenon and goes beyond the traditional focus on achieving wealth and business creation outputs (Rindova, Barry & Ketchen, 2009). In particular, the emerging notion of 'entrepreneuring' (Steyaert, 2007) indicates a need to turn towards a more open, non-teleological, and processual view of entrepreneurial action as continuously unfolding and inherently creative. By focusing on entrepreneuring as a process, it is possible to engage with the in-between to understand how these contexts enable creative practices to shape new forms of organizing actions. However, this liminal threshold is rarely observed in organizational or entrepreneurship studies, especially in relation to ordinary entrepreneuring and common creative experiences in conditions of crisis.

Our research addresses this gap by studying a group of nascent necessity

entrepreneurs (NNEs) in three E.U. countries – the United Kingdom (U.K.), Spain, and Ireland – who have actively tried to develop better contextual conditions for generating entrepreneurial activities in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. Through the analysis of 50 in-depth interviews and more than 60 field notes, observations, media articles, and policy documents, we illustrate how, despite institutional constraints, constant interruptions, postponements, and upsetting situations, many of these liminal entrepreneurs manage to engage in organization-creation entrepreneurial practices that lead them towards sustainable outputs. It is through engaging creatively with constant institutional and cultural constraints that our entrepreneurs learn how to 'navigate' the system, explore new ideas, and strengthen their social networks, while co-creating and reshaping their immediate social context to accommodate their new entrepreneurial identities and practices. Thus, both their entrepreneurial self and their context become reconstructed through creative interactions. We argue that these experiences can shed new light on how organization-creation activities become necessary to navigate conditions of crisis and austerity and develop 'liminal' entrepreneuring. This perspective also resonates with recent scholarship advocating more processual approaches to entrepreneuring (Steyaert, Hjorth & Gartner, 2011) and, as such, contributes to give new directions for empirical research within studies of organization-creation and creative entrepreneuring.

In addressing the above, our paper is structured as follows: first we look at the literature on NNEs and link it with research on liminality and creative entrepreneuring actions. Then, we turn to the research design and methodology for data collection and analysis. The results and findings, which are presented as a narrative, follow. Finally, we close the paper with a discussion of the main insights from our research, linking them to

relevant literature.

Becoming an Entrepreneur in Times of Crisis

The relationship between organization-creation and entrepreneurship has become central in the post-industrial economy as the way to facilitate processes of collective creativity and innovation and as an active response to the current socio-economic crisis. Increasingly, as a response to the global financial crisis, entrepreneurship is widely portrayed as that positive, elusive competence individuals need to develop, and organizations need to foster, to increase creativity, innovation, and the possibilities of finding employment in times of economic instability (Perren & Jennings, 2005). Given the sustained and widespread nature of the economic downturn in Europe, it is not surprising that the 'Schumpeter effect', whereby entrepreneurship is seen as reducing unemployment, has gained support (e.g., Sanchis Llopis et al., 2015). Beyond economic concerns, for many of the unemployed, entrepreneurship is also the means for regaining recognition and social acceptance.

Nascent entrepreneurs are defined as those individuals who have been actively involved in a not-yet-up-and-running business start-up for at least three months (Gartner & Shaver, 2012). If the motivation for initiating the business start-up has emerged out of contextual necessity, such as lack of other sources of income or employment, then they are labelled necessity entrepreneurs (Amit & Muller, 1995). In this research, we look at NNEs as those individuals in transition from conditions of un(der)employment who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities through committing time and/or resources into developing a new venture (Wagner, 2005).

Existing research on necessity entrepreneurs pays little attention to their transition

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process, however. Most current research has an economic focus, investigating the success/failure rates of necessity entrepreneurial start-ups (Davidsson & Gordon, 2015), or a psychological focus, looking at the factors and variables that influence and/or motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs out of necessity (Cassar, 2010). Although there is a recognition that there are different types of necessity entrepreneurs (Sarasvathy, Ramesh & Forster, 2015), the underlying general assumption in extant research is that it is difficult for necessity entrepreneurs to reach 'opportunity entrepreneur standards', as they are generally less educated, experienced, motivated, and satisfied (Amit & Muller, 1995), less successful as a result (Wagner, 2005), and, therefore, less relevant in terms of economic growth and job creation (Wennekers, van Wennekers, Thurik & Reynolds, 2005). Their only hope is that their poorly resourced, necessity-based start-up may turn into an attractive opportunity alternative over time (Hinz & Jungbauer-Gans, 1999). Thus, extant literature assumes that entrepreneuring done out of 'necessity' has little, if any, potential for creativity, innovation, and development, typically failing to understand pathways through which ventures started from necessity might innovate and grow (Welter, Baker, Audretsch & Gartner, 2016).

Not surprisingly, there is little interest in understanding how necessity entrepreneurs experience and manage the everyday process of engaging in entrepreneurial activities in times of crisis, as the process does not seem to lead particularly to wealth creation. The growing numbers of necessity entrepreneurs (Fitzsimons & O'Gorman, 2015), as well as the constant institutional encouragement towards entrepreneurial activities in times of crisis (Stenholm, Acs & Wuebker, 2013), suggest, however, that an exploration of that process is necessary.

We find the emergent research tradition in creative entrepreneurship studies useful to

understand the process NNEs undergo. This research tradition looks at entrepreneurship more as the range of change-oriented and creative organizational activities and processes present in any everyday entrepreneurial endeavour, rather than as a linear developmental stage process aimed exclusively at wealth creation (Berglund, Johannisson & Schwartz, 2012; Hjorth et al., 2015; Rindova et al., 2009). Researchers in this tradition focus on the process of 'entrepreneurial becoming' (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009) as a form of social creativity constituted by connected, heterogeneous practices that shape daily work and ways of living (Johannisson, 2010). From this perspective, entrepreneurship belongs to organizations and society, not just to economy (Steayaert & Katz, 2004), as it enables transitions towards creative organizing actions (Hjorth & Gartner, 2012).

Thus, we see entrepreneurship as the creative organizing process of folding and refolding materials and practices that seeks "gaps and breaches, and watches out for openings" (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009, p. 11), becoming the 'in-betweeness itself' (Steyaert, 2007). We understand nascent necessity entrepreneurship as a specific response to context-specific constraints (Hjorth et al., 2015), and as a way of dealing with, navigating, and transforming those contextual limitations, taking advantage of in-between liminal conditions.

What is rarely explained in this research tradition, and our paper develops, is how this liminal entrepreneuring process actually occurs and can enable the emergence of creative organizing outcomes in precarious conditions. In our research, we focus on how NNEs, in their everyday entrepreneuring, disassemble identities and social positions, experiment with alterantives, and (re)connect entrepreneuring ideas and practices in a new way, using more imagination and creative organizing practices (Gartner, 2008) than 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter, 1954). By outlining this process below, our research also addresses recent calls

(Welter et al., 2016) to make explicit the rich variety of 'everyday' entrepreneurship and to go beyond the understanding of entrepreneurship as largely a function of large corporate entities, excluding in the process 'other' entrepreneurs.

Necessity Entrepreneuring as a Liminal Creative Process

In organization studies, the concept of liminality has been treated primarily as a structurally imposed condition by virtue of a profession or a particular role, e.g., temporary workers (Garsten, 1999), consultants (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003), or those undergoing role changes (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016), and is often associated with having negative consequences. In entrepreneurial terms, liminality has been used more positively to indicate transformative stages (Anderson, 2005), or spaces, that allow entrepreneurs to discover their true selves (Brooker & Joppe, 2013), where new, possible futures, not yet formed, exist side-by-side with current trajectories (Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). Thus, a few studies have started to outline how liminal conditions can prompt entrepreneurs to develop new possibilities with a view to ultimately altering current resources and strategies of action.

The term 'liminality' was coined by the anthropologist van Gennep (1960) to refer to these potentially creative transitions. For van Gennep, the liminal phase was one of three phases of a rite of passage. In the first phase, the separation, a previous structural position is broken down, and in the last phase of reaggregation the new one is ceremonially established. The middle, or liminal phase, however, involves the temporary suspension of social structure, so that those who go through it are neither one thing nor the other, and at the same time both one thing and the other. They are in a paradoxical 'state' of 'transition' where potentiality is at a maximum and actuality at a minimum. Turner (1995) further developed the concept

calling this in-between stage 'ante-structure', emphasizing the opposition of the liminal condition to clear and articulated social structures. Thus, the limen as the threshold, the border, contains 'liminal personae' in a condition of having no social or institutional position defined and recognised as such: they are in-between and betwixt (Turner, 1977a, p. 37). Social invisibility and lack of a given 'social position' are central characteristics of this liminal condition, which removes limits from everyday life, so everything is open to question. Liminal processes include transgression, inversion, and parody, but especially include the reflexive contemplation of structures that have been suspended, which enables and inculcates a critical and creative attitude (Boland, 2013). Hence, a liminal transition is a dangerous time, with no sure standards for behaviour. There is a potentially frightening, bewildering limitlessness in which society appears arbitrary and culture merely illusionary, a moment of 'touching the void' (Boland, 2013). And, yet, liminality is also the time/place where unlimited potentiality exists (Turner, 1995).

Entrepreneurship is ultimately a liminal, transformative condition, a process of creating possible futures and states of being, and this is very much reflected in the transitional process our NNEs undergo, as they live "in that half-way house of becoming" (Anderson, 2005, p. 598), existing as would-be entrepreneurs. In employment terms, NNEs embody the liminal entrepreneurial condition as they find themselves going through a period where the social and community structure they know is dissolving (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014), where they are perceived as potentially dangerous or become invisible, and where they are pushed to find 'structure' by themselves, since the institutions they used to rely on find it difficult to provide one for them.

To engage in entrepreneurial activities from a situation of un(der)employment involves

balancing forces between what liminal entrepreneurs are and what they might become, or between their 'actuality' and their 'potentiality'. Any position we have in the social structure provides us with a degree of stability and coordination that steers and simplifies our activities in socially recognised and authorised ways. However, as the experience of the liminal entrepreneurs we interviewed demonstrates, their social positions are not stable; rather, their positions are constantly enacted as they go through a number of transitions that involve the management of some sort of threshold or border (Stenner & Moreno, 2013). They become 'something different' when they cross a border, and sometimes 'their context' changes, too. So, liminality "significantly disrupt[s] one's internal sense of self or place within a social system" (Noble & Walker, 1997, p. 31) and triggers both identity and contextual reconstruction in such a way that a possible new identity and social position might become meaningful for individual entrepreneurs within their community (Beech, 2011). As Turner's conceptions indicate, separation from a stable condition is not destitute of form and, although liminality can involve loss, it also holds the potential for creative resurgence (van Gennep, 1960).

Periods of social transformation, like the one created by the recent global financial crisis, seem to be conducive to the emergence of liminal groups, such as our entrepreneurs (Turner, 1977a). In this context, liminality can have positive and negative implications not only for individual entrepreneurs but also for their social context. On the one hand, 'communitas' (Turner, 1977a) (a bonding over and above formal social bonds) can spontaneously emerge from liminality through the support of those involved in a similar process and can play a significant role in ensuring a smooth transition towards a reaggregated [entrepreneurial] state. However, there can also be 'outsiderhood', where the individual is

"situationally or temporarily set apart" (Turner, 1977a, p. 233) from others in chronic (Boland, 2013), or permanent 'liminoid conditions' (Turner, 1977a). This is a distinctive kind of liminality, where the process of transition is never brought decisively to a close, or it is constantly re-opened again by events that suspend social structures. If individuals entering a period of rapid social change do not engage with the new understandings and practices generated in the transition as genuine, the transition does not become transformative, and the meanings and practices related to the [new] social structures are not replenished or renewed (Boland, 2013). Then reaggregation does not occur. What is crucial here is the long-term, continuous, or permanent experience of liminality as an interminable transition generated by the cumulative suspensions of structures and the dissolution of order and norms. It is here where creative organizing efforts run the risk of 'dissolving' in the face of constant uncertainty.

NNEs, more than any other type of entrepreneur, operate at the edge of what they do not know (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995), trying to create new realities and aiming to transform ideas into new ventures (Anderson, 2005), always aiming to engage creatively with both presence and absence in their situation. In times of systemic change, when old values, symbols, and institutions transcend into new ones, the ability to improvise and to learn is even more important (Kostera & Kozminski, 2001). It is in this context that the concept of liminality enables us to understand borders, gaps, and movements between organizational states, positions, and systems not as empty space, but, rather, as space/times of 'structural melt-down', where new organizational forms can be created, played with, and experimented with. Indeed, it is in liminal conditions that our NNEs can use various 'interstices' – the spaces that fall between the cracks of events – to creatively become something different.

Thus, to understand how NNEs disassemble, experiment with, and (re)connect entrepreneuring ideas and practices, potentially generating creative organizing outcomes in times of crisis, we need to look at their daily entrepreneuring practices.

Methodology

To understand the process NNEs go through, we focused on the narratives and practices developed by would-be entrepreneurs enacting 'entrepreneuring' as a creative organizing practice. We used a qualitative research design to explore, in depth, the micro-dynamics of everyday entrepreneuring, including contextual demands (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014), collecting 50 in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs living in precarious conditions, along with observations of the entrepreneurs' locations and social and institutional engagements. We also collected public narratives (from printed media and digital fora) of entrepreneurship in the U.K., Ireland, and Spain. In addition, we examined publicly available documents, such as government and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports, to gain an appreciation for the conditions and cultural understandings of entrepreneurship in the three countries. Our aim is to straddle the micro-macro boundary, looking at the development of local necessity entrepreneuring narratives and practices within particular social and historical contexts (Dawson & Hjorth, 2012).

Data Collection

Over a period of two years, we followed a group of NNEs in the U.K., Spain, and Ireland. Our aim was not to do a cross-country comparison between NNEs; rather, it was to look at would-be entrepreneurs in E.U. countries who have actively tried to develop better contextual conditions for generating entrepreneurial activities in the wake of the global financial crisis

(Xavier, Kelley, Kew, Herrington & Vorderwülbecke, 2013). Of the E.U. countries identified in GEM (Xavier et al., 2013) as placing an emphasis on investing in entrepreneurial activities and having a pro-entrepreneurial outlook, we had access in terms of networks and language to Spain, Ireland and the U.K. During data collection in these three countries, we used both established entrepreneurship networks (e.g., NEN and PRIME in the U.K.; community enterprise partnerships in Ireland), as well as personal contacts and networks (particularly in Spain, where we found less available formally established networks), to generate the interviews and observations.

We all spent time in the field, in our native countries, talking with and observing NNEs living in precarious conditions. During the observation and in-depth interview process, we asked participants about their transition from un(der)employment towards entrepreneurship, and about their experiences as NNEs. We focused on generating the entrepreneuring 'pre-histories' (Sarasvathy, Dew, Velamuri, & Venkataraman, 2010), as well as looking for moments of interruption and crisis when the would-be entrepreneurs were forced to reflect on their social, cultural, and ideological frameworks to make sense of, and cope with, their changing situations.

We collected 50 in-depth individual or paired interviews between 2013 and 2015 from Ireland (15), the U.K. (19), and Spain (16). Our main criteria for selection was the length of time would-be necessity entrepreneurs had been trying to set up a business, such that our sample consists only of nascent or very recent new business owners. In selecting our respondents, we followed the GEM (Xavier et al., 2013) classification of nascent entrepreneurs as those trying to set up a business for at least three months, while new business owners are considered former nascent entrepreneurs who have been in the process of

business creation for more than three months, but less than 42 months. All our would-be entrepreneurs had faced un(der)employment or precarious employment conditions, with their main motivation for starting their business being contextual necessity. As Table 1 shows, the time spent trying to set up a business ranges from 3 months to 22 months. We did not discriminate in terms of the products or services our interviewees offer (which range from business consultancy to art therapy). We have a relatively balanced sample in terms of gender (23 females and 27 males) and age (ranging from 27 years to 83 years). Our sample also includes entrepreneurs who set up on their own (37 sole traders), as well as those who started with a partnership of some kind (13).

---Table 1 around here---

In addition, 60 out of a total of 192 documents – representing policy documents, public reports, field notes, observations of the entrepreneurs' realities and locations, as well as media documents – were selected for relevance and analysed. National media narratives on entrepreneurship from the three countries were selected from different newspapers (e.g., *El País* in Spain, *The Times* and *The Guardian* in the U.K., and *The Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* in Ireland) and digital blogs, as analysing narratives from secondary data sources offer rich insights into the social world of hard-to-reach actors (Warren & Smith, 2015). The stories were selected for their completeness and relevance.

The publicly available documents selected refer to entrepreneurship policy related government documents from each country, as well as GEM and Eurofond reports, from 2011 until 2015. We also included in the analysis, as supporting evidence, the notes we had taken after our interviews and during our visits to the different countries. See Table 2 below for the total data corpus.

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The use of different methods of data collection enabled the inclusion of different viewpoints to refine our understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data Analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic and narrative analysis using the NVivo program, and followed inductive and deductive approaches and quality indicators to meet required qualitative research standards (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). Three researchers participated in this codification process and common work was carried out to interpret data.

The media and policy documents were also thematically analysed together with the interviews in NVivo to examine the ways in which public narratives present and frame the process of entrepreneuring, shaping institutional and organizational policies and practices that impact the way people respond to the difficulties they face at the symbolic, sociocultural, institutional, and practical level. The GEM reports and the field notes were used as supporting evidence throughout the analysis.

Data analysis was accomplished in three different steps. The first step sought to identify the activities, experiences, and transition stages liminal entrepreneurs go through from un(der)employment to entrepreneurship. It consisted of multiple readings of the interview transcripts, field notes, and documentation to identify everyday activities, experiences, and events. These were initially coded according to the personal historical narratives of the necessity entrepreneurs' transition from un(der)employment to entrepreneuring, and organized following the three transition stages outlined by Turner (1977a): separation, liminality, and reaggregation. The analysis of the documents also helped us understand the

social, cultural, and institutional constraints and conditions the necessity entrepreneurs faced. This first step in the analysis served to establish the general basis for our data narrative and was accomplished both inductively, from the literature on liminality, and deductively, by way of the codes emerging from the data.

The second step involved refining the narrative of our interviewees' daily entrepreneuring practices. We looked at the data a second time, organizing the practices and activities into three main entrepreneuring areas emerging from the first step in the analysis: the liminal entrepreneurs' engagement with organizations, institutions and networks; their main activities as entrepreneurs in their local context; and the development of their negotiated identity as entrepreneurs. Once again, we used the three liminal phases outlined by Turner to refine the narrative. However, during this second stage of the analysis, the final reaggregation phase became unclear. While some necessity entrepreneurs seemed to 'exit' the liminal condition and start to reaggregate, others did not seem to be able to do so.

This led us to take a third step in the analysis, which consisted of a further reading of the data focused on identifying the outputs – social (e.g., engaging with the community, getting recognition for a social contribution), personal (e.g., being at ease with a liminal identity), and material (e.g., generating revenue from developing/selling a product or service) – that our would-be entrepreneurs reported as 'accomplishing'. This enabled us to further explore the reaggregation phase of their transition to understand who among the NNEs are on their way towards reaggregation and made it through the liminal phase versus those who remained in what we call a 'liminoid stage'. As in our two previous analyses, the final categories emerged as we looked into our interviewees' narratives and practices about their current situation and future expectations.

The final narrative follows Turner's (1995) three liminal phases of separation, liminality and reaggregation. In the first phase, entrepreneurs explain how they separated from a previous identity or social position. The second stage explores their liminal situation and the daily entrepreneuring practices and activities they engage in with organizations, institutions and networks, and how they overcome the cultural and institutional invisibility they encounter through creative organizing practices. The last stage, reaggregation, explores the differences between those NNEs on their way to successfully complete the liminal transition into a new entrepreneurial self and social position and those who do not.

Liminal Creative Entrepreneuring in Times of Crisis

The following narrative illustrates how living in 'ante-structural' conditions (Turner 1995) 'pushes' NNEs towards a constant re-construction of their identities and social positions. The NNEs who start to reaggregate develop creative organizing outputs both at the personal and the institutional/social level. However, our results also indicate that, even after spending time engaged in entrepreneurial activities, many NNEs do not reach a final stage of reaggregation into a clear entrepreneurial direction. Instead, their entrepreneuring journey tends to be repeated again and again, as they go through different cycles to re-build self, projects, and social relationships. We explore these processes below.

Separation: The Aftermath of Employment and Unemployment

As van Gennep (1960, p. 141) suggested, when NNEs describe the separation, they report finding themselves detached from their old life, and often experiencing a change in their social condition. This separated state clearly affects confidence and perceptions of self-worth in terms of their position in society. Thus, our necessity entrepreneurs undergo what Turner (1977b, p. 233) describes as being 'situationally and temporarily set apart' from others. The

triggers for that separation were as varied as redundancy, constructive dismissal, and unfulfilling temporary jobs.

> ...[as] unemployed you are an outsider. You wonder 'why me?' and that doubt affects everything, including your family relationships...my divorce was [not] a direct consequence of becoming unemployed, but the isolation and constant self-doubt didn't help, becoming 'unproductive' in people's eyes didn't help. (SP: J)

However, the suspension of an employment role, which provides a clear work identity and a position in the labour market, opens for many a gateway to explore other pathways. Furthermore, to start on the path of entrepreneurship, a second separation is required: liminal entrepreneurs need to also abandon the clear social position of 'unemployed'.

> ...[when] I was made redundant...I was forced to think – OK what am I going to do next? I had two options: either search for another job yet again or take the plunge, grab the bull by the horns, and try to invest my efforts and energy fully into what I would like to do. (UK: KL)

From there onwards, NNEs describe a liminal space where role(s) and social positions become suspended and constantly renegotiated.

Liminality: The Ante-structural Context of Necessity Entrepreneuring

According to Turner (1977a, p. 232), the transition, marginal, or liminal stage in the rite of passage involves 'being in a tunnel', striped of status and authority, and removed from social structure. All our entrepreneurs are in this phase, relating a powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in terms of labour market interactions (Baker & Nelson, 2005). The imbalances are reflected particularly in the confrontations our would-be entrepreneurs face at the institutional level, where their institutional invisibility leads, for instance, to a lack of access to business funding, or at the cultural level, where they find themselves without voice in dominant entrepreneurship narratives.

Institutional invisibility: No access to resources

NNEs report that policy and regulatory support at the institutional level can act more as heavy interrupters than enablers in their entrepreneurial process. As they are not employed, unemployed, or 'full' entrepreneurs, their institutional invisibility leads to restricted access to resources and support, and to a lack of recognition as both government and media promote entrepreneurship success stories. While there are policy and institutional differences in the three featured countries, we also found interesting common patterns.

According to the 2013 GEM Spain report, budding entrepreneurship practices have increased due to high unemployment levels and lack of access to the labour market (Peña, Guererro & González-Pernía, 2014). The Spanish government attempted to reduce institutional barriers to entrepreneurship with new legislative tools (e.g., the 2013-2016 'Strategy for Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment' decree) trying to reduce taxes and bureaucratic burdens, provide health insurance, and promote internationalisation (Peña et al., 2014). However, despite the encouraging institutional intentions, none of these initiatives were used, accessed, or even discussed by our interviewees. In fact, the Spanish respondents vociferously expressed a profound dissatisfaction with the monolithic institutional structures that rigidly enforce bureaucratic processes supporting those considered 'proper' entrepreneurs, whilst limiting access to resources for those who have not reached that end goal.

> They are not really giving a chance to people like me...the town hall...just gives €50 for a flat rate on Internet to those younger than 30 years old...for 6 months, but what about the rest? [Or] you might want to use a small space you already have for your business, but, no, it has to be a 'proper' shop. (SP: E & E)

In Ireland, there is also a general improvement in entrepreneurial activity, yet similar constraints were identified in terms of policy barriers (Fitzsimons & O'Gorman, 2013). Following the crisis, new initiatives, like the support of government and development

agencies, role models in the media, and the educational system (Fitzsimons & O'Gorman, 2013), were developed to encourage entrepreneurship. However, Irish respondents also discuss how rigidity, bureaucracy, and inefficiency act as barriers when applicants do not fit the criteria set under dominant views of what an entrepreneur is supposed to be or do.

> ...certain aspects of government policy were constraining entrepreneurial activity in Ireland...government policy has made it even more risky for people to set up their own business. In particular, the lack of a social welfare safety net for owner managers, if the business failed, was highlighted (Fitzsimons & O'Gorman, 2013, pp. 30-31).

U.K. neccesity entrepreneurs also shared the recurrent problem of disconnection between people and formal institutional support. As the 2013 U.K. GEM report explains, "nascent entrepreneurs showed that their expectations of funding streams decreased substantially over the year... whilst their experiences of using those sources has fallen below the record low levels seen in 2011" (Levie, Hart, & Bonner, 2014, p. 5). Lack of awareness and grounded knowledge on the part of institutions and government about the challenges of becoming an entrepreneur out of necessity are also reported in the U.K. as barriers for development.

Thus, liminal entrepreneurs in the three countries report being institutionally 'invisible' and suffering from a lack of support from the institutions they used to rely on. Many are just starting up their project or are working on their latest endeavour, while a few are more established and in the process of creating jobs. But, regardless of achievements, people reported being 'outside the structure'.

Cultural invisibility: No voice in the dominant entrepreneur narrative

A second hurdle our liminal entrepreneurs report constantly confronting is the pervasive cultural narratives about who an entrepreneur is supposed to be. The extent to which

individuals can challenge and resist these narratives in developing their entrepreneurial identity has been extensively debated. While some authors (e.g., du Gay, 1996) argue that individuals are reflexively inscribed as entrepreneurs by the enterprise culture narrative, other authors (e.g., Down & Warren, 2008) have a more empowered vision of entrepreneurs as aware cultural operators able to navigate institutional and cultural constraints in developing their own entrepreneurial identity. We have found both.

The institutional and public documents analyzed, as well as all interviewees, constantly refer to the dominant public narrative of the successful (usually male) individual entrepreneur. These narratives deny a voice to NNEs.

> ...not everyone can be an entrepreneur. [...] To be an entrepreneur is to have certain traits in your character. You have to have a certain personality. You have to be able to think. You have to be a 'jack of all trades'. So I'm not that... (UK: S)

Further, in many cases, these narratives are embedded in social structures and representations that position the would-be entrepreneurs as outsiders, constraining any entrepreneurial development as they lack access to networks or power. Within these cultural frameworks, many of our respondents found themselves socially categorised as outcasts because they were perceived as breaking implicit social norms. In many cases, our liminal entrepreneurs faced social stigma when their social network or community questioned or rejected their first – usually unsuccessful – attempts at entrepreneuring.

> Gardens that promote biodiversity? People would look at you as if you were possessed: 'she is crazy, the 40's crisis, right?' I had plenty of ideas, but there was so much boycott, especially from my friends. (SP: M)

When liminal entrepreneurs talk about their own experiences, they switch from outlining the 'individual hunger and drive' relayed by entrepreneurial success stories to stories about nonlinear progress and unclear goals. However, while not all liminal

entrepreneurs believe in their potential economic success, they nevertheless envision their business as part of their own personal life project, or as a potential contribution to their community, and therefore worth fighting for.

Navigating the ante-structure: Creative entrepreneuring practices

For our liminal entrepreneurs, creative entrepreneuring involves both an internal, psychological dimension, as well as an external, relational one. They report creative entrepreneurial practices through a constant engagement with contextual interruptions, as well as constant self-reflection on, and eventually redefinition of, their social and personal position. These are organization-creation practices: as interactions-in-the-making, they prepare the NNE's context for receiving and affirming the greater value of what they propose as new. Table 3 illustrates some of those reported creative organizing practices.

---Table 3 around here---

Using the invisibility mantle to navigate institutional constraints: Finding 'pores' to develop entrepreneuring ideas. Most responses to the lack of a clear social structure, interruptions, and constraints develop into strategies and daily tactics, where displacement and invisibility can be turned into innovative organizing responses. Liminal entrepreneurs depict spaces for experimentation where they try out different practices, relationships, and alternative visions of themselves that may not have been considered before. Most of their reported innovative pathways emerge out of need by having to circumvent societal or personal constraints to create living possibilities.

A commonly reported tactic is the use of the 'porosity of institutional structures' to find informal, underground pathways to get through hurdles.

> Many times we work as art dealers representing an artist. Then it is him who sells it, and pays only 8 per cent taxes on it, so then he gives us some remuneration for our services, as art dealers, not as art sellers – as it will be us paying up to 21 per cent in taxes then..… It is always very complicated; you have to 'untangle' everything you do. (SP: J & D)

It is through such porosity that people are able to explore potential gaps and navigate the system to make ends meet. Examples abound from all countries: from unlicensed food vendors to working out alternative arrangements with business partners. People report scarcity, lack of accessibility to resources, and an 'empty job market' as increasing the difficulties to set up a business. Living in ante-structural conditions forces them to dis/engage from/with the institutional and legal domains that often prevent them from developing an enterprise. Some liminal entrepreneurs might choose a questionable path to make ends meet, but what they all express is the unequivocal need to find some 'breathing space'. Necessity acts as a strong pushing force for liminal entrepreneurs to open up avenues for 'trying things out' on the ground, navigating around heavy policy and bureaucratic barriers.

> ...two of us started off registered as self-employed, then just the one. Instead of us both paying as self-employed – paying for two insurances and two professional collegiate associations (compulsory for planning permission) – we just had one paying and the other one working for him... a bit illegal, but now I only pay intermittently – in those months where I have to issue invoices – otherwise I don't. (SP: O)

Creative social and cultural practices: Decentring wealth as part of entrepreneuring. For most of our liminal entrepreneurs, entrepreneuring seems to have further meaning than just creating wealth. The entrepreneuring journey is presented as having forced periods of profound self-reflection, where ethical issues and a coherent relation with one's ideological position, as well as with others, become central concerns. Living and working in precarious conditions seem to enforce a different mind-set, where the future is short-term and objectives become grounded in daily requirements. People then tend to come together to generate their

own ways of making a living by sharing skills and resources. Scarcity calls people to question

not only their job but also their life.

> It is a risk to do this [invest in a new idea], but what if you don't do it? So, if you lose
> €5,000, you lose it. I am not in debt with a bank. I will not lose my home as I don't
> have one...€5,000 might be recovered; we'll see. There is more than money in this. (SP:
> J & D)

Additionally, people find intrinsic value in selling their own work. They report an

increase in self-esteem and self-worth, thereby bringing other psychosocial resources to the

self. Here, again, the creation of 'wealth' is understood as different from financial rewards.

> When people started buying the things I made I just got a high...just loved it and it
> became an obsession from then on. It made me work more. (IR: EG)

Investing in relationships and networks also becomes very important. All liminal

entrepreneurs report learning how to use the psychosocial resources that have supported them

throughout the entrepreneuring process to then help others believe they can improve their

lives by exploring new avenues, skills, and resources. This means engaging in networking

and making use of all the attainable material and social resources at hand.

> So, if there is no work, we make it up. Say we are missing €300 to pay this month's
> expenses. So, we would just make up something for €300, or more. For example, we
> proposed the neighbouring shops to celebrate Saint Valentine's day together. Everyone
> put in €10, not much, and we did the advertising for everyone. We took €200 for the
> design and the printing. (SP: J & D)

Psychological creative practices: The ongoing re-writing of the entrepreneurial self.

Liminal entrepreneurship requires a re-writing of the self to be able to find and generate the

necessary resources (psychosocial, professional, material) to co-construct the project, idea, or

enterprise. As Turner (1977b) suggested, liminal occasions are characterised by heightened

reflexivity, where our entrepreneurs step back and think about their situation, considering

consciously what regulates their behaviour. This re-writing of the entrepreneurial self

requires not only re-shaping and changing self-understandings but also changing the way interactions with others and with the context are carried out. Liminal entrepreneuring pushes people to experience opportunities and explore pathways not previously considered, opening up a different vision of what it means to be in the world.

> To launch something is a very personal process...you start doing what you know and then you realise you need to know other stuff. I am an architect and I know about gardening, but I had to learn...a bit of economics, a bit of law, a bit of marketing, a bit of psychology. So I learnt, crafted, used resources from a previous job, from my ethics and my stories; I developed myself and the business out of necessity, and as I grew. (SP: M)

The entrepreneuring project becomes a life project. Apart from the innovative practices that some respondents develop, creative living is a way of life, where they continue to re-engage in new options and enterprises despite constant failed attempts and difficulties. Interestingly, despite the reported challenges concerning the lack of stability, constant financial constraints, maintaining high levels of commitment and continuity, and being prepared to face the next hurdle in the process, the narratives contain many references to a sense of purpose, and passion.

Reaggregation: Emerging Entrepreneurial Outputs

A sense of reaggregation happens when, following a transition, one does not return to 'normal' but is gradually able to construct a new identity (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016) and move to a new understanding of self and community (Turner, 1977a, 1977b). The reaggregation, incorporation, or post-liminal rite is the ultimate end point in the transition. Not all necessity entrepreneurs reach this point, but some seemed ready to move into this reaggregation state having achieved some clear personal outputs (e.g., self-motivation, self-acceptance, self-belief), social outputs (e.g., social recognition, potential new social position, social and community engagement) and material outputs (e.g., some income or gains to keep

self/business going, business network development).

There are differences, however, in personal, social and material outcomes among NNEs. These differences enabled us to identify a pattern of variation between NNEs on their way towards reaggregation and those who are not. Table 4 summarizes the main differences between those two groups.

---Table 4 around here---

In overcoming their condition of necessity, NNEs reaching a reaggregated stage are able to '*re-write themselves*' as 'others': as would-be-entrepreneurs. Although beginnings and the past might frame the process of entrepreneurial becoming, they do not determine the course of development, let alone dictate expressions of the creative organizing process among NNEs.

> Entrepreneurial… I suppose I am... Entrepreneurial spirit is about wanting to do it for yourself, you have to have that get up and go if you're going to do it for yourself, so yeah, I suppose so, but it's kind of weird hearing that word connected to my name. Strange. But yeah, I guess so... (IR:JL)

At this stage, NNEs show hope in the future, so that regardless of obstacles 'something will pan out'. They strive to be different, to move, to resist equilibrium: movement is not feared or avoided. They also show resilience, engaging in a dynamic process of positive adaptation, despite significant adversity (Luthar, 2003).

> Financial independence. It's a bit of a...ridiculous thing, but it's true; there's a lot of musicians and creatives...who are on the dole, and they get by with gigs and stuff that's cash in hand. I've just had enough of it. I want… Yes, I just want to be in control of my 'destiny'! (IR:JL)

This process of becoming 'other' necessarily occurs in social and cultural contexts, making context a permanent resource for individual and collective action. In the process of

reaggregating and becoming entrepreneurial, *the NNEs' context also gets re-written.* During the reaggregation process, liminal entrepreneurs engage with their contexts and communities in a generative way, using them as the intersubjective structures of support from people and institutions that enable them to outline a new position in the social structure. Thus, the context where our necessity entrepreneurs dwell contains the potential both for exclusion and for providing the intersubjective structures of support that enable their positive social aggregation.

> ...family especially; my two sisters are very successful in media and film, and they've given me invaluable advice, and I've got a brother who is very successful as a solicitor so they're going to be unbelievable help and I'm very lucky for that because a lot of people don't have that. So I kind of realised that ...all this around me, if I don't do it now it will just be foolish really. The time is now. (IR:JL)

NNEs on their way to reaggregation seem to survive, make do, and manage to find resources for social capital, social cohesion and conviviality through their bonds of communitas (Turner, 1977a), stressing relatedness and connecting as the particular organizing activities entrepreneurship requires (Anderson, Drakapoulou-Dodd & Jack, 2012).

These bonds of communitas are often "ante-structural, […] undifferentiated, equalitarian" (Turner, 1977a, p. 275), with some entrepreneurs identifying with those of a lesser social status, and feeling empathy and 'solidarity'. While many of our participants felt aggrieved by their own drop in status and security, several shared examples of others whom they perceived as worse off. In the process of 'reaching out' to others to survive, they inevitably become aware and sometimes involved in addressing others' needs and a sense of communitas develops. Thus, communitas, through the shared experience of austerity, generates a stripping and levelling of structural status (Turner, 1977a) that brings people of different backgrounds closer together. These networks are developed by means of community

exchange of goods and skills, and other creative survival responses. Additionally, entrepreneurial activities become an extension of the self; work, family, and social activities become constantly intertwined. Openness, readiness, and blurred or transgessed boundaries – e.g., work/home, private/public, sharing/giving vs selling/buying – are key components at this stage (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

> You are constantly on the go. Need pushes you to be creative and to try to get more ideas, get more stuff going... those who have it all and are secure can relax, but when you are in need, you have to keep on moving and you have to get your brain working... it is impossible to stop.... you need to constantly find ways to make a living. (SP: T)

When it comes to material outputs, our liminal entrepreneurs both employ *creative imagination* (Chiles, Bluedorn, & Gupta, 2007) and negotiate access to basic capital resources (e.g., tools, equipment, buildings, machinery, etc.) On the one hand, material outputs and opportunities become way stations along the entrepreneuring path, moving through social and institutional contexts. On the other hand, these outputs and opportunities are connected to the movements of people towards, around, and away from opportunitites (Hjorth et al., 2015). Not surprisingly, many of the liminal entrepreneurs we interviewed were leading community-based initiatives, where 'successful outputs' became re-framed: a successful output is providing food or clothes for a community programme, or helping those suffering different types of conditions of vulnerability.

> Something I've been doing for 15 years … I collect food for hampers at Christmas. We had 155 families this year who got a week's shopping before Christmas. And I do the care packs for the homeless. People just give me stuff all year round and I keep it...in the spare room and pass it on.... And I thought, you know, there's a bit that just takes care of itself and has a life of its own [the charity] and I'm killing myself with this bit [the business], but maybe [the business] is where it's going, eventually. (IR: HW, who was homeless for a week only a month into starting her business; she subsequently bartered training a woman with a disability for a home and a base for her business.)

Successful 'outputs' are therefore discussed in ways that highlight interactions and links to

the local community, rather than to wealth or power positions. Other 'outputs', such as autonomy, family life, flexibility, and ethical and social values, take a more prominent role in their narratives.

> I value my freedom, my autonomy, my time with my children...yes I need to earn money, but I do not want to become rich. I do not want to be stressed out and under the pressure of having to manage 100 different clients and projects. It is hard enough as it is now. I just want what I need to live, to keep on going. I don't want my business to grow! (SP: PL)

The Liminoid State: The Ongoing Lack of Aggregation

In describing the liminal process, van Gennep (1960) understood 'liminality' as the state between 'separation' and 'aggregation'. In this process, negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety and doubt, are pervasive.

> Emotionally, my mind plays a lot of tricks on me because the fear factor kicks in, especially when the end of the month comes and you check your bank account and you see money not coming in and you see the savings going down. You are alone and it's...so scary, I get panic attacks. (UK: M)

Thus, liminality results in outsiderhood for some of our NNEs. Such outsiderhood takes the form of disconnection and alienation from others. This may result in a dislocation or distancing in personal relationships, a lack access to social structures and institutions that enable development, feeling "excluded from my own friends" as one U.K. entrepreneur reported.

> [The] whole idea of not having security and just sort of… There was an impression certainly I got, from some of the people around me at the time of, like, January and February, when the shop was not doing very well at all, that, 'Oh it's failed; why are you still doing this? Why don't you give up?' and I was constantly being asked, 'Why don't you just give up?' (IR:EG)

This lack of aggregation, of finding an entrance into a given social position, means that they cannot plan for a 'better future' for themselves and their family. Hence, those in liminoid conditions tend to focus on the immediate present, as it is difficult to conceive of a

self as 'other' or any other future projection. The entrepreneuring narrative remains unfinished, open, and ongoing.

> I cannot afford to worry about the future...[it] is poisonous. I only managed to contribute to my pension for 15 years and now the government says it is 25 years or no pension... what do I do? Keep on running? I cannot think about the future. It hurts. (SP: JS)

These narratives illustrate the ways in which liminal entrepreneurs navigate scarcity and lack of resources through creative entrepreneuring practices, such as navigating institutional porosity, decentring wealth, or redefining the self within the institutional, cultural, and psychological resources available to them. They also show how some are unable to reaggregate and seemingly stay in a liminoid state that generates anxiety and a lack of a clear future, and where the entrepreneuring narrative remains unfinished, open, and threatening.

Discussion

Steyaert and Katz (2004) define entrepreneurship as a model for innovative thinking, for reorganizing, and for crafting the new, or, as Hjorth (2004) puts it, a 'handy disturber of order' that demands new organization. This entrepreneurial potential to generate creative disruption (Styhre, 2005) is historically and culturally situated. In our research, we have seen how organization-creation practices are shaped by context, existing at the boundaries and occupying liminal spaces of 'in betwixtness' (Turner, 1995). We have focused on how NNEs in their everyday liminal entrepreneuring disassemble their identities and social positions, experiment with new relationships and alternative visions of themselves, and (re)connect with entrepreneuring ideas and practices in a new way, using imagination and organization-creation practices. While a succesful liminal transition is not always possible, the in-between liminal situation of NNEs is particularly suited to understanding how interruptions, breaks,

and disruptive situations can become a source of creative entrepreneuring and organizing practices.

Steyaert and Katz (2004) also suggest that, to reclaim entrepreneurship from a stifling economic discourse, we should consider the societal contexts in which entrepreneurial activities are enacted, so as to resist the trend to focus on already successful areas famous for innovation. This has been taken up by many researchers increasingly showing an appreciation for context and its role in facilitating or inhibiting entrepreneurial activity (Johannisson, 2011; Welter, 2011). In our research, we have seen how public discourses seek to position entrepreneurship as the panacea for unemployment, thus both socially desirable and feasible. Within this discourse, the un(der)employed are now responsible for creating their own jobs, as well as for taking themselves through the transition from unemployment to self-employment, all with limited or no support. Further, not only are the unemployed to take on the risks associated with starting up a business, along with the pressure to live up to the ideal of the exemplar entrepreneur (Anderson & Warren, 2011), they are also doing so in a context of personal crisis and economic uncertainty. Therefore, our liminal entrepreneurs find themselves in a space where the social structure they know dissolves, rendering them invisible and forcing them to create their own structural conditions. And, yet, in a context where risk and uncertainty are the norm, their transition represents a space of becoming wherein engaging with the context creatively is both a necessity and a possibility.

Liminal entrepreneuring is 'done' in situated interactions by actors through material arrangements and discourses. To navigate ante-structural conditions, our NNEs engage with and overcome institutional invisibility, lack of representation in dominant cultural narratives, and the self-doubts emerging from their own personal crises. Against this 'necessity'

background, many manage to develop creative practices using institutional 'pores' and challenging entrepreneurial self-narratives that write them out as entrepreneurs because of gender, age, or lack of success to advance their projects (Anderson & Warren, 2011). Their daily entrepreneuring is very much about becoming, and becoming is always a co-production between the entrepreneur, the other, and their historical and cultural contexts (Anderson et al, 2012). This resonates with critical entrepreneurship research that examines entrepreneurship as accomplished in and through actions in local contexts (Down & Warren, 2008), as well as with recent studies that have shown how dominant understandings of entrepreneurship are challenged through explorations of creative entrepreneuring in peripheral local positions (Imas, Wilson, & Weston, 2012). Our research acknowledges the creative power of entrepreneurship to 'create sociality in local settings', thereby enabling alternative ways of being in the world (Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson & Essers, 2014).

All this indicates that alternative ways of being and doing emerge in the liminal, 'alternative spaces' our NNEs inhabit (Steyaert, 2010). Within this 'ante-structured' space, liminal entrepreneurs need to improvise in-between: interpreting, responding, and performing anew in an unstructured situation (Cornelissen, Clarke & Cienki, 2012). They use corners of garages as improvised shops, bartering opportunities to put their products in the community, institutional openings such as tax free charities to become institutionally visible, etc. Thus, in pursuing their projects, our NNEs became simultaneously able to learn and perform societal and cultural scripts as concerns what entrepreneurship is about, while at the same time challenging both those entrepreneurial scripts and other actors. Improvisation and invention become tangled up in their continuous becoming (Hjorth, 2013), where both entrepreneurial self and environment are transformed and developed through creative interactions.

The liminal, therefore, not only provokes critical thought, it also can incite feelings, action, and experimentation. We have seen how liminality encourages not just self-reflection, but, importantly, playfulness and the exploration of new possibilities (Turner 1995). Rather than ignoring or dismissing hunches or new ideas of acting, in this realm, our NNEs need to engage them to overcome their condition of 'necessity'. In doing so, entrepreneuring opportunities are created and actualised in complex networks of interpersonal relations through language and activity, rather than existing as independent realities that could be anticipated in advance (Ramoglou, 2013). Our NNEs are not 'heroic creators' who 'discover' opportunities; rather, their opportunities emerge through ongoing creative organizing actions (Hjorth & Gartner, 2012).

Thus, our findings enable us to re-conceptualise nascent necessity entrepreneurship into creative liminal entrepreneuring by stressing its relational and processual aspects. We show the mutually constitutive outcomes of creative practices, even in conditions of liminality: when able to reaggregate, entrepreneurs produce and reproduce what eventually might become a new entrepreneurial identity within a different social and organizational structure.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have illustrated, empirically, how NNEs in Spain, the U.K., and Ireland develop creative organizing actions and improvisational entrepreneurial practices in conditions of austerity and socio-economic crisis. We see the contributions of our research as fourfold.

First, in uncovering the liminality inherent in entrepreneuring and its organization-

creation practices, our research makes explicit "the creativity of undergoing" (Ingold, 2014).

Organizational creativity research often focuses on what accounts for the spontaneous generation of the absolutely new and considers activities as creative only when they produce a novel and useful output, which is explicitly assumed to be desirable. Actions that are not explicitly or directly involved in the production of those novel and useful outputs are usually dismissed as not creative or interesting. However, focusing only on successful outputs that are novel and new is at the expense of recognizing the potential relational processes needed to make and grow people and products. Those in-between creative actions could be just the one necessary step towards a subsequent action that will eventually achieve the novel output, or simply change the status quo. In making liminal entrepreneuring explicit, we are able to look behind what people do and the miscellany of products or created goods these doings generate, to focus on the 'creative good' that generates persons in relationships (Lombardo & Kvålshaugen, 2014). This organization-creation capacity of entrepreneuring is "undergone not done" (Ingold, 2014, p. 127): a process in which our NNEs not only create new organizing practices but, engaging socially, create themselves and their context.

Second, our research reinforces and extends the 'creative process view' (Steyaert, 2007, p. 454) of entrepreneurship, illustrating how relational processes of enactment, interpretation, and creativity occur in daily life. Entrepreneuring is experienced as an ongoing generative process emerging from the interdependence between our liminal entrepreneurs and their sociocultural context. Our research illustrates empirically the adaptive and fluid nature of the organizing practices involved in nascent organizing and underscores the fluidity, and the ongoing and piecemeal everyday work, of such organizing processes (Barinaga, 2016). This perspective allows us to go beyond the essentialist and equilibrium-based notions

underpinning both the opportunity discovery perspective (Venkataraman, Sarasvathy, Dew & Forster, 2012) and the evolutionary perspective (Aldrich & Martinez, 2001) in entrepreneurship. Our research particularly positions nascent necessity entrepreneuring as part of an overall process of personal and social change going beyond economic or managerial logics (Jones & Spicer, 2010).

Third, our research has clear implications for policy making. Studies on informal entrepreneurship have already started to outline how many more ventures than are usually acknowledged have development potential, e.g., as a stepping-stone toward more substantial businesses (Williams & Horodnic, 2015). This research also emphasises the wider role entrepreneurship can play for our economies and societies (Calás, Smircich & Bourne, 2009; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). This has important consequences for policy making, as measures to stimulate necessity entrepreneurship do not necessarily benefit opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, and vice-versa. For example, stimulating the unemployed to start a business will benefit necessity and not opportunity entrepreneurs (Stuetzer, Obschonka, Brixy, Sternberg & Cantner, 2014). On the other hand, while some entrepreneurial ventures never contribute much in the way of jobs or growth themselves, they might serve other objectives and foster societal change.

Finally, while the concept of liminality has been used in organization studies when looking variously into consulting practices (Czarniaswka & Mazza, 2003), temporary employees (Borg & Söderlund, 2014; Garsten, 1999), and institutional entrepreneurship (Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014), it has rarely been applied to the process of entrepreneuring itself. Liminal entrepreneurs are very much under-researched in academic literature, not to mention practically ignored by the media and policy-makers. As Steyaert and Katz (2004, p. 180)

suggest, we need to focus on the "everyday activities rather than actions of elitist groups of entrepreneurs", providing a view of entrepreneurship in its various mo(ve)ments, rather than focusing on high profile successes or failures. We have here, through exploring the experiences of those engaging in entrepreneurship out of necessity, tackled an area of study that remains at the margins of academic research and, in so doing, added a liminal dimension that enables a richer, fuller understanding of how (necessity) entrepreneurs experience this journey.

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Table 1. Summary of key NNEs' characteristics.

Time trying to set up business	Number	Type of service/product offered	Number
3-6 months	23	Consultancy (financial/business)	15
6-12 months	21	Technical specialist (e.g., IT, surveyor)	6
12-18 months	4	Digital support, web design, photography	6
18-24 months	2	Art related service (e.g., art therapy, music promoter, music teacher)	6
24+ months	0	Other (e.g., personal trainer, farmer, plumber, psychologist, baker)	17
Total	**50**	**Total**	**50**

Table 2. Total data corpus.

	Interviews	Media documents	Policy documents	Public reports	Field notes
U.K.	19	15	5	5	5
Ireland	15	40	25	7	2
Spain	16	13	3	5	6
Total	**50**	**68**	**33**	**17**	**13**

Table 3. Examples of NNEs' creative organizing practices at different liminal stages.

Creative practices at liminal stages	In relation to self (*reconstructing self-identitiy*)	In relation to institutional contexts (*finding institutional 'pores' to develop entrepreneuring ideas*)	In relation to social and cultural contexts (*decentring wealth as part of entrepreneuring*)	In relation to business contexts (*generating enough material outcomes*)
Separation	Questioning previous self-identities (e.g., renouncing expertise as 'scientist' to set up as a 'merchant')	Renouncing hope to find institutional help (e.g., exploring other collective forms of support)	Breaking with previous social structures (e.g., using critical events such as redundancy, divorce, or death to separate from known social structures)	Redefining work skills and networks
Liminality	Self-reflection, disengaging from relationships that constrain self-development	Undeclared payments to avoid taxes, registration of business on-and-off	Setting up tax free charities and foundations, involving family and neighbours in developing the business	Relying on family for housing and business premises, earning enough to cover business unit rent, utilities pay-as-you-go
Reaggregation	No need to justify oneself, seeking out business opportunitites, willing to take risks	Using tax breaks and wellfare benefits to sustain or expand the business	Volunteering to make a name in the community, pro-bono work	Reallocating to different geographical locations (e.g., urban vs. rural)

Table 4. Differences in creative organizing practices at different liminal stages.

Creative organizing practices ➔ Transitional stage ↓	Personal outputs: Re-writing the self	Social outputs: Re-writing the context	Material outputs: Using creative imagination to develop opportunities
Moving towards reaggregation	Vision of self as other Resistance to equilibrium Resilience	Bonds with 'communitas' Able to draw on social structures and institutions to support development	Use of first outputs as 'way stations' for further development Access to basic capital resources Thinking beyond wealth creation
In liminoid conditions	Difficult to imagine self as 'other' Seeking to go back to initial state of self Ongoing vulnerability Perceived lack of a future	'Outsiderhood': no clear position in the social structure No access to structures and institutions to enable development	Blocked creative imagination: difficult to 'see' a future Lack of access to basic capital resources