Embodying entrepreneurship: everyday practices, processes and routines in a technology incubator

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Abstract

The growing interest in the processes and practices of entrepreneurship has been dominated by a consideration of temporality. Through a thirty-six-month ethnography of a technology incubator, this thesis contributes to extant understanding by exploring the effect of space. The first paper explores how class structures from the surrounding city have appropriated entrepreneurship within the incubator. The second paper adopts a more explicitly spatial analysis to reveal how the use of space influences a common understanding of entrepreneurship. The final paper looks more closely at the entrepreneurs within the incubator and how they use visual symbols to develop their identity. Taken together, the three papers reject the notion of entrepreneurship as a primarily economic endeavour as articulated through commonly understood language and propose entrepreneuring as an enigmatic attractor that is accessed through the ambiguity of the non-verbal to develop the 'new'. The thesis therefore contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurship and proposes a distinct role for the non-verbal in that understanding.

Lay Summary

Entrepreneurship is commonly understood to be about creating new firms with new products or services. This thesis finds that this is not the daily experience of entrepreneurs. Instead, entrepreneurship is experienced as a primarily visual phenomenon, where symbols and spaces are used to develop an understanding of entrepreneurship that is more about developing a unique identity than about creating a new firm. Language is so well-defined that its use immediately restricts our understanding of phenomena, including entrepreneurship: simply talking about entrepreneurship helps develop a common understanding. Yet entrepreneurship is meant to be about discovering the new, and everyone taking unique approaches. This thesis proposes that visual expressions, including the use of symbols and the body, are much more ambiguous than language, so can be used to avoid the restrictive development of a common understanding. Through the visual, entrepreneurs discover the new and unique which is the very essence of entrepreneurship.

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Prologue

This thesis has a genesis in necessity. I embarked upon this research journey without secured funding, so had to construct a workable funding model through my studies. The clearest opportunity lay in utilising my existing skills as a professional marketer to generate funds from part-time work whilst I concurrently studied. Having made connections within Edinburgh's nascent technology startup scene, I discovered an exploitable needs gap. New technology ventures were often launched because their founders had a technical solution for which they were seeking a market problem. They often recognised the need for marketing, but had little interest, knowledge, or aptitude to fulfil the role themselves and held the assumption that the requirement did not justify a full-time role. When I realised that they were further restricted by funding, the opportunity was clear. Through networking, I eventually found a start-up company which wanted to write software for the games industry. Their initial requirement was for a strategy marketing consultancy, but when I submitted my report, they invited me to work part-time for them to implement that strategy. The framing of the thesis had settled: I would work two days per week for that company and form my thesis as an inductive ethnography around the experience of a new venture in the games industry.

However, I quickly realised that this would be a limited study and that as the Business Development Director, I was a key strategic actor in my own site of study. I had also become intellectually curious about the building in which the company was housed. Codebase was a recently launched technology startup incubator in Edinburgh, UK which had already gained a reputation for excellence. Whether I spoke to local academics, business leaders, or politicians, the name 'Codebase' was almost always mentioned during discussion of technology within

Edinburgh and Scotland. It was valourised as a symbol of entrepreneurial success and cited as evidence that Scotland had a credible technology scene. Most suggested that the incubator was itself creating value, either through teaching its resident companies about excellence, or by providing a networking space for those companies to share knowledge, or by encouraging the creation of new firms. Although most of these practitioner claims chimed with academic theory (e.g. Hackett & Dilts, 2004), my early experiences of the incubator made me question such claims. The first indication of discordance was the appearance of the building. Despite Codebase being described as a cutting-edge space with a borrowed ethos from the successes of Silicon Valley, the incubator was housed in a rather run-down, ex-government building with a brutalist, concrete aesthetic (figure 1). Furthermore, inside the building there was little obvious evidence of the purported networking and collaborations between firms. The firms did not even seem to have the financial ambitions of their Silicon Valley counterparts. Yet, there was a deep and extensive appreciation of being in the incubator, which residents frequently describing how they loved the 'vibe'. Codebase was clearly thought of as a special place within Edinburgh, but the source of that exceptionalism remained unclear.

Figure 1: The brutalist exterior to Codebase

Before the words 'coronavirus' and 'covid' graced our public conscience, I began to ponder the conceptual justification for housing these technology companies within a physical building. For cash-strapped companies that generated value through intellectual property, the purpose of co-location with similar companies was unclear. The promise of the cyber age seemed to promise an end to such practices as digital businesses operated without great physical means, and yet here was an example of physical offices as being at the forefront of organisational innovation. The paradox orientated the research towards the visual and material and although its genesis was inductive, the research progressed along the abductive spectrum as research questions were formed and generative papers were written. I particularly wanted to make best value of

the data access which working for a company within Codebase afforded. Specifically, I wanted to explore data that I could discover through an ethnography which would be less clear through traditional qualitative methods such as interview, or event-based data collection. This research is therefore orientated towards the visual and experiential dimensions of qualitative research. Furthermore, as an initially inductive study, I determine not to define entrepreneurship at the outset, but accept it as a "field of study within management" (Busenitz et al., 2003, p. 286) so that I may fully explore the concept before settling on its understanding (Dennett, 2013). I shall progress this introduction by orientating the evolution of the three papers around pertinent literature. I first outline how entrepreneurship studies have been dominated by rationalist economic assumptions, before addressing how this is being critiqued through approaches that have variously been termed entrepreneuring (Steyaert, 2007a), process studies (Hjorth et al., 2015) and practice studies (Champenois et al., 2020). I find that these approaches have yet to fully adopt a spatial turn, despite the common use of spatial metaphors in entrepreneurship. I briefly outline the contours of incubator theory before developing my guiding research question. I have included a short section on methods in the introduction which, rather than being needlessly repetitive of the content in the three papers, outlines how the overall methodology is apportioned to each paper. I conclude the introduction by describing the approach to each paper and giving an indication of the conclusions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Entrepreneurship as an economic endeavour

Entrepreneurship is often approached through an economic rationalist lens (Karatas-ozkan et al., 2014) with an exceptionalism that separates its scholarship from organisation studies. The field has developed many of its own areas of interest, although the pursuit of economic capital has been "something of an obsession within the entrepreneurship literature" (Pret et al., 2016). This thesis addresses both these critiques by bringing theory developed elsewhere to help understand empirics with entrepreneurship, and by developing theories of entrepreneurship that do not rely upon economic primacy.

1.1 The origins of entrepreneurs

Much of the early interest in entrepreneurship attempted to define the traits, skills and motivations required for success, but found only weak effects (Aldrich & Wiedenmayer, 1993) leading to calls to dismiss the question of "who is an entrepreneur?" (Gartner, 1989) as misleading to the understanding of organisation creation. Nevertheless, interest in defining the exceptionalism of entrepreneurs continued (e.g.Baum & Locke, 2004; Chell, 2008; Murnieks et al., 2014). This line of enquiry has been criticized as mythizing entrepreneurs by drawing on public impressions of entrepreneurs such as Andrew Carnegie (Harvey et al., 2011), Richard Branson (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2017) and Michael O'Leary (Warren & Anderson, 2009) to suggest that the creation of new organisations and organizational forms requires exceptional individualism (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2016). This has coalesced into reification of entrepreneurial discourse as heroic (Nijkamp, 2003), youthful (e.g.Ainsworth &

Hardy, 2007, 2008) and white (e.g.Knight, 2006), driven by the dominance of an Anglo-Saxon, masculinized view of entrepreneurship heavily inspired by Silicon Valley (Ogbor, 2000). More generally, approaching entrepreneurship by assuming an exceptionalism of entrepreneurs gives a romantic and excessively narrow view both of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship (Gill & Larson, 2014) that has little epistemological or ontological verisimilitude (Ramoglou et al., 2020).

1.2 The destinations of entrepreneurs

A quite different approach to entrepreneurship in the economic rationalist tradition has concerned itself with understanding how firms can best be created and scaled. Initially drawing from general theories of rationalist opportunity discovery (Drucker, 1998), theory began to develop to predict success based on the firm's resources (Chandler & Jansen, 1992; Cooper et al., 1994) or to address issues in new venture creation such as financing (de Bettignies & Brander, 2007), leadership (Vecchio, 2003), and recruitment (Leung, 2003). The linear, rationalist approach to creating and growing new ventures was termed *causation* by Saras Sarasvathy (2001), who contrasted it with her idea of *effectuation processes* that 'take a set of means as given and focus on selecting between possible effects that can be created with that set of means' (ibid. 2001, p. 245). Effectuation alerts us to entrepreneurship as being *always* future-orientated (Gartner, 1993) where the desired destination and present practices are in constant negotiation and change.

2. Entrepreneurship as process

2.1 Process studies

Effectuation changes the conversation about entrepreneurship and orientates our thinking towards a processual view. Rather than considering the fixed nature of static entities, process approaches absorb fluidity and change as immanent to entrepreneurship (Hjorth et al., 2015). Studies can *accept* change in entrepreneurship by considering the movement from one state to another. However, by drawing on the work of Henri Bergson (Bergson, [1933] 2002), Hjorth et al. (2015) suggest that to *absorb* change as process studies must, the ontology of entrepreneurship should address movement and transformation itself. It draws our attention away from previous concerns with the origins and traits of entrepreneurs, and from their firms' destinations, towards the present-ness of entrepreneurship and its organising and creating modes.

2.2 Entrepreneuring

Chris Steyaert had previously promoted the concept of 'entrepreneuring' as a common denominator that could link streams of entrepreneurial process theories including: developmental; evolutionary; complexity and chaos theory; interpretive; phenomenological; social constructionist (and its narrative, dramaturgical and discursive offspring); pragmatic perspective; practice-based perspective; actor-network theory; and radical processual perspectives (Steyaert, 2007a). These perspectives draw a more critical reading of entrepreneurship that acknowledges the non-linear and mundane happenings (Steyaert et al., 2004) of everyday life (Boutaiba, 2004). In the practice perspective, Steyaert draws upon effectuation theory to suggest that 'entrepreneurship is often more about constructing the part

of the world with which entrepreneurs are concerned than about producing calculations and acting upon their script' (Steyaert, 2007a, p. 466).

His re-invigoration of entrepreneuring has been taken up by scholars from across the spectrum of entrepreneurial experience including opportunity identification (Popp & Holt, 2013), learning (Karataş-Özkan, 2011) and as a process of creating artefacts (Selden & Fletcher, 2015). It can more directly 'give back' to management studies (Hjorth et al., 2015) and address fluidity by considering identity (Alsos et al., 2016) and its interaction with a gendered world (Gherardi, 2015). A contextual reading of entrepreneuring leads to an understanding of the co-creation between entrepreneur and venture (Morris et al., 2012), or its interaction with the surrounding community (Hindle, 2010) and institutions (Watson, 2013). Entrepreneuring can even have an emancipatory potential (Rindova et al., 2009), particularly through its transformative potential for poverty (Tobias et al., 2013).

2.3 Entrepreneurship-as-practice

Out of Steyaert's range of entrepreneuring approaches, it is perhaps the practice perspective that has drawn most attention recently. In some ways it has come to replace entrepreneuring as a conceptual attractor for 'the different processes and activities involved in entrepreneurship' (Champenois et al., 2020). Taking inspiration from the social studies work of Ted Schatzki, the practice is always relational because it acknowledges that 'the social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings' (Schatzki et al., 2001, p. 3). Campenois et al. (2020) identified research streams as: narrative, dramaturgical and discursive; social constructionism; structuration; theory of practice; social practice theory;

entrepreneuring; and actor-network theory. In this typology, entrepreneuring is restricted to studies of 'becoming', yet more pertinent to this study is the understanding that these approaches include the processual, relational and material.

The relational is an important addition to the process view of entrepreneurship, because as we diminish the importance of static entities, it implores us to accept the context of transformation into our studies. This perspective is most common in the social constructionism, structuation and Bourdieu's theory of practice approaches (ibid.). It leads naturally from the critical perspective to include the social contexts of entrepreneuring (Keating et al., 2014) so that we understand the way in which these entrepreneurs construct their entrepreneurial worlds, as well as are constructed by the various worlds which they experience.

3. Entrepreneurship and space

3.1 Time and space

Bringing the material into the conversation is also an important step in understanding how entrepreneurs experience entrepreneurship, with specific attention in the dramaturgical and actor network approaches, as well as being part of an integrated, social practice theory approach (Champenois et al., 2020). Its relative lack of attention demonstrates the dominance of time within process studies, where the experience of entrepreneurs is considered primarily through the narrative, discursive and cognitive functions. Across the related fields of process approaches to entrepreneurship (Hjorth et al., 2015), entrepreneuring (Steyaert, 2007a) and entrepreneurship-as-practice (Champenois et al., 2020),

there is opportunity to more deeply understand entrepreneurs' lived experience through the spaces they inhabit and the materials with which they collectively interact during practice. Champenois et al. (2020) cite only five empirical articles that have attended to that approach. Of these, Goss and Geiger (2017) make only oblique reference to space within time-based liminal practice, and Greenman (2012) similarly attends to occupational boundary work through its symbolic divisions more than its material. Fletcher (2004) is slightly more attentive to space by addressing globalisation of entrepreneurship, whilst Watson (2013) usefully discusses the influence of individual, organisational and institutional dimensions within an entrepreneurial setting. Butcher (2018) is perhaps the most explicitly spatial of the cited articles by addressing how learning within a coworking space is a socio-spatial process.

Butcher's (2018) assertion implies a critique of process studies that they are remiss in ignoring the spatial. In the socio-spatial view, space is not just a material setting for other processes, but it has its own ontology. Entrepreneurship has not yet experienced the full effects of the spatial turn that has influenced other areas of the social sciences, despite the field being replete with spatial metaphors, including research park (Kang, 2004), innovation centre (Smilor, 1987), business accelerator (Barrow, 2001), technopole (Castells & Hall, 1994), science park (Westhead & Batstone, 1999), industrial park (Autio & Klofsten, 1998) and many others. More prominently, entrepreneurship is heavily indebted to the influence of Silicon Valley as a habitat (Lee et al., 2000) to which so many other global entrepreneurial spaces refer (Feld, 2012; Isenberg, 2010).

3.2 Relational space

Much of the spatial turn stems from the work of Henri Lefebvre, particularly his book *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991). His contribution was to move thinking on from space as a Euclidean or Cartesian containers to theorising space as being socially produced through non-linear, continual and recursive processes. Although he used competing phraseology throughout his book, he proposed a triad by which space was produced in this way, consisting of 'conceived space' as it represented and designed, 'lived space' as an embodied experience as it is felt, and 'perceived space' as it is brought into reality through practice and what is seen. Space is a living, contextual relation in which the '-tion' in *The Production of Space* declares its activity and movement, putting space together within the act-tion and transfoma-tion of the process studies of entrepreneurship (Hjorth et al., 2015; Steyaert, 2007a). Practices of entrepreneurship only exist in the sense that they are reproduced as a common experience (Nicolini, 2009) and space is inherent within these ideas because 'social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 404). We should recognise that relational space has its own traditions, including topology-orientated (e.g.Deleuze, 2013; Mol, 2001), Marxist (e.g. Castells, 2002; Castells & Hall, 1994; Harvey, 2003; Soja, 1980), object-orientated (e.g. Schwanen, 2015) and hybrid (e.g. Massey, 2005). Taken together, this suggests a rich seam in which entrepreneurship-as-practice theory may be developed.

Taking space seriously alerts us to the cultural, social and political dimensions of entrepreneurship, which sit alongside its economic dimensions (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). Entrepreneurship always occurs in sites that are both political and enacted in the everyday, in which 'drawing boundaries can be considered to be a

crucial aspect of every entrepreneurial process' (ibid. , p. 184). Drawing the appropriate boundary is an important activity, either to create spaces that allow for creation through the suspension of normal rules (Hjorth, 2004), or so that spaces of creation may draw from other, fruitful spaces (Lockett et al., 2009). Attention to boundaries is at once physical, meaningful and enacted (Lefebvre, 1991) because, for instance, spatial organising can have a strong affective dimension (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013), allowing for creative tactics within spaces recursively imbued with meaning and collective autonomy (Lange, 2011).

4. Incubators

One of the most frequently researched boundaries of entrepreneurship has been the incubator. Much of the work on incubators, and other spaces of entrepreneurship for that matter, has remained based in the assumptions of entrepreneurship as an economic phenomenon. It has also remained largely dissociated from the emerging processual trend, treating spaces as Cartesian containers in which resources are concentrated and social interaction may be established. Nevertheless, if this thesis is to take the spatiality of an incubator seriously, it is worth understanding what these incubators are intended to achieve.

4.1 Early research

Although the first incubator is recognised as being the Batavia Industrial Centre, established in 1959 at Batavia, New York, research on incubators was started in earnest by the publication of a national survey of business incubators in 1984 (Temali & Campbell, 1984). Through the 1990s there was a trend of clustering young companies together geographically to reduce their early failure rate

(Markley & McNamara, 1996; Rice, 2002). The clusters were thought to attract highly specialised workers and encourage knowledge spillovers (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Often these clusters were centred around knowledge centres such as universities (Brooks, 1986), taking the form of physical incubators, and much of the scholarship was an attempt to create a taxonomic description of how these clusters function (Allen & Bazan, 1990). Concurrently, research started on what would later develop into entrepreneurial ecosystems (Dubini, 1989) as 'social, economic, political, and cultural contexts that support high-growth entrepreneurship within a region' (Spigel, 2017).

4.2 Incubators as economic phenomena

The cultural contexts were the abiding concern of early scholarship, which attempted to define the optimal entrepreneurial culture (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991) as a means of driving an economy (Jack & Anderson, 1999), a concept which was later refined from being culturally based to one based on discourse (du Gay, 1995). However, even this refinement was considered to be 'an overgeneralised and deterministic account of "enterprise" as a form of "governmental rationality"' (Fournier & Grey, 1999).

As a more direct acknowledgement of its economic underpinnings, a trend within the incubator literature was to consider the critical success factors. This started with Campbell et al. (1985), who proposed four areas where incubators could create value for incubatees: the diagnosis of business needs, the selection and monitored application of business services, the provision of financing, and the provision of access to the incubator network. Smilor and Gill (1986) countered with a list of ten incubator factors conducive to the economic success of companies: on-site business expertise, access to financing and capitalisation, in-

kind financial support, community support, entrepreneurial networks, entrepreneurial education, perception of success, selection process for tenants, ties with a university and a concise programme with clear policies, procedures and milestones. However, we can see through the continued attempts to define success factors and best practice (e.g.Bergek & Norrman, 2008; Dai, 2012) that these totalising attempts will always struggle to understand the dynamics of an incubator without greater attention to the social dynamics.

Of the many cited success factors, the ability to build networks has been frequently proposed as the primary value-add feature of incubators (Hansen et al., 2000). The incubator can enable internal networking to improve knowledge sharing and business outcomes (Sá & Lee, 2012), which can also be developed primarily as social networks (McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Spatial and material concerns have also been used to show how incubator design can inhibit networking (C. E. Cooper et al., 2012). Network research helped develop a multi-scalar approach to entrepreneurial spaces when it also recognises the role of incubators in developing external networks in order to secure resources (Soetanto & Jack, 2013). The incubator manager can play a key role in this networking by making connections between companies and external resources (Goswami et al., 2018), and also in coordinating the timing of resources (Rice, 2002). These developed networks also help develop a sense of shared credibility, which helps secure resources (Smilor, 1987).

4.3 An undertheorized phenomenon

Towards the end of the 1990s, incubators fell out of favour with policy-makers as a wave of internet-based companies were found to be over-valued (Holson, 2000; Martin, 1997). This failure of praxis led to the accusation of the underreporting of failures and overreporting of successes (Hackett & Dilts, 2004) and the view that 'little progress has been made toward understanding how incubatees develop within the incubator' (Dai, 2012). This reflection supports the claim that 'there is a failure to understand the dynamic nature [of incubators] as well as that of the companies located in them [and] there is a lack of clarity regarding the performance of science parks and incubators which is associated with problems in identifying the nature of performance' (Phan et al., 2005, p. 166)

Despite this lack of understanding, clustering still occurs throughout the world (e.g. Nam, 2015; Wonglimpiyarat, 2016), normally formed around a successful company rather than a university (Pandit & Cook, 2003). However, the value of physical space is questioned by the rise in virtual incubators (Dai, 2011) which can have both an active (Cantù, 2017) and passive (Ittelson & Nelsen, 2002) role in mediating networks and dyadic relationships. There have even been calls that small businesses no longer need space (Risk, 2015), despite other findings that space at both the office level (Rooney et al., 2010) and regional level (Larson & Pearson, 2012) are important for improving outcomes through building social capital (Zagenczyk et al., 2008).

5. Developing the research question

Incubator research has underexplored the opportunity to apply both practice-based thinking and spatial thinking. One of the impacts of the rise of virtual incubators, and the more recent surge in interest in remote working post-Covid 19, is that it gives impetus to re-examine what physical co-location provides. The strong orientation of entrepreneurship research around mythicized traits of entrepreneurs and economic ends has unhelpfully distracted attention from the process-orientated, lived experience of entrepreneurs (Anderson, 2015). In particular, when research ignores the affective and visual experiences of entrepreneurs, it misses the opportunity to theorise the physicality of physical incubators. In short, if we think of incubators simply as mechanisms to provide resources, it becomes viable to make the argument that the physical provides nothing that the virtual cannot provide. Yet spatial theory argues against this conclusion as buildings 'are more than passive containers for relations. Like all practices they are formative, as much through the things that happen in them, their functional programme, as by their spatial relations and their form' (Markus, 1993, p. 11). They can be inculcated with meaning (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2013) and power (Kerr & Robinson, 2016), or have internal topographies of meaning (Siebert et al., 2017) where practices of the material can be generative (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). In Lefebvrian thinking, space is processual and entrepreneuring can be proposed as an inherently open, rhythmic phenomenon (Verduyn, 2015). More generally, space can absorb the fluidity of time through 'spacing' which would orientate our approach to an incubator towards its material, embodied, affective and minor configurations (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012).

Given entrepreneurs' extensive use of metaphor (Dodd, 2002; Maclean et al., 2015), it may be useful at this juncture to introduce a guiding metaphor for this

thesis. The processual approach suggests at a non-linear complexity that occurs during a journey. I propose the metaphor of a cruise ship, travelling from Southampton, UK to New York, USA. Traditional approaches to entrepreneurship place a lens on Southampton, with questions about where entrepreneurs come from and what type of people they are; or they place a lens on New York and try to understand market opportunities. In turn, incubator research places its lens on the ship itself as a container of passengers, but its questions are all orientated about how to best get to New York, or how to sail most quickly. Yet this is a cruise ship and getting to New York is not its only purpose. Passengers enjoy the journey for its own sake, perhaps playing chess or listening to an interesting lecture during the journey. This thesis addresses what happens on that cruise ship that is not primarily about either origin or destination. It is about the processes of entrepreneurship as they are practiced day-to-day within an incubator. I agree with Watson's suggestion (2009) that such studies benefit from treating research questions as 'guidance' to 'understanding better', rather than treating them as 'tight and clear' restrictors of positivist studies. My broad research question was therefore "What are the processes, practices and routines of entrepreneuring within an incubator?". The breadth of this question is through accepting that these processes may not be a direct articulation of either origin or destination yet are meaningful when they are part of entrepreneurship. In our cruise ship metaphor, chess may not be caused by New York, yet it is a practice that is given meaning by the journey. The papers are therefore able to bring in theory from wider management studies and sociology to help understand the entrepreneuring and also contribute back to organisation studies.

6. A note on methods

It is not my intention to describe the methods at length in this introduction, as these are addressed in the individual papers. The prologue helps frame the conduct of this research and I had the rare opportunity to conduct a wide-ranging ethnography. This kind of approach follows calls from the process-based entrepreneurship literatures to conduct more enactive methodologies (Steyaert, 2011a) through ethnographic approaches that 'find out how things work in a particular social setting' (Newth, 2018, cited in Champenois et al., 2020). By taking a spatial and visual approach, all buildings, artefacts, materials were 'incorporated into the fabric of ethnographic enquiry, just as they contribute to the fabric of everyday life' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 137). However, to address emergent meanings of visual artefacts which can arise from the invisible (Quattrone et al., 2021), it was necessary for the data collection to be primarily conducted through interview, where meaning could be explored. This study as presented would therefore be more accurately described as broadly ethnographic (Watson, 2009), where my daily experience sensitized me to possibility of meaning that could be explored during interview. Table 1 summarises the range of sites where the ethnography occurred. Much of the data presented is through quotes from interview, although it is the presentational 'tip' to the ethnographic 'iceberg'. Similarly, I have attempted to show my visual experience through photographs and description of scene.

Setting	Approximate Frequency	Comment
Company office	2 days per week	
Incubator networking events	1 per month	
Incubator knowledge transfer events	4 per year	Normally on a theme of entrepreneurship
Incubator social events	3 per year	e.g. a birthday party for the incubator
Public celebrations of success (parties)	2 per year	e.g. one company gets investment and invites everyone to a celebratory party
Hotdesking	15 days	
Yoga	1 per week	
Book club	3 per year	
Corridor conversations	2 days per week	
Corridor walks	2 days per week	Included walking through hotdesking and other areas
Lunchtimes	2 days per week	Shared lunch areas
Emails from incubator management	2 days per week	Helped inform shared values of the incubator
Incubator instant messenger	2 days per week	Shared lunch areas
Online Media	N/A	e.g. incubator twitter posts

Table 1: Ethnography activities

I have also attempted to show different perspectives of the methods across all three papers. Rather than repeat text, I have elected to write concise methods in the first two papers and use the third paper to describe methods more fully. It was the nature of the third paper to require more depth to the methods, so that I could describe how I was able to link the observation of the use of visual symbols to their meaning-making. I was also mindful that in this broadly social constructionist approach, the researcher is an active participant in that meaning-making, particularly through the framing of questions asked and their interpretation (Huff, 2009). I address this in the first paper on social class, because my own class status and life experience had the greatest influence in that paper. I have used pseudonyms for all interviewees, and table 2 gives a summary of their status. I have followed Codebase practice of referring to actors within the incubator as 'residents', unless I am making a specific point about them being entrepreneurs or interviewees.

Number	Pseudonym	Role	Company Size	Company Location	Time in Codebase (months, approx.)	Interview Length (mins)
1	Alistair	CEO	10+	Floor	12	65
2	Arthur	COO	4-10	Office	18	84
3	Bill	CEO	4	Office	36	67
4	Bobby	Sales Executive	10+	Floor	18	62
5	Ben	Marketing Executive	10+	Floor	6	69
6	Steven	Sales Executive	10+	Floor	12	56
7	Charlie	Engineer	10+	Floor	12	80
8	Chandler	COO	2-6	Office	12	75
9	Curtis	Employee	Incubator Management	N/A	4	75
10	Conor	CEO	10+	Floor	60	86

11	David	Project Manager	10+	Office	2	63
12	Gareth	CTO	10+	Floor	24	95
13	Henrik	CEO	Coffee Shop	Hotdesking	18	73
14	John	CEO	Incubator Management	N/A	48	63
15	Jill	CEO	1	Hotdesking	18	60
16	Louise	Marketing Manager	10+	Office	6	81
17	Matthew	CEO	2-6	Office	12	85
18	Gwen	CEO	2-6	Office	6	50
19	Oscar	COO	Incubator Management	N/A	60	76
20	Pedro	CEO	2	Office	60	87
21	Paul	Events Manager	Incubator Management	N/A	24	81
22	Sam	CEO	2	Coworking	1	46

23	Stuart	Strategy Officer	Incubator Management	N/A	60	65
24	Sol	Senior Executive	UK bank	Hotdesking	24	73
25	Toby	CEO	2-6	Office	24	62
26	Maurice	CTO	4	Office	36	74
27	Patrick	Engineer	4	Office	12	72
28	Tom	Marketing Executive	10+	Floor	18	91
29	Tina	Executive	UK Bank	Hotdesking	18	76

Table 1: Interviewees

7. Structure of the thesis

As a site of entrepreneurship, an incubator can be a useful analytical tool for research. However, spatial scales are relational so that, for instance, global mythologies of entrepreneurship can influence micro-practices. Extant research also suggests internal and external incubator processes (e.g. Goswami et al., 2018) and there have been calls for greater contextual research across both organizational studies (e.g. Maclean et al., 2007) and entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2019). Despite the observation that scales of entrepreneurship are relational rather than hierarchical, treating scale as a 'neat vertical structure like Russian *matryoshka* dolls' can have 'analytical clarity' (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 338). For the purposes of that clarity, I have therefore approached the three papers of this thesis as three layers of these nested dolls, whilst recognising the relational links between them. In each of the scales, I also select a research question that addresses an area of entrepreneurship-as-practice (Champenois et al., 2020). The approach can never be a comprehensive description and understanding of an incubator, but it gives sufficiently complete perspective to address the guiding research question and develop an understanding of incubators and entrepreneuring in the conclusions.

In the first paper, I address how the entrepreneurs relate to the immediate world outside the incubator. As the spatial context of Silicon Valley is reproduced around the world (Isenberg, 2010), it can be entwined with local cultures to develop something new (Gill & Larson, 2014). One of the contexts of particular concern to the UK is that of social class (Savage et al., 2013) and despite claims of emancipation through meritocracy (Rindova et al., 2009), there are still some indications that entrepreneurship fails to live up to its egalitarian mythology (Martinez Dy, 2020). I adopt Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu,

1990), particularly his notion of habitus, to reveal that the privileged class haS used the incubator as a setting by which they can appropriate entrepreneurship. Through the public performance of bodily tastes, the incubator has become a site dominated by the aesthetics of the privileged class. I develop the work of Friedman et al. (2021) to propose that entrepreneurship's aesthetic (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2009) and ethical (Clarke & Holt, 2010) dimensions allows it to be appropriated as a class project whereby the entrepreneurs can disavow their own privilege and claim themselves as pioneers within a meritocracy. The paper treats the incubator as a performance space, but one in which the material and bodily practices have come to imbue that space with classed meaning.

In the second paper, I look more specifically at the space of the incubator and further develop the notion of it as a performance space. I start by recognising that incubators have mostly been treated as inert containers for other activities (Butcher, 2018), and I more directly apply spacing (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012) to understand the topology and movements of space as it is practiced and understood by the entrepreneurs. This analysis relates to the first paper by including entrants from the surrounding city as performers in, and of, this space, but it pays greater attention to the materials and spatial arrangements within the incubator. I find that the building is able to define stages of entrepreneurship through spatially fixing people. It then uses a combination of materials and movement corridors to inculcate an understanding of successful entrepreneurship as the growth of the firm. Through judicious use of glass and solid materials, the incubator can entice entrepreneurs into developing this understanding of entrepreneurship in a process I call 'spatial nudging'. Importantly, the nudge is only ever experiential and never a diktat, so the entrepreneurs may retain the sense of autonomy that is important to their understanding of entrepreneurship. I propose that spatial nudging may be a useful governance mechanism for organisations as they become less

hierarchical (Clegg and Baumeler, 2010), because it organises understanding whilst still allowing for individual action and creativity (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004).

The third paper picks up on the first paper's concern with the use of class-based materials but looks more generally at how entrepreneurs use visual symbols to develop their identities within the collective space. It adds to the second papers' proposal of the incubator as a performance space by developing our understanding of how such spaces can become locally meaningful of entrepreneurship. I start by acknowledging that the dominant view of identity work is as a discourse-based activity (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021), with the notable exception of Clarke (2011), who studied the use of visual symbols during pitching performances. I depart from that latter study by switching the lens to the everyday and mundane territory of entrepreneuring. I deepen our understanding of the symbol in identity work by developing theory of the symbol as flexibly interpretive (Bechky, 2003) so they can be used in individualised identity projects which, despite their contradictions, can be used together as a collective project of entrepreneurship.

I further develop this last point in the conclusions to this thesis. By reflecting across all three papers, I first outline an understanding of the incubator as a performance space that allows other processes to happen, such as of class and entrepreneurial identity. I then progress entrepreneurship theory's understanding of the material from being a methodological adjunct to language to proposing its distinct epistemology. The visual symbol can retain ambiguous meaning, allowing entrepreneurs to use the visual to explore the new and in-between, which is the very essence of entrepreneurship-as-process (Hjorth, 2014; Hjorth et al., 2015; Steyaert, 2007a). I contrast this fluid epistemology with the categorical and

defined nature of language (Quattrone et al., 2021) to suggest the non-verbal as the primary mode in which entrepreneuring occurs on a daily basis. In our cruise ship metaphor, the activities on board become the purpose of the cruise because they are what is experienced and enacted during the cruise. Narratives of the destination may be important to the existence of the cruise, but we miss the essence of the cruise if we treat it as a mere mode of transport.

8. References

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Chapter 2: Paper 1. Habitus By Taste and Ethics: The Reproduction Of Class Structures in UK Entrepreneurship

Abstract

Established occupations in the UK can become the preserve of elites when 'fitting in' is driven by a class-based habitus. However, social class has been largely ignored in studies of entrepreneurship, despite suggestions of structural inequalities across other dimensions. I interrogate entrepreneurship's meritocratic foundations through a thirty-six month ethnography of a startup incubator. By attending to the habitus of entrepreneurs, I find they use taste and ethics to appropriate entrepreneurship as an occupation for the privileged class, whilst they access mythologies of entrepreneurship to disavow their own privilege. When considered as an everyday experience, I propose technology entrepreneurship as a class project, rather than as a primarily economic endeavour.

1. Introduction: Class and Entrepreneurship

Does the reproduction of Silicon Valley-inspired digital entrepreneurship across the Western world transcend regional class structures? I interrogate the concept of entrepreneurship as a great social leveller (Martinez Dy et al., 2018) by examining entrepreneurs' habitus within a UK startup incubator. The study follows from findings that patterns of class inclusion in the UK are changing (Savage et al., 2013), yet are still strongly linked to occupational field (Crompton, 2010; Friedman, Savage, et al., 2015). I extend this discussion to entrepreneurship at a time when governments are placing great faith upon the occupation for both economic growth (Isenberg, 2010) and as a means of social inclusion (Zahra & Wright, 2016).

Class exclusions and mobility have long been a concern of governments as an economic imperative (Reay et al., 2010) yet interest in class had started to wane by the towards the end of the 20th century due to an assumed weakening of class divisions (Evans, 1992). As geographers started to recognise that class distinctions, rather than dissipating, were being restructured through the neo-liberalisation of global capital (MacLeavy, 2020), there began a resurgence of interest in class, particularly in the UK which has historically had significant class divisions. The interest was encapsulated in the 2011 Great British Class Survey (GBCS), which Savage et al. (2013) analyzed through a Bourdieusian lens to suggest a new landscape of classes in the UK, based on distinctions of wealth (economic capital), cultural tastes (cultural capital), and the extent of their social networks (social capital). Despite criticism of the classification as lacking deep theoretical insight (Mills, 2014), the paper was influential in moving the conversation of class in the UK towards occupational type. However, they also noted that class distinctions are less accepted than in the past, with a third of respondents denying that they belong to any class as all. In a later paper

responding to their critics, the authors emphasized that their identified classes are 'not ontological or structural entities, but are the product of the interplay of the three different capitals which comprise them' (Savage et al., 2015, p. 1015), leading to the observation that 'culture and lifestyles might be class-structured or classed, even in the absence of well-formed classes' (Flemmen et al., 2017, p. 127).

Classed cultural distinctions can retard social mobility and perpetuate inequality through a patchwork of taken-for-granted norms across the occupational landscape. These norms act to exclude those without the relevant capitals or knowledge of these occupational 'rules of the game' (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). For instance, the appropriate accent, mannerisms and dress are particularly important for entry into, and progression within, both acting (Friedman et al., 2017) and the wider film and television industry (Randle et al., 2015). Even when class diversity improves group performance, such as in advertising, there are persistent economic, social, cultural and emotional barriers to entering the profession (Macleod et al 2009). Whilst class-based exclusions can be a result of sustaining historic norms, elites also change institutions to bolster their own legitimacy and embed privilege (Harvey et al., 2020). A tendency towards classed homophily can also be driven by changing external market expectations (Ashley & Empson, 2013), which can even lead to traditionally working-class jobs seeking employees with a middle-class aesthetic that appeals to their customer base (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007). Findings from the GBCS were developed by Freidman et al (2015) to show that social mobility was more prevalent in emerging high status occupations, such as IT, than traditional professions such as law, medicine and finance. We may take from this the ability of occupations to remain classed through retaining a tendency towards homophily, and imposing it as part of strategic change.

The relationship between occupation type and social class has rarely been applied to digital entrepreneurship, despite it being one of the most significant global occupational movements of this century (Audretsch, 2007). Digital entrepreneurship is often purported as a means by which people may 'change their position in the social order in which they are embedded and, on occasion, the social order itself' (Rindova et al., 2009, p. 478) because its digital nature means entrepreneurs need fewer resources (Nambisan, 2017) and have reduced transaction and coordination costs compared to other forms of entrepreneurship (Pergelova et al., 2019). Digital entrepreneurship can access international markets more easily that other industries (Patel & Conklin, 2009) and success can be driven more by desire (agency) than presented opportunities (structure) (Kitching & Rouse, 2017). Despite these claims, entrepreneurship's status as a 'great leveller' in the UK has been questioned (Martinez Dy et al., 2018) with findings that entrepreneurs tend to come from higher social classes (Jayawarna et al., 2014), or are children of entrepreneurs (Schölin et al., 2016) where they have better access to appropriate role models across social contexts (Zozimo et al., 2017), or where personal relationships provide better access to entrepreneurial networks (Hite, 2005). By allowing economic capital to become 'something of an obsession within the entrepreneurship literature' (Pret et al., 2016), we have underexplored the processes by which this apparent social closure has emerged (Ahl & Marlow, 2021; Parkin, 1979). The very idea of class has been claimed to be an 'ideological contradiction of democratic capitalism' (Savage et al., 2015, p. 1015), leading to calls for research exploring the meritocratic assumptions of entrepreneurship (Martinez Dy, 2020) as a strong expression of democratic capitalism.

I approach this issue by exploring the construction of class during the creation of an entrepreneurial culture in a city. Following much of the scholarship addressing class, I develop the question using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990), particularly how class creates, and can be created by, habitus, as a 'specific mode of thought' (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 99), of generally corporeal indices that 'constructs the world by a certain way of orientating itself towards it' (ibid., p. 144). I explore how these concepts have been explicitly and implicitly applied to entrepreneurship to theorize the extent to which entrepreneurship acts as a localized emancipatory force (Rindova et al., 2009). As a study site, I selected a new startup incubator in the UK as a building designed to develop an entrepreneurial culture, where I conducted a thirty-six month ethnography, including both participant-observation and twenty-nine interviews to explore the construction and development of the habitus which gives entry to this social world.

I contribute to our understanding of social mobility into an industry (Martinez Dy et al., 2018; Savage et al., 2013; Spence & Carter, 2014) by finding the incubator dominated by the aesthetics of a privileged class, as expressed through habitus. This appropriation of entrepreneurship by the privileged class questions its role in social inclusion (Zahra & Wright, 2016) and their rejection of entrepreneurship's capitalist foundations questions its role in economic growth (Isenberg, 2010). I develop this latter concern to propose that, as a daily, lived experience, entrepreneurship is being used as a project of class identity rather than primarily as an economic venture. The entrepreneurs are moving beyond their classed origin stories (Friedman et al., 2021) by selectively using mythologies of entrepreneurship to imagine themselves as agentic, heroic pioneers within a meritocracy.

2. Theoretical Framework

Scholarship on social class in organization studies has been strongly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (Jarness, 2017). An important expression of an individuals' class is through their habitus as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). Habitus is an historically embodied, internalized and taken-for-granted nature (ibid., p. 56) which guides actions and feelings. Although a habitus can be difficult to define, it is realized as a pre-reflexive 'feel for the game' (ibid., p. 52) and as a guide to actions and feelings. As such, habitus is deeply classed where an individual's understanding of the game to be played, and their ability to play it, are unequally distributed by class divisions in society (Bourdieu, 2010). In this construct, class is not a defined property, but is a 'structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and the effects the exert on practices' (ibid., p. 100). We expect to see a sense of homogeneity of those structures within a class, such that a 'singular habitus of members of the same class are united in a relationship of homology that is of diversity within homogeneity reflecting the diversity of homogeneity characteristic of their social conditions of production' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 60).

Bourdieu further distinguishes between an original habitus, learned 'through the formative experiences of earliest infancy, of the whole collective history of family and class' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 91), and a specific habitus which is formed by their experiences in adulthood (Bourdieu, 1999). The two continually combine and recombine during life, influencing each other and revealing that habitus has 'a

power of adaptation, it constantly performs an adaptation to the outside world which only occasionally takes the form of radical conversion' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 88). It is in his development of this adaptive habitus over subsequent writings that Bourdieu opens the concept to agency, despite critiques of habitus as little more than a submission to the authority of the field (Butler, 1999). However, even when habitus is the product of domination, it can help adaptation to new situations where there are homologies through habitus (Kerr & Robinson, 2009). There is value, should we find an appropriate research site, of treating habitus as transcending 'determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55) and not ruling out 'that the responses of the habitus may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode the operation that the habitus performs quite differently, namely an estimation of chances presupposing the transformation of the past effect into an expected objective' (ibid., p. 53). We may therefore consider that whilst habitus can be part of a conscious action, nevertheless habitus itself is a 'spontaneity without conscious or will' (ibid., p. 56), which guides practices and provides a disposition in the consumption of the surrounding social world. Contrary to Butler's (1999) conception, we may treat habitus as an actor on both individual and collective dimensions, as a mediator between 'the game' and 'playing the game' (Spence & Carter, 2014). It therefore both needs reference to a field to be meaningful, but it also acts to constitute that field as 'an arbitrary social construct' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 67), 'endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one's energy' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 127).

2.1 The Privileged Habitus

In his concern for social distinctions, Bourdieu wrote extensively on how habitus manifests in a dominant class, drawing on a specific habitus as a condition of entry to that classed field, or at least one that is sufficiently malleable to become 'one of us' (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 100). This dominant class used habitus to distinguish themselves from others, whom they dominated through economic and social means. By drawing on this generalised notion of a classed habitus, rather than attempting to name and define typologies of class distinctions, we usefully avoid becoming 'preoccupied with the rather limited question of whether the social distribution of lifestyles is structured in a similar fashion as that depicted in Distinction' (Jarness, 2017). Instead, we can view habitus as a means by which people can embark on classing projects, including distinguishing their own identified group from the working class (Skeggs, 1997). This view of habitus is particularly useful in the UK, where use of term 'middle class' has been so malleable that it is often a metonym for a range of cultural, economic and social privileges and defined only as it is distinguished from the excluded working class (Reay, 2008). For the purposes of this paper, therefore, I shall address the 'unruliness' of the class concept (Savage et al., 2015, p. 1014) by using the term 'privileged class' to include expressions of the dominant and middle classes, and the term 'underprivileged class' to include expressions of dominated and working classes.

Throughout his career, Bourdieu described how the classes expressed their habitus in contemporary culture (Bourdieu, 2010, pp. 165-222). Through art, music, food and other expressions, he described the privileged aesthetic as self-imposed austerity, restraint and reserve with the rare and 'pure gaze' of aesthetics, contrasting with the underprivileged class, and their desire for substance and function, the 'easy and common' (ibid., p. 171). Although a relationship can be drawn between apparent taste and the means to afford such

goods, Bourdieu stressed class as something deeper than an economic distinction. For instance, whilst wealth may give access to expensive foods, its appreciation through taste is a 'natural gift of recognizing and loving perfection' held in the privileged habitus, contrasting with mere gastronomy as a set of appreciatory rules around food which may be learned by those without the pre-reflexive habitus (ibid., p. 61). Similarly, manners are one of the key markers of class through its symbolic meaning depending 'as much on perceivers as on producer' (ibid., p. 59) and one of the ways in one may 'fit in' to a class-based social group, or not. Matters of taste and style can be so strongly indicative of class (Shaw, 1994) that it can be determined by visual appearance alone, even during highly ritualised presentations such as wedding photographs (Pape et al., 2012).

These distinctions of habitus through bodily traits such as manner and appearance can still be influential in the hiring practices of firms (Laurison & Friedman, 2016), resulting in social closure and the replication of status (Rivera, 2012). Even where firms attempt to use meritocratic measures such as education, they can ignore the class-based barriers to attaining that education (Rivera, 2015). The effect of class continues once people enter these occupations, particularly amongst elites where, for instance, fine distinctions can be made between the type of fee-paying school employees attended (Carter & Spence, 2014). Meanwhile, public sector workers have been found to have a greater leaning towards this aesthetic disposition than their private sector counterparts (Spence et al., 2017), who are more disposed towards a pursuit of wealth (Spence & Carter, 2014), further demonstrating the potential for occupational distinctions through habitus within the same class status. Similarly, there are notable localizations of common habitus when organizations expand to different countries (Spence et al., 2016), indicating that when habitus becomes a means of the reproduction of class privilege, its nature may only be revealed

through an exploration specific to that context (Maclean et al., 2007). Organizations, far from being paragons of efficiency and meritocracy, can 'endanger new inequalities or strengthen existing ones' (Amis et al., 2020, p. 197) even as they globalize.

Finally, although we have been able to discuss social class without giving primacy to economic distinctions (Sayer, 2005), wealth still has a power in class beyond giving access to expensive goods and practices. Not only do cultural and social capitals ultimately convert into economic capital, but the privileged class can start to act as if their aesthetic disposition in itself is an elevation above the ordinary (Bourdieu, 2010, pp. 4-89). The typology of a class pursuing beauty is an expression of privilege where 'economic power is first and foremost a power to keep economic necessity at arm's length' (ibid., p. 48). This developed habitus can become common in economically privileged occupations, which then attracts yet more entrants with that same habitus (Friedman, Laurison, et al., 2015, pp. 123-144). In turn, people from underprivileged backgrounds without that original habitus fear that they will not 'fit in' and inflict 'self-elimination' (ibid., pp. 171-183) by avoiding entering those occupations, despite being otherwise suitable.

2.2 The Entrepreneurial Habitus

Entrepreneurship research is underpinned by an economic rationalist approach (Karatas-ozkan et al., 2014). Central to this work is the development of a mythology of the heroic, individualistic entrepreneur (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2016; Ogbor, 2000) who is able to take advantage of opportunities to pursue economic success (Boje & Smith, 2010). It can be assumed that because digital ventures require fewer resources than other industies, and even other forms of entrepreneurship (Mason & Harrison, 1997), that it is free from many of the classed structural barriers that affect much of the rest of society (Nambisan,

2017). This line of thinking has led digital entrepreneurship to be proposed as a solution to poverty (Bruton et al., 2013), particularly in third world and non-Western countries (e.g.Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013) and as a means by which individuals may free themselves from the social restrictions of their pasts (Chandra, 2017). However, the proposal of entrepreneurship as a means of economic and social emancipation (Rindova et al., 2009) carries empirical and theoretical contradictions (Martinez Dy et al., 2018).

The global mythology of digital entrepreneurship has been variously described as masculine (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2016; Ogbor, 2000), youthful (e.g.Ainsworth & Hardy, 2007, 2008) and white (e.g.Knight, 2006). The dominance of these groups can be addressed by applying Bourdieu's theory of practice to overcome dichotomies in entrepreneurship research (e.g.Tatli et al., 2014), but a still greater body addresses the social embeddedness of entrepreneurship without explicit use of that theory (Welter et al., 2019). Critical feminist scholars have shown how this mythology can exclude women from entrepreneurship (Marlow & McAdam, 2013) even in putatively equal spaces (Ozkazanc-Pan & Clark-Muntean, 2018), leading the female entrepreneurs to either reproduce this mythology (Marlow & McAdam, 2015), hierarchical structure (Heizmann & Liu, 2020) and business model (Jennings et al., 2016), or to develop a distinctly feminist type of entrepreneurship, with separate spaces where they can build 'large networks, bonding ties, trust, reciprocity, mutual obligations and expectations, and shared language and codes' (Lee et al., 2019). This consolidated view of entrepreneurship as either emancipation or oppression, or both (Verduijn et al., 2014) emerges from gender studies, but we know little of how it could apply to the changing and socially malleable structures of class.

Even empirically, and without structures of gender or social class, there can be variance in the consumption of this entrepreneurial ideal. In their seminal study of entrepreneurial identity, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) outlined three types of founder: Darwinians, who placed greatest value on the pursuit of economic capital; Communitarians, who placed greatest value on social capital by seeing their activities as founders as an 'important catalyst for the development of the community and for achieving recognition by their peers' (ibid., p. 943); and Missionaries, who place greatest value on cultural change where they may 'pursue their political visions and advance particular causes' (ibid., p. 944). A distinct habitus is also present in, for instance, environmental entrepreneurship (Outsios & Kittler, 2018) and even in different regions, where the Silicon Valley habitus is developed in a way that corresponds to what may be termed a regional habitus (Gill & Larson, 2014). In contrast, De Clerq and Voronov (2009) argued that the entrepreneurial habitus must not only include 'fitting in' to gain legitimacy in the localised field, but also include a sense of 'standing out' in order to break established rules and create entrepreneurial value.

By including more reflexivity in our approaches to entrepreneurship (Sklaveniti & Steyaert, 2020), we are left with an unclear picture of the entrepreneurial habitus: at once dominating and dominated; inclusive and excluding; global and regional; conformist and rebellious. More pertinent to our study, we have little understanding of the micro foundations of the relationship between social class and the entrepreneurial habitus.

3. Methods

3.1 Data Selection

To explore the effect of social class on the consumption of the entrepreneurial habitus in the UK, I selected Edinburgh as a study site. As the capital of Scotland, Edinburgh has been a center of intellectual, legal and political life in Scotland for many decades and has a well-established financial industry (Perman, 2019). It is generally considered to be more privileged than other cities in the country (Docherty & Foulkes, 1999) with elites formed around sentinel corporations in the financial sector (e.g. Kerr & Robinson, 2016). As such, the city provides a landscape apparently at odds with the egalitarian entrepreneurship of Silicon Valley, so provides a site suitable for exploring the consumption of that culture. Despite the clear juxtaposition, at the time of study Edinburgh was garnering increasing interest as a center for digital entrepreneurship through two rapidly-growing technology firms, and a number of incubators. The incubator I selected for study, Codebase, had gained interest from Scottish business and political circles, which considered it to be symbol of successful digital entrepreneurship in Scotland. Codebase housed approximately 200 people, separated into different categories of office size. There were communal areas for meeting, socializing and hotdesking where entrepreneurs could interact, verbally, aurally, and visually. Despite the conspicuous attraction of offering low-cost office spaces, the stated aim of co-location was to create an entrepreneurial community from pioneering firms and give nascent entrepreneurs access to otherwise closed entrepreneurial networks and unobtainable resources (Bøllingtoft, 2012). This study gave access to a defined site of the creation of entrepreneurship, where people attempted to 'become' entrepreneurs (Steyaert, 2007a).

3.2 Data Collection

A researcher seeking to understand habitus has to 'situate oneself within "real activity as such", that is, in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as spectacle' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52). To experience that 'real activity', I conducted an ethnography over thirty-six months, particularly considering the tastes in food, cultural activities, manners, dress and bearing which the literature foregrounded, together with indicators of values and attitudes as orientated towards class and entrepreneurship. Given that habitus is at once the 'anchor, the compass and the course of ethnographic journey' (Wacquant, 2011, p. 81), I feel it useful to give an indication of the researcher's habitus, to contextualise that journey and understand how the indicators of class tastes and attitudes were understood. As a native of Edinburgh, I had some understanding of the city, and with a privileged class upbringing, I had an appreciation of that locally-defined habitus. However, my career had taken me out of that classed field and led me to work alongside people from some of the most deprived areas across eastern and southern Scotland, giving me an insight into their quite different habitus. By straddling the significant class divide in the local context, I had familiarity with the cultural toolkits (Swindler, 1986), and reflexive distance from both sides, to be able to capture 'the intentionality without intention, the knowledge without cognitive intent, the pre-reflexive, infra-conscious mastery that agents acquire in the social world' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 19). I was then able to construct questions for twenty-nine semi-structured interviews lasting an average of one hour each to understand their reflexive and pre-reflexive attitudes towards the situating of their habitus within the social milieu. Because habitus can be identified most clearly when one feels like a 'fish out of water' (Norwicka, 2015), I found counter-factual questions to be particularly useful in exploring boundaries of inclusion,

particularly trying to define who would not fit into the space, or be included in the social group.

3.3 Data Analysis

The findings from the ethnography helped inform the questions for interview, but the analysis led to further possibilities which I was able to explore with subsequent ethnography and interview. This continual building between theory and data continued until saturation.

I coded by expressions of taste and their consumption of the Silicon Valley mythology (Ogbor, 2000). By pattern-matching, I found binaries between an original habitus and Silicon Valley and also binaries between what they expressed as their current, entrepreneurial habitus and their impression of the corporate habitus. They were strongly binary when the expressed view of one was dependent upon, or a reaction to, the other. I refined this coding by discussion every two weeks with colleagues as a second phase of reflexivity as 'a tone of familiarity needs to be approached from a distance to arrive at renewed understandings of the social reality under focus' (Costa et al., 2019, p. 28).

4. Findings

The data showed patterns of the presented habitus as a selection of parts of an original, privileged habitus, and an aesthetic, digital entrepreneurship habitus inspired by the consumption of Silicon Valley culture.

4.1 Entering the Incubator

It is first necessary to understand Codebase as a selector of talent from the surrounding city. Codebase self-describes as a concentration of the city's talent and, crucially, is seen by others as the enablers of the next generation of digital entrepreneurs. It was created as a private enterprise by a group of people who had previously worked together at a university incubator. Finding that site too restrictive, they created a spin-out. The founders were therefore a social group and their initial employees were also from their social group. A key site in forming this social group was a pub frequented by university faculty which specialized in rare and exclusive beers, as a form of cultural distinction. Curtis's recollection of his interview process reveals the extent of the reliance on social homophily in the creation of the founding team:

> [The founder] needed someone to maybe cover reception, maybe do events. Someone who was outgoing, I guess. His wife at the time, well I had worked with her at a festival, and I used to work with [other incubator employee] as well. And I came back, went to the [pub] for a few pints to talk to [the founder]. We just sat down for a pint for an hour. I don't think we even talked about what we were going to do, we just got to know each other. I guess it's that social aspect because we are completely different in a lot of ways. And he goes: "can you start Monday?", and I went: "yeah I've got nothing else to do." So I had no experience of this sector. None. But I've got experience of people. And that was what he needed at the time. (Curtis)

This selection procedure was important because their shared habitus started to embody the ethos of the incubator through a cultural homology. Connor, a CEO of one of the early companies that decamped from the university incubator described Curtis as 'the heart of the place' and one of the big motivations in making them move into Codebase. In turn, Curtis described one of the other prominent founding team as setting the tone of Codebase through being 'this posh, weird guy who is super socially conscious and ethical and very hilarious'.

The founding team also held responsibility for setting entry criteria for entrepreneurs and they were notably 'quite picky about who they let in and stay in' (Chandler). The criteria were never formalized, but instead the product of 'just a chat' (Toby) to see if they would 'fit in' (Oscar) and able to 'build relationships' (Pedro). This clear appeal to homophily seemed to be a common experience amongst entrants to the incubator and most viewed traditional interviews as excessively formal processes that did not allow them to 'get to know' the person as the essential criteria (Toby). I only found one exception. Tina, who worked for an on-site service provider described how she was formally interviewed and 'grilled' by the founders before she was allowed to work in the incubator. Her experience as someone with limited experience of digital entrepreneurship sits in contrast with Curtis's chat over a pint of carefully brewed and socially exclusive beer. Trish contrasted herself as 'coming from where I live, loads of refugees, it's one of the deprived areas in Glasgow. Even my son's school is a deprived school', with Codebase as somewhere that was noticeably middleclass and 'not very diverse' compared to her home life. However, once she had passed the barrier to entry, Trish accepted that there were no overtly exclusionary practices. I now turn to the subtle ways in which an entrepreneur could 'fit in' to the incubator.

4.2 Fitting In

4.2.1 Money as Unnecessary

The prevalence of a privileged habitus was clear across multiple dimensions, not least through the corresponding absence of underprivileged dimensions. The most salient source of privilege, and most surprising when contrasted with the entrepreneurial narratives of equality and 'bootstrapping', was that 'there are certainly people here with plenty of money' (Paul). Some had acquired that money through work in large firms (e.g. Louise) or their own firms (e.g. Connor), whilst others' wealth more clearly drew from a generational replication of privilege through inheritance (e.g. Ben).

This wealth privilege was accompanied with an ambivalence, mostly claiming that wealth was not a 'primary driver' (Connor) behind their decision to become an entrepreneur, or, in the case of David, that financial success had never been a driver throughout his career, even before he moved into entrepreneurship. This freedom from financial constraints facilitates the aesthetic disposition that was prevalent in Codebase, so it is important to understand its nature. Gwen, an American who had recently settled in Edinburgh, opined that this reflected a wider, regional attitude:

> 'So here culturally there's a very interesting aspect of in the US if you make money, flaunting the, the home, the jewelry whatever, is a rite of passage, as long as you are not super obnoxious about it. But here, it's no. Absolutely not. (Gwen)

Whilst there may be a national character to this attitude, to be fully understood it should be placed within its class context. When discussing attitudes towards

wealth, I initially avoided defining absolutes in the questions, leaving many of them to volunteer their view. When asked about financial ambitions, some expressed ambivalent opinions such as 'winning the lottery wouldn't make much difference to my life' (Arthur), but Sam was more precise:

> I'm quite frugal as my friends point out. As long as I have enough to support my lifestyle I'll be quite happy. To be honest if I have an extra £50k I wouldn't know what to do with it. They'd know what to do with it better than I would. (Sam)

Sam chooses a sum of £50,000 as his immediate financial horizon, but we can contextualize this sum when we consider that it would be enough to purchase a small flat in an underprivileged area in Scotland, and is approximately twice the median annual earnings (Parliament, 2021). His sense of frugality appears to be in the context of his peer group, rather than, as Gwen claimed, in the national context. Nevertheless, this entrepreneur makes claims to value a simple life where wealth has little prevalence.

4.2.2 Corporates as Unethical

As a stronger reaction to this ambivalence towards money, it was common in my ethnography to hear corporate firms talked of in pejorative terms. Chandler even described the 'shame' of having worked at one of Edinburgh's most prestigious financial institutions, whilst Steven, who had no experience of working for corporates having joined a Codebase company straight from university, had developed an implicit distrust of them:

> Personally, I just have a general distrust of banks and big corporations. Watching the Big Short. It just doesn't feel. Uneasy. I'm not saying there aren't ways of working with them. I guess small businesses need to work with big businesses. But you need the next level of transparency on what's happening and I don't think banks will ever achieve that. (Steven)

Although Steven suggests his attitude stems from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the narratives developed through international media such as The Big Short film, later in our interview he linked his ethics-based view of corporates with the part of the prevalent habitus that treats money as unnecessary:

> The impact of being in this place for a year has completely and utterly changed my career goals. Before I wanted to work in a big corporate company and earn a lot of money. For me, it sounds clichéd, but now [I want to work for] a business that has a positive impact on people's lives. [My company] arguably does that and I like that people say now they can sleep at night. (Steven)

I had not prompted Steven to discuss this issue, yet he volunteers the construct that working in a corporate is wholly about earning money, juxtaposed to the ethical superiority of working in a startup. Notably, his company makes accounting software for small businesses, yet he is able to ignore the obvious sector parallels with the corporate banks he derides. It is 'being in this place for a year' that has helped Steven coalesce global cues such as from The Big Short into a narrative of the immorality of corporates and, therefore, the relatively superior morality of startups.

Simply being in the incubator meant they could assume themselves as separate from the surrounding city. This initially manifested as a distinction between local entrepreneurship and local corporates within the city:

> Banking. Financial services. All these things that are well known household names. If you look at our [technology startup] successes, Skyscanner, Fan Duel, they don't have the same recognition as Standard Life or Scottish Widows or the Oil firms I suppose. Whereas if you go to Silicon Valley you have Apple, Hewlett Packard and Intel. (Gareth)

When the residents discussed their views on corporates, it was often relating to their daily lived experiences of the establishment of Edinburgh. Instead of talking generally of 'corporates', residents would often give examples of financial services firms that were dominant within Edinburgh, Standard Life being the most frequently mentioned. In this context, corporates should be understood as the norm for this city and what would be considered a 'standard' work environment for the privileged class, in a similar way that working in a single, labour-intensive industry might be standard for a working-class company town (Garner, 1992). Most residents I met and interviewed had either histories of working in corporates, or assumed that it would be the default career for them had they not chosen entrepreneurship.

Corporates were cast as being emblematic of a lack of agency. This was emphasized by one speaker at an incubator event, who said 'people who work in corporates are not necessarily unintelligent or unambitious', but that 'the difference is because of the structures. It's not that the people are different. It's a luxury of a startup that you can have no structures'. The corporate structures were seen to 'pigeonhole' people (Arthur), making them 'just a cog' (Steven) where there 'wasn't an option for change' (Ben). They were also seen as generally ineffectual, as a stasis with a culture of 'fear and protections' (Pedro). To become an entrepreneur was to break free of these structures and embark on a more ethical life.

4.2.3 Tastes in Food and Drink

The wealth of some of the entrepreneurs would certainly give them the option of consuming expensive culture, but it became clear that there was a widespread appreciation of taste even amongst those who claimed to be struggling

financially. It was widely accepted that one of the main advantages of renting space in Codebase was due to its low cost, and many considered that they were in a (relatively) financially precarious position whilst they attempted to establish their companies. Nevertheless, there was much less willingness to compromise on corporeal tastes, which was most readily observed through food and drink. Every day of the ethnography, I had lunch in one of the communal dining areas, and I could observe patterns over time. Buying lunch at local eateries was relatively common, certainly as a more expensive option than home-made lunches, but the selection was particularly revealing of their tastes for rarity. It was more common to frequent artisanal cafes selling hand-made foods from around the world, rather than the cheaper, local supermarket selling mass-produced and widely-available foods, despite both being equally proximate to Codebase.

However, it was in the coffee selection that their salience of taste was most clearly revealed. There was an independent coffee shop in a communal space in Codebase and whilst coffee in itself would no longer considered to be classed, the selection of that particular shop was. It claimed to be one of the first specialty coffee shops in Edinburgh and during my interview with the owner, he insisted that I refer to the establishment as a 'roastery' as a more accurate indicator of specialty. Most of our discussion was him distinguishing his product as superior to other specialty coffee shops in the city and there was a great sense of pride in elitism, albeit that the distinction was through the appreciation of taste and attention to detail, rather than any other form of social stratification. This claim of elitism was confirmed by one of the entrepreneurs who had extensive social connections amongst Edinburgh's occupational elites:

> A lot of people just want to come in and see what [the incubator] is like. A friend is a partner at a law firm and she got very excited that it's [the specific roastery in Codebase]. So she would want to come back. (Louise)

The decision to select that roastery was driven by the assertion of the entrepreneurs' taste, according to its owner:

> [Codebase] had a tiny, single machine and staff turning up willy nilly[1]. It used to be on floor M and when they came down here they had a counter made. But according to people here before, they said the quality and consistency was poor. (Henrik)

This resulted in what others saw as a paradox between the insistence upon upholding these standards of taste, which came at an economic cost, and the entrepreneurial narrative of frugality during that period of precarity:

> Why is it not 50p? We have a machine upstairs. But there's a disconnect there, you've got this struggling startup but you're fueling it with £3 coffees. That doesn't compute. (Gareth)

4.2.4 Hobbies and Pastimes

In daily interactions, we would often talk about interests outside work and these became a means by which people from different companies could form ties and engage in common social projects. It was noticeable that soccer, as the UK's most popular sport and one with distinctly working-class roots, was rarely discussed in the incubator. Instead, people were interested in traditionally privileged-class sports like rugby, badminton and horse-racing, or sports drawn from entrepreneurial mythology such as ping-pong. Likewise, surfing was particularly popular, despite the location being rather inhospitable for the sport with cold weather and sheltered beaches. The entrepreneurs were conscious of the link with Silicon Valley:

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1 'Willy nilly' is a UK colloquialism meaning in an ad-hoc manner.

Alistair: 'There's definitely a fit with surfing and tech. Is there a book about surfing and startups? It seems to be a common thing.'

Researcher: 'What is that link? Why do startup tech people go surfing more than bankers?'

Alistair: 'It's a more relaxed, open-minded sport where you're not necessarily competing with anyone. It's kind of hippyish, which the startup scene can be, more than banks. People are treated really well and have flexible work.'

In this last line, Alistair opines that surfing is more than a mere cultural nod to California but is part of a way of being for entrepreneurs (their habitus), as he saw it. When I asked Chandler, an avowed upper middle-class[2] resident of Edinburgh, if he surfed, he replied: 'Yeah I do. Badly. Worse than I golf', thereby volunteering his view of equity between a hobby from his original habitus and one from Silicon Valley.

The various aspects of the original habitus appeared to be very much taken-for-granted in an unconscious manner, as Paul summarized:

The middle-class thing is just a passive thing. Nobody's doing anything about that. The middle-class thing is just a constant thing that's just there in the background. And we just accept it mainly because everyone here is in it.

So there is a bigger issue about how accessible this is to people with a working class background who maybe don't have a tech education. So maybe their instant reaction is to go and work in [a supermarket]. Which was working class. Most people there don't like the things I like... Maybe there's an element of privilege there.

I don't want to pitch it as this middle-class thing you can't access. But maybe by accident that's just the nature of the industry. You've got Silicon Valley and the rest of them and it's not much different. (Paul)

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2 The upper middle class is amongst the most privileged of what I am terming the privileged classes. Chandler attended one of the most expensive fee-paying schools in Scotland and his classmates would have filled the ranks of the highest earning professional occupations in the country.

Paul's comments emphasize the class split as it was enacted in Codebase. Rather than describing fine distinctions between several different classes, he shows how there is a fundamental split between a privileged class, which he generally terms the 'middle class', and the underprivileged class, which he terms the 'working class'. In his view, the 'other' (the class to which he does not belong) have a natural place working in supermarkets, whilst the technology industry is naturally and self-evidently a place for his privileged class. Paul is showing how well he understands that fitting into his occupation is through matching of a pre-reflexive habitus.

4.3 Negotiating Fit

4.3.1 Accents

The aural experience of the incubator was also heavily classed. In the UK, accent is a marque of social background and can be used as means of cultural matching in elite occupations (Carter & Spence, 2014). Edinburgh in particular has fine distinctions of accent, which are easily classifiable to any native attuned to such differences. I was not the only one who noticed:

> It's just (pause). I went to a private school but grew up in Leith[3], So I got to see both sides of it. Having that Edinburgh working class accent, it really doesn't exist in [the incubator]. I've maybe heard 3 or 4 people who have that accent. Because Edinburgh has lots of private schools and is very middle class[4]. (Paul)

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3 Leith is a dockside area in Edinburgh with a history of deprivation. As an example, the film (and book) 'Trainspotting' addressed the pervasive drug culture in Leith during the late 1980s. Parts of Leith have been gentrified over the past 20 years but it remains a working class area.

4 As previously stated, by "very middle-class", Paul means very privileged. Private school is a term for a fee-paying school.

As Tina found, the dominance of privileged class Edinburgh accents was very noticeable to outsiders, yet those with foreign accents could fit in more easily than those with local, working-class accents:

> Something I would pick out and maybe that's because I'm from Glasgow, but everyone speaks really nice. I would say even foreign people who have come to speak here all speak really nice. They're all educated either through self-education or university. I think the characteristics are all very similar, even though there's introverts and extroverts. (Tina)

By mentioning Glasgow, Tina refers to the common acceptance in Scotland that Glasgow is significantly more working-class than Edinburgh (e.g. Watt & Ecob, 1992). We discussed the differences between the cities, but in her opinion of foreign people, Tina shows how a privileged habitus from another country more easily fits with the Codebase habitus than her own, working-class habitus.

4.3.2 Manners and Competition

Manners may be difficult to classify, but the manners of a privileged class were clear through the multitude of interactions throughout the ethnography. They were typified by a quiet deference and lack of ostentatiousness, but it was more clearly observed through emergent social rules. For instance, in the open plan working spaces, people were very reluctant to disturb others by taking phonecalls and would typically go outside to talk, despite it being a place where conversations were permitted. As an American, Jill identified this protocol as being typically British:

> Well that's a cultural thing. An American might. I've been living here for 18 years and have been acclimatised to the British culture. But I think if someone were being consistently loud [by taking phonecalls], an individual might say something diplomatically. But I suppose it would be passive aggressive behaviour to say something to the staff about it. And they could send something round or put up a sign or something. (Jill)

For Jill, the difference was due to national culture, but my view as an ethnographer attuned to local classed habitus was that the practice emerged from classed norms. Her description of prospective social disciplining reveals the social maintenance of norms.

These taken-for-granted manners can be juxtaposed with entrepreneurial imperatives. We may firstly consider that when taking phonecalls outside, they are giving precedence to local social norms over their immediate business needs. The choice becomes more obvious when the entrepreneurs describe their view of entrepreneurship as 'lively…chaotic…loud…argumentative' (David), adjectives that seemed out of place in this rather genteel, quiet community.

As an extension of considerate manners, there was an explicit rule in the incubator, enforced only through social agreement, that companies should not poach staff from one another. Many people contested this rule when I asked about it, respecting the principle of competition, yet when I asked senior members of companies about the rule, those who would be responsible for implementing it, there was widespread acceptance. Alistair, a CEO, explains how the rule treads the line between a competitive, individualistic culture and a manners-based community:

> Alistair: 'Well they've kind of got this unwritten rule. I would never stop an employee going to another company if they thought that was right. I don't think that's very human rights [sic]. I think there's a way it could be acceptable and not cold-hearted recruitment by poaching deliberately.'
>
> Researcher: 'Is there a difference between poaching within [Codebase] and poaching from another startup in Edinburgh?'
>
> Alistair: 'I guess not really. In practice it's the same thing. I guess it's when you're poaching from startups then that individual can be really critical to

them and poaching them can cause a lot of damage. But I guess you have this community where people recognise each other so you can see the same person working for another company. So if you didn't leave amicably that could be quite awkward. So that could have an impact on poaching.'

In his closing remarks, Alistair clearly shows that he is willing to compromise on recruitment to his own company in order to avoid a socially awkward situation with those whom he considers to be his social peers. He is expressing the power of this created occupational community, which uses implicit rules and conventions to influence individual's views of the appropriate habitus. This is a clear appeal to the norms of social capital. As part of a privileged class, the entrepreneurs are replicating the way that traditional occupations in the city develop common understandings to ensure conformity and primacy of the community over the individual. In short, and in contrast to the supposed impetus of entrepreneurship, the community makes sure that people want to 'fit in' more than they are willing to 'stick out' (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009).

4.3.3 Bodily Bearing

Distinctions of dress and bodily bearing were subtly and heterogeneously shown in this incubator, but more noticeable was the absence of a working-class aesthetic. Whilst previously working in another organization, I had become familiar with this aesthetic, particularly the social importance of wearing tracksuits as everyday wear. In the UK, tracksuits, as a specific form of leisure wear, have cultural links with the working class and this form of dress is particularly linked to deprivation and social exclusion (Jones, 2016). However, I did not see this during thirty-six months of ethnography. Tina, our interviewee from Glasgow, tried to explain how a person's bodily appearance and actions marked them out as not fitting in:

I think you could just...by looking at him…he looked a wee bit rough. How would you say? I don't know. You noticed him. A wee bit like he was a drunk. But in a. Just even in his body. And because of his brain he's not got confidence, the way he was acting. [Codebase] is very middle class. Very. So that's it, he was very, very, very working class. Yeah I would say. (Tina)

5. Discussion

5.1 Habitus as a Selection Criterion

This incubator does not demonstrate entrepreneurship as a 'great leveller' (Martinez Dy et al., 2018), and aesthetics of the underprivileged were almost entirely absent from the site. However, neither was the site a direct replication of commonly understood entrepreneurial aesthetics and identity (e.g. Warren & Anderson, 2009). The first contribution of this paper is identifying the habitus which emerged through their daily lived experience. The local, privileged habitus remains durable in the incubator whilst an entrepreneurial habitus, as derived from Silicon Valley, is incorporated around it. To understand this process, we may first consider the entry criteria. As the founding team of Codebase met through a shared social space, which had its own tastes and aesthetics, they drew upon both social and embodied cultural capitals when creating their team. When they subsequently created vague rules of entry around homophily of habitus, they started to use their own habitus as a 'matchmaker' (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 239) through selection criteria, which then created a social milieu in which a collective habitus conducive to their own could be developed. This cultural matching has also been examined in established elite occupations where recruiters look for cultural similarity so entrants can 'fit in' to the team, as a quality more important to the organisation than individual expertise for the role (Rivera, 2012, 2015). Millar (2021) suggested that recruiters to elite institutions, whilst claiming to innocently seek a generalised fit, were actually powerful agents of class exclusion. Although Codebase may also claim to be simply building a

coherent community for this nascent industry, these findings show pressures of exclusion through homophily. In this role, the founding team are inadvertently acting as 'hyper-agents' by embedding inequalities through several dimensions of social and cultural capital (Maclean et al., 2014; Maclean, Harvey, & Kling, 2017).

5.2 The Durable Primary Habitus

When traditional industries are revealed to exhibit a privileged habitus, we may consider that as hysteresis (Kerr & Robinson, 2012; Spence et al., 2017) or as the co-evolution of privileged habitus and social structures. In contrast, Codebase demonstrates the durability of the original habitus in the construction of a new industry. The taste dimension of habitus imposes itself within the incubator so that that 'through the systematic "choices" it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 61). In this idea, the habitus 'acts' to make the aesthetics of entrepreneurship, as locally defined in the incubator, familiar to the privileged class. Entrepreneurship then becomes inclusive for them in a similar way that elite occupations have been in the past.

It is important, when discussing habitus in this manner, not to lose sight of it as existing in the unconscious and between structure and agency (Bourdieu, 2010) and limit our view of it as something subject to conscious change. Nevertheless our use of the concept accepts that 'habitus change constantly in response to new experiences' (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 161) in their conversation between their original habitus and their entrepreneurial aspiration. Habitus becomes part of a strategic change calculation (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53) and has itself a generative

capacity (Skeggs, 2004; Stahl et al., 2021) to reauthor their identities (Ybema et al., 2015). Taste and ethics both act between conscious and unconscious as the entrepreneurs adopt their corporeal tastes, or make their ethical claims, as the taken-for-granted way.

Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs are faced with a paradox. Whilst they may retain an original habitus, they need to somehow adopt an entrepreneurial aesthetic that rests upon some very different assumptions. Direct comparisons between the two habitus may be challenging to reconcile, particularly concerning the different values placed on money or competition. Empirically, as Paul described so aptly, the privileged habitus pervades the social space, always there and simply taken for granted. It is the corporeal parts of the habitus, the tastes in food and drink and bodily manners, that are particularly durable because 'the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste' (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 188) and 'what is learned by the body is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 73). Their privileged class's need for rarity and elevation above necessity (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 182) or restraint and reserve (ibid., p. 171) gains primacy in this place. As a result, the habitus that develops in the incubator maps neatly to their original, privileged habitus and class and 'cultural reproduction serves as a source of continuity and distinctiveness' (Maclean et al., 2007, p. 547). Despite the changing nature of class (Savage, 2015), the privileged class imposes itself upon the development of these new organisations and new organisational forms (Steyaert, 2007a).

Elements of an entrepreneurial habitus that are contradictory to the original habitus are actively rejected through an ethical stance. This is most clearly seen through rejecting the 'Darwinian' pursuit of wealth in favour of more socially-

minded entrepreneurship (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). It is typical in entrepreneurship to adopt an ethical mode of that works by enhancing the capacity of individuals to operate equally in the market (Harvey et al., 2021), but the entrepreneurs in this study has a more expansive view of ethics. Ethics were invoked when the entrepreneurs had to negotiate between 'privileged class' manners and 'entrepreneurial' competition. The entrepreneurs use ethics (Clarke & Holt, 2010) to frame competition as immoral, whilst they use tastes to favour maintaining common understandings of manners. Ethics therefore has a critical role in creating this new habitus, where it is used to negotiate between contradictory claims of the original and secondary habitus.

Hobbies were an example of where the habitus did not have to choose between an original and secondary habitus. Two very different hobbies may co-exist within one consolidated habitus because, in practice, they are separated in time. One may golf on Saturday and surf on Sunday, but it is perhaps more difficult to build a coherent identity with two opposing views on the value of money. A selectively omnivorous cultural consumption (Lizardo & Skiles, 2012) that avoids direct contradiction of the original habitus is a way by which the entrepreneurs can coherently span both worlds. We may further note that whilst hobbies allowed them to span between their privileged and entrepreneurial habitus, they made little attempt to span between privileged and underprivileged habitus. For instance, there was little appetite to drink both high-quality coffee and another low-quality hot beverage, nor was there much interest in soccer despite it having moved beyond its working-class roots. The 'strategic change calculation' of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53) is one of entwining privileged and entrepreneurial habitus, but the project largely avoids the underprivileged.

It is also worth recognising the local foundations of this appropriation of entrepreneurship by the privileged class. Entrepreneurship can have regionally-specific characteristics (Gill & Larson, 2014), but this analysis of bodily habitus adds a depth to that proposition. The nature of entrepreneurship may be specific to a region, but it is also specific to class within that region and the two interact because local knowledge is critical to this latter interpretation. As Jill and Gwen both showed, the emergence of social norms can differ between nations, yet my own knowledge as a native ethnographer helped identify the more micro dimension of class exclusions. Entrepreneurship, as it is being created locally, can therefore take on boundaries of inclusion that are only appreciated by those conversant with the locally-defined privileged habitus. Similarly, only the local underprivileged class may understand local entrepreneurship as an exclusionary occupation because they recognize the habitus as being class-based. As demonstrated through accents, those from elsewhere may be able to transcend class divides and be perceived by the community as easily 'fitting in' (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). Conversely, as seen through manners, they can read class divisions as geographic divisions and have a self-perception that they 'stick out' (ibid.), which can lead them, in this case Jill, to 'acclimatize' their manners and adjust their secondary habitus so they fit in more easily.

5.3 Entrepreneurship Reimagined

Their use of tastes in the original habitus may be a form of embodied cultural capital (Spence et al., 2017), but pertinent to this study is that there is little evidence of it being used to convert to economic capital. Indeed, this was barely seen to be the purpose of entrepreneurship. This leads us to question what entrepreneurship has become in this context. I have established that an incubator can provide a space whereby entrepreneurship can become conducive to the privileged classes, but without wealth creation as a fundamental imperative

of entrepreneurship (Pret et al., 2016) we are left attempting to understand the purpose of this classed interaction.

Organisation theory can help guide our understanding. In elite occupations, there can be a familiar desire for homophily in institutions through morality and habitus (Cook et al., 2012), hobbies and bodily presentation (Rivera, 2012), and dress and speech (Ashley, 2010). In these circumstances, the privileged class have an imperative to 'disavow a rigged game' (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013) so they can lay claim their own successes, rather be denied their agency through claims of benefitting from structural privilege. Friedman et al. (2021) found that privileged people could claim this agency by re-imagining their origin stories as being less privileged than they were, which allowed them to construct narratives of a meritocratic progression from claimed humble origins to their successful presents.

The entrepreneurs in this study were faced with a similar dilemma of trying to address their structural privilege and claim agency, but instead of doing it by reworking their origin stories, they re-imagined their destination story. They rejected the idea of their form of entrepreneurship as being a capitalist pursuit and appropriated narratives of social entrepreneurship to suggest that their occupation was about helping society, despite the sometimes implausibility of those claims. This reworking also accesses entrepreneurship's mythology of heroism (Ogbor, 2000), albeit reframed from capitalist egocentrism to philanthropy.

Entrepreneurship in this local context was then juxtaposed to the surrounding corporates, which were considered to be unethical capitalists. The entrepreneurs could use that contrast to portray themselves as ethical relative to the local alternative, and also agentic because they had accessed the entrepreneurship-

as-emancipation narratives (Rindova et al., 2009) and freed themselves from the assumed structures of corporate life. As with Friedman et al. (2021), they are making claims on their presents by comparing themselves relative to their peers. Yet in contrast to that study, the entrepreneurs are not addressing their pasts nor are they overtly denying their privileged backgrounds. Instead, ethics are being used to negotiate a movement of their stories from the effects of privileged origins, with its structural and unethical dimensions that would have delivered them a corporate life, to entrepreneurship, with its emancipatory, heroic and agentic dimensions. Adopting ethics as 'the only title which gives a right to every privilege' (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 353) gives these entrepreneurs the 'right' of imagining away the privileges of their original class.

The other aspect to using ethics in this way is that they are not obviously structural. Unlike economic or social capital, ethics are not always commonly assumed to be classed, so their use can fit comfortably in this reimagining of class. However, this is not the full story. Ethics here are being expressed as noblesse oblige (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 16) which is part of the privileged class habitus, particularly through its origins in that class's freedom from economic necessity. In this moral dimension to their habitus (O'Mahoney, 2007) their ethics refer to 'actors' sensuous dispositions which they absorb largely subconsciously through socialization' (Sayer, 2005, p. 43). By being part of habitus, ethics are very much an unconscious expression of their privileged upbringing, albeit that they are being yielded as part of a strategic action. Using the ethics of a privileged class in this apparently meritocratic project has a sense of the implausible in a similar way that re-working origin stories implausibly denied the realities of their upbringing (Friedman et al., 2021). Ethics, as realized through philanthropy, can even perpetuate inequalities (Maclean et al., 2021), giving further potential for implausibility. What makes this account particularly interesting is that the entrepreneurs are selecting the philanthropic and heroic

mythologies of entrepreneurship to move away from the effects of structure, yet by doing it through habitus they can keep its workings and inherent implausibility at a pre-reflexive arm's length. Taste, of course, allows them to retain the aesthetics of their original habitus and keep this transition familiar.

6. Conclusions

This paper proposes entrepreneurship as a project of class renegotiation, where privileged people may use its assumptions of meritocracy to jettison notions of the effects of their own privilege. Entrepreneurship in the local context is appropriated by the privileged class through habitus so that this class-based appropriation, with its attendant social closure, can remain in the background, unnoticed and even denied. Especially through its visual and aural dimensions, habitus is proposed as being both durable and powerful in in changing entrepreneurship from being primarily an economic endeavour to being a form of class identity project.

This use of entrepreneurship contradicts assumptions of its emancipatory effects (Zahra & Wright, 2016) and gives cause to reconsider its unbridled promotion. Governments looking to entrepreneurship as a source of economic growth and social mobility (Isenberg, 2010) may wish to more closely consider the practices of this local entrepreneurship. Given that entrepreneurship always carries a promise of the future, there is always potential for storytelling of that future to mask the lived realities of the present, and this paper asserts a way in which the practices of entrepreneurship are divergent from its imaginings. I also suggest that to reveal this divergence, we must attend to the micro dimensions of habitus, including the visual and aural.

We may also consider the specificity of this study to entrepreneurship. As an ill-defined signifier (Jones & Spicer, 2005), entrepreneurship can be interpreted by its practitioners in many ways which, together with its heavily aesthetic mode (Elias et al., 2018), may lend itself to an appropriation through tastes. Similarly, its future orientation and imagined nature (Steyaert, 2007a) may be suitable for an ethical rendering. However, we may also consider the observation that changes in the nature of occupations have historically changed class systems and relations (Savage, 2015) and this could be its modern incarnation. If entrepreneurship continues its move towards being a mainstream occupation, it may be worth recognizing that here it is being used to disguise privilege in a way that replaces traditional, capital-based class systems and, given its freedom from visible wealth, works more subtly than parallel processes in established institutions. As the career landscape moves away from traditional occupations, future research may like to consider how new forms of class are being created. Fruitful areas may include those that include projects of imagination and self-definition where economics is not a primary objective. Alternatively, it may be useful to explore the relationship between economics and ethics in the emergences of these class boundaries.

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Chapter 3: Paper 2. Buildings as power: encouraging entrepreneurship by space and movement

Abstract

Despite a comprehensive scholarship on the social production of organizational spaces, spatial studies of entrepreneurship incubators have been mostly confined to measuring the effects of reducing distance between actors. Through a thirty-six-month ethnography, I apply the space-as-power relations perspective developed in organisation theory to understand a single incubator as a socially produced space. In contrast to most incubator studies, I analyse different types of space within the building to reveal processes of fixing, enticement and movement which reflect the power relations immanent in spatial arrangements and material of the incubator. The study contributes to organisation theory by proposing space as a governance model that allows for individualized processes. It also contributes to entrepreneurship theory by showing how space affects the progression of entrepreneurs within an incubator.

1. Introduction

As a social and economic imperative of governments, the use of buildings to house and encourage entrepreneurship has a history dating back to 1959 (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2014). Studies of entrepreneurship tend to borrow from theory developed in related fields (Leitch & Harrison, 2016), yet it has not adopted the spatial turn as vigorously as elsewhere in social sciences, despite the various spatial metaphors used, including incubator, hub, park and others. I therefore borrow from the sibling field of organisation theory to understand buildings as agentic, socially created spaces (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004) which can be manifestations of power relations (Taylor & Spicer, 2007) and stimulate behaviours amongst inhabitants. However, in considering power, I recognize that we still have little understanding of how entrepreneurs progress within incubators (Dai, 2011) and attend to the distinctive power relations within those buildings to suggest them as worthy of their own theorization. The study comes at a time when work-at-home practices during covid-19 has led to widespread questioning of the value of buildings to organizations (Thomas et al., 2020), and follows an earlier trend in entrepreneurship of questioning and even abandoning the use of buildings to house start-up companies (Pauwels et al., 2016). This move in entrepreneurship theory is despite a recognised lack of theory and understanding of such structures (Hackett & Dilts, 2004).

Reconsidering incubators through a spatial ontology orients us towards power relations embedded within, and created by, physical barriers. I depart from the dominant spatial consideration of incubators by attending to the micro and material (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Siebert et al., 2017) within the incubator, guided by the research question: what are the spatial processes within an incubator that affect entrepreneurs?

The paper starts with a selected overview of the significant scholarship on space in organisation studies, orientated around the power relations immanent at different scales of a building. I finish the section drawing from work on entrepreneurial activity within established organizations to show how different spaces can be created in a building to encourage creativity and newness. I then juxtapose entrepreneurship theory's treatment of spaces for the creation of new entrepreneurial firms, demonstrating areas in which this study can progress and contribute to our understanding of incubators. I discuss the methods of study as an ethnography conducted as participant-observer in a single incubator in Edinburgh, UK for two days per week for thirty-six months, indicating how this social constructionist approach progressed from initial induction to an abductive study. I present the findings as people within the incubator understood them: first as a whole building, then as discreet spaces within the building and I finally analyse the findings which indicate an orchestration of movement between the different spaces. By describing the role of co-locations, routes, symbols and materials in the incubator, I develop theory of how incubators can use a building to demonstrate entrepreneurship and define success amongst its tenant firms, using space as power to inculcate an understanding of entrepreneurship whilst still allowing for individualised firm processes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Space in Organization Theory

Addressing the tendency to treat space as an inert container of organisational life, the spatial turn seeks to develop space as a distinct ontology. Following Henri Lefebvre's triadic description of the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991), the literature on the spaces of organisations can be categorized as either distance, as lived experience, or most commonly as the materialization of power relations; this despite Lefebvre's assertion that the ontology of space is as the complete triad (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Extending this argument is to recognise that the complete triad is immanent within all studied spaces, even when not made explicit in the analysis, which led to the call for more complete understanding of organizational spaces at different scales (ibid.).

Starting outside the organisation, Porter's cluster theory has long been influential in suggesting that similar firms can benefit from mutual competition when geographically proximate (Porter, 1998). Power relations in clusters is more evident in company towns where a central organisation affects aspects of the home life of its workers, or as in its modern reinvention, Silicon Valley, where the industry and not the firm assume primacy over lived experiences (English-Lueck, 2000). Home life can also encroach into work (Richardson & McKenna, 2014), and so we begin to understand that the spatial boundaries of an organisation can be contested through both power and lived experience. Even the building of an organisation in isolation can be imbued with meaning beyond simply a container (Berg & Kreiner, 1990), or can have its symbols appropriated for new organisational contexts (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2013; Liu & Grey, 2017).

However, much of the spatial turn in organisation theory has been applied to spaces within the organisation. Most commonly, Foucauldian disciplinary power and the metaphor of surveillance through the panopticon are invoked as spatial techniques of management. For instance, call centres combine individualised confinement with technologies of surveillance in an attempt to ensure homogeny of practice amongst employees (Bain & Taylor, 2000). However, these attempts of power by spatial design rest upon externally-derived understanding of the purpose of the space and so are subject to contestation as actors create spaces of resistance. For instance, by spatially referencing the role of performer and audience in a theatre, semi-circular medical teaching spaces created a power differential between teacher on the 'stage' (performer) and student (audience) which fixed both student and teacher in place and allowed for a power differential to be created (Markus, 1993, pp. 229-243). In Lefebvrian terms, we can surmise that the lived experience of a designed space can rest upon shared mental models derived externally to that space.

In contrast to power through spatial fixing, the neoliberal movement created the open plan office, which was thought to reduce power differentials and encourage interaction and the movement of knowledge (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Further micro manifestations were based around 'interaction-promoting facilities' (Allen, 1984) where communal facilities such as restrooms and watercoolers were positioned to encourage this mixing of people, whilst offices were redesigned to become both open plan (Kampschroer & Heerwagen, 2005) and flexible workspaces (van Der Voordt, 2004). Attention was paid to how objects were arranged in relation to the 'gaze' of audiences (Höllerer et al., 2013) and how 'design gestures' can connect different types of designed space (Yannow, 2006). Nevertheless, such spatial design often fail to account for the power of fluidity and change. If employees find their individual identities threatened (Elsbach, 2003), they can start to impose their own hierarchies in such spaces (Hirst,

2011), leading to the creation of heterogeneous, socially-created spaces within apparently homogeneously designed open spaces. In considering entrepreneurship as an activity within organisations, Daniel Hjorth used Foucault's concept of heterotropia to describe these 'other' spaces as being free of managerialism to allow for play, creativity and the creation of newness within organisations (Hjorth, 2004, 2005). A building which seeks to adopt such spaces and progress from 'planning a controllable and predictable development [as] the driving force' to impose both 'predictability and randomness', 'order and chaos' might be termed a 'generative building' (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). These recognitions of different types of space within buildings addresses the call for a multi-scalar approach to spatial studies (Taylor & Spicer, 2007), but also treats organisations as processes. Process thinking orientates our understanding towards absorbing fluidity and spatially it has been conceived as 'spacing', which points the understanding of organizational space towards its material, embodied, affective and minor configurations (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012).

2.2 Space in Entrepreneurship Theory

Although process studies have been applied to entrepreneurship in organizational settings (Hjorth et al., 2015; Hjorth et al., 2018), processual thinking has rarely been applied to spaces for the creation of new entrepreneurial firms, nor has it adopted spatial thinking as strongly as organization theory. The spatial dimension is largely driven by governments' social and economic imperative to encourage entrepreneurship within their countries (Audretsch et al., 2017) and, unsurprisingly, has been heavily influenced by Porter's cluster theory (Porter, 1998). This manifests at the State, regional and city scales giving rise to a literature on geographic agglomeration of entrepreneurs the most recent of which, entrepreneurship ecosystems, departs from Porter by replacing

competition with cooperation as the source of mutual value (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). One of the unresolved issues of this literature is the extent to which they reflect power relations as a deliberate attempt to encourage the prevalence and quality of entrepreneurship within boundaries, or the extent to which they are simply metaphors for emergent socio-spatial phenomena. The literature on neighbourhood entrepreneurship has generally adopted the latter approach (Lange, 2011; Trettin & Welter, 2011; Welter & Trettin, 2006; Welter et al., 2008), recognising entrepreneurship as an everyday, socially-embedded activity (Steyaert & Katz, 2004).

Buildings as sites of entrepreneurship have been given specific attention by scholars as defined entities which aim to encourage entrepreneurship. When considering entrepreneurship as an everyday experience, scholars often take advantage of defined boundaries to adopt a space-as-distance approach (Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Theodorakopoulos et al., 2014) and, unlike organisation theory, there tends to be much less interrogation of different types of spaces and fluidity within the building. The first part of this distance approach is to consider the building as a protective barrier to the outside within which start-up firms can receive resources, services and assistance (Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005), reflecting the early notion that as 'the universal purpose of an incubator is to increase the chances of a firm surviving its formative years' (Allen and Rahman, 1985). The boundaries both define the space and opens it up as a site of study. Although the effectiveness as protector remains unclear (Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Isenberg, 2010), with arguments that it shields firms from formative market forces (Cohen et al., 2019) and claims success only due to its ability to act as a selection device for excellence (Aernoudt, 2004; Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005), the barrier can be agentic as a site of shared credibility for nascent firms (Cooper et al., 2012; Hansen et al., 2000). Furthermore, the barrier affords the ability to not just select for individual potential, but also for firms that share the values and norms of the

incubator (Bøllingtoft, 2012) particularly for those dispositioned towards networking (Ebbers, 2014). Nevertheless, the barrier's agency is limited in this respect when tenant entrepreneurs frequently develop networks which extend beyond those defined bounds (Cantù, 2017), indicating a muted effect of boundedness.

When studies are set within the building, theory is often borrowed from that developed in open plan offices and co-working spaces (Butcher, 2018) to suggest that the primary role of placing new ventures together in a building is to reduce the geographic distance between them. This is thought to increase contact frequency, which allows for the development of shared values through narratives and sharing experiences (McAdam & McAdam, 2006) and provides access to networks for knowledge sharing and contact building (McAdam & Marlow, 2008). Reflecting the ability for buildings to invoke boundary selection policies, geographic proximity is not enough to promote knowledge sharing (Irving et al., 2019), but must be concomitant with social, cognitive and institutional proximities (Boschma, 2005; Cantù, 2017). However, excessive institutional proximity can reduce the willingness to interact (McAdam & Marlow, 2007; Schwartz & Hornych, 2008). These spaces have been described as 'leaderless communities' (Mitev et al., 2019) with an absence of top-down power (Bøllingtoft, 2012) and studies have mostly adopted a space-as-distance approach, whilst others have introduced a topology beyond simple measured distance. Suggesting at unintended processes of spatial individualization, companies can tend to stay within their offices and the mere provision of open spaces may not be enough to promote interactions (Chan & Lau, 2005). Similarly, different floors can act as a barrier to interaction (Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005), suggesting that the spatial design of incubators must be carefully considered beyond simply as a container which reduces proximity (Assenza, 2015). Theory adopting a space-as-distance approach leaves us with an

inadequate understanding of socio-material processes in incubators and lacks a form of 'mediating instrument' that could bring actors together in a joint endeavour (Jeacle & Carter, 2012).

This identified need is often addressed by considering power relations within the incubator, yet studies tend to treat them as social processes within a spatial container, rather than adopting an explicitly spatial or material ontology. Incubator management is described as the mediator of knowledge spillovers between either: startup firms and other actors within the proximal network (Cantù, 2017); or between networks where learning is 'shared understanding of the overall objectives of their community' (Peters et al., 2004); or as the broker of dyadic relationships between firms within the incubator (Butcher, 2018); or even between firms inside the incubator and external actors (Goswami et al., 2018). More generally, mediators can help adapt global models for local contexts (e.g Yang et al., 2021). However, the role of the incubator as an intermediary (Bergek & Norrman, 2008) could inhibit networking within an incubator (Cooper et al., 2012) leading back to the original suggestion that knowledge was better shared through increasing spatial proximity (Rubin et al., 2015).

Theorising of incubators further accepts power relations when considering ownership. Addressing the finding that the priority of an incubator is dependent on its ownership (McAdam & McAdam, 2006), Grimaldi and Grandi (2005) classified incubators into either Model 1, which were publicly owned and provided tangible assets, or Model 2, which were privately owned and provided intangible assets, particularly funding, knowledge and networking. The effectiveness of Model 1 incubators to both encourage entrepreneurship and confer credibility has been questioned, not least because of the nature of their public ownership encourages underreporting of failures and over-reporting of successes (Bearse,

1998), leading to the view that technology incubators in particular should be privately run (Tamásy, 2007) so that the setting is growth-orientated. Some incubator management take equity within tenant firms, allowing them to exert control by defining milestones and so affect the firm's values and its intended outcomes (Baraldi & Ingemansson Havenvid, 2016).

A further distinction between incubator models is that spaces of entrepreneurship designed to serve a central organization or platform can be subject to unity and power from those sources (Jacobides et al., 2018), whilst spaces for individual technology firms must account for their need to continually renegotiate with individualised imagined futures in disparate markets in a process termed 'effectuation' (Sarasvathy, 2001). Spaces for technology firms recognise that the common value is a sharing of business models, rather than assets (Autio et al., 2018) and it is perhaps unsurprising that Foucauldian power is rare in such incubators with little source of central control and with few shared goals or assets. The inappropriateness of this common approach to technology incubators could possibly explain the inclination towards a space-as-distance stance.

Our understanding of relational space within incubators, therefore, falls short of the progress which organisation scholars have made, and yet deserves particular attention due to the very different power relations between centrally-organising firms with tendencies towards managerialism, and incubators containing firms pursuing individualised processes of effectuation. Treatment of power within incubators has rarely been spatially-orientated, focussing more on the effect of governance structures. Indeed the under-theorising of space as power relations has manifest in a rejection of the spatial, leading to a rise in virtual incubators (Dai, 2011) and an assertion that buildings are no longer necessary for

incubators (Korreck, 2018). This spatial ambiguity continues in accelerators as the most recent incarnation of incubators (Pauwels et al., 2016), which are defined as 'a fixed-term, cohort-based program for startups, including mentorship and/or educational components, that culminates in a graduation event' (Cohen et al., 2019). They are programs which do not necessarily provide working spaces and which create hierarchical power relations by offering pre-seed equity investment, which permits them to influence the objectives of the firm (Pauwels et al., 2016). We are therefore left with an ambiguous understanding of space-as-distance within an incubator, a lack of consideration of space-as-power and few studies which consider lived experience, leading to the claim that 'little progress has been made toward understanding how incubatees develop within the incubator' (Dai, 2012) and furthermore that 'there is a failure to understand the dynamic nature [of incubators] as well as that of the companies located in them' (Phan et al., 2005). Accepting organization theory's encouragement to adopt processual thinking (Hjorth et al., 2015) and consider the 'material, embodied, affective and minor configurations of space' (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012), we are led to the research question: what are the spatial processes within an incubator that affect entrepreneurs?

3. Methods

The use of ethnography to study incubators as social spaces is well established (Butcher, 2018; Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005; Steyaert, 2011b) as a way of addressing the multiplicity of spatial scales at which organizational spaces are produced (Taylor & Spicer, 2007) and 'bringing space back in' (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). Such research is studied on-site for extended periods and collects data in multiple ways, including observation, interview and texts, through an inductive, holistic and personalised approach (Angrosino, 2007) which 'combines

the detailed, experiential perspectives of multiple groups within a social unit by developing an overarching narrative through participant observation in these groups, to obtain a fragmented and integrated perspective on the social unit' (Moore, 2011). A spatial orientation draws the ethnography towards physical form and its three components: geometry; mass and surface; and optical phenomenon such as light and colour (Frankl, 1914 in Markus, 1993, p12 Frankl, 1914). I therefore considered the twin dimensions of power and movement across those three components which combine with function to 'give meanings about the world' (Markus, 1993, p. 11), allowing for the emergence of different lived experiences of the space (Lincoln et al., 2011).

3.1 Case Study Outline

Following other ethnographies on the effect of incubators on its tenants (Busch & Berkema, 2020), I selected the incubator as the unit of study and for analytical clarity, I chose one of being in a city without an established entrepreneurship ecosystem. Indeed the city, Edinburgh, UK, is best known as the legal and political capital of Scotland, with attendant tourist interest in its long history; as a site of arts festivals; and the home to a centuries-old financial services industry. The advantages of the ethnographer being an established member of a community (Giazitzoglu and Payne 2018) were evident when I returned to Edinburgh shortly before the study after a fifteen-year absence. Juxtaposed to the Calvinist risk aversion of traditional Edinburgh was an emerging narrative of technology entrepreneurship. Firstly evidenced by the recent emergence of two fast-growing technology companies, Skyscanner and Fan Duel, the epicentre of the city's ability to encourage new entrepreneurship was frequently being named as Codebase, a privately-held incubator occupying a single former government building in the center of the city.

Codebase is an organisation that curates new technology companies which are past the point of ideation and have a minimum viable product. It describes itself as 'the UK's largest tech incubator' (Codebase 2018) and has four tenanting options. Non-tenants and single entrepreneurs can access a hotdesking area for a daily charge; companies with fewer than five employees can use a co-working space; larger companies rent individual offices and the largest companies take up whole floors. The building has an events space at the entrance to the building, which is used for internal events as well as being rented by other organizations for Edinburgh-wide events. The rest of the building is rented by unrelated organizations.

3.2 Data sources

To become a participant observer, I gained employment in a tenant company for two days per week during the full thirty-six month study. The employing software firm was resident in a single office on the ground floor and entrance to daily work was past the reception and through the co-working space. Early stages of the ethnography concurred with Chan and Lau (2005) that tenants often confine themselves to offices, so the ethnography was changed to include attendance at community events and periods as participant-observer in the open plan hotdesking area. The observation provided data on the three form components of geometry, surface and optical phenomenon, particularly on what was visually revealed to people in different locations, but it also included perspectives on aural experiences. Furthermore, the movement of people could be observed, allowing for reflection on their changing experiences *during* the movement (Deleuze, 1993). The nature of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming (Hjorth, 2014) allowed me to assume full 'insider' status as a new and becoming tenant, providing both access to interviewees and the ability to fully participate in

community praxis, which also included social events, public celebrations of firm successes, and networking and knowledge transfer events involving both Codebase residents and members of the surrounding community. I also attended a weekly yoga class within Codebase and, in latter stages, ran a book club. A total of twenty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted across different resident types so that a holistic account of the space could be generated: founder entrepreneurs (nine); employees (seven); incubator management (five); service providers (four). Questions were informed by observations and addressed the interviewees interpretations of space and their lived experience and practices. Interviews were initially selected based on people I met during ethnography and the various community events became a particularly useful source. Another useful source was Codebase management, which allowed me to understand intention behind the designed space and also gather observations of patterns. Finally, I found willing interviewees during daily ethnography, meeting people during lunch and introducing myself to other companies on my floor. With some interviewees, I managed to get referrals to others in the company, which helped provide a more rounded view across the different types of residents.

3.3 Analytical process

The extended period of 'dwelling' in the data (Welch et al., 2010) informed the interpretations of the lived data (Yannow, 2006) and allowed a continual iteration between data collection and theorizing. All observations and reflections were noted in a research diary, which informed both the interview questions and the subsequent participation-observation. The aim was to gradually join in a conversation with and about the form and function of the space, building an ethnographic account which accepted inclusion of the author (Ingold, 2014) and develop a thick description (Fenn & Geertz, 1974). The process therefore

included a dialogic between emergent theorizing and participant reflections on that theory, and the coding of that theory in particular (Sangasubana, 2011). Such was the ease of access which being a becoming-participant provided that I was able to clarify and follow up with interviewees frequently. The incubator management in particular provided a rich source of inspiration as they had conceptualized their own intentions behind the space and so provided one apex of Lefebvre's triad from which theory could be developed (Lefebvre, 1991). However, this perspective was very different to my colleagues in our firm's office and it became clear that residents were having very different experiences in different spaces. The analysis then began to segregate by space type, and then by the different uses of space. The final phase was to consider how these different types of spaces were connected. To maintain the benefit of 'outsider' perspective, I consulted two academic colleagues every fortnight and discussed the interaction between data and nascent theorizing. The data therefore moved between people, their movement and the material and this data was continually being interpreted, re-presented to the field and then re-interpreted in what amounted to a co-development of the understanding of the space. This approach attends to the 'ontological politics' of entrepreneurship ethnographies (Steyaert, 2011b) by stimulating the imagination of the incubator tenants (Hjorth, 2011) and engaging with the moves, sensations and affects of the space (Thrift & Benzer, 2008) in order to collect and analyze data.

4. Findings

4.1 The Space

When discussing the incubator in spatial terms with interviewees, the central hotdesking area was most commonly indicated as the 'hub' of the incubator. Figure 1 represents this space, showing it to be an open area with multiple uses: hotdesking for single entrepreneurs starting their firms; a café area for use by the entire incubator; some soft seating for socializing or meetings; and a ping pong table. This area is situated near the entrance to the building and is the main thoroughfare to the rest of the incubator. Adjacent to this mixed hotdesking area is coworking (for firms of two to six people); the reception area; a dedicated events space; and what was known as the floor D corridor, which housed the incubator management offices, some smaller tenant firm offices (including my own). It also acted as the main corridor to the rest of the incubator.
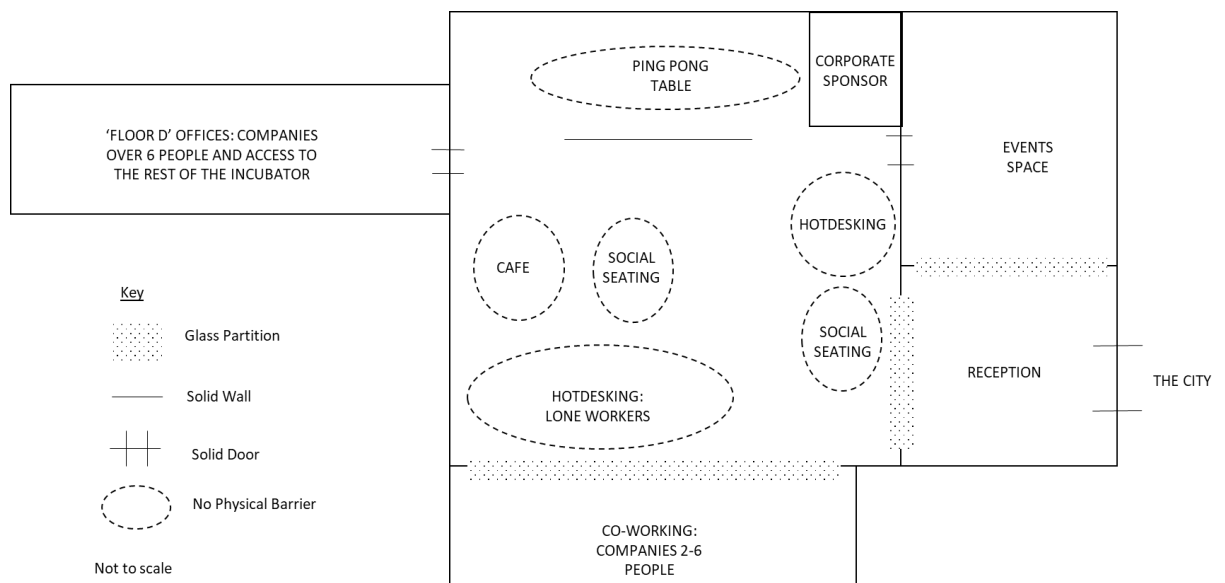
Figure 2: a representation of the 'hub' of Codebase

From the Floor D corridor, there is access to the rest of the incubator, which includes some firms in small offices, up to firms large enough to occupy whole floors. The walls in the building were moveable, so some of the larger firms

increased their office sizes during the time of the study. The size of the largest firm varied but was approximately forty people at which point one of those CEOs admitted in conversation that 'we're probably not a startup anymore'.

4.2 Agentic Boundaries

The analysis revealed that the incubator was not the open, free-flowing and hierarchical space of entrepreneurship theory, so the challenge of analysis was to understand and theorize the barriers and fluidity of the building. In agreement with much of entrepreneurship literature on incubators, the building separates the entrepreneur from the non-entrepreneur and becomes imbued with meaning:

> I tend to actually say I work in Codebase. It's a handy
> brand actually because I could never explain what it is that I do.
> (Chandler)

Figure 3: the exterior of Codebase, juxtaposing the re-use of a brutalist former government building with the 12th century castle (signposted top left).

In agreement with other studies (Bøllingtoft, 2012; Ebbers, 2014), the incubator uses its boundary to select both for high-potential companies, but also for those who will help build a community:

We had one company come in to meet us in person. A big company thirty or forty people. And they would have been the perfect, perfect company. Software product, well-funded with a space just the right size for them. Met the CEO and we decided within ten seconds we weren't going to give them the space.

Because they came in and said "hi" and we said "hi thanks for coming into Codebase today. Do you know about what we do?" And he said, "No no, just show me the space". And we said, "We are more than just space, we are a landlord fundamentally, but we've got the huge value of the community here".

And he was like "No, no just show me the space." It's just like "Well ok I'll show you the space but it's a waste of time because you're not getting it".

It's quite good. People think in that situation that we're trying to sell the space to them, but they're selling to us. (Oscar)

This quote demonstrates how powerfully these selection criteria are applied, with the final sentence indicating a contestation between the applicant firm's understanding of externally-derived rules of the space (as landlord) and the rules to which the incubator management wish to subscribe (as selective community curator). The management uses the boundary to impose this understanding and invoke the desired externally-referent power relation in a similar way to Foucauldian institutions (Foucault, 1977). Interestingly, the selection is total, with no scope for any company to state the intention to avoid engaging in a community as 'a sense of belonging together' (Weber, 1978). This is the first way in which the incubator boundary acts: as a dominant power to ensure that every entrant company is value-orientated towards community and that every other company it encounters is similarly orientated.

The power affordances of the boundary were mobilised from acting as a separator to acting as protection from an external threat. The founder of the incubator attempted to create a sense of solidarity, frequently using the phrase 'circling the wagons', both in interview and in public speaking, to give this sense that the companies had something worth protecting *from*. Incubators often invoke the protective metaphor against the threat of market forces, but here the threat is identified as being locally situated in the city and is identified as being various sources of bad advice, unscrupulous investors seeking excess equity and poorly performing services, often state-sponsored. The reception staff talked of 'assessing' service providers as they arrived at the incubator to determine whether they were suitable, normally on the basis of trust. The protective role of

the physical boundary is therefore not orientated against concepts such as a market but is against physically realised threats: real people coming to the door with nefarious intentions. Naturally, not all residents agreed that outside was quite so threatening but even for them the metaphor portrays the door to the building as a meaningful boundary between two categories of work: that of inside (entrepreneur) and outside (non-entrepreneur).

The findings start to progress from what we understand of incubators when the internal workings of the building were analysed. Prior to the study, the incubator had occupied only one floor of the building and accounts of that time suggest the non-hierarchical, serendipitous interactions of open offices:

> It was great when they got this space on one floor. And you got in the lift and then it would be reception and you'd have a good chat. And there was the café and you'd bump into everybody. (Curtis)

This arrangement, if it was ever reflected in the lived experience of tenants, disappeared as they expanded beyond one floor:

> Then we were on floor L we didn't really [continue to mix]. We'd come in the other entrance and go up [to our individual offices]. There wasn't the same heart to it. (Curtis)

Although this study is not primarily longitudinal, this historical data is included to demonstrate the realities of scale: that the spatial effects presented in this study were necessary to *re*-create what had been inherent in smaller scales of reducing geographic proximity and so points us towards the possibility of different spatial dynamics within large, multi-floor incubators than small incubators characterised by a network of personal relationships.

4.3 Materials as Obscuration

As the incubator expanded, firms started to become fixed in different spaces through the building. This was still strongly in evidence during this study, with little mixing between firms when they were isolated within their own offices. Even in communal dining spaces there was little interaction between firms, demonstrating that despite the design of the boundary to select for communitarian residents, the physical barriers were effective inhibitors of interaction (Assenza, 2015). The barriers between residents acted to fix, but they also created an unknown. The offices for larger companies were situated behind a security door where those in smaller companies in hotdesking or co-working could not access.

> And that's a second barrier those doors through there. We all know that's people who have got their teams now. Nobody goes through there…. It's maybe not intentional, but it's the layout of the building that…created that. (Tina)

The larger tenant firms therefore become an unknown to the smaller firms. Even those in individual offices had a sense of the unknown about other offices because often the only indication about each firm was a logo and perhaps a strapline, but little other information about the firm's activities or markets. The fixing and unknowns were not just by firm. The incubator ran google groups and slack communication channels, most of which were open, but the CEOs had their own group, as did CTOs, in which they could share experiences. These elite groups were closed to the rest of the residents of the building and as with the offices, their existence was known but their essence entirely obscured. The hard barriers therefore confer unknowing of the whole: the residents know that other companies exist but know little about them. We can see the concern that expansion of the incubator lead to a 'loss of heart' in the community. When the new companies become individualized, fixed and unknowing of the whole, then

from the perspective of the tenant companies the incubator becomes indistinguishable from any other landlord. Despite this apparent individualization, there was a pervasive narrative throughout the study that the incubator was filled with high-potential and high-performing companies. What lead to Codebase rediscovering its heart when it expanded across floors in the building?

Figure 4: Floor D corridor. The doors at the end of the corridor had key access, preventing small companies entering this space and seeing the range of companies. Even for those of us who were permitted access, the branding is all we saw of the companies and everything else was obscured from view.

4.4 Materials as Revelation

The Codebase management attempted to create 'a sense of progression everywhere' (Founder). Other than by reducing geographic distance to encourage networking (McAdam & Marlow, 2007), the incubator invited such a sense by the use of other spatial tactics. Although Codebase does have spaces and events for networking, they use the material of glass to create that understanding of progression by helping to reveal the unknowns which have been fixed. As one of the managers explained, the original intention had been to impose aesthetics of modernity and openness by having glass 'everywhere', but financial constraints meant this was only partially realised. Glass is frequently used inside buildings an aesthetic device, yet carries the potential of an 'oppressive, high surveillance environment' (Hirst, 2011). In Codebase, this glass allowed for the surveillance by the entrepreneurs of other spaces. For instance, at the entrance there is a dedicated events space where knowledge is exchanged through presentations and networking.

Figure 5 the reception area with the adjacent glass-fronted events space

The glass fronting to this space, together with an adjacent timetable board, has the effect that both visitors and residents are presented with a site of knowledge exchange and community as they enter the building. They can see through to the event because the glass reveals the unknown to them, and the fixing of the event by the solid boundaries allows that presentation to occur. Each morning of the ethnography, this spatial arrangement made me aware of the scale and variety of events taking place. Although others in the building may have been less alert, everyone seemed to be aware of the space as a site of knowledge about technology and business. The spatial effects were underpinned by practice, as driven by the incubator founder:

We have practically every decent tech event that happens in Scotland happens in that room over there. And that's very, very deliberate. And we spent years learning about how to do that right. So everyone talks about that stuff. (John)

The quote is layered with competition: the wording is not oriented around the pursuit of excellence as an abstract but is in relation to the rest of the country. The founder both establishes a hierarchy and places Codebase at the top, which is then visually symbolised to everyone entering the building. It is more than attempting to be the centre of excellence in Scotland: the glass demonstrates the status to both residents and visitors. Similarly, the co-working space is glass-fronted and abuts the hotdesking and café areas, where all entrants to the building must pass. Everyone in that space can see collaborative working as part of the meaning of the space and it is a demonstration of progression beyond the singular working of hotdesking. However, the glass as a presentational device, especially semi-obscured with brand, retains some sense of the obscured. As Tina's observation about barriers shows, glass partitions are still barriers. They still prevent movement. By combining obscuration and revelation, the glass partitions both define two different stages of entrepreneurship and allow people to see their future progression.

This combination of revelation and obscuration is also invoked through other spatial arrangements. The hotdesking area is in an open space shared with the café, some ad-hoc meeting spaces and a ping pong area. The open space has a multiplicity of uses through which entrants to the building must pass. Interviewees indicated the importance of the space when, after espousing the fantastic 'buzz' of Codebase, admitted that this claim derived primarily from their experience of this space which, in many cases, they only experienced for a few seconds' transit each day. It is worth considering how this space can exert such influence. Part of its affect is through the glass-fronted spaces in its

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surroundings, as discussed. However, within the space there are other representations:

> You've got people with their laptops out, their Macs out, and you're conscious that they are working away. So you are working as other people are working. Maybe talking. But you are aware that there are other people just working away just doing stuff. Yeah I suppose that it's a consciousness thing (Tom)

Tom worked for a company which occupied almost an entire floor of Codebase but chose to occasionally work in this open space because it helped them concentrate. In interview, they admitted ignorance of what these other people were working on, but the effect of the spatial arrangement is as a visual representation of the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunity and the activation of the entrepreneurial process (Davidsson, 2015).

The other representation is through the transmission of sound. As indicated in the quote above, when one sits in hotdesking, one is subject to several stimuli. Apart from the spaces of entrepreneuring, one is presented with spaces of play and of the home. There is a small café in the space with the sound of coffee being made, an artefact of start-up ecosystems as a symbol of delineation between work and play (Pfeilstetter, 2017). The café plays music across the open space and these sounds compete with the noise from the ping pong table, another start-up trope. The aural experience in that space becomes an imbrication of work, play and home where it ceases to simply be a place of work and becomes a place of being where one's work, play and home life merge into a becoming.

Figure 6: spaces occupied for hotdesking, the cafe and social spaces, with open space for the transmission of sound. Note the glass front to the coworking space in the background.

This aural experience, situated in the building's most important space, is enhanced by practice. The space adopts the home aesthetic of Anglo-American cafes and acts as a social meeting space in the same location as being a primary work meeting space. It was even common for job interviews to be conducted in that space next to friends talking about shared hobbies such as surfing or mountain biking. It is also the space where the incubator most explicitly demonstrates what is valued, and therefore what is to be valued amongst its firms. Celebrations of successes were often held in these spaces and everyone

in the building was invited. These demonstrations of success to other companies tended to be either obtaining investment or being acquired by another company and so these ceremonies help establish a communal definition of 'advancement' and 'progress' (Crosina, 2018). As a result of these uses, almost all interviewees identified it as the 'heart' of the incubator and were unwilling to define the space more specifically, even if they individually only used the space for one purpose.

4.5 Space in Motion

Codebase therefore spatially presents itself as a site of entrepreneuring, indicating the prescribed values of the incubator. However, this static model does not fully explain how the incubator was able to rediscover its heart beyond being a predominantly fixing actor and for this we must consider movements. The first motion is the way that the 'hub' draws people from across the building, removing the practice-imposed barriers between companies and floors. The hub acted as an 'interaction-promoting facility' (Allen, 1984) as people accessed its communal facilities. Most accounts of these interactions were for social purposes, but it also gave tenants visibility and access to the incubator management, who mostly acted to facilitate dyadic relationships between tenants so they should share knowledge on a wide range of concerns such as data protection policies, funding, accessing investors, making staff redundant and others. The drawing of people into that one physical space also acted as a demonstration. It became common for people to point out individuals in that space who were deemed to be successful, which began a narrative of adulation towards these people and of shared credibility (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). It is the spatial arrangements which makes people feel that this is an attainable and purposeful goal for themselves. In conversation, people often contrasted what the remote example of Skyscanner meant to them, a successful company based elsewhere in the city but which provided little inspiration for their daily lives, with the feeling of

community and oneness felt with other companies in the incubator. The effect of physically seeing these purportedly successful entrepreneurs as part of daily life was said to be a source of inspiration for others in the incubator, but admittedly these 'successful' examples may also have acted as a limitation on aspirations for the rest of the incubator.

In the final stage, the spatial aspects of the incubator combine to achieve the incubator founder's aim:

> We are really, really trying to everywhere promote the sense of progression. So you come in here first and it's £10 a day or £50 per month and it's nothing. And this is where you can smell the air. And that sense of progression is we all need role models and we all need to know what this thing looks like (John).

Part of the way that the incubator shows what 'this thing' looks like is through the presentation of entrepreneurship in the hotdesking space. However, the ability to 'smell the air' requires movement between spaces. This is firstly done by resident companies being aware of a physical progression through the incubator:

> So [successful company] started in our office, moved up and then did very well after that. So it become a physical manifestation of the various stages. And your office keeps growing." (Chandler)

Chandler's acknowledgment of the physical route of this previous company demonstrates the movement which is the value of the incubator: there is a mirroring between physical journey through the building and the journey of becoming towards being an entrepreneur. Chandler continues:

> Which actually becomes a dangerous proxy to success. Because that's what you do and oh I've got all these people working for me. And it's this much money. And you're kind of getting away from your main metrics of cash generated. (Chandler)

Chandler is helping to explain that the linearity of the space, and the encouragement to emulate progression, has become a value of the incubator.

Spatially at least, there are very few implorations to seek profit and amongst the alternatives of behavioural expectations (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010), Chandler is aware that growing by staff number has become the key metric for companies in the incubator. Particularly noteworthy is their indication that without the buildings and its effects, 'cash generated' would unquestionably be the 'main metric'. Indeed, there was frequently a disdain amongst residents for seeking profit in a neo-liberal sense and one CEO even gave a public interview warning against startups seeking venture capital investment because it creates a profit-focussed company.

The progression through the building also starts to exclude:

> We don't want to be hogging space. Whenever I hear of companies trying to get in here and I know how useful it was for us to get the space and you don't need to commit to a lease. So it feels we should be moving out and we could take up a five year lease without being totally terrified. So there is part of me that feel like we should be moving out to create space. (Conor)

The five-year lease refers to what would be expected from corporate real estate, outside the protective barrier of an incubator, so the CEO is feeling the pressure from the spatial system to no longer define their firm as being a start-up. Progression beyond the incubator also drives a movement of firms through the building, providing space for others to pursue this goal of growing staff numbers.

We can therefore see strong effects of spatial power inducing values and behaviours in tenants. However, these were all individual firms where the spatial effects were not driven by organisational hierarchies or fiduciary obligation and there was a great deal of individual interpretation, with several examples of contestation. Some even asserted that the incubator was no more than a landlord. My own firm had little engagement with the incubator and so was not inclined to grow quickly, and another CEO rejected the suggestion that there was

even a growth imperative: 'it's not something that's ever occurred to me…that's not something we've ever encountered', demonstrating that the growth imperative was not explicit, nor driven by narrative or agreement. In these instances, the firms had been blind to the spatial power. Although this was against the intention of the incubator, little was done to prevent stagnation and as one of the incubator managers said:

> If you're not wanting to grow there should be some element of supporting the community and there are some in here that do a lot for the community. So that kind of makes it work. (Curtis)

However, there were no identifiable metrics by which a firm could contribute to the community. Nevertheless, working against the community was considered to be the only breach of the rules by which a firm could be ejected. Few examples of such behaviour were given, but included being overtly and aggressively competitive, or explicitly attempting to poach staff from other companies. Staff were allowed to move to other firms within the incubator if they wished, but it was a general agreement that this could not be initiated by firms themselves, which further emphasises the cooperative 'rules' of the space. One firm thought that their rebellion was a special case:

> Because we got in early it feels like we get away with things…[we] don't really fit in with the tech incubator model. (Pedro)

However, the ethnography revealed that a rejection of some or all of the values of the incubator was not confined to those who joined the incubator early. Similarly, my own company rarely thought to ask the incubator for advice when it was needed and often looked outside to government agencies or their own networks for answers when the knowledge was available in the incubator.

5. Concluding Discussion

The findings challenge entrepreneurship theory's positioning of incubators as open spaces designed to promote knowledge spillovers and collaboration. Rather that problematising barriers and fixedness in incubators (Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005; Chan & Lau, 2005), I accept both as rooted in context leading to desired and unintended outcomes (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007) and seek to understand the power effects of their spatial arrangement.

5.1 A Process of Fixing, Enticement and Movement

Reflecting on the incubator when it was all located on one floor, residents had described a space that more closely reflected extant understanding of incubators: as a fluid site of habitation where the agency of the boundaries is limited to defining and separating entrepreneurship from the external world, so acting as a mere container of entrepreneurial and social processes but with an almost absent internal agency. This study, situated in a greatly expanded incubator with a scholarly attention to the micro, finds agency in the material internally by separating and defining different classes of entrepreneur. The fixing effect is merely weak, with entrepreneurs able to move outside their spaces for social or work purposes, and so only imposes a boundedness on this separation and hierarchy. The fixing and individualization avoids acting as a direct technology of control because of the very weakness of the boundedness and indeed, most offices are prevented from surveillance by the use of obscuring materials. Nevertheless, the fixing has a distinct power when combined with other spatio-material effects.

The fixing and defining of different types of space, and their contained class of entrepreneur, allows for the use of glass and material arrangement to provide a glimpse into other spaces. It is because of the hierarchy of entrepreneurs created

by the fixing that the space is able to change glass and open plan materials from being technologies of surveillance into technologies of enticement. Indeed, these materials act as poor ability to enable surveillance because as a Model 2 type incubator (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005), it lacks immanent hierarchies of ownership. The glass lacks a social surveillant to activate such a material property. As such, the greater effect of these non-solid materials is the other way, in which it turns the fixed inhabitants into performers for those who can glimpse through.

Finally, when entrepreneurs are fixed and then introduced to materials of obscuration and revelation to entice them into new futures, they are encouraged to associate movement through the incubator with progression as an entrepreneur. These spatial effects begin to use the larger companies as socio-material objects that embody the definition of a successful future. The spatial arrangements then draw these objects through the incubator, enticing others in emulation, thus both defining and bounding aspirations of firms within the incubator. In these apparently leaderless communities (Mitev et al., 2019), leadership is created through this processual use of space.

5.2 Spatial Nudging

The micro-arrangement of the material therefore creates a process in which the journey, rather than the destination, becomes agentic to define what it means to be an entrepreneur. Here, we can understand performances of entrepreneurship as bringing together both space and time to create space as a process (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). The contribution of this paper to organization theory is to extend the understanding of space and buildings as agentic and processual and to celebrate its hidden power. I have deliberately used terms such as 'entice' and 'encourage' throughout, because it reflects the soft 'nudging' effect of this space. Warner described such social effects by referring to Parson's 'voluntaristic theory

of action' (Parsons, 1949) as 'an actor who makes choices in a situation…limited by objective conditions and governed by normative regulation of the means and ends of action' (Warner, 1978). Such inducements, merely limited by conditions, were easily rejected and there were several denials of its effect, both by report and by lack of progression through the incubator. Nevertheless, by creating a directional topology within the incubator, it has managed to impose order amongst the naturally chaotic. As organizations 'become less normalized, less hierarchical and less tightly governed by surveillance' (Clegg & Baumeler, 2010), so this understanding of space provides a model of control and governance without surveillance, and one in which subjects are still free to adopt individualized processes and retain spaces of chaos (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004) and so become receptive to, and complicit in, such technologies of control. For example, in the case of individual entrepreneurs on laptops being positioned as demonstrations of entrepreneurship in action, these extracted collective affects have little impact on the individual, which allows for the continuance of individualization and so provides the environment for acceptance of such spatial power. Importantly, these spatial processes were not entirely designed, nor entirely created by practice, nor fully created by concept. Lefebvrian space is created by the constant interaction of the triad whether or not this is fully recognised by its spatial creators (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Much of these effects were indeed unintended: the building was designed as a brutalist government office block; only financial restrictions prevented the incubator management scattering glass liberally through the building; and the hotdesking 'hub' and 'heart' of the building was only created because there was a demand for space from non-residents and that was the easiest place for access. Yet the very unintentionality of these spatial effects draws out the opacity of their power, and to have potential for governance. As we seek to work increasingly online, this study implores us to re-evaluate the use of offices as part of the organization, and not just its resting place.

In using space to bring together the sibling fields of organization theory and entrepreneurship theory, I use the contribution to the former to help progress understanding in the latter. I have shown how this incubator uses the mutually-dependent processes of fixing, enticement and movement to define entrepreneurship and define its success around growth of staff numbers. It rejects the assumption that incubators can be treated as large, open spaces (Butcher, 2018) and its concomitant adoption of a singular space-as-distance approach. As a caution to the trend of creating online incubators and accelerators (Korreck, 2018), this study reveals how space can locally define entrepreneurship and shed light on the dynamic nature of incubators and the companies located in them (Phan et al., 2005).

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Chapter 4: Paper 3. Symbols in Entrepreneurial Identity Construction: Heterogeneity Through Ambiguity

Abstract

Becoming an entrepreneur involves the continual crafting of an identity. These identities are mostly thought to be expressed through language, and the limited research into the use of visual symbols in entrepreneurial identities has been confined to performance events. This paper addresses the use of such symbols during daily entrepreneurial life, switching the lens to the mundane, continual nature of identity construction. Based on a thirty-six-month ethnography, I find that visual symbols are used to express heterogeneous interpretations of entrepreneurship. I propose visual symbols as a distinct ontology within entrepreneurship identities, where the ambiguity of both symbols and entrepreneurship allows for these individual expressions to be part of a collective project of entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

Do symbols have a distinct role in entrepreneurial identity work? Much of the scholarship on identity, including in entrepreneurship, approaches questions through studying language as a 'representational technology that actively organizes, constructs and sustains social reality' (Bell & Davison, 2013; Chia & King, 2001). This leaves the use of visual symbols in identity creation relatively unexplored (Brown, 2019) and potentially a rich seam in which we can further our understanding of how identities are created (Corlett et al., 2017; Harding, 2020; Kreiner et al., 2006).

Identities of entrepreneurs have been studied widely (for recent reviews, see Mmbaga et al., 2020; Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021; Wagenschwanz, 2021), yet much of this scholarship considers how founders orientate their identities around their internalized societal expectations of entrepreneurship as a role (Farmer et al., 2011; Murnieks et al., 2014). This, and the related *identity theory* approach (Stryker & Burke, 2000) are contrasted conceptually with *social identity theory* as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and social significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1978). There have been attempts to consolidate the concepts (Ashforth, 2000; Powell & Baker, 2014; Wagenschwanz, 2021), while a recent review grouped them all within 'identity as property', resting upon 'largely positivistic understandings [of entrepreneurial identities] as "categorical essence" (Down, 2006) – that is, something relatively homogenous across groups of entrepreneurs' (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021, p. 13).

The less-attended approach to entrepreneurial identity, and the focus of this study, assumes a social constructivist understanding where identities are constantly changing (Brown, 2019), unstable and fragmented (Altheide, 2000) and exist as a process of continual crafting (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006) in the pursuit of an ideal (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009). Radu-Levebvre et al. (2021) cite the two conceptual threads as being *narrative identity theory* (Bruner, 1991; Bruner, 2004; Ricœur, 1984), relating to the continual telling and re-telling of entrepreneurial narratives (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), and *identity work* (Down & Warren, 2008; Warren, 2004a; Watson, 2008, 2009), relating to how entrepreneurs negotiate an identity through a project of the self in the context of organizational and social discourses (Kuhn, 2006). Despite the distinction, much of the identity work scholarship has been studied and conceptualized through the use of language, whilst 'other symbolic and material tools…have been overlooked in how entrepreneurs construct and enact their [entrepreneurial identities]' (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). In one of the few exceptions, Clarke (2011) considered how entrepreneurs use visual symbols during pitches to secure funding. Whilst being a valuable entry into identity work, these pitches, as performances of impression management, are in some sense 'cynical performances' with an intention to deceive (Goffman, 1973, p. 28) investors by telling optimistic stories of their entrepreneurial realities. We may expect very different behaviors during earnest, daily identity work (ibid., p. 129).

To further our understanding of the role of symbols in this process, I studied a technology incubator in the UK that housed over 100 technology startup companies. I gained employment in one of those companies and conducted a wide-ranging ethnography over thirty-six months, which also informed twenty-nine targeted interviews. By switching the study from investor pitches to the mundane and everyday, and by considering entrepreneurship as a process of becoming (Hjorth et al., 2015) rather than as a purely economic pursuit, it was

not necessary to restrict the definition of the entrepreneur as 'someone who had risked their own money and resources in the founding' (Clarke, 2011, p. 1372). Instead, I am persuaded by the argument that 'it is unhelpful to see entrepreneurship solely as a matter of starting new businesses and that it is even less helpful to treat as 'entrepreneurs' everyone who runs their own business. What is likely to be more relevant to our understanding of business and other enterprises is to work with a concept of entrepreneurship as a particular type of human activity' (Watson, 2013). Entrepreneuring (Steyaert, 2007a) in this context therefore becomes a matter of identity work in conversation with their social environs, where those who act entrepreneurially (Steyaert & Katz, 2004) may embark on entrepreneurial identity work. As such, I collected data from all residents of a start-up incubator who expressed a desire to identify with entrepreneurship. This study, therefore, does not sit within the well-serviced *founder identity* literature (Wagenschwanz, 2021), although it does accept founder-centered studies germane to the identity work literature.

The findings show that entrepreneurs flexibly interpret (Bechky, 2003) the relation between 'the material' and 'entrepreneurship' to conduct heterogeneous identity work. Whilst narrative identity work within an organisation can also be heterogeneous, their expression within a social milieu exposes difference and invites resolution. In contrast, I find that the ambiguity of symbols (Kornberger, forthcoming) sustains difference when expressed collectively, allowing for multiple interpretations of what it means to be an entrepreneur within the same social milieu. I contribute to our understanding of visual symbols in entrepreneurship by developing theory of symbols as a generative ontology within identity work allowing for the exploration of the in-between and uncategorised (Steyaert & Katz, 2004) during identity work, to embrace and stimulate new identities and new approaches to what entrepreneurship means. I

distinguish between this understanding of symbols and extant theory, which I propose has ontological coherence with discourse studies.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Constructing An Entrepreneurial Identity

Entrepreneurship is one of the most visible and rich sites of identity creation (Crosina, 2018), yet we often limit the variety of identities to binaries such as distinguishing heroic male entrepreneurship tropes from the humane, risk-adverse female (Hytti, 2005; Ulla & Jarna, 2013), commercial from ecological entrepreneurial identities (York et al., 2016) and technology from social entrepreneurial identities (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). In particular, the myth of the heroic (Nijkamp, 2003), flamboyant (Anderson & Warren, 2011), or individualistic (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2016) entrepreneur with inherent characteristics has been so pervasive that entrepreneurs are often treated as if they are different from the rest of society (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2016). Ogbor (2000) criticizes the positivistic approach of measuring these traits, whilst also noting that entrepreneurship assumes a Western, male mentality in the Darwinian pursuit of wealth. Specifically, our understanding of global digital entrepreneurship has been heavily influenced by a dominant Silicon Valley mythos (Isenberg, 2010; Wentrup et al., 2020), where Silicon Valley acts as a metonym for change (Boje & Smith, 2010), innovation (Florida, 2008), and competitiveness (Bahrami & Evans, 1995).

However, these normative treatments of entrepreneurship fail to adequately account for the social contexts of these identity constructions (Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009; Trettin & Welter, 2011; Zilber, 2006).

Identity is created through a dialogic between the internal self and their social contexts (Watson, 2009), where emerging identities are influenced by social feedback and disciplining (Newbery et al., 2018). The entrepreneurial mythology therefore develops into a common understanding as enacted locally (e.g.Gill & Larson, 2014). This intimate social milieu which creates an interpretation of these globalized myths is critical to understanding entrepreneurial identities (Watson, 2013). Indeed, a disagreement between individuals and their localized, social definition of entrepreneurship can lead to contestation (Marlow & McAdam, 2013) and resistance (Warren, 2004b), resulting in entrepreneurs seeking out alternate local contexts in which they can develop their identities (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Marlow & McAdam, 2015).

We may examine this dialogic between the self and social context as a process (Hjorth et al., 2015) of becoming (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009) where entrepreneurs gradually transition to a new sense of being (Hjorth et al., 2015). It positions entrepreneurial identity as a mechanism (Shepherd et al., 2019) where the identity is an aspiration (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009) towards their own interpretation of entrepreneurship (Fraher & Gabriel, 2014). In this processual view, entrepreneurship acts as 'an empty signifier…whose operative function is not to "exist" in the usual sense but to structure phantasmic attachment' (Jones & Spicer, 2005, p. 235). The aspiration is realized through locally-enacted identity work, which 'involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social identities which pertain to them in the various milieu in which they live their lives' (Watson, 2008, p. 129). The identity work seeks to reconcile a range of occupational and home identities, including pasts and presents (Hytti, 2005), yet there is a considerable diversity of approaches, including identity work as addressing both stability and fluidity, coherence and fragmentation, and different

approaches to authenticity (Brown, 2015). Identity work in the context of entrepreneurship may refer to 'a range of behaviours, attributes, and thoughts to purposely form, maintain strengthen, or revise an entrepreneurial identity to ensure coherence and distinctiveness' (Mmbaga et al., 2020, p. 35).

Entrepreneurs, therefore, can be considered as skilled cultural operators who must continually craft their identities under a disciplinary power from localized interpretations of entrepreneurial myth and fantasy. It is the crafting of that identity, rather that its desired outcome, which is of interest to process-orientated entrepreneurial identity theorists.

2.2 Symbols in the Presentation of an Entrepreneurial Identity

Entrepreneurial identities are often studied through their use of language (Bardon et al., 2017; Brown, 2019; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) as it is claimed to be 'perhaps the most pervasive symbolic medium…for creating resonant identity claims' (Überbacher et al., 2015, p. 926). Much of our understanding of entrepreneurial identity work is through the study of socially available and individual narratives (Hamilton, 2014) so that entrepreneurs may negotiate 'who they are' (Navis & Glynn, 2011, p. 479). Figurative language, such as metaphors, can be useful tools for constructing these identities because they are able to encapsulate the meaning of the entrepreneurial myth within a single linguistic image (Dodd, 2002; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005). Metaphors can be used as 'heuristic action-orientated labels' (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005, p. 156) to assemble a construction of entrepreneurship that range from the 'evil wolfish entrepreneur' to the 'supernatural angel-like guru' and the 'successful skyrocket' to the 'community corruptor' (ibid., p. 163). Addressing the entrepreneurial discourse can also have an aesthetic edge, for instance by accessing tropes of

disruption and innovation through performances of emotions (Warren & Anderson, 2009). Cliches can be used in a similar way, but have a more tenuous attachment to entrepreneurship, so may be more easily jettisoned when the specific identity claim becomes untenable (Down & Warren, 2008). These linguistic devices are useful tools for identity work in the pursuit of localized interpretations of entrepreneurship.

Moving beyond language, Clarke (2011) departed from this dominant epistemology to develop 'the first study to rigorously examine how entrepreneurs use visual symbols to develop legitimacy and secure resources' (ibid. p.1384). This still stands as 'one of the few' studies to illustrate these dynamics (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021, p. 20), despite our understanding of entrepreneurship as a highly aesthetic endeavour (Elias et al., 2018) where activities can be embedded within material objects such as prototypes, documents and machines (Lamine et al., 2019). In her study, Clarke (2011) adopted a similar stance to the previous studies of metaphors by suggesting that they work through being widely understood (Goodwin, 2000), to engage specific audiences and convey new types of information (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2018) and by tapping into that audience's understandings of entrepreneurship. In this impression management (Goffman, 1973), the entrepreneur's performance is an idealized version of themselves (ibid. , p. 44) where they attempt to access the audience's 'sign-accepting tendency [that] puts the audiences in a position to be duped and misled' (ibid. , p. 65) into believing the entrepreneurs as being more legitimate than they may believe themselves to be. Although the investors are aware of the scene as a performance to that end, the truly 'cynical' performance (ibid. , p. 28) includes 'symbolic decoupling' (Überbacher et al., 2015) where the entrepreneur hides materials that would harm their presentation as legitimate entrepreneurs.

It is perhaps unsurprising that resource acquisition has such dominance within entrepreneurial identity research, and these studies provide valuable insights into how identity symbols invoke tacit knowledge of status domains. However, it is in the 'backstage' (Goffman, 1973) to these studies of impression management that the internal legitimacy is crafted (Brown & Toyoki, 2013). We must be specific on our use of Goffman's terms. Back and front stage are both relative to a specific performance and we can discern two types of performance in Clarke's (2011) work. First, most clearly, is the performance of impression management attempting to secure resources. However, our study is more interested in a second view, as suggested by Radu-Lefebvre et al. (2021), that this impression management is also a performance of an identity and so can be considered identity work (Watson, 2009). The backstage to that identity performance is the everyday, where 'the supressed facts [of identity] make an appearance' and where 'the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course' as 'illusions and impressions are openly constructed' (Goffman, 1973, p. 114). Although the backstage will include some sense of contrived performance, because 'we all act better than we know' (ibid. , p. 80), it is of particular motivation to this study because the mundane and daily work is a staging of identity closer to the 'reflexively understood version of one's self' (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016). Goffman recognised that language and behaviour is different in the front and back stages (Goffman, 1973, p. 129) and that material symbols of the front stage are hidden and stored in the backstage. I extend this dramaturgical observation to propose that materials can therefore be used differently in the backstage, because they are for a different audience (the internal) and for a different purpose (an understanding of oneself).

The use of visual symbols during such internal constructions of identity has rarely been addressed, save for notable exception of Clarke, this time with Robin Holt (2017), who asked entrepreneurs to express their everyday identities through pictorial metaphors and found a much wider range of interpretation than exhibited during pitches to potential investors. The visual research methodology suggests a rich heterogeneity of everyday entrepreneurial identity, but we should recognize that the pictures were being proposed as reflexive portrayals of their construct*ed* identities, rather exploring their use of symbols as everyday objects in identity construct*ion*: they are in the front stage of identity, where the researcher was the audience. This risks treating the symbolic as distinguished only by their methodological distinctiveness (Pink, 2006), particularly when we consider that visual language, such as metaphors, can be used in a similarly reflexive way (Maclean, Harvey, & Stringfellow, 2017). The methodological orientation can also be seen in in the work of Kašperová and Kitching (2014), who emphasized the role of the body in entrepreneurial identities, particularly for disabled entrepreneurs. Whilst a useful insight into the additive role of non-linguistic performances in the social construction of entrepreneurial identities, it did not include the wider range of materials included in other studies. More pertinently, and in common with the other approaches, the study stops short of developing our understanding of the material as a symbol and limits their treatment of the non-linguistic as being a material adjunct to the linguistic. It is to that final question that we now turn.

2.3 Defining the Symbol

Switching our attention from impression management to daily identity construction gives us reason to consider more deeply the conceptual basis of how visual symbols are used in entrepreneurship. In the 'heterogeneity of entrepreneurship' (Welter et al., 2016), we might consider the potential for

multiple relations within everyday social settings (Swindler, 1986). Yet entrepreneurship has tended to treat visual symbols as having a symbolic dimension 'that stands for or suggests something else' to particular audiences (Zott & Huy, 2007, p. 72), and this restricts our view in two ways. Firstly, separating the intrinsic dimension from the symbolic confines our understanding of symbols as separate to the real and substantive (Johnson, 1990), making their use always 'unreal' and having a sense of deception, either of the audience or the self, rather than as a 'real' tool of identity. Secondly, it adopts a singular relationship between object and meaning where the 'skill' of the entrepreneur is to correctly understand that singular meaning and present it to the audience. By this notion, the symbols' meaning derives from an external setting, as understood by the audience, and the performer has no role in their construction, only their performance. That is, the symbol has little part to play in internal identity constructions. Taken together, these assumptions reveal that entrepreneurship leans towards the assumptions behind the field of semiotics, which is a structuralist stance that attempts to encode reality through treating signs and symbols, including metaphors, as having singular meanings. In semiotics, such objects have properties of the signifier and signified, and although it takes from postmodernism the need to understand these meanings in context, semiotics remains a structuralist science (Danesi, 2007), somewhat at odds with the social constructionist branch of entrepreneurial identity that motivates this paper (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). In contrast, the constructionist notions of postmodernism separate the signifier and signified, leaving "the pure and random play of signifiers" to continually disrupt old meanings and create the new (Jameson, 1991, p. 96).

To treat a symbol as an object of social construction, we must therefore leave behind the *a priori* notion of symbols as singularly defined signifier and signified and consider their very construction. That is, we must move on from the field of

semiotics and look to a social constructionist understanding of symbols. In seeking to give meaning to symbols through social definition (Laas, 2016), Lawrence developed the idea of social-symbolic work as 'the purposeful, reflexive efforts of individuals, collective actors, and networks of actors to shape social-symbolic objects' (Lawrence, 2019), positioning the work as discursive, relational and material. However, this still inscribes properties into the object around which relations are made, and so marks a progression, but not a full departure, from symbols as signifier and signified.

Kornberger et al. (working paper) took further steps to develop the symbol as relational by leaning on Ernst Cassirer's theory of the symbol that subsequently influenced Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas and many others who sit within the same post-structuralist or post-modernist tradition (Vandenberghe, 2001). Cassirer's theory of the symbol is 'radically anti-empiricist, and thus post-positivist; an empirical given is never simply reflected in consciousness but is always generated and formed by a spontaneous act of consciousness' (ibid.2001, p. 485). Instead of supposing the symbol as 'not real', Cassirer proposed the symbol as real, and the real as relational, concluding that what separates humans from animals is our need to understand the world through symbols, rather than as instinctive reactions to stimuli. Kornberger et al.'s (working paper) contribution is develop these ideas for institutions, suggesting that the symbol holds three relational properties. First, the symbol is the connection between the present and an abstract idea. Second, the symbols is the material presence, but it also contains an absence in the meaning or idea that is not there. Third, this relationship causes both stability and change over time as the absence is reformulated. Kornberger (forthcoming, pp. 94-105) further empahasises the ambiguity of symbols that emerges from such relational properties, where the abscense is able to seduce, and adopt a 'poetic mode' (Burke, 1941; Burke, 1989) which can accommodate conflicting emotions and

views. This contribution eildes with other work on symbols that suggested it had a tendancy towards polysemy over time, which is the coexistence of many possible meanings (Jones et al., 2017), resulting in *interpretive flexibility* which is 'the capacity of a specific technology to sustain divergent opinions' (Sahay & Robey, 1996).

Now that we have developed our definition of the symbol within the same intellectual tradition as our approach to entrepreneurial identity, we may address our research question: how do entrepreneurs use visual symbols in everyday identity work?

3. Methods

3.1 Data Selection

To address my research question, I looked to an incubator as a place for identity work (Kornberger & Brown, 2007; Proshansky et al., 1983). Codebase was based in Edinburgh, UK and was frequently celebrated in newspapers, by think-tanks and by politicians as evidence of an emerging technology scene within the city. By housing over one hundred start-up technology companies, it provided the potential for a strong sense of identity within a distinct social group. Codebase, as is common amongst its type, positions itself as more than a mere setting and claims to add value to its residents by providing access to networks, encouraging collaborations and providing a peer-to-peer sense of mentorship. As a site of entrepreneurial learning, an incubator also holds the potential to be a 'potentially powerful identity workspace, namely a place where individuals construct, revise and reconstruct their narrative identities' (Harmeling, 2011).

Codebase had some communal spaces for work, leisure and eating, but it also rented closed offices for some of their larger companies. This allowed for the interrogation of different consumptions of the entrepreneurial ideal by entrepreneurs at different stages of becoming, whilst being mindful of identity as a bridging device in the 'permanent dialectic' (Ybema et al., 2009) between individual, organization and societal levels of analysis. The dialectic accentuated the potential for agreements and contrasts between these levels, and this was one of the ways in which identity constructions were revealed.

3.2 Data Collection

Ethnographic methods are considered to be an appropriate way to 'explore physical capabilities, including the use of artefacts, and the consequences for identity and action' (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014) and have a long history in identity studies (Pink, 2006; Snow & Anderson, 1987). Specifically, visual ethnography rests on the premise that a 'valid and unique insight into culture and society can be acquired by carefully observing, analyzing and theorizing its visual dimensions and manifestations: visible behaviour of people and aspects of material culture' (Pauwels, 2020b, p. 14) through naturally-occurring data such as coffee queues and 'corridor conversations' (Kameo, 2017). I embedded myself as observer-as-participant (Denzin, 1978) by gaining employment in one of the start-up companies in the incubator. I was employed two days per week as the marketing and sales director in a three-person company and the ethnography lasted for thirty-six months.

Following Watson's (2009) study of identity work in entrepreneurs, I avoided the 'tight and clear' research questions of 'positivistic' studies and embraced the ethnographic tradition by treating my 'broad' research question as 'guidance' to

'understanding better' during data collection and analysis (ibid. , p. 258). In common with that study, I claim this study as an 'ethnographically orientated' one (ibid., p. 259), rather than a full ethnography. Whilst the study started as an inductive ethnography following Reedy et al.'s (2016) approach of spending the first 6 months of mostly observing, I soon began to find multiple, micro spatio-temporal sites of symbolic expression (Whittle et al., 2016), which helped me to develop the broad research question and set the design of the study. I first orientated the study towards symbols when I found that the entrepreneurs had a generally homogenous view of the incubator as a site of entrepreneurship, and they spoke in particularly aesthetic, material terms when appreciating the 'vibe' of Codebase. Much of the initial data collection came from my immediate daily environs, so I subsequently made efforts to experience other sites, such as working at times in the hotdesking area. When I explored the specifics of the 'vibe', a much more differentiated and nuanced picture emerged as each entrepreneur interpreted the material in a different way. This paradox of heterogeneous interpretation collectivizing to a homogenous expression led me to investigate their relationship with the material more closely. I then used photographs, mostly from the incubator's twitter account, to 'see' into other areas, using my 'social, psychological, and cultural understandings' (Parker & Jeacle, 2019) from the wider ethnography to interpret the meaning both of the events of the photograph, and the context in which it was being presented.

The weekly yoga class for incubator residents was particularly revelatory because there were high levels of trust and openness within that setting and as a yoga practitioner, I was a full insider who could share thoughts on identity and visuals. It also brought together people from across the incubator which helped to address the challenge of ethnographers finding naturally occurring data which occurs spontaneously across time and space (Whittle et al., 2016).

I initially took detailed field notes on the use of different symbols following Clarke's (2011) categories, which were based on Goffman's own description (Goffman, 1973): setting, props, dress, and expressiveness. However, given the everydayness of the study, the role of their facial expressiveness in identity construction was unclear. Instead, I found that they were using their bodies in that role. The human body and its behaviour is a significant repository and agent of social worlds (Wagner, 2020) and particularly in the café and events spaces of the incubator, entrepreneurs would put their bodies in those space-times to be 'seen' to be there and to 'feel' part of the entrepreneurial community. I first understood this when asking people why they had come to a certain event, and thereafter expanded my visual ethnography to refine Clarke's 'expressiveness' to 'bodily expression' with a greater focus on movement and presentation of the body. Being a study of the everyday, the non-linguistic performances occurred in many different spaces and orientations, with many different audiences according to those orientation. I was therefore careful to depart from adopting Clarke's (2011) singular *mis-en-scene* of the front stage, which meant repeated observations of the backstage from different positions and at different times. I mostly achieved this through saturation over the thirty-six months, by returning time and time again to scenes and observing from different angles, and concentrating on different people or objects.

When observing the use of these symbols, and asking about their interpretation, I was also led by the work on identities by trying to probe and understand connections between the material, entrepreneurial myths and the symbols that link them. However, visual ethnographies which are narrowly etic to participants are at risk of being unduly influenced by the researcher's influence, while unduly emic approaches, such as interview, have the potential to mislead through misunderstanding, confusion or the contextual framing of the data collection. Rose addresses this by suggesting that researchers should critically attend to the

meaning behind all four sites of visual materials: their production; the image itself; its circulation; and its audiencing (Rose, 2016). This integrated approach accepts that the researcher will always be part of the selection of materials to be analysed (Pink, 2006), but seeks to understand how participants interpret (Bell & Davison, 2013) and react to visual materials (Pauwels, 2020a)

It is therefore the researchers' responsibility to 'recognize the symbols in a specific context; to unravel members' interpretations in this context; and to verify the reliability of these interpretations across multiple members' (Rafaeli & Worline, 2000). I therefore conducted twenty-nine interviews in which I could explore their interpretations of my observations and use that semi-structure as an opening of a conversation about the use of visual symbols in their identities. Opening questions explored their opinions on my selected symbolic categories, their history with such symbols before and during their becoming as an entrepreneur, and their views on others' use of those categories. This allowed me to explore meaning, interpretations, and context. Commonly the answers were tied to entrepreneurial culture, which allowed me to explore connections. These interviews were supplemented by frequent, ad-hoc chats with entrepreneurs during the ethnography. The interviews were recorded on tape and fully transcribed, but the ad-hoc chats were only recorded in field notes so that the tape recorder did not become a barrier to the integrity of the everyday encounter (Pauwels, 2020b) and allow me to remain as 'backstage' (Goffman, 1973) as possible.

I found candidates for interview by introducing myself as their neighbour, by meeting them at incubator social events and yoga practice and by asking for snowballing recommendations. I deliberately chose entrepreneurs from a selection of company sizes and longevity, including the incubator management, and a selection of individuals of different experience and positions within those companies. Given my positioning of identity work as an aspiration towards a

mythology, I did not constrain myself to only interviewing founders, but instead selected those who gave indications of that identity work. Following common practice in studies of identity, these interviews provided 'a backstage look at the entrepreneurs' perspective on how thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of entrepreneurs related to their use of visual symbols' (Rubin & Rubin, 2004, cited in Clarke, 2011). I stopped interviewing once I got to a point of saturation and found that the selection had given different perspectives on their position as becoming-entrepreneurs. The interview mostly marked the start of a longer, ongoing conversation, as I kept meeting most of the interviewees throughout the ethnography at various events and through serendipitous corridor conversations. A further research focus was by spending extended periods with the company in which I worked, particularly the CEO, which allowed for considerable depth of study to compliment the breadth of the rest of the study and provide greater thickness than might be gained from a whole-incubator approach (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

3.3 Data Analysis

Each set of field notes were typed up as soon after the event as possible and analysed for evidence of visual symbols and identities and I then coded them into emergent themes. In order to achieve 'critical distance' (Alvesson, 2003) from my own interpretations of the visual (Reedy et al., 2016), I consulted frequently with incubator residents and discussed my coding. I also consulted biweekly with academic colleagues 'to enable new insights to be generated' (Whittle et al., 2016). However, although the gathered data was on the material and ideation, my recording in field notes was mostly textual. Even when I took photographs, these represent only one particular view of the material (Smith, 2015), rather than the relational nature of the symbol which I wished to explore. I therefore went beyond common practice of analysing in cycles (Smith et al., 2018) continued the

analysis throughout the ethnography, constantly taking myself back to the visual sites to deepen understanding of my nascent codes and adjusting as necessary.

The analysis was therefore embedded within the experience of the visual symbols, rather than abstracted from it by text. After four months, I had gathered enough ethnographic data to conduct semi-structured interviews exploring their interpretations of these observations. Interviews were fully transcribed and then became part of the analytic process, which resulted in a continual refining of themes between periods of interview and ethnography in a 'recursive, process-oriented, analytic procedure' (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). As a key aspect of ethnographic analysis, 'much of the more explicit analysis occurred *within the actual process of writing the first draft of the article'* (Watson, 2009, p. 259, emphasis in original). I found that the entrepreneurs used dress, settings, props and bodily expression in different ways to connect to their idea of entrepreneurship, but more interesting than what material was used, was how the entrepreneurs interpreted and imagined both the material and entrepreneurship. I therefore present the findings as a milieu of multiple stories set within one case study (Perren & Ram, 2004). Each story addresses a theme found commonly throughout Codebase, and presenting in this way allows the reader to better appreciate the richness of the data, and better understand how entrepreneurs connect material to meaning. The first story is about the multiple interpretations of a single setting, whilst the subsequent stories are about individual entrepreneurs as exemplars of the themes of dress and bodily expression. Pedro narrates most of the final story, to give an insight into how he interprets symbols and narratives.

4. Findings

4.1 Common Space, Uncommon Meaning

Figure 1: a common area with a mix of furniture

Figure 1 is typical of a common space in the incubator. The space is near the entrance to the building and because it is a main thoroughfare towards working spaces, it is an important communal site and part of the area where most residents described as the 'hub', or 'heart' of the incubator. It is a picture of the

material 'vibe' of the incubator. We can see in the picture that there is a range of aesthetics, from plastic office chairs to wooden kitchen chairs. There are also traditional chesterfield leather sofas sitting alongside a table football table. It was a discussion over this scene that first led me to understand how the material could sustain entrepreneurs all having different interpretations of entrepreneurship, yet keep those differences hidden from each other.

First, there was the group that admired the mix of styles and thought that it was materially representative of their status as entrepreneurs, as they sought to muddle through and make do with whatever resources they could secure. It was what the management described as a 'minimal viable product' (Stuart), which resulted in a 'retro chic feeling' (Louise). It was common in interview for new entrepreneurs to admire the mix of second-hand furniture which was described as a 'mish-mash' (Tom) and a 'stereotypical hipster setting' (Sam). A connection was made between aesthetic and authenticity:

> This has evolved out of its own startup. If you want to talk about
> authenticity, this wasn't created at a design workshop down
> in Shoreditch to figure out how to create a nice effective incubator space.
> This has evolved out of a genuine startup idea (Toby).

Shoreditch is a gentrified area in East London closely associated with tech start-ups and entrepreneurship with a bohemian aesthetic. However, Toby is contrasting that visual identity with his local, 'authentic' identity, demonstrating his selectivity in what he believes true entrepreneurship to be. When I probed their admiration of the temporariness and mixed aesthetic of the space, many entrepreneurs said they did not want any improvements to 'change much' (Oscar) or 'destroy the authenticity' (Toby) and would aim to 'keep the same vibe…nothing fancy' (Paul). The need for these entrepreneurs to exist within a temporary setting where they could 'make do' (Toby) was contrasted with a corporate (non-entrepreneurial) identity where 'people wouldn't be able to work in a place like this…they may think it's disgusting, and it's true in a way but it's not

what we're here to do' (Toby). Even certain parts of the building were criticized as being 'too office-like' (Sam), and when the individual movable tables were replaced with better quality fixed tables they pejoratively thought it gave a feeling of being 'more official…[having] more concreteness' (Jill).

A second group were rather more ambivalent about the mixing of styles, rather ignoring most of the furniture in the scene, but they set a particular significance to the table football table as meaningful of the importance of fun to the 'vibe' (Sam). Although not included in figure 1, hobbies common to Silicon Valley culture, such as surfing and ping-pong, were popular in this Scottish incubator. The ping-pong table was sited in the common area and was so well used at lunchtimes that there needed to be a booking system. Charlie and Ben frequently played together, and Charlie drew out its importance in creating a relaxed, non-competitive environment:

> I think it's like when you're playing ping pong you get into the flow state like in programming. Anything where you're focusing on that one thing…I got the word flow from a psychologist it goes on about this flow state. I suppose when you win it's good, but it's just the flow state. One of the best things about ping pong is when you get a rally going. When I lose the rally I don't really mind because it was fun. (Charlie)

Whilst Charlie described the importance of the practice of 'fun', Ben went further and connected these practices of relaxation and non-competitiveness to Silicon Valley stereotypes:

> Ben: 'It's a more relaxed, open-minded sport where you're not necessarily competing with anyone. It's kind of hippyish, which the startup scene can be, more than banks. People are treated really well and have flexible work …the more relaxed working hours…taking Fridays off. So it's 4 day weeks. And ping-pong.'
>
> Researcher: 'If the table tennis table weren't there, would you think they should have one?'

Ben: 'Yeah. Like some kind of place to escape the work and unwind a bit get to know your colleagues. I do it everyday, usually for about half an hour or 45 minutes.'

For this group of people, the *scene* is characterized by the artefacts of sport, meaningful of their interpretation of Silicon Valley stereotypes as relaxed, playful, hippyish and non-competitive. They manage to both ignore the meaning that the first group attached to the 'mish mash' furniture, yet still place the *scene* in juxtaposition to corporates.

A third group went further still and dismissed any claims that the *scene* was meaningful of entrepreneurship. Whilst they still agreed that the space had a great 'vibe', they did not think this was due to the furniture, but instead attributed the aesthetic to the music, or the presence of so many companies within the same space, or other non-material aspects. For this group, their attitudes towards the *scene* in figure 1 were more pragmatic, such as the meeting rooms not having enough pens (Curtis), the uneven floors meaning only flat footwear could be worn (Tina), or because of the lack of air conditioning (Ben). Others recognized the aesthetic, but just described it in terms of taste, such as being 'a little chintzy' (David) or declaring 'the building doesn't matter' (Matthew), rather than being at all meaningful of entrepreneurship or Silicon Valley.

4.2 Gwen wearing jeans at work

Gwen was an American with a work history of running the European operations of one of the world's largest software companies. She gave an insight into the use of material, particularly dress, through her position as an outsider trying to become accepted into the community. My conversations with her, and seeing her at various presentations, showed how she found the material boundaries

between the localized version of entrepreneurship and her proximate, antecedent identities routed in the USA and post-entrepreneurial software companies. Adapting to these new boundaries was not easy:

> I felt that I could get into the portfolio job, you know where you do three days a week coaching entrepreneurial environment and get in there. So I spent a lot of time interviewing, meeting people, could I offer them services. It was horrendously difficult. It is a very, very closed network. And unless you personally prove yourself here, they really don't care. (Gwen)

One of the main issues she faced was being perceived as 'this big person from [the software multinational], they think they know everything blah blah'. She also thought that, as an American, she saw a different relationship between material and wealth than the locals:

> So here culturally there's a very interesting aspect of in the US if you make money, flaunting the car, the home, the jewellery whatever, is a rite of passage, as long as you are not super obnoxious about it. But here, it's no. Absolutely not. We bought a run-down cottage in the countryside. My husband didn't tell his best friends for a year. He doesn't want them to think…there's a term for it…boasting. (Gwen)

Gwen is describing how performing these materials can either be meaningful of personal success, or as meaningful as superiority in relation to others. The difference, in Gwen's view, is national so reflects a difference between a US entrepreneurial identity and a UK one.

However, there was an aspect of startup culture that this localised version had in common with its US progenitor:

> The shirt's out, yeah they're my Converse sneakers and they're ripped through the dog..I don't like that look, that entrepreneur coolness. Ick. I think it's ick. But look at all of them…I personally don't get it. But for some reason that seems to be the cool entrepreneurial thing. (Gwen)

Gwen was being clear that this dress was meaningful of entrepreneurship, but that it was not 'her'. Eventually, she managed to adopt the entrepreneurial dress:

> It took me 6 months to wear jeans here. 6 months to break down that mental thing like it was ok to wear jeans to work. That's how I was brought up. (Gwen)

By the time of this interview, Gwen had become an accepted member of the community and although she was indeed wearing jeans, I could not agree that she was an embodiment of 'entrepreneurial coolness'. During the interview, and across the many interactions we had during the ethnography, Gwen paired her jeans with more formal shoes and shirts that may be expected of a top software executive during their leisure time. Most noticeably, she wore large pieces of gold jewellery that seemed more akin to US-style 'flaunting' than what other women wore in the incubator. Gwen had found a material presentation that sat in the intersection between her prior identity and the bounds of local interpretations of entrepreneurship. This was a pattern I found frequently. Whilst someone at my yoga class declared that 'it's a startup world, you can wear what you want!', so many others described how people wearing suits did not fit in to the incubator, as that form of dress was meaningful of the corporate world. Figure 2 was posted on the incubator's twitter page in an attempt to show how easily big business and investors, in suits, mix with entrepreneurs. However, as Gwen found, these entrepreneurs in casual clothing are not mixing with the suits. They are two distinct groups and according to the entrepreneurs, where the 'suits' do not belong. Despite the formal rule that 'you can wear what you want', in identity terms you cannot.

Figure 2: An event mixing 'suits' with 'entrepreneur'

Gwen also found that people could deliberately use these boundaries of dress to progress beyond entrepreneurship:

> And people leave the entrepreneurial thing behind. You can actually see it among the movers and shakers here in Edinburgh. An individual came to see me the other day and he was wearing a cashmere sweater. Ok, last time I saw him he was in a hoodie. He's making the personal journey across the line. (Gwen)

4.3 Jill being there is Jill belonging there

Jill was also an outsider to this technology startup world being, in her words, 'black, American, and female'. However, her role as a contract project manager necessitated her to be well connected within the incubator so that she could continue to get new business. As with Gwen, she initially found it difficult to become part of the space:

> And because I was new to this kind of environment. Not knowing how to behave or be in a space like this. Having been in corporate environments

and coming in here and not feeling weird. It was very different, and I was very conscious of it. I suppose it would be like going into a big corporate building like Standard Life where I used to work. And you would be siloed into your floor into your department. So there's lots of different wings. And it would be like going into a different floor where you don't know anybody and you're like I know I belong here but you're looking around for somebody familiar to connect with. And as much as everybody's welcoming and doesn't feel hostile. It's making the analogy to coming in here at first, but everybody's oh what do you do, what's your project. (Jill)

Jill's challenge was to become part of the incubator so that she did belong, and she did this by positioning her body as part of the *scene*, so that she became part of what people expected to see in the hotdesking area. Her first tactic was to avoid the 'silo' effect of her corporate experience so that she could belong to 'entrepreneurship':

> And to draw that comparison to the corporate environment, and you go to a different floor doing something different and it's trying to remove those barriers. Creative Edinburgh[5] exists on the creative floor[6], which is a little bit of a niche, but I don't exist in that, which is why I like being down here [in hotdesking]. So that I'm not only associated with the creative floor. I don't know everybody, I never will, but being able to interact with a number of different people and not be siloed into you're a part of the creative community or the tech community. They're all one to me. (Jill)

Then Jill recognized that there was a pattern of arranging the *scene* in the hotdesking area and bodily presentation was part of this familiarity and definition of the space:

> *Jill:* 'Maybe this reflects a bit of my own working patterns, a bit of anticipation of what I am coming into. So it doesn't have to be the same and it doesn't have to be routine, but it's seeing the same faces and I tend

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5 Creative Edinburgh is a networking association for people working in the creative industries in Edinburgh. It is primarily aimed at entrepreneurs.

6 The "creative floor" in Codebase is a corridor dedicated for companies that work in the creative industries.

to sit in the same places. Everyone does. I sit at the window on a Tuesday, so the fact that this guy here is there wouldn't put me off, but people have their patterns and behaviors will generally sit in the same place.'

Researcher: 'So you sit next to the same people them? Do you do networking?'

Jill: 'There's some people I'll chat to. Some people I'll see who are coding so I'll not. But really my skill is just being there and meeting them and making the real connection. And showing that I'm personable, I'm organised, showing up on time. And there are little nuances on how I present myself that connect to me as a professional. And after that they can go online and have a look at me. And hopefully they will see that I'm a trusted member of the community.'

As my ethnography progressed, I began to see Jill at various events, as well as at hotdesking and she had become one of the constants of the visual appearance of the incubator. In chatting to other residents, she seemed to be well known and had developed a wide network, being a speaker at various events and organizing meetups. I caught up with her several months later at a party and she described how she now felt she did belong. The incubator had afforded her the ability to develop her identity through presence in a space defined as being one of entrepreneurship. This constant presentation of herself in the space had helped to develop her own sense of belonging to the entrepreneurial space, and this was entwined with her business need:

> I've been in quite consistently over the past few months and as a result I'll get emails like the one you sent me, saying they had seen me about and could we meet to catchup. Or we're working on this what do you think? And that's a natural timeline, some things take 6 months to press. You're dealing with startups and they're still defining what they're doing. So there's a whole dance around what I can do and what they need. So for me there's something quite magical. I need to create myself as a persona so people can come to be and access my skills or knowledge. (Jill)

4.4 Don't tell Pedro he does not belong

Pedro was also an example of 'being is doing' because, as one of the longest-term residents, he clearly felt part of the space. Neither Jill nor Pedro needed narratives in this identity work, and both could develop their identity by presenting themselves in that space. As I explored these themes with residents, I occasionally stumbled across disagreement and resistance which the resident themself had not articulated previously. It was as if, despite their own developed ideas of the meaning of materials, they were rather more ambivalent about others' use of material. Yet, when I as a researcher articulated others' material expressions through language, I surfaced disagreements which had hitherto been unexpressed.

Pedro was one of the few residents who volunteered an example of disagreement through narratives, without me prompting it. We must first understand Pedro's perspective. He and his business partner had been one of the first residents of the incubator and felt that he had helped define the character of the social space. As the incubator grew in size, his relationship with the incubator went from being one of personal connections with all the other entrepreneurs, to being just one entrepreneur amongst a community, many of whom he did not know personally. He had become frustrated at some new residents having a different concept of the incubator than he had, expressed through their relative lack of bodily presence in the spaces he thought important:

> Why are you here if you are not using what makes it different from any other serviced offices in Edinburgh? Just so you can say oh yeah I'm in Codebase. It's a PR exercise then, to say you are here. Because maybe it has a certain. Oh we're a tech company because we're in Codebase. But you don't actually participate. It's not even like participation. You're missing opportunities. Even at board level you don't go to the CTO meetup or whatever. You're not even on the founders list. If you weren't here, nobody would notice. (Pedro)

Pedro was expressing a view of these people as conducting a front stage performance of presence, without an appropriate backstage. It is important to note that he was surfacing this view only under interview, leaving the protagonists to continue with their identity work unaware of Pedro's views. In contrast, he did share his views when he was faced with a material expression that became a discourse, as this next example shows. I shall let Pedro relate the incident:

> For example, there's a conference that's going to be happening this weekend. And it was very disruptive for this area here when they did it last year. Well this area got very restricted even on the Friday. Benches set up for lanyards and checking in. And it's one of the larger companies and it seems to be one of those companies where a lot of the staff do not participate at all. In anything. And they were looking at you as if you were an attendee. And it's no, I work here every day. I've been here for longer than you've been at this company. They're like can I help you? It's like I'm going to my office. Leave me alone. Don't give me the stares constantly. And they were at every door. I work here. Let me through!
>
> And they sent round an email saying oh the conference went really well. It endangered ill feeling towards the company. So people then hope the conference is a failure. Or it would be great if they moved out, I hope they fail. I hate these guys. I can't be bothered with their staff. So that is something I have complained about directly to them. (Pedro)

Whilst Pedro was ambivalent about claims that other companies made about themselves, in this example he is getting affronted when the company makes claims about the incubator, and his position in the incubator. The blockages and lanyards are giving a signal that the company *is* the incubator, yet this was not uncommon in that space. Throughout the ethnography I observed organisations frequently renting that space and adorning it with their own branding. This type of material expression starts to impinge and involve other residents, leading to Pedro's resentment when he is made to be involved in their performance. However, even when residents were made to be part of this material expression,

their resentment was not surfaced publicly. Only when this performance was made explicit through the use of language did it become a social interaction, with Pedro's contestation over what it meant for the communal identity and his role in Codebase. Pedro's reaction of 'I've been here longer that you've been at your company' is an attempt to stamp his legitimacy that he feels the company has robbed from him. His exclamations of 'leave me alone' and 'let me through' are expressions that reverse their narrative of them *being* the incubator and he followed up with a complaint to reverse that narrative. As good as his word, at the following year's conference, the company was positioned to the side without blocking our entry, and we all received an email apologizing for the disruption and thanking us for our compliance. No-one told us we did not belong to that space.

5. Discussion

Studies of identity work in entrepreneurship have used largely discourse-based methodologies to understand how one becomes an entrepreneur (Brown, 2015, 2019; Steyaert, 2007b). Whilst some studies have explored the effect of different types of language (e.g. Dodd, 2002; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005), I highlighted that one of the few studies to consider the use of visual symbols during entrepreneurial identity work (Clarke, 2011) was confined to the performance of an aspirational identity during pitching. To interrogate how entrepreneurs use symbols during their everyday identity work, I adopted a relational view of symbols as having three properties: as a connection between the material and abstract; as having both presence and absence; and as having both stability and change as the absence is reformulated (Kornberger et al., working paper). The four cases illustrated different aspects of how entrepreneurs use symbols in the everyday: the entrepreneurs' descriptions of the furniture demonstrated a diverse interpretation of the material; Gwen used clothing to gradually adopt an

entrepreneurial identity which she could reconcile with her previous identity; meanwhile, Jill's example showed how she used her bodily positioning to gain acceptance as an entrepreneur; finally, Pedro's example showed a difference in how visuals and discourse constitute performances during everyday life. I shall now explore these findings with our relational symbol perspective.

5.1 Symbol as a connection between material and abstract

The 'material' in this study is being used in the Goffmanian sense to include a range of non-verbal expressions, drawing as it did from Clarke's categories of dress, props, settings and expressiveness (Clarke, 2011). As the entrepreneurs live and experience the incubator, it was uncommon to continually talk of entrepreneurship and how they interpreted it, yet it was very common to continually experience the material and make relations with aspects of entrepreneurship. In its clearest expression, people 'being' in the incubator was enough for them to claim to be entrepreneurs. By including movement and context in the 'material', it becomes clear that the meaning does not reside within the material itself, but instead in how it is relationally expressed. For instance, the body has no inherent meaning of entrepreneurship until it is placed in the incubator for prolonged periods. Over time, 'being' in the incubator becomes to mean that the individual is part of the entrepreneurial community. To avoid conflation with understandings of material as a static, haptic entity (Kornberger et al., working paper), it is appropriate to describe symbols as a relation between visual and abstract, to include this range of non-verbal expression and to keep our understanding of the symbol as a relation, rather than as a property of the material.

The entrepreneurs experience their daily lives through these visual phenomena and there is a sense of continual expression and identity work throughout the day in which the visual is connected to entrepreneurship. This has been explored elsewhere in entrepreneurship, where visual artefacts can be used as a continual, daily expression of how the entrepreneurs wish to be seen (e.g.Zamparini & Lurati, 2017). Visuals and language can also be combined to create a desired performance effect throughout a social movement campaign (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019). These uses of the visual rely upon the user understanding how the specific visual will be interpreted by the audience, so they are accessing a tight and singular relationship between visual and idea. Whilst these studies move Clarke's (2011) setting from formal performances to the everyday, they still share the assumption that their expression is purposeful to the audience where the visuals are used to create a *mis-en-scene* for the verbal performance. Mostly scholars assume an economic basis for entrepreneurship, but here I critique more generally the singular, purposeful and linear view of entrepreneurship where the actor's role is only to access a pre-constructed and singular relation between visual and abstract, where they have very little agency in the construction of that connection. This sheds light on how this study departs from these studies and so contributes to our understanding of identity and symbols. If we consider that the symbol is a relation between the visual and abstract, it is the everyday experience that allows actors to form a diversity of symbolic relations because both visual and abstract are not presented as a purposeful *mis-en-scene.* As they live everyday in the incubator, the entrepreneurs experience the visuals in a wide variety of contexts and orientations, which generates multiple possibilities for interpretation. We saw this with the furniture arrangement which, in a formal performance, would have been arranged to support a specific narrative, which then would have then been successfully or unsuccessfully received by the audience. In everydayness, there is no 'purpose' to the arrangement and no intended success, so the

entrepreneurs can all legitimately make relations between the material and whatever aspect of an abstracted entrepreneurship as they may imagine, and entwine any other part of their identity as they wish. Because each entrepreneur has a range of experiences and identity constructions, they interpret the visual milieu in different ways. The value of this study is therefore not precisely in its everydayness, but in the role of everydayness in releasing the *scene* from singular views of entrepreneurship to show a much wider interpretation, and one that included entrepreneurship as an aesthetic, play, rebirth and many others. The generative property of this symbol-as-relation relies upon both the visual and the abstract being flexibly interpretative (Scheaf et al., 2018) and this speaks to the idea of symbols having both a presence, in the visual, and an absence, in the abstract.

5.2 Symbol as both present and absent

When exploring the absent properties of these symbols, it is worth first reflecting upon presence, because this is what the dominant 'front stage', rationalist-driven view of entrepreneurship attempts to create. Jean Clarke's (2011) study is one the most clearly 'front stage' of these visual studies. Such performances of impression management have a sense of cynicism where visuals are presented or concealed to support language in leading the audience to a particular conclusion. The meaning of the visuals is defined by the audience and, in this view, it is the skill of the entrepreneur to access that meaning. In that sense, it is the intention of the entrepreneur to convince that they *are* entrepreneurs, and so make themselves the present embodiment of entrepreneurship. The front stage therefore attempts to make present and reduce the ambiguity of what is otherwise absent.

Visuals in that conception share the ontological basis of language because the latter also attempts to make ideas present. Pedro found this reality when he was

faced with a discourse, supported by visuals, that suggested he was not part of the entrepreneurial community. It is significant that his strongest reaction was when the visual performance transitioned to dialogue, both during the incident and with the subsequent email. The language-based expressions removed any ambiguity in the visual performance and made the idea present, of him not being part of that community space. This had not been the case during the many other visual-only performances in that space by other firms throughout the ethnography. Reactions to these non-verbal performances were similar to the interpretations of furniture. Some embraced their ambiguity by interpreting the performances as meaningless in identity terms. They therefore felt unthreatened by companies running events in public spaces. Others, such as Pedro, interpreted the non-verbal performance as meaningful of a specific identity construct but, critically, he recognised the ambiguity of the material by not making his objections public. As with the furniture, everyone imagined their own relationship between material and meaning, yet it remained in their imaginations. Only when the performance included the verbal did it remove ambiguity so that it could spark a reaction from Pedro and lead to a public contestation over local narratives (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). When we theorise visuals as acting in concert with narratives during a performance, it is the intention to give those visuals the same properties which we give to language, so they may act in a supporting role in the scene (Clarke, 2011). Pedro had found a similar use of material as Clarke's (2011) entrepreneurs, because he had encountered an attempt at daily impression management, where the verbal expression not only makes an idea present, but also activates the visuals to make the idea they express both singular and present. The example draws out the different roles of material and discourse-based performances where language 'stifles reverberations', creating a causality that removes it from the poetic ontology (Bachelard, 2014, pp8-9) by giving it singular definition. When materials are used in combination with these verbals, their reverberations are also stifled, and they

take on a singular meaning. In contrast, when the entrepreneurs in this study could engage with visuals without discourse, as with the furniture example, they found ways to engage where they could find those reverberations, leading to a great diversity of interpretation. This demonstrates an ontology of visual symbols that has not been addressed by 'front stage' studies of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship remaining absent therefore remains critical to this identity project. In its absence, without precise definition, entrepreneurship remains ambiguously defined. It is the very ambiguity of entrepreneurship which is its generative force, allowing actors to find newness. Whilst Clarke's (2011) entrepreneurs concealed visuals which contradicted the view of entrepreneurship which they wished to perform, in the everyday there is no concealment. Every visual is presented. Entrepreneurs interact with all the visuals in the space so that the meaning of entrepreneurship cannot be restricted, and they can find new expressions. Furthermore, because entrepreneurship is kept absent and not articulated through discourse, each visual can be interrogated for new meanings that would be concealed during a front stage performance. Turning back to our furniture scene, if one wished to present, for instance, a performance of entrepreneurship as a process of bricolage, one may have hidden the ping pong table because it had a meaning which did not align with that performance. In the natural backstage, not only is the table present, but the entrepreneurs are free to establish relations between its abstract of playfulness and its abstract of entrepreneurship, but they are also free to deny any connection to an abstract and see it as nothing more than its material presence. The symbolic relations are inherently emergent and non-linear, which is the source of its generative power that is missing from front stage performances.

5.3 Symbol as change and stability

Kašperová et al.(2018) also identified the limitations of discourse-based approaches to entrepreneurial identity. Based on an empirical study of embodiment in entrepreneurship, they adopted a critical realist stance to argue that entrepreneurs' internal conversations (Archer, 2003) were under theorised by a social constructionist view of entrepreneurship. Their contention was that social constructionist approaches fail to fully account for the role of the actor by placing excessive analytical emphasis on their social worlds, or on dominant discourses of entrepreneurship. I have similarly argued that this has been a shortcoming of discourse-based studies, and I have gone further to suggest that visual studies, when situated in the front stage, also fail to account for the generative effect of the imaginative connections that entrepreneurs make between visual and abstract.

However, in contrast to Kašperová et al.'s (2018) findings, the empirics in this study do support a social constructionist stance. The symbol as relational is inherently an internal conversation and one through which the entrepreneurs interrogate and change their identities. The internalisation of this conversation into the imagination distinguishes it from the public, articulated nature of language which Pedro found. Reverting to our furniture scene, each of the respondents had undertaken an internal conversation between the furniture and their interpretation of entrepreneurship. Similarly, Gwen had conducted an ongoing internal conversation in her relationship with jeans, gradually changing her identity until such point as she felt it was sufficiently in line with her own interpretation of both jeans and the workplace. However, that is not to declare that these material objects hold inherent meaning, nor that the internal conversation has no interaction with the social. The meaning is generated by the actor understanding a relationship with the abstract, and that abstract is socially-constructed. Gwen understood jeans to be meaningful of non-work time because of her prior social interaction with the corporate world. She was then presented

with the dominant discourse of jeans as appropriate for entrepreneurial work. By engaging with both socially-constructed worlds, Gwen engaged in an internal conversation to transition from one to the other. The actors are therefore active in constructing the connections between visual and abstract, and it is the very absence and ambiguity of the abstract that allows the actors to be agentic in the construction of meaning.

Reflecting upon Kasperova' et al.'s (2018) view has helped to reveal the dynamic nature of visual symbols in this study, emphasising how symbols are subject to change and stability (Kornberger et al., working paper). Gwen used this relation to play with her identity, taking time to understand her own emotions with her identity (Delgado García et al., 2015). Time is important in this project because it affords the opportunity for non-linear reformulation and testing. We arrive at the concept of identity play as a specific type of identity work that addresses 'people's engagement in provisional but active trial of provisional selves' (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). Identity play can be as a rehearsal for the front stage, exploring newness and using their identity work as a generative project. The understanding of visual symbols as relational to an ambiguous absence allows for this identity play, leading to the observed diversity of identity, as well as the process of recursive construction. Identity play can also be playful (Warren & Anderson, 2009), as reported by entrepreneur's engagement with the ping pong table. It is during this period of play that the entrepreneurs gradually bring their own view of identity towards one that they wish to present to the world (O'Neil & Ucbasaran, 2016).

This identity play occurs in the backstage, during their daily lives where they have time to continually interrogate visuals in different orientations and reconsider the connections to abstracts. As an experimental practice, its purpose

is to rehearse their identities before they must perform them in front of investors. Whilst Clarke (2011) suggested that the ability to produce a 'cynical' performance and selectively conceal visuals was a function of entrepreneurial experience, the existence of identity play with visual symbols suggests that the ability to play and rehearse allows entrepreneurs to bridge this experience gap. Gwen, for instance, could visually perform as an entrepreneur because she had six months to conduct identity play and reconcile a sense of coherence with her existing identities (Mmbaga et al., 2020). As discussed, the symbol during this phase is unconcealed, facilitating the play and allowing for exploration and it is in this sense of rehearsal that visual symbols are being used in the backstage. When they are taken forward into the front stage, whether daily (Zamparini & Lurati, 2017), or during formal events (Clarke, 2011), they are stripped of their playful nature because their abstract, the idea to which the actor connects them, becomes narrowed by the setting's definition. Therefore, whilst Gwen may slowly play with her relationship with jeans in the backstage, by the time Clarke's entrepreneurs get to the front stage they find themselves needing to conform to the sartorial expectations of those performances. The visual, or material, has changed from being a process of change and exploration which acts without language, into being an artefact of stability and definition that acts only to support language.

The backstage setting is therefore the *scene* for these identity play projects. It allows for individualised and playful projects, where actors may rehearse their connections between visual and abstract over time, gradually homing in on an identity construction with which they feel comfortable. A primarily visual experience allows the entrepreneurs to conduct this identity play without the disciplining force of 'present' social interaction (Newbery et al., 2018). Actors tell themselves stories as a vehicle for self-legitimisation, but as self-narratives, they can be developed as part of an internal conversation (Archer, 2003) and exposed

only during life-history interviews (Maclean et al., 2012). When these narratives are expressed publicly through language, or, as with Clarke (2011) through visuals when ontologically indistinct from language, the social world gives feedback of approval or disapproval and so creates the disciplining internal-external dynamic of identity work (Watson, 2009). However, when conducted non-verbally, as a symbolic expression in a collective site of entrepreneurship, it is for the entrepreneur to interpret the feedback. Jill, as with so many of the entrepreneurs, interpreted being in the incubator as 'being' an entrepreneur, so her symbolic expressions in that site were validations of her entrepreneurial identity. This supports the view that 'entrepreneurs create and…are created by their social reality' (Karp, 2006, p. 297), but recognises that the social world is accessed symbolically (Kornberger et al., working paper; Vandenberghe, 2001) so that 'entrepreneurship happens when an entrepreneurial inner dialogue happens' (Karp, 2006, p. 300). Therefore, as a collective I found that the visual mode sustained a great heterogeneity (Welter et al., 2019) within a shared intention (Gilbert, 2009) of being an entrepreneur. Even when Gwen interpreted the visual site as rejecting her claims about being an entrepreneur, the visual mode afforded her the ability to play with the material until she self-legitimated her own self-narratives. In contrast, Pedro's experience indicates that a discourse-based approach reduces the ability to sustain difference and attempts to force conformity of identity, as is more common in other types of identity work. Visual symbols therefore recognise that identities are 'infinitely revisable, and always provisional, works-in-progress' (Brown, 2006, pp. 740-741), but can avoid the associated problem of spinning inconsistent narratives about our lives (Ricœur, 1984).

6. Conclusions

As we extend the scope of entrepreneurship and identity, particularly through identity play, it is useful to deepen our understanding of the means by which this work is conducted. I have sought to avoid the epistemological temptation of assuming material as simply another tool vying for status alongside language, and instead I propose that visual symbols are a distinct ontology in entrepreneurial identity. Whilst the use of symbols during performances has been described part of the growing interest in social constructionist identity research in entrepreneurship (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021), it now looks slightly more positivist, relying as it does on singular, common understandings of the material. The social construction of its meaning occurs away from the site of performance, whereas this study positions the symbol as central to the process of social constructivist identities in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship in all its heterogeneity can only be accessed through the symbolic in a social setting.

This casts a light on previous research and its multiple streams, all trying to theorise what an entrepreneurial identity is and its antecedents. Rather than attempt to erode ambiguity through language-based positivistic categorization, further research may wish to embrace the ambiguity of entrepreneurship and explore its organising power. It may be fruitful to approach entrepreneurship as a project of the imagination of future possibilities (Steyaert, 2007a) which can be best understood through imagination-laden devices such as symbols. This study has chosen a limited number of materials for study, but there may be others, such as music, affect and space. The categorical tendencies of language may even have lessened ontological power in such identity work, limiting the paths and fissures by which people can become entrepreneurs (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). If, for example, an entrepreneur develops their identity within a social milieu that defines digital entrepreneurship around competitiveness, it might be difficult for them to develop and understanding of entrepreneurship as the pursuit of creativity (Gartner, 2012; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). Further research

might wish to explore entrepreneurial identity as purely symbolic in other settings, freed from the constrictions of a public narrative, to explore multiple paths within a process (Jancsary et al., 2017) and what forms of entrepreneurial activity may emerge from fluid becomings of entrepreneurial identities (Steyaert, 2007a)

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Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Perspectives summarised

Across three perspectives, I have attempted to understand the everyday processes and practices of entrepreneurs within an incubator (Dai, 2011). In the first paper, I discovered that privileged class people appropriate entrepreneurship as a class project. Their material, particularly bodily, tastes allow them to locally define this nascent occupation along familiar class lines (Spence et al., 2017), whilst them being physically in a site of entrepreneurship also allowed them to adopt the narrative of entrepreneurship as a meritocracy. The paper questions assumptions of entrepreneurship as emancipation (Rindova et al., 2009) because the incubator becomes a vehicle by which these privileged people can jettison assumptions of societally embedded class privilege (Friedman, Laurison, et al., 2015) and reimagine themselves as heroic and agentic pioneers.

In the second paper, I developed our understanding of incubators as socially-constructed spaces (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Taylor & Spicer, 2007) to theorise how spatial arrangements within the incubator created people as performers to others. It brings organisation and entrepreneurship theories together to progress our understanding of incubators from being inert spaces (Butcher, 2018) to revealing their potential as active governance structures which socially create a localised understanding of entrepreneurship through space. The paper highlights the value of physical offices through the often unseen and underappreciated affects it can have.

In the final paper, my analytical lens moved further to the micro and explored how entrepreneurs used materials (Clarke, 2011) to express different identities of

entrepreneurship within Codebase. My analysis goes beyond narrative approaches that base identity work on discourse to suggest that materials have a distinct ability to sustain a heterogeneity of identity (Brown, 2019) when developed within a collective.

The thesis therefore attempts to deepen and broaden our understanding of the incubator as a key entrepreneurial mode through three different approaches. Although this can never be a complete exegesis of the incubator as an object, it explored that which was revealed through a participative, visual ethnography which may have been more challenging to address through more common methods, such as relying on the interview alone (Pink, 2006). The visual dimension gave me access to part of the participant's world which would have been obscured through interview, allowing me to see what the participants saw, as they experienced it. This brought me into the site at the experiential level, during the process of its expression, allowing lines of enquiry to be explored during interview that an interviewee may not have raised themselves. The exploration worked in conjunction with time, to re-look at practices and processes; and with space, allowing me to explore new spatial contexts of expression. The ethnography therefore aided with the inductive research process, by helping to reveal the embodiment of entrepreneurship as its primary mode when we consider its everyday expression. That is, the methodology allowed me as a researcher to experience the world as imagined by the entrepreneurs: bodily, socio-materially, heterogeneously, presently, and not primarily articulated through language.

As such, the three papers contribute to different intellectual traditions across entrepreneurship and organisation studies, blurring conceptual lines between them (Casson, 2005; Mason & Harvey, 2013), and shining a light on how an

understanding developed in one can help deepen insights into the other (Hjorth et al., 2015). This conclusion to the thesis does not attempt to restate those theoretical and empirical contributions, but rather it reflects upon what the combined learnings tell us about entrepreneurship and incubators, and its implications for organisations.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. I first progress my discussion of the ethnographic method to deepen our understanding of incubators from being inert containers of dissociated entrepreneurial processes, to being enacted performance spaces which allow people to daily define themselves as being entrepreneurs. This discussion then leads to a further consideration of the material, picking up from paper 3 (symbols) and reflecting on findings from the other two papers to define a distinct role for the non-verbal in how entrepreneurs develop their own understanding. My concluding remarks explore the implications of this theorising for our understanding of the boundaries of entrepreneurship and entrepreneuring.

5.2 Theorising incubators

This thesis started by recognising that entrepreneurial spaces, including incubators, had not yet been well served by process approaches. This is largely because the dominant approach has focused on the economic benefits of reducing geographic distance between companies (Campbell & Allen, 1987; Smilor & Gill, 1986). In process terms, that approach assumes the destination of the process to be economic success (Anderson, 2015), and then lends epistemological privilege to that destination. This is a problematic view of incubators because it places the process of entrepreneurship as a future state that exists beyond the incubator, in a time-space when the firm has achieved

economic success and left the incubator. By viewing entrepreneurship as a future state, it fails to engage with the process of entrepreneuring as it occurs in the present (Hjorth et al., 2015; Steyaert, 2007a) and so we miss the opportunity to understand the role of entrepreneurial spaces in this process. Furthermore, by considering this future state as a singular output, that of economic success, we assume a disciplined, linear march in which companies either succeed or fail to make progress. As a theory of organising, this ignores the social construction of process where non-linear processes may emerge towards other ends (Meyer et al., 2005). Taking inspiration from strategy-as-practice (Carter et al., 2008), these concerns have surfaced within the emerging field of entrepreneurship-as-practice (Thompson et al., 2020), to which this thesis contributes by developing theory of this entrepreneurial space.

When studying incubators as a linear progression, the future state is often articulated in the present through entrepreneurs' storytelling to investors and stakeholders (Chapple et al., 2021). Mostly these stories are told through discourse, but they can also be supported with material aids (Clarke, 2011). These stories are often revealed during pitching events where entrepreneurs secure resources by telling convincing stories about their future states (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), and the performance always carries a sense of deception (Goffman, 1973) because of the inherent uncertainty of the future. The storytelling is therefore an attempt to close the legitimacy gap between the entrepreneur's current state and their claimed future state, where their ability to tell convincing stories is critical in securing resources (Garud et al., 2014).

However in this incubator, these stories were rarely told. Whilst everyday storytelling can often be a meaning-making device (Maclean et al., 2015), I found a general temperance against such predictions, suiting the understated nature of

their original habitus (Bourdieu, 2010). By researching what actually happens in social contexts, rather than what rationally ought to happen (Karp, 2006), I found that their bodily and material experience of life in the incubator allowed them to conduct projects that did not directly lie on the linear process towards economic success. In these papers, I explored these emergent processes through entrepreneurship as a class project, or an aesthetic experience, or a change in the relationship with work where it is brought closer to other parts of their lives. Across all three papers there is a theme of organizing power which is never precisely or overtly articulated, so allows for these divergent processes within the organizing (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018; Quattrone, 2017). In the first paper addressing class, habitus acted pre-reflexively to create the space as a class project, whilst in the second paper directly addressing space, I coined the term 'spatial nudging' to describe this ambiguous power. The final paper focused on visual symbols and exemplified the organizing power of imaginative ambiguity.

Further studies will, of course, illuminate many other divergent processes within an incubator, but the value of the range of papers in this study is to reveal how the performance space of the incubator allows for a multitude of non-linear, recursive and even playful processes within an overall linear process of progressing beyond the incubator. The social construction of these processes implies a rejection of a singularly economic rationalist assumption (Karataş-Özkan, 2011), yet all three papers suggest spatial processes with which we could develop a deeper understanding of incubators. As a counter-factual question (Durand & Vaara, 2009), we might wonder if these processes would be similar without an entrepreneurial space like this incubator. For instance, the daily, experiential social interaction of the entrepreneurs that drove the empirics in this study would be absent to an entrepreneur working alone from a home office. If we are to take social constructionism seriously, we ought to be able to develop a theory of entrepreneurial spaces by their material, embodied, affective and minor

configurations, rather than lapsing into economic rationalism (cf. Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Karp, 2006; Stam, 2015; Taylor & Spicer, 2007).

Having identified both linear and recursive processes within the incubator, we can also identify two types of space. The first type acknowledges the incubator as a container (Butcher, 2018) and is the types of space that Deleuze and Guattari termed 'smooth space' as formless, nomadic and free-flowing (Deleuze, 2013). As outlined in the second paper on space, incubator theory has often assumed the space as open and free-flowing and then studies often leave the concept of space behind whilst it explores the sayings and doings contained within the incubator. However, Deleuzian approaches alert us to the power dimensions of space and across the three papers we can see how this smooth space has released entrepreneurs from the linearity that much of entrepreneurship theory assumes. It is by being in this type of unorganized space that entrepreneurs are able to move freely across dimensions of space: physically, mentally, and imaginatively (Lefebvre, 1991). This allows them to interrogate the incubator and find the in-betweens and the undiscovered so, for example in the first paper, re-formulate an incubator as a place of a classing project.

The smoothness of the space also creates everyone in the incubator as a performer, making the body as a performed material where movement is an important experience of being (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013). Including movement of both performer and audience then generates a great deal of heterogeneity, not only because every audience member experiences a daily performance that is unique to them, but also because so much of the understanding of the perception of this reality occurs internally (Maclean et al., 2015). This dynamic was most fully explored in the last paper on symbols, but it

can also be seen in the first paper as people consumed aspects of class-based tastes and ethics through interactions in different areas of the incubator. In the Deleuzian view, this freedom is how smooth space generates heterogeneity (Deleuze, 2013, p. 431), yet one of the common misconceptions is that such spaces are therefore free from the effects of power (Munro & Thanem, 2017). Deleuze later clarified that such spaces allow for 'societies of control' (Deleuze, 1992) where power pervades the space, ever present always affectual. This is the essence of the first paper addressing class, where entrepreneurship as a venture for the privileged class pervades the incubator and becomes part of the cultural toolkit (Swindler, 1986) for becoming an entrepreneur (Steyaert, 2007a). The people, as entrepreneurs in that space, become expected to have the tastes and ethics of that class. Jill found this expectation when navigating the social etiquette of using phones in this smooth space, so although such spaces allow for the exploration of the new, there is a locally-developed societal control which closes off certain explorations and practices. It is also the essence of exclusion, where the societal, class-based control excludes the underprivileged class (Ashley & Empson, 2013).

This type of 'smooth' control also occurs with more traditional conceptions of entrepreneurship. By being in the incubator and experiencing the daily performances, actors 'see' other entrepreneurs every day and develop a definition of successful entrepreneurship. In this incubator, this led to local ideas of entrepreneurship as primarily technology-based, with an ethical dimension. Furthermore, the propensity to have public celebrations of company acquisitions led to the understanding that this was the purpose of creating a new venture. The incubator as a society of control therefore re-introduces a linearity to the space, even when only considered as a container, where there is an expectation in the incubator of a particular form of entrepreneurship with a particular destination. This was more obliquely addressed as the expression of regional cultures in

entrepreneurship (Gill & Larson, 2014), but here it is as the effect of power that is developed socially within the incubator.

The other type of Deleuzian space is striated space, which are spaces of hierarchy and division. I explored striated space in the second paper on space, where the fixing and spatial arrangements exerted a power to inculcate a sense of enticement and progression amongst the entrepreneurs. This intimate spatial analysis had rarely been conducted in incubators, with the exception of a few studies which assessed whether the intimate spatial contributed to achieving the linear assumptions of entrepreneurship (e.g. Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005; Chan & Lau, 2005). One of the contributions of my paper was to show how space can be used to present images of entrepreneurship, either through its fixed event space demonstrating entrepreneurship as networking and knowledge sharing, or by the internal routes causing flows of people that turned them into performers. The striations in the incubator therefore act similarly to the mis-en-scene in Clarke's (2011) study, by organising a daily presentation of entrepreneurship. In the space paper I termed this 'spatial nudging' and it is a way that striations can control the daily experience and introduce a linearity to an otherwise smooth space. Whilst in a smooth space the entrepreneurs may be free to 'see' different aspects of entrepreneurship, in this striated space they are nudged to 'see' the version of entrepreneurship that the space presents to them.

It may be tempting to view striated space as one of conformity and control, because it is described as the space of the 'royal science', where the state attempts to place order upon society and induce homogeneity (Deleuze, 2013). However, we can draw upon the view here that striations help to create mis-en-scene within the incubator to understand that striations can allow for heterogeneity. We can consider the incubator itself as a striation within the city

because as much as a container contains, its boundaries also separate from the outside city. The incubator therefore becomes a site of entrepreneurship as distinct from the rest of the city so, as explored across the three papers, the processes and practices within the incubator become understood as the process and practices of entrepreneurship. When Gwen crossed the boundary into the incubator, she understood herself to be within a site of entrepreneurship and this stimulated her lengthy process of identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) as she become accustomed to wearing jeans. The striation of the incubator boundary *stimulated* the play, rather than restricted it. Daniel Hjorth memorably described these spaces as Foucauldian heterotropia (Hjorth, 2005) where rules within organisations can be suspended for the development of *homo ludens,* but here we see it applied to the entire entity where this incubator is such a striation that stimulates play.

This incubator is therefore a combination of smooth and striated spaces, both of which have characteristics of freedom and control. This tension can be explained through Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that all spaces are multiplicities of smooth and striated spaces which continually interact. In their words, 'a multiplicity is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension, but by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in "intension"' (Deleuze, 2013, p. 286). The 'lines and dimensions' of the incubator explored in this thesis include class, identity, ethics, play, the purpose of work, and others. They all exist as the 'intension' as stimulated by the interaction and imbrication of smooth and striated spaces, which manifests as both linear and recursive processes. The multiplicity works by exerting these forces of freedom and control so that 'a becoming is not a correspondence between relations…to become is not to progress or regress along a series' (Deleuze, 2013, p. 277). Entrepreneurs in this study do not undergo a process of becoming by adopting a linear process (Steyaert, 2007a),

but instead move linearly and recursively to create a process of becoming that is both controlled by their environment, and yet unique to them. Throughout, there is a tension between rebellion and conformity which allows entrepreneurs to negotiate their 'lines' of fitting in to and sticking out from community ideals of the entrepreneur (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). The view of the incubator as this multiplicity also supports our starting point of the Russian Doll model as only an analytical tool, rather than a conceptual reality (Taylor & Spicer, 2007).

Taking this analysis of the incubator, it is useful to reflect upon other types of entrepreneurial space. We must first respect the data collected here by acknowledging that this cannot be a full analysis of spaces that were not studied, but instead can act as the lines by which a typology of entrepreneurial spaces may be developed. It is often described that incubators have been replaced by accelerators, and that the latter are distinguished by their limited time duration, cohort-based programmes, and specified achievement milestones (Cohen et al., 2019). By the analysis here, accelerators are attempts at the 'royal science' to impose a linearity with strict control measures which 'accelerate' them towards economic success. There seems to be little room for the spatial multiplicity in the concept, suggesting that it is an idealized, or 'pure' model. At the other extreme, entrepreneurial ecosystems are loose, 'social, economic, political, and cultural contexts that support high-growth entrepreneurship within a region' (Spigel, 2017). The linearity is recognized by the high-growth intention, but otherwise there is very little structure to the space (Stam & van de Ven, 2021; Stam, 2015). Entrepreneurial ecosystems may include what Deleuze would term 'lines and dimensions' (Deleuze, 2013), such as networking, finance, talent, culture and others (Stam, 2015), but theory lacks the clear striations of, for instance, a mediating instrument (Jeacle & Carter, 2012) which would impose control and linearity on the process. In this Deleuzian typology, an incubator sits as a multiplicity between the pure types of accelerator and ecosystem. It may be

possible, with further study, to plot entrepreneurial spaces along their spatial dimensions. For instance, a science park in which entrepreneurs work in fixed offices with fixed objectives might be considered as a heavily striated, whereas a co-working hub might be closer to a smooth space. Such a typology could be used to critique the spaces and stimulate further research. If, for instance, an accelerator is theorised as an idealised straited space, we may inquire into its scope for play and change. Without spaces for play and recursive processes, scholars may wish to question whether this is truly an entrepreneurial exploration of the new (Spinosa et al., 1997), or whether accelerators are only mechanisms that encourage new venture monetisation. Alternatively, these 'pure types' of entrepreneurial space could be critiqued theoretically for failing to account for the multiplicities which exist in social worlds (Buchanan & Lambert, 2007; Deleuze, 2013).

5.3 Epistemologies of the non-verbal

Moving further down the spatial hierarchy of Russian dolls illuminates how these different expressions of entrepreneurship emerge within this space. A performance consists of more than just performer and script and it is the *mis-en-scene* that requests settings and props to support the performance (Goffman, 1973). However, these non-verbal expressions provide more to entrepreneurial performances than mere support for the verbal. In both bodily-expressed social class and through symbols, entrepreneurs use the incubator to express their version of entrepreneurship, which often lie in between precise categorization or traditional understandings of entrepreneurship. For instance, the collective expression of a privileged class through habitus allows the actors to think of their material tastes as part of fitting in to that social space (Spence et al., 2017). For some, these tastes become part of entrepreneurship, whilst for others it reflects

previous lives. This leads to in-betweenness in the meaning of entrepreneurship, where for some it is a project of class reorientation, whilst for others the class is less important and they pursue a new aesthetic. Similarly, through their relationship with materials the actors were able to explore entrepreneurship as firm growth, as 'entrepreneurial cool', as a coders' aesthetic, 'relaxed', as play, as emancipation, and many others. These materials are incomplete objects because they resist common definition, so can have multiple meanings as constituted by the actors: one actor's meaning may therefore be invisible to another (Quattrone et al., 2021). This hides their individualised meanings from public interaction in a way that the verbal mode would struggle to do.

This visual mode suits the nature of the incubator as recursive because sustaining the incompleteness of the visual creates holistic meanings with generative outcomes, whereas the verbal mode is defined and linear (ibid.). The verbal mode would define entrepreneurship precisely, stealing from the entrepreneurs the opportunity to seek generative directions in spaces of play (Hjorth et al., 2018) and constitute their performances of entrepreneurship through the visual (Quattrone et al., 2021). A primarily visual mode allows the entrepreneur to suspend the definition of terms and to use the everyday to dwell upon an anomaly, to test it out and seek new meanings in the invisible spaces of its incompleteness, to understand its strangeness, before eventually bringing its value to bear (Spinosa et al., 1997). I have used a similar technique in this thesis, by not defining entrepreneurship at the start, and allowing its definition to gradually reveal itself through the empirics.

I expand on the term 'visual mode' to include expressions that allow for the retention of imagination and play through its lack of precise articulation. This has included the material (e.g. clothing), spatial (e.g. including movement and arrangements), kinesthetic (e.g. being in the incubator), auditory (e.g. accents) and olfactory (e.g. the taste of coffee). However, these are often interrelated. For instance, symbolic relations can exist between master concepts, such as class, and 'material' such as coffee, but it is the bodily experience of tasting that coffee which creates it as that material. In our process thinking, the material and the experience of that material are as one. There is the possibility of completing the list by adding the haptic mode, but the importance is that the sense should allow for dwelling on an anomaly and divergent imagining. This is difficult through the verbal because as soon as we start to talk about entrepreneurship, we define it for our audience. However, as shown across all three papers, when entrepreneurs interact with non-verbal objects of entrepreneurship, there is no such definition for the audience and the meaning resides in the imagination. These imaginings can even act pre-reflexively through their habitus projects, so, for instance, when I as a researcher articulated to entrepreneurs the potential for entrepreneurship to act as a class project, they treated it as a new thought, and one which they wished to reject, despite them having embarked on such projects materially.

5.4 New directions for entrepreneurship

These findings push us further towards an understanding of entrepreneurship as transformation itself (Hjorth et al., 2015), with little concern for the destination. The dominant narratives of entrepreneurship as an economic endeavor existed outside the incubator, whilst the experience of being in the incubator was

primarily non-verbal and experiential, allowing them to develop very different understandings of entrepreneurship.

Given the prevalence of metaphor in entrepreneurship (Clarke et al., 2014; Dodd, 2002), it may be useful to explore this view of entrepreneurship as a metaphor or analogy. This thesis propounds the idea of entrepreneurship of multiple processes within an overall process. There is a linearity driven by the myths of entrepreneurship and it does have meaning through being an attractor (Steyaert, 2007a). However, within that wrapper, the incubator allows for a variety of other practices, processes and routines that are either specific view of entrepreneurship, such as viewing entrepreneurship as a primarily social-ethical pursuit, or are seemingly unrelated to entrepreneurship and with a different directionality, such as when it is used as a class project. These internal processes are nevertheless still driven by being in the incubator as a place of entrepreneurship. For instance, the class project needed the narratives of entrepreneurship-as-emancipation for it to occur. The analogy I use to describe this dynamic is that of a cruise ship. Imagine such a vessel on a journey from the UK to the USA. It certainly has a linearity to it and can be considered a mode of transport from origin to destination. However, such a narrow view misunderstands the experience of its passengers who engage in all manner of activities during the voyage. Some will play chess, others will expand their intellectual horizons by attending lecture series. Others may embark on journeys of other kinds, perhaps by falling in love with another passenger, or marking their transition to retirement by embarking on an adventure. All of these practices and processes need the cruise ship to occur, both as a phenomenon and as a spatial setting, yet are not themselves linear modes of transport. Indeed, the destination may be irrelevant for some passengers: they may disembark at New York, go straight to JFK airport and fly home.

Let us now consider the effects of narratives on the cruise ship. What would happen if the daily experience onboard was not of the different material, spatial and bodily experiences of their chess, lectures and so forth? If the narrative of the journey to New York became their everyday, the journey becomes something else. The passengers would talk all the time of New York and it becomes the purpose of the cruise ship, dominating their daily lives, whilst the other activities become distractions to while away the time during the journey. Once the narratives from a site external to the cruise ship (New York) dominate the space, then the power of the non-verbal to generate new meaning gets subsumed. The cruise ship has become something else, and something singular: a mode of transport to New York. In that case, the passengers would quickly wonder if there were a more efficient mode of transport, such as flight. Eventually, and possibly with exponential alacrity, the passengers seek more efficient modes of transport in pursuit of the destination-orientated narrative and switch to flying to New York. The opportunity to learn chess or enjoy their lecture series falls away as a forgotten opportunity. Narratives of the destination have made the journey all about the destination, and little else can be explored that is not in direct pursuit of that objective.

It is the same with entrepreneurship. The idea of entrepreneurship functions to stimulate the imagination and structure the present transformation of the actors, but was not itself a destination with a commonly-agreed articulation. The idea of entrepreneurship must exist as a disciplinary power to act as that stimulant, so that it is a conceptually meaningful common project. Entrepreneurship is an organizer in the same way that the shipping lane from the UK to New York organizes the passengers to conduct activities they would not otherwise have done. One of the key contributions of this thesis is to emphasize the importance

of ambiguity of this organizer to afford these other, non-linear projects. Only through the ambiguity of entrepreneurship may actors remain free to fully explore full meaning of entrepreneurship as an exploration of the new and transform in new ways. This is a similar idea to as discussed with the non-verbal mode, and they act in concert as a generative experience. Time-based studies of entrepreneurship suggest it as a journey where 'the unit of explanation should be the entire process, with all its twists and turns. When the entrepreneurial journey is discussed as a flow of events and actions, each event/action constitutes an indelible part of how the process has played out and is sensitive to the history that preceded it' (McMullen & Dimov, 2013, pp. 1504-1505). In this view, the journey can have divergent and convergent activities (Van de Ven et al., 1999), yet these activities always try to move towards the same, economic ends (Johannisson, 2009). When we bring in space, these divergent activities can become dissociated from this destination, just as our cruise ship passengers may define the meaning of their journey through activities dissociated from New York. Our passengers may not even be interested in New York, as our entrepreneurs may have little interest in exiting the incubator to become a financially successful firm. However, without New York there is no journey: without entrepreneurship as an organizer, there are none of the processes, practices and routines that have been explored in this thesis.

If not a mode of transport, we may ask what a cruise ship is. If not about creating firms, what meaning can we give to entrepreneurship? Critically, it means different things to different people. As long as entrepreneurship can remain as an undefined, incomplete organizer, it retains its generative capacity through ambiguity. We can therefore look beyond entrepreneurship as organization creation (Hjorth et al., 2015) to understand it as a non-verbal process of exploring the in-between and anonymous. Spinosa et al. (1997) explored this idea by using 'entrepreneur' as being engaged in organization-creation, and yet accepted that

their other examples of the virtuous citizen and culture figure are 'fundamentally the same' (p. 68). Entrepreneurship can therefore be enacted in any situation, which demonstrates that the academic bounds between entrepreneurship and organizational studies have little epistemological or ontological veracity. The myths of entrepreneurship may act as organizers (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2003), but the processes of disclosing new worlds are the same (Spinosa et al., 1997) across contexts (Welter et al., 2019).

5.5 Limitations

This thesis was not designed as a comparative study between different ontologies of entrepreneurship, but it merely asserts what it does from a single study site and then reflects upon other ways that entrepreneurship is treated. The assertions I make rely rather heavily on philosophies that make totalizing assertions of universal ontology, either of all space being social (Lefebvre, 1991), or 'the collective is constituted through shared symbols' (Kornberger, forthcoming, p. 100). Further research may like to create a design that progresses this theorizing by setting deliberately comparative studies between the non-verbal and verbal, or between bodily expressions and non-verbal expressions beyond the body. Such a research design might address how entrepreneurs consume narratives and how they consume material manifestations in their development. For example, this was addressed in the paper 3 on symbols and identity through Pedro's experience, but it was only an indication of the difference between the two and the paper's lens was firmly on the material. Whilst socio-materiality is a well-advanced science, this study points to more research to be done on socio-materiality within entrepreneurship.

The thesis is also limited by being only one case. By its own admission, the incubator was new and an exceptional case within an emerging technology scene. I suggest that this gives an interesting research site, perhaps even an extreme case (Eisenhardt, 1989), but it is not clear if the salient findings are generalizable. As a social construction, one may expect a natural variation between incubators of course, but the newness of the incubator also confers a variable which may exist only in an initial, transitory sense, and may not exist in more mature, or different, incubators (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). As an example, the incubator acted as a forum for the privileged class to assert themselves, yet much of the initial entry into the incubator was through social networks, which would naturally induce a social homophily. Perhaps a more established incubator may shed those beginnings and become more reflective of the totality of its surrounding environs through the churn of recruitment. Furthermore, I note that the surrounding city of Edinburgh has a strong and established privileged class, but it is not clear if the classing within the incubator reflects Edinburgh's class system, or the propensity of entrepreneurship to act as class system. These concerns could be addressed through comparative or longitudinal studies.

The unit of study could also be expanded to gain a deeper perspective. I propose the incubator's material significance, yet I have left the surrounding ecosystem suggested as a different mode of entrepreneurship. Further research could investigate these different types of spaces and the links between them. There could be value in empirically understanding the effects of different types of entrepreneurial spaces on entrepreneurs and entrepreneuring. Most significantly, this research points to a greater exploration of entrepreneuring outside formally designated institutions, such as business startups. If entrepreneuring is the discovery of the new through the exploration of ambiguity, it holds great promise to reside across our social worlds. We may like to explore organisations more in this vein, but even greater insight could be gained by exploring ambiguity in the

emergence of new ideas and new practices in other areas. We may ask where new forms of music and art emerge from, or new social attitudes. This thesis suggests at spatial and material approaches to such questions, rather than relying on narrative accounts. Indeed, non-narrative approaches may prove instrumental in unlocking entrepreneurial potential in a wide array of social phenomena. This thesis promotes the idea of accessing actors' entrepreneurial worlds as they daily experience them: visually, affectively and presently. It suggests we limit our understanding when we access those worlds through language, or textual transcripts of language, and as reflections on the past.

5.6 References

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