
Nascent entrepreneurs' motives as antecedent of culture in entrepreneurial ecosystems

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Abstract: Identifying entrepreneurial culture in a broader way as a part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem dimension is a challenging task, as there is no consensus on the definition and dimensions of this construct. There have been attempts to define what entrepreneurial culture is. The cultural dimensions traditionally related to entrepreneurial activity are the common trait for the two discourses is that nascent motives in combination of individual traits as bricolage are antecedents of an entrepreneurial culture. The aim of this study is threefold, first; to identify nascent entrepreneurial archetypes and their constituent communities within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, second; analyze how nascent entrepreneurial archetypes motives act as antecedent form an understanding of culture in communities that form entrepreneurial ecosystems and finally; Identify a suggest a future research agenda for understanding culture and its composition in entrepreneurial ecosystem, furthermore, contributing and lay the foundation for comparative studies enabling a further advancement how to identify boundaries, layers individual, communities and system as well as the utility for the individual – context nexus within entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial ecosystem; Culture; Nascent entrepreneurial motives; Entrepreneurial archetypes; Communities

1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship research has increasingly moved beyond explaining local differences in firm entry rates toward understanding entrepreneurship as a systemic and context-dependent process embedded within entrepreneurial ecosystems (Lindelöf, 2002; Löfsten and Lindelöf, 2002; Stam, 2015; Stam and Spigel, 2016; Audretsch et al., 2019). In parallel, the innovation management literature highlights that innovation emerges from interactive systems of actors, knowledge flows, and institutional arrangements rather than isolated firm-level efforts (Tidd and Bessant, 2021; Chesbrough, 2003). From this integrated perspective, entrepreneurial activity is shaped not only by individuals but also by local configurations of resources, institutions, and innovation infrastructures that jointly influence the quantity, quality, and direction of entrepreneurship and innovation. Empirical studies consistently show that local context plays a decisive role in shaping entrepreneurial behavior, based for opportunity recognition, innovation performance, and growth, particularly through culture (Spigel, 2017; Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Autio et al., 2014).

Despite the growing prominence of the entrepreneurial ecosystem concept, there remains limited understanding of how behavioral entrepreneurial characteristics, such as human capital, experience, and demographic attributes, interact with macro-level ecosystem conditions to generate entrepreneurial outcomes, such as culture (Brown and Mawson, 2019). While ecosystems are frequently invoked as

explanatory frameworks, empirical research often treats individuals and contexts separately, offering only partial insight into the mechanisms through which individual action shapes ecosystem structure where behavior to its expression becomes the antecedent of culture. As such, in this paper, culture in entrepreneurial ecosystems are formed by the dynamic of interaction among individuals, communities, and institutions (Lindelöf 2002; Alvedalen and Boschma 2017)

Identifying entrepreneurial culture in a broader way as a part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem dimension is a challenging task, as there is no consensus on the definition and dimensions of culture as a construct. There have been attempts to define what entrepreneurial culture is (Murphy, 2023). Existing empirical work on entrepreneurship in contexts and ecosystems largely follows two complementary but incomplete approaches. The first examines aggregate levels of entrepreneurial activity, top-down perspective. In this perspective, culture from an entrepreneurial ecosystem is operationalized as number of individuals in a population that becomes an entrepreneur, e.g. starting a company, with the indicators of entrepreneurial orientation in relation to high growth as a semantic denominator (OECD 2025). Furthermore, its relation to innovation and competitive dynamics (Acs et al., 2017; Stam and van de Ven, 2021). This stream of thought in advancing understanding of contextual heterogeneity, the top-to bottom approach tends to rely on aggregated indicators that obscure the behavioral role of, and semantic differentiation of individual entrepreneurs in forming a context (Hayton and Cacciotti, 2013). The second approach, which this study follows, explains contextual variation by analyzing differences in attributes of individuals from bottom-up approach. Defining culture as dependent of behavior and its relation to entrepreneurial configuration of archetypes (Becker, 1964). Culture is subsequently formed as bricolage of antecedents (community) of entrepreneurial behavior depending on why individuals start firm and archetype configuration (Gill, 2013; Urban and Kujinga, 2013; Lloyd 2019; Scazziota et al. 2023).

Advancing our understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystem therefore requires explicitly linking and integration individual with institutional and behavioral configurations with the context. Integration is essential for developing a new instrumental understanding of how entrepreneurship, culture and communities with the system co-evolve (Alvedalen and Boschma, 2017; Brown and Mason, 2017). Following questions and purpose are addressed in this paper:

- Is it possible to identify nascent entrepreneurial archetypes and their constituent cultural communities within an entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- If, so how do nascent entrepreneurial archetypes motives act as antecedent form an understanding of culture in communities that form entrepreneurial ecosystems – bricolage of culture?
- What is the role of innovation/creativity in forming the entrepreneurial ecosystem communities.
- Identify and suggest a future research agenda for understanding culture as a construct and its composition in entrepreneurial ecosystem, furthermore, contributing to a further advancement of a typology of

communities in entrepreneurial ecosystems system as dependent of utility of exchanges as well as for boundary conditions and layers.

2 Theoretical background

2.1. Entrepreneurial ecosystem

Recent scholarship on entrepreneurial ecosystems points to persistent conceptual ambiguities, particularly regarding causal mechanisms and the heterogeneity of ecosystem configurations across contexts. While the concept has gained prominence, it often lacks analytical clarity in explaining how ecosystem components interact and evolve over time (Alveson and Boschma 2017). As a response, several scholars have adopted systems-based perspectives, drawing on complexity theory and evolutionary economics to conceptualize entrepreneurial ecosystems as dynamic and interdependent systems rather than static collections of actors and institutions (Lindelöf 2002; Roundy et al., 2018; Lindelöf and Hellberg, 20023).

This system-oriented view emphasizes the importance of relational structures, shared norms, and institutional arrangements in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. Entrepreneurial behavior is thus embedded within localized social and cultural contexts that both enable and constrain opportunity recognition and venture creation (Spigel and Harrison, 2018). From this perspective, ecosystems are not merely defined by their constituent elements, such as firms, universities, or support organizations, but by the quality of interactions and coordination among these elements (Colombo et al., 2019).

To advance understanding of these dynamics, scholars increasingly argue for a multi-level analytical approach that bridges individual entrepreneurial action with meso- and macro-level structures. Focusing solely on system-level characteristics risks obscuring how entrepreneurs interpret, navigate, and reshape their environments (Autio et al., 2014). Conversely, micro-level analyses that neglect institutional and social contexts provide an incomplete picture of ecosystem functioning. Entrepreneurial ecosystems therefore emerge through the co-evolution of individual agency and structural conditions, where social capital, governance arrangements, and institutional thickness play a central role (Bichler et al., 2022).

While ecosystems exert strong influence over entrepreneurial behavior, individual entrepreneurs are not passive recipients of contextual forces. Through strategic action, network-building, and institutional work, entrepreneurs can actively modify their environments and reduce structural constraints, particularly in less developed or peripheral ecosystems (Malecki, 2018). This highlights the adaptive nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems and underscores the importance of agency in ecosystem transformation, where the understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems requires attention to how individual behavior interacts with broader contextual factors. Early-stage entrepreneurial intentions with an entrepreneurial ecosystem are shaped by the alignment between personal human capital, demographic characteristics, and behavior (Bosma et al., 2018). A comprehensive ecosystem approach must therefore integrate individual-level motivations with structural and relational dimensions to capture the dynamic

processes through which entrepreneurial activity emerges and is sustained over time.

2.2. Entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurial culture

Entrepreneurial culture is widely understood as a constellation of shared values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral expectations that collectively encourage and legitimize entrepreneurial activity within a given social, organizational, or spatial context. It shapes how individuals perceive opportunities, assess risk, and respond to uncertainty, thereby influencing both the intensity and forms of entrepreneurial behavior (Urbano, Aparicio, & Audretsch, 2019). The theoretical roots of entrepreneurial culture can be traced to Schumpeter's theory of economic development, which conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a driver of economic change through processes of innovation and creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934). Contemporary scholarship extends this view by emphasizing the cultural conditions that legitimize experimentation, novelty, and deviation from established routines. Cultural environments that normalize innovation and tolerate failure are therefore more likely to stimulate entrepreneurial activity (Acs, Estrin, Mickiewicz, & Szerb, 2018). Similarly, opportunity-based perspectives on entrepreneurship highlight the importance of cultural norms that promote initiative, proactiveness, and adaptive behavior (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Stevenson & Jarillo, 2007).

Culture in entrepreneurial ecosystems is frequently underpinned by two implicit assumptions: the relative homogeneity of high-performance firms within ecosystems and the primacy of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) as a universal cultural driver of performance (Miller, 1983; Covin and Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Within this dominant perspective, culture is often operationalized through firm-level strategic postures, such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, thereby conflating ecosystem culture with the EO construct. This approach overlooks the growing body of ecosystem scholarship that conceptualizes culture as a shared, yet heterogeneous, system of values, norms, motivations and role expectations embedded in local contexts (Löfsten and Lindelöf, 2002; Isenberg, 2010; Spigel, 2017).

Empirical evidence challenges the assumed universality of EO as a cultural proxy. Lindelöf (2002) demonstrates that the relationship between EO and performance is not self-evident. In a population of high-technology firms characterized by substantial inventive activity and above average performance, EO was related to performance only through a mediating effect of motivation. These findings indicate that adherence to EO alone is insufficient to generate superior performance, thereby questioning the assumption of firm homogeneity within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Instead, performance outcomes were more strongly associated with motivational dynamics, aligning with entrepreneurship research that emphasizes the central role of individual and collective motivation in shaping entrepreneurial behavior (Shane, Locke and Collins, 2003; Deci and Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, from an ecosystem culture perspective, these findings suggest that cultural effects operate not merely through uniform strategic orientations, but through differentiated motivational logics across actors and organizational archetypes (Gill, 2013). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are increasingly understood as culturally pluralistic systems composed of diverse

actors such as growth-oriented ventures, lifestyle firms, corporate actors and support organizations each embedded in distinct cultural and motivational configurations (Spigel, 2017; Roundy, Bradshaw and Brockman, 2018). Culture in this sense functions as an enabling or constraining mechanism that shapes how different actors interpret opportunities, mobilize resources and pursue performance within the ecosystem.

With motivational factors in relation to heterogeneity, conceptualized through archetypal dimensions, to advance understanding of culture in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Shifts the analytical focus from EO as a dominant cultural construct to motivation-based cultural differentiation, pinpointing how cultural heterogeneity, rather than cultural uniformity, underpins ecosystem dynamics and performance outcomes. Within entrepreneurial ecosystem frameworks, culture is conceptualized as a foundational enabling condition that interacts with institutional and resource-based elements to shape entrepreneurial behavior. Lindelöf (2002) and Isenberg's (2011) ecosystem models explicitly identifies culture, as a core pillar influencing entrepreneurial activity. At the community levels, entrepreneurial culture manifests. Behaviors are sustained through ecosystem-based interactions and organizational practices, including leadership behavior, routines, and shared assumptions that guide the individual (Schein & Schein, 2017). Together, start-up motive shapes the entrepreneurial culture within entrepreneurial ecosystem, as entrepreneurial behavior by aligning individual aspirations with socially legitimized and institutionally supported pathways to venture creation. In sum, entrepreneurial culture represents a multidimensional construct operating across individual, communities, and entrepreneurial ecosystem levels.

2.3. Entrepreneurial culture, communities and individual behavior

In relation to entrepreneurial communities, the concept of boundaries within entrepreneurial ecosystems offers a community-centric perspective that addresses critiques of firm-level boundary assumptions in entrepreneurship research. Rather than treating boundaries as fixed organizational attributes, this perspective emphasizes how entrepreneurial boundaries are socially constructed, negotiated, and enacted within communities and ecosystems (Feldman and Lowe, 2017; Spigel, 2017). Research on entrepreneurial communities suggests that boundaries emerge through shared practices, collective identity, and cultural norms, rather than through formal organizational demarcations alone (Brown and Mason, 2017; Roundy, 2017). Furthermore, within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneurial actors are embedded in communities that function as shared habitats, where each actor develops a distinct configuration shaped by their participation in networks, peer interactions, and community-based exchanges. These boundaries are influenced not only by industry, product, and market choices, but also by social capital, informal collaboration, legitimacy building, and access to shared knowledge within entrepreneurial communities (Stam and Van de Ven, 2021; Korsgaard et al., 2022). Consequently, actors experience differing degrees of access, influence, competence development, and identity formation depending on their embeddedness within community structures. At the community level, entrepreneurial actors collectively shape the entrepreneurial community itself. The community culture is emergent and relational, formed through interaction of individual behavior. Shared entrepreneurial collective narratives play a critical role in defining community culture and forms of

entrepreneurial behavior (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Audretsch et al., 2019). Similarly, the broader habitat, such as a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem or a trans local entrepreneurial community, are shaped through interactions among multiple entrepreneurial community populations (bricolage). These habitat-levels reflect localized configurations of behavior that gives and defines a cultural meaning that develop through bottom-up processes grounded in entrepreneurial practice (Thompson et al., 2018). Whether geographical or community-based, these contexts are enacted through participation, shared cognition, and collective sensemaking within the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Roundy et al., 2018).

Overall, the perspective underscores the central role of communities, and cultural embeddedness in shaping entrepreneurial ecosystem culture as **bricolage of cultures**. It advances an understanding of entrepreneurship ecosystem in which culture is continuously produced and reproduced through community interaction and collective meaning-making. From this standpoint, entrepreneurial ecosystems are best understood as outcomes of entrepreneurial community participation by individuals and their behavior.

2.4. Individual behavior and the formation of entrepreneurial archetypes as communities

Entrepreneurship research has long emphasized heterogeneity among entrepreneurs, with human capital and demographic characteristics serving as central explanatory lenses for distinguishing entrepreneurial archetypes. Human capital theory posits that individuals' knowledge, skills, and experiences shape opportunity recognition, venture creation processes, and performance outcomes (Becker, 1964). Demographic traits such as age, gender, education, and prior occupational experience, are frequently used as observable proxies for deeper cognitive and experiential differences among entrepreneurs. A dominant archetype in this stream is the high human capital entrepreneur, characterized by advanced formal education, industry-specific experience, and prior managerial or entrepreneurial exposure. These entrepreneurs are more likely to engage in opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, pursue innovation-oriented strategies, and found growth-oriented ventures (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Ucbasaran et al., 2008). Their accumulated human capital enhances opportunity recognition, access to resources, and legitimacy with external stakeholders, aligning them with scalable and knowledge-intensive business models.

In contrast, the low formal human capital or necessity-driven entrepreneur archetype is typically associated with lower educational attainment, limited industry experience, and constrained labor market alternatives. These entrepreneurs often enter self-employment as a response to unemployment or underemployment, emphasizing survival, income smoothing, and autonomy rather than growth or innovation (Reynolds et al., 2005; Block et al., 2015). Demographic factors such as younger age, immigrant status, or marginal labor market positioning frequently intersect with this archetype. Age-based human capital accumulation further differentiates entrepreneurial archetypes. Young entrepreneurs tend to possess higher levels of general human capital (e.g., education, digital skills) but lower levels of industry- and firm-specific experience, leading to experimentation and technology-driven ventures with higher failure variance (Levesque & Minniti, 2006). Older entrepreneurs, by contrast, often exhibit deeper experiential and social capital, fostering more

conservative opportunity selection and incremental innovation strategies (Kautonen et al., 2014). Gender-based archetypes have also emerged from demographic analyses. Research indicates that female entrepreneurs, on average, possess different human capital profiles often combining high educational attainment with interrupted career trajectories which influence sectoral choices, growth aspirations, and financing strategies (Brush et al., 2009). These patterns reflect structural and institutional constraints rather than inherent capability differences, reinforcing the importance of contextualizing demographic archetypes within broader social systems as communities. In a recent publication, Hopenhayn et al. (2022) found that demographics had a direct effect on the origins of entrepreneurial motivation, stressing therein the importance on the creation of new firms.

Overall, human capital and demographic approaches conceptualize entrepreneurial archetypes as probabilistic patterns rather than fixed types. Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes interaction effects between human capital, demographics, and institutional context, recognizing that entrepreneurial behavior evolves as individuals accumulate experience and reposition themselves across communities (Marvel et al., 2016).

2.5. Human capital, demographics, motivation and the formation of entrepreneurial archetypes

To theorize this heterogeneity, scholars have relied on typologies and archetypes that capture recurring configurations of entrepreneurial Building on this tradition, this subsection develops a theoretical framework linking entrepreneurial archetypes to the interaction of human capital endowments, demographic positioning, and start-up motives. Prior research has identified recurring archetypes such as opportunity-oriented innovators, lifestyle entrepreneurs, necessity entrepreneurs, serial entrepreneurs, and mission driven entrepreneurs (Ucbasaran et al., 2008; Wiklund et al., 2019).

Human capital theory provides a foundational explanation for variation in entrepreneurial behavior. Human capital defined as the knowledge, skills, and experience accumulated through education and work shapes individuals' capacity to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (Becker, 1964; Shane, 2003). In entrepreneurship research, human capital has been shown to influence opportunity recognition, venture creation processes, and performance outcomes (Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Unger et al., 2011). Importantly, entrepreneurial human capital is multidimensional, encompassing formal education, industry-specific experience, and prior entrepreneurial activity (Marvel et al., 2016). Individuals with high and specialized human capital are more likely to pursue innovation-oriented or growth-driven ventures, whereas those with limited or underutilized human capital tend to engage in imitative or necessity-based self-employment. From an archetypal perspective, human capital does not merely affect performance; it structures the range of entrepreneurial paths perceived as feasible and legitimate. Different endowments of human capital give rise to qualitatively distinct entrepreneurial roles, contributing to the emergence of recurring archetypal patterns rather than idiosyncratic entrepreneurial behavior.

Demographic characteristics further shape entrepreneurial archetypes by conditioning access to resources and opportunity structures. Factors such as age,

gender, socio-economic background, and migration status influence both the accumulation and deployment of human capital (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Jennings and Brush, 2013). Age is associated with variation in risk tolerance and experience, with younger individuals more inclined toward experimentation and older individuals more likely to leverage accumulated human and financial capital (Levesque and Minniti, 2006). Gendered institutional and cultural contexts affect sectoral participation, growth aspirations, and financing opportunities, contributing to persistent differences in entrepreneurial trajectories (Brush et al., 2018). Socio-economic background shapes risk-bearing capacity and the availability of safety nets, thereby influencing venture scale and strategic intent (Hurst and Lusardi, 2004). Rather than acting as direct causal determinants, demographic characteristics define structural constraint **sets** within which entrepreneurial choices are made. These constraints interact with human capital endowments to produce differentiated entrepreneurial archetypes, reinforcing patterned heterogeneity across the entrepreneurial population. Start-up motives represent the proximate mechanisms translating structural position and capability endowments into entrepreneurial action¹. Literature commonly distinguishes between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurship (Reynolds et al., 2005), while also recognizing motives related to autonomy, lifestyle, social impact, and self-realization (Douglas and Shepherd, 2002). These motivational orientations influence venture goals, growth intentions, and strategic behavior.

Crucially, entrepreneurial motives are not purely subjective preferences but contextually situated rationales shaped by perceptions of feasibility and desirability (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). Individuals' motivations reflect their assessment of available opportunities given their human capital and demographic constraints. For example, highly skilled individuals embedded in professional networks are more likely to articulate opportunity- and innovation driven motives, whereas individuals facing labor market exclusion may emphasize income generation and security. Motivations thus function as mediating mechanisms that stabilize archetypal configurations by aligning intentions with perceived capabilities and constraints. Integrating these perspectives, entrepreneurial archetypes can be conceptualized as ideal typical configurations arising from the interaction of human capital endowments, demographic positioning, and motivational orientations. These archetypes are analytical constructs rather than discrete empirical categories, and individuals may transition between them over time as capital endowments evolve and constraints change. Theoretically, this integrative view highlights entrepreneurship as a stratified and context dependent phenomenon. Entrepreneurial heterogeneity is not incidental but systematically produced through the interaction of capabilities, constraints, and motives. Recognizing entrepreneurial archetypes thus contributes to theory development by clarifying how individual-level characteristics translate into patterned forms of entrepreneurial behavior as culture, with implications for empirical operationalization as communities in entrepreneurial ecosystems.

¹ Number of individuals starting a company in a society is on an aggregated level considered to be a key indicator, if the most dimension with explanatory power, of how entrepreneurial a society is (Global entrepreneurship monitor 2004/2024). Start-up motives for individual then becomes crucial in understating entrepreneurial behavior and consequently entrepreneurial culture.

2.6. Summary of theory - Contextual model of the buildup of culture as bricolage in the entrepreneurial ecosystem

In terms of scale, the degree of embeddedness highlights the capacity for entrepreneurial activity within communities. In terms of scope, a key question concerns whether entrepreneurial milieus or ecosystems operate primarily at the local or regional level, or whether they extend nationally and globally, and how geographically dispersed configurations shape entrepreneurial outcomes. The interaction between scale and scope is contingent on the actors involved, the structure and density of networks, institutional constraints, and the configuration of market needs. At its core, entrepreneurship remains, though not exclusively, a locally grounded phenomenon, strongly embedded in community participation and context-based interactions (Spigel, 2017; Stam & van de Ven, 2021). Entrepreneurial activity is deeply intertwined with local culture, norms, and individual-level prerequisite skills, which continue to shape opportunity recognition and exploitation (Bosma et al., 2018; Audretsch et al., 2023). This perspective aligns with recent work emphasizing the relational and contextual nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems rather than viewing them as purely structural or policy driven constructs.

Malecki's (2018) argument that the biological analogy of ecosystems has gained traction remains influential, particularly when examining the interface between the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the entrepreneurial milieu, and individual agency. This perspective intersects with contemporary developments in social ecology and economic geography, which focus on the reciprocal relationship between people, organizations, and their environments (Neumeyer & Corbett, 2017). As Acs et al. (2018) contend, the ecosystem concept must be carefully adapted from biology to the social sciences to avoid overly deterministic interpretations. While the application of biological metaphors to social and economic systems remains problematic, scholars have increasingly sought to refine rather than abandon these analogies. Recent research has converged biological concepts such as ecosystems, habitats, and co-evolution with contextual and spatial-based theories of entrepreneurship (Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Malecki, 2018; Lindelöf & Hellberg, 2023). From this perspective, an entrepreneurial ecosystem comprising multiple communities can be understood holistically as a bounded, yet dynamic configuration shaped by physical, institutional, and socio-cultural conditions specific to a given territory.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems endowed with abundant resources and diverse opportunity structures, while simultaneously harboring competitive pressures, can be viewed as sub-systems within a broader environmental bricolage of communities (Roundy et al., 2017; Autio et al., 2018). When market conditions shift, organizations are exposed to competing demands that require new managerial approaches, adaptive capabilities, and strategic decision making under conditions of resource scarcity and uncertainty. The way these trade-offs are managed influences both the quality and quantity of competitive actors operating within a given entrepreneurial milieu or habitat. Neck et al.'s (2004) early notion of "mapping" entrepreneurial contexts has been extended in more

recent work that employs ecosystem mapping and network analysis to identify patterns of interaction among actors, populations, and sub-communities (Kuckertz, 2019). By examining individual behavior alongside the contextual sociology of place, it becomes possible to disentangle how varying degrees of embedded within communities shape an entrepreneurial ecosystem's broader capacity to develop, sustain, and pursue opportunities over time.

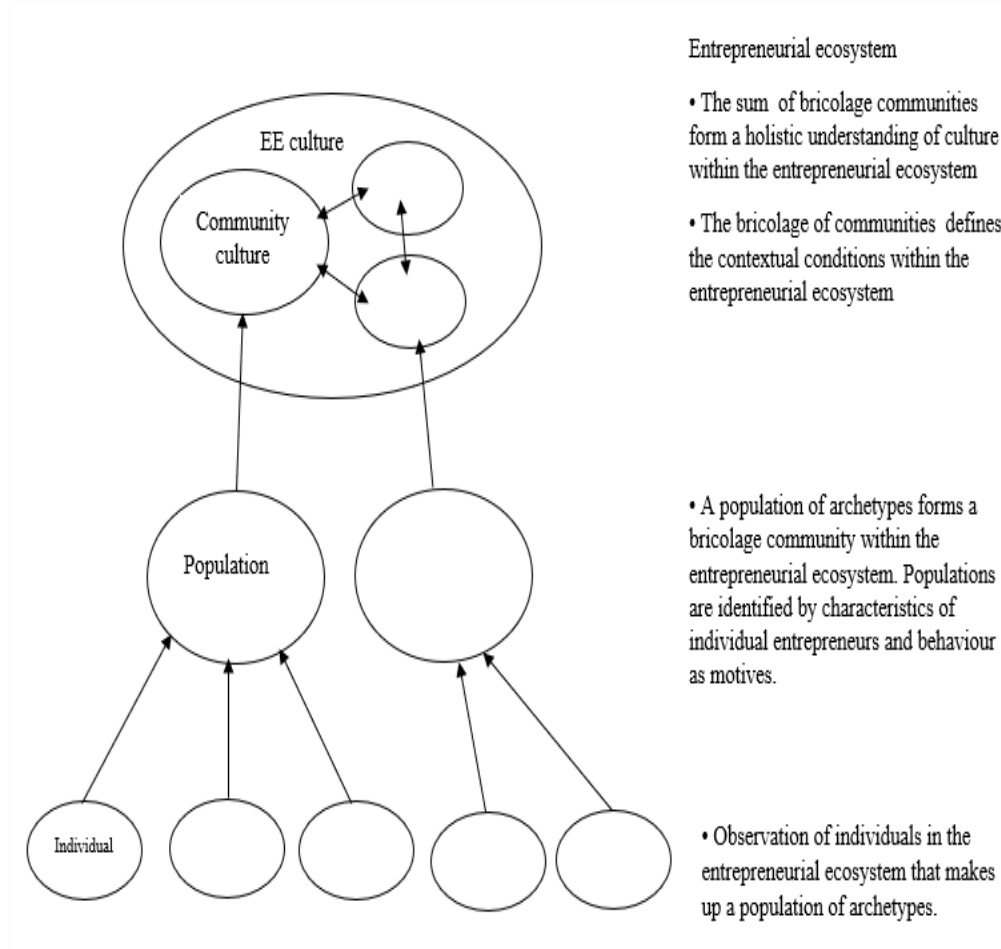


Figure 1. Contextual model of the buildup of culture from bricolage communities within the entrepreneurial ecosystem

3 Case description, data collection and research methodology

3.1. Case description – the municipality of Eskilstuna¹

Many studies on entrepreneurial activities have been undertaken in regions that have been known to create and promote entrepreneurial activities. When choosing to take a closer look at the one in our case study, the municipality of Eskilstuna, it is noticed that the township scored poorly on several salient factors

² The information is obtained from the Swedish bureau of statistics, 2020 figures about municipalities (<https://www.scb.se>)

related to the regional opportunities that tend to enhance and advance entrepreneurship.

There are four factors that could have a decisive influence, either positive or negative, on a region's ability to develop entrepreneurship: (1) the general level of education (positive); (2) continuous presence of entrepreneurs, ipso facto a population with a relatively large amount of self-employment (positive); (3) a substantial unemployment rate (negative); and (4) a large proportion of the population employed in the public sector (negative) (Wagner and Steinberg, 2004; Lazear, 2005; Hyytinen and Ilmakunnas, 2007; Kibler, 2013). The municipality of Eskilstuna is deficient in three of the four categories measured. First, a high level of its population is unemployed; second, it has a larger public sector than its entire working population; and third, it has a smaller proportion of entrepreneurs when compared to the rest of its working population. The only category that indicates the ability for entrepreneurship is its overall level of education (see footnote 1), which establishes (within the limits of what can reasonably be measured) that the Eskilstuna municipality has a less entrepreneurial ecosystem than what one could expect from other regions of Sweden.

Eskilstuna is in Södermanland municipality, part of a large industrial and cultural inter-connected "Mälardalen region" about 100 km west of Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. The municipality has 69,800 inhabitants in the urban areas of the city and 107,000 in the outlying suburbs. Traditionally, manufacturing has been the dominant industry, a tradition that dates back 400 years with the establishment of weapons manufacturing. The municipality of Eskilstuna was especially hard hit by successive waves of recession in Sweden during the approximately twenty years from the 1970s to the 1990s. Whereas Sweden's population was rising overall by 13 Percent, Eskilstuna municipality had a net decrease by six percent, coupled with persistently high unemployment. Using the method adopted by Hyytinen and Ilmakunnas (2007) when examining official Swedish statistical figures for municipalities, specifically the ratio of people employed as business owners and/or in nascent activities (cf. www.sbc.se), it becomes clear that the Eskilstuna municipality should be regarded as one of Sweden's least entrepreneurial contexts.

3.2. Sample and questionnaire

The nascent motives (mixed-method/GoT), from interviews, were operationalized (coded) in 11 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The interviews were conducted by telephone by business owner/entrepreneur. The questions were semi-open, based on theory of entrepreneurial motivation. These items are validated by comparing them to established entrepreneurial motivation research, updated with more recent conceptualizations of opportunity- and necessity driven entrepreneurship (Williams and Round, 2009; Block et al., 2015). In line with contemporary motivation frameworks, both push and pull factors were incorporated. Push factors included unemployment and constrained labor market opportunities (Smeaton, 2003; Williams et al., 2016), while pull factors captured opportunity recognition, autonomy, and value creation motives (Shane, 2003; Kautonen et al., 2015; Stephan, 2020).

Following prior and more recent studies on entrepreneurial human capital (Unger et al., 2011; Marvel et al., 2016; Hessels et al., 2018), ten items were used as proxies for human capital and demographic characteristics. To ensure statistical robustness, several variables were operationalized as dummy variables (1/0): gender (male = 1, female = 0); prior business management experience (yes = 1, no = 0); novice entrepreneur (yes = 1, no = 0); serial entrepreneur (yes = 1, no = 0); portfolio entrepreneur (yes = 1, no = 0); family business background (yes = 1, no = 0); prior employment experience (yes = 1, no = 0); and ethnicity (non-Swedish = 1, Swedish = 0). Age was treated as a continuous variable, while education was measured as a three-level ordinal variable reflecting highest attained education: (1) compulsory education (up to nine years), (2) upper secondary education (approximately 13 years), and (3) university education (minimum matriculation). In addition, industry affiliation was included as an ordinal variable ranging from 1 (service industries) to 5 (knowledge intensive and complex innovative industries), consistent with recent classifications of industry technological intensity (Colombo et al., 2019).

The city council of Eskilstuna provided a comprehensive register of all businesses operating within the municipal area. This register was compiled using data from tax authorities, value added tax registrations, and official records of mandatory business registrations. The resulting sample can be regarded as a stratified random sample comprising six industry categories: manufacturing, construction, retail, hotels and restaurants, transport and communication, and other services. Industry proportions were calculated based on the full municipal business register and validated through comparison with official statistics from Statistics Sweden, ensuring representativeness across sectors.

Entrepreneurial businesses were identified over a five-year observation period. This time frame aligns with contemporary methodological recommendations aimed at minimizing recall bias and post-hoc rationalization of entrepreneurial motives. Prior research suggests that a window of three to five years is appropriate for capturing authentic entrepreneurial motivations while accounting for macroeconomic fluctuations (Block et al., 2015; van der Zwan et al., 2016). Within this period, a total of 257 firms were identified as either non-independent or inactive ventures in Eskilstuna. From this population, 175 firms were selected for the final sample.

3.3. Data collection, validation of sample

The data was collected during a two-month period by dispatching two letters, one main and one reminder, and, as a final option for gathering data, a telephone call made to the delinquent respondents as a final attempt. The questionnaires were sent to the managers (respondents) in the companies; 144 questionnaires were returned, yielding an 82.0% response rate. The aggregate number of respondents and the response rate were deemed acceptable for this type of study.

The Mann–Whitney U test was used to measure differences between the sample and the population. This test is suitable for small samples and/or samples not meeting the normal distribution criterion (Aczel, 1999). The test detected no statistically significant response bias (.568) between the respondents and the industrial population. It is also assessed the number of employees working in the industry (see appendix 1) by further applying the Mann–Whitney U test to check for statistical differences. A response bias of .416 was detected.

There were no statistical differences in the number of employees between the two groups. Regarding legal forms of business ownership and gender, no major differences between the two groups were found. The ratio of male to female entrepreneurs in this study is the same as that for Sweden in general, as determined by the 2024 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. In all, it can be concluded that our sample is representative of the population. Appendixes 2 – 4 shows the sample company classification by SIC code (Standard Industry Classification) and population analyzed by industry structure.

3.4. Data analysis strategy

The research strategy followed three essential tracks: (1) data driven analysis (Haig, 2005), consisting of validation of the established dimensions of human capital; (2) demographics and nascent motives to identify how the ecosystem can be interpreted; and (3) the application of theory driven reflection in the context of Eskilstuna municipality. The analysis was undertaken in two stages: correlation analysis to obtain initial insight into validity concerns, followed by an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Table 1. details the correlation matrix of 22 items and the numerical results that further highlight our theoretical approach in relation to the three main focuses. In the next step the data were clustered into factors (see Table 2.) that reflected our theoretical approach to identify distinct entrepreneurial motivational matrices for startup businesses. These, in turn, were based on the profiles that had obtained from human capital and demographics.

4 Findings and results

To identify the relationship categories, an exploratory, factor analysis was run with the items using extraction and varimax rotation as a statistical technique. The results are displayed in Table 3. Items that exhibited high reliability – a Cronbach's value of $\alpha > 0.50$ and high factor loadings (>0.40) – were recommended for further investigation. The Cronbach's Alpha values in our research undercut the recommended level of $\alpha=0.70$ for exploratory studies posited by Nunnally (1978). However, Cohen (1977) and Schmitt (1996) argue that a value of 0.50 is sufficient. The factor solution contained an Eigen value above 1, together accounting for 88.57% variance in the sample. When analyzing the corrected item-to-total correlations, they ranged from 0.18 to 0.43. This indicated that all items share a high degree of variance with their respective constructs, which, in turn, means that we can introduce 11 empirically distinct factors representing important dimensions of entrepreneurial culture. The eleven factors were identified with $\alpha > 0.50$ and were labelled to reflect the common themes influenced by our theoretical approach.

Table 1. Correlations between start-up motives, human capital, and demographics

Sub-groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
1. Self-realization	-																						
2. Recognition	.137*	-																					
3. Role model	-.076	.517**	-																				
4. Financial	.323**	.094	-.038	-																			
5. Threat of unemployment	-.163*	.081	-.067	.124*	-																		
6. Unemployed	-.096	-.061	.165*	-.108	.008	-																	
7. Opportunity to buy a company	.045	.137*	.307**	.064	-.030	-.061	-																
8. Opportunity to buy part of a company	.024	-.021	-.026	-.047	-.063	-.051	.349**	-															
9. An emergent opportunity	.208*	.101	.168*	.008	-.042	.024	.370**	.278*	-														
10. Innovation/creativity	.257*	.132*	-.065	-.063	-.019	-.139*	-.034	-.054	-.055	-													
11. Autonomy	.211*	.112	-.010	.008	-.109	.039	.020	.065	.082	.393**	-												
12. Gender	.087	-.194*	-.124	.210*	-.051	-.208*	.054	.181*	.023	-.072	.067	-											
13. Age	-.287*	.010	.046	-.181*	.062	-.083	-.102	-.056	-.163*	.057	-.036	.068	-										
14. Education	.254*	.078	.036	.005	-.242*	-.074	.118	.008	.100	.198*	.202*	-.102	.065	-									
15. Experience in business management	.001	.197*	.088	-.013	.004	.078	.193*	.073	.185*	.016	.097	-.117	.116	.298*	-								
16. Novel entrepreneur	.008	.223*	.188*	.001	.128*	-.128*	.128*	.188*	.102	.125	.196*	-.181*	.015	.155*	.105	-							
17. Serial entrepreneur	.030	.195*	.162*	.004	.111	-.125	.169*	.089*	.122	.039	.185*	.032	.119	.125	.430**	-1.00**	-						
18. Portfolio entrepreneur	.032	.110	.087	.058	-.043	.084	.212*	.156*	.069	.000	.086	.016	.065	.079	.311*	-1.00**	.391**	-					
19. Family business	-.071	-.122	.348**	.053	-.089	.058	.335**	.180*	.057	.004	-.092	.124	-.147*	.004	.071	.030	.059	.019	-				
20. Previous employment	.175*	-.057	-.068	.004	-.045	-.097	.008	.000	.248*	.195*	.143*	-.091	.092	-.112	.175*	-.149*	.120	-.015	.152*	-			
21. Migrant	-.293*	.115	.052	-.058	-.282*	.016	-.114	-.079	.019	-.145*	.001	-.370**	.030	-.193*	-.115	.034	.006	.036	.108	.062	-		
22. Industry	-.019	.106	-.071	-.182*	.006	-.258*	.022	-.083	.057	.283*	-.037	-.211*	.181*	-.214*	.165*	.011	-.035	.005	-.098	.172*	-.381**	-	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The eleven factors we found *with* $\alpha > 0.50$ were labelled to reflect common themes across the factor items and were influenced and as a result from our theoretical approach.

- Push entrepreneurship (factor 1): The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's was ($\alpha = 0.51$), It accounts for 5,90 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the first dimension of push entrepreneurship (unemployment/). The items score low as a motive for start-up. However, that does not mean that push entrepreneurship is not relevant for certain sub-groups in the population as female, on the other hand, were the only sub-group that stated unemployment as a reason for start-up. The category is also straightforward and relates to how individuals assess their chance of becoming an entrepreneur. The control item of industry corresponds with service industry. Recognition is negatively correlated to gender implying that women's need for recognition is a push reason for becoming an entrepreneur. Starting a business is a way for women to overcome a stigma of being unemployed, as they perceive that their gender limits their chances of pursuing a career in existing organizations. Recognition could then be seen as an expression of this desire.
- Materialism (factor 2); The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.52$), It accounts for 11,23 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension financial motive. The financial variable is straightforward and mainly concerns making money for consumption and creating wealth. This category is correlated to human capital and demographic categories such as gender and age. The result indicates that younger males perceive financial motives as more important than it is for other subgroups. This tendency has also been recorded by other researchers (cf. Davidsson and Honing, 2003). The average age for becoming an entrepreneur in this study is 40 years.
- Self-realization (factor 3); The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.52$), It accounts for 13,41 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of self-realization. Self-realization, including its underlying attributes of visions, goals and motivation. The correlation between self-realization and human capital and demographics can be found in the following category, younger, well-educated and financial. The figures show that self-realization as a start-up motive pertains mainly to individuals who find themselves in the more privileged situation of actual having the choices because they are younger, well-educated and/or with no foreign ethnicity.
- Autonomy/creativity (factor 4): The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.51$), It accounts for 12,39 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension autonomy. Autonomy involves taking control over one's life and a "way of life" situation. The category

correlates to self-realization, education, and innovation/creativity. In this category, higher education plays a role. Skilled individuals seem to have more choice than less fortunate individuals e.g. with the investment in human capital also comes freedom of choice. The other aspect is the category's relation to the serial entrepreneur, where autonomy seems to be the driving force for continued entrepreneurial endeavors.

- Migrant (factor 5); The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.51$), It accounts for 6.92 percent of variance. Five items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of migrants. The second push entrepreneurship dimension relates to migrants. Were the push entrepreneurship in this category is related to gender (female), self-realization and education. It seems that individuals with lower education and with migrant were motivated to become entrepreneurs to a larger extent by the threat of becoming unemployed and not as mean for emancipation and personal development. The control item of industry corresponds with service industry.
- Recognition- spinning off (factor 6): The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.52$). It accounts for 7,31 percent of variance Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of recognition. When analyzing the outcome, this factor is related to career change, we the driving forces of the nascent entrepreneurs, have a sense of not being appreciated and the competence within the existing workplace is not taken advantage of. It also corresponds to a 'need for approval' (Birley and Westhead, 1994) and "recognition" The dimension relates to work experience and Innovation/creativity.
- Transitional (factor 7): The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.53$), It accounts for 8,25 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of spinning out opportunity. This dimension relates to utilizing accumulated experience into a career into entrepreneurship. An opportunity emerged relates to previous employment and Work experience. The item in this category corresponds to buying a company or a part of a company.
- Inspired (factor 8); The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.54$), It accounts for 10,67 percent variance. Four items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of spinning out opportunity. Novel entrepreneur as inspired to become self-employed relates to recognition. opportunity to buy a company/opportunity to buy a part of a company. However novel entrepreneur also as connections to role model, threat of unemployment, autonomy and women entrepreneurship. Since most of the sample consists of people that have started companies for the first time, the diversity found is beyond what is expected.

- Lifestyle (factor 9): The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.53$), It accounts for 4,12 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of serial entrepreneur. The serial entrepreneur is related to recognition and autonomy. This factor relates to the need for self-actualization and captures desires for personal accomplishment, furthermore the pursuit of prestige
- Opportunistic (factor 10); The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's is ($\alpha = 0.51$), It accounts for 2,13 percent of variance. Three items loaded onto this factor represent the dimension of portfolio entrepreneurs. Portfolio entrepreneurs relate to opportunity to buy a company, experience. Thus, factors are more of doing "business", the corporate entrepreneur then the new venture entrepreneur.
- Role model (factor 11): Cronbach's of this factor is ($\alpha = 0.56$), It accounts for 6,24 percent of variance. For family business and role models are inter-connected. As the underlying dimension includes external influences, role models generated and how family tradition affects individuals' social behavior. Role is positively correlated to human capital and demographic variables such as novel entrepreneurs and family business.

The factor analysis identified 11 dimensions of entrepreneurship, as discussed above that account for 88 percent of the variance. Contemporary entrepreneurship research conceptualizes entrepreneurial behavior as a combination of motivation, cognition and action, mediated by entrepreneurial intention and opportunity perception. Entrepreneurs act upon perceived valuable opportunities that emerge from individual resources, contextual conditions and institutional frameworks. While unemployment in general (O'Leary, 2022), and unemployment among women, did not motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs, the threat of unemployment appeared to motivate ethnic nascent entrepreneurs to take the final step towards entrepreneurial activity.

Two main lines of argument explain why unemployed individuals do not necessarily transition into entrepreneurship. The first concerns resource constraints. Recent studies highlight that unemployed individuals often lack the necessary combinations of human, social and financial capital required to engage in entrepreneurial activity, even when motivation is present (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Deficiencies in entrepreneurial skills, professional networks and access to finance significantly reduce the likelihood of venture creation. In the context of Eskilstuna, targeted policy programmed designed to support unemployed women into entrepreneurship appear effective, as the findings indicate that unemployment does not constitute a major barrier for female entrepreneurs when institutional support mechanisms are present (Bergmann, Hundt and Sternberg, 2022).

The second line of argument relates to incentives. Recent research suggests that generous welfare systems can reduce necessity-driven entrepreneurship by lowering the perceived opportunity cost of remaining unemployed, particularly in risk-averse populations (Kilström and Laffont, 1979; Neuman, 2021). Individuals tend to evaluate entrepreneurial risk relative to expected economic returns, which are shaped by labour market alternatives and social security arrangements (Ilmakunnas and Kanninen, 2001). From this perspective, unemployment may be absorbed by welfare institutions aiming to stabilize economic fluctuations and reduce income volatility (Henrekson, 2005). Although this study cannot directly measure risk incentives, the generally low level of entrepreneurial economic activity in the region suggests a shortage of opportunities with sufficiently high economic rewards.

Regarding migrant entrepreneurship, two key conclusions emerge. First, unemployment itself does not constitute a primary motive for entrepreneurial entry among migrants. Second, the perceived threat of unemployment may act as a triggering mechanism that encourages nascent migrant entrepreneurs to formalize their entrepreneurial intentions. Recent studies emphasize that migrant entrepreneurship is often shaped by a combination of structural barriers, opportunity constraints and transnational resources rather than by unemployment alone (Malerba and Ferreira, 2021). These findings suggest that opportunity-driven and push-driven entrepreneurship should be jointly incorporated into analytical models to better capture heterogeneous entrepreneurial motivations.

The results of this study challenge overly optimistic portrayals of entrepreneurial motivation. In contrast to views that emphasize autonomy as the dominant driver of entrepreneurship, recent evidence suggests that motivations vary substantially across entrepreneurial sub-groups and contexts (Ivanycheva *et al.*, 2024). For many individuals, opportunity recognition, employment insecurity and flexibility are more salient than autonomy alone. Moreover, dominant motives are shaped by human capital and demographic characteristics, indicating that entrepreneurial motivation is neither universal nor exclusively entrepreneur specific. Categories such as opportunity, push and flexibility entrepreneurship remain underexplored as combined motivational drivers.

When start-up motives are analyzed alongside demographic characteristics and human capital within a specific local context, a more nuanced picture of entrepreneurial behavior emerges. In addition to the primary start-up motives, factor analysis reveals opportunity as a distinct category that differs from push entrepreneurship. While push entrepreneurship is associated with unemployment or employment insecurity, opportunity entrepreneurship is closely linked to accumulated experience, prior occupational background and managerial exposure (Urbano *et al.*, 2019). These findings suggest an accumulative and relatively conservative entrepreneurial process in which opportunity recognition and exploitation are grounded in previous experience and social embeddedness.

A defining feature of Eskilstuna is that entrepreneurial activity appears largely transitional rather than focused on innovative new venture creation. Combined with an average entrepreneurial entry age of approximately 40 years, this indicates a conservative and less dynamic entrepreneurial environment. Entrepreneurship is often pursued as an extension of prior employment trajectories rather than as a disruptive or growth-oriented activity.

Following tradition through family influence and role models represents another entrepreneurial pathway characterized by limited risk-taking and constrained opportunity development. Entrepreneurial intention in this context reflects continuity rather than transformation, with individuals pursuing familiar or inherited opportunities. The entrepreneurial population therefore relies heavily on prior achievements, including accumulated knowledge, previous business experience or family business involvement. In contrast, more dynamic entrepreneurial behavior appears concentrated among younger, well-educated individuals seeking to deviate from established and traditional entrepreneurial paths.

Materialism, lifestyle orientation, self-realization and autonomy emerge as motivation categories strongly influenced by learning processes. Both formal education and informal learning through work experience play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial orientation, reinforcing the close relationship between knowledge accumulation and entrepreneurial action (Dias, 2020). Higher education is particularly associated with motivations linked to innovation, self-realization and autonomy, which are typically considered positive dimensions of entrepreneurship.

Recent research has increasingly focused on nascent and early-stage entrepreneurs to understand how human capital configurations influence entrepreneurial entry and outcomes (Chaudhuri *et al.*, 2023). While such studies often predict venture creation rates and performance outcomes such as growth or survival, the determinants of entrepreneurial entry differ from those influencing post-entry performance. Entrepreneurial behavior, and its interaction with human capital and demographic characteristics, remains underexplored, particularly in relation to how these elements shape the functioning of local entrepreneurial ecosystems. The main findings of this study are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Summary of findings: Levels and bricolage of culture in an EE-system

<i>A. Culture - Aggregate as start-up/number of entrepreneurs in a context</i>		
Swedish bureau of statistics, 2020 figures about municipalities		
	Municipalities of Eskilstuna Gnosjö*	
Number of SME's/entrepreneurs in relation to labour force (index)	7.80	11.90
Eskilstuna is ranked 152 out of 244 attitudes towards entrepreneurship and business culture in Sweden, with less companies being started per capita than the average.		
*The municipality of Gnosjö is regarded as the most entrepreneurial municipality in Sweden. Gnosjö has a higher-than-average entrepreneurial activity and industrial dynamics than Sweden in general, and more so than Eskilstuna.		
<i>B. Culture - aggregate but differentiated on perception</i>		
Start-up motives* (from the grounded theory approach)		
Variables	mean	standard deviation
Autonomy	4.00	1.89
Self-realization	3.61	1.53
Financial	3.34	1.43
Innovation/creativity	3.27	1.71
An opportunity emerged	2.70	1.72
Recognition	2.10	1.55
Roles	2.09	1.54
Threat of unemployment	1.47	1.05
Opportunity to buy a company	1.34	0.93
Opportunity to buy a part of a company	1.17	0.53
Unemployed	1.03	0.15
Scale 1 – 5 (1 no importance, 5 very important)		
The rank of motives follows the results of Carter et al., (2003) and Cassar (2007)		

<i>C. Culture differentiated on archetypes forming communities of behavior – from the GoT/EFA mixed-methods approach</i>		
Communities of nascent entrepreneur's motives	Typical cultural traits	Typical influence of the entrepreneurial ecosystem culture
Push entrepreneur and gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women - Self-respect - Expectations from the ecosystem actors - Lack of opportunities and alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women seem to be pushed into entrepreneurship based on a guilt-oriented expression of what is expected. <p>” Do what is expected of you”</p>
Migrant and gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women - Lack of opportunity - Lack of education - Service oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Migrant woman expresses itself as isolation and a sub-culture that is not integrated. With a desire to be elsewhere.
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extracts from previous experience and employment - Older and male - Respect from the ecosystem actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The traditional male doing business” Relates to the conservative approaches to become an entrepreneur start-up motive related to corporate entrepreneurs.
Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expectations - Conservative - Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follows or is a part of the traditional conservative entrepreneurial motives.
Isomorphic progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youthfull - Lifestyle of self-realization and autonomy - Success and creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The youthful dynamic entrepreneurial stance towards becoming an

		<p>entrepreneur, that is based on education. Breaking away from the traditional and conservative. However, there are some elements of male cultural isomorphism,</p> <p>“Making money”</p>
<p>Controls – Entrepreneurial orientation (Lumping and Dess 1996); When testing for entrepreneurial orientation as cultural construct amongst the entrepreneurial archetypes, cluster analysis, no major difference in risk, dynamics and strategic posture could be identified. The general cultural trait amongst the archetypes is that they are risk avert, stable and cost-price/differentiation as the base for opportunity. The explanatory power for the identification of culture, in the investigated context, is dependent on sociological constructs rather than economics related dimensions of psychometrics, entrepreneurial orientation. Sociological construct explains 90 percent of the variance, the entrepreneurial construct less the 10 percent.</p>		

5 Discussion

5.1. Who’s a nascent entrepreneur and why does it matter for understanding culture in an entrepreneurial ecosystem? - Culture as a bricolage of communities.

Since the 1980s, entrepreneurship research has been dominated by a mainstream tradition aligned with market-oriented policy agendas and pro-enterprise governance in Western economies (Peck 2010). Within this paradigm, entrepreneurship is framed primarily as an economic activity oriented towards growth, competitiveness, and value creation (Börckling, 2016). Such approaches tend to universalize entrepreneurship, overlooking its social, political, and contextual variability (Calás, Smircich and Bourne 2009). Operationalized as entrepreneurial orientation (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). As a result, entrepreneurs are frequently portrayed as exceptional or heroic figures whose presumed innate qualities enable opportunity recognition and economic progress (Busenitz et al., 2003). This framing abstracts entrepreneurship from its broader institutional and socio-political conditions, despite evidence that entrepreneurial activity is deeply embedded in social structures and relations (Granovetter 1985; North 1990), obscuring the semantics and diversity that makes up the entrepreneurial construct of culture in contexts. Differences in value systems and cultural orientations towards entrepreneurship have been argued to affect entrepreneurship (Thomas and Mueller, 2000). Where culture usually refers to the meanings, symbols, and assumptions about what is good or bad, legitimate or illegitimate, underlies the prevailing practices and norms in a society (Bourdieu, 1972; Markus and

Kitayama, 1994), culture is defined as a set of shared values and beliefs (Hofstede, 2001). The expression of culture can then be understood when *observing human behavior*. A society's culture reflects its response to these issues in certain behavioral orientations. Such orientations represent general societal expressions that are deeply embedded in the functioning of major societal institutions, in widespread practices, in symbols and traditions, and, through adaptation and socialization, in the values of individuals (Hofstede, 1980).

This study distances if from the notion of the Schumpeterian or Krizner view of what entrepreneurship is as an expression and its operationalization as entrepreneurial orientation as a cultural denominator. As such reducing entrepreneurial behavior as an extension dependent on the achievement of performance (unicorns/gazelles etc.). Entrepreneurial orientation is a construct within entrepreneurship orientation, but it can be questioned as an indicator for general entrepreneurial behavior (Gill, 2013), and subsequently entrepreneurial culture. Furthermore, there are numerous studies questing the strait forward relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance, see example Schepers et al., (2014) and Saeed et al., (2014). Lindelöf (2002), incubators as entrepreneurial ecosystem, identified early that the entrepreneurial orientation as construct did not relate to performance unless mediated by motivation (growth aspirations), even when it related to firms with high level of inventions as its operational base. It seems that the entrepreneurial archetype combining with motivational dimensions identifies communities of behavior that makes out the bricolage of entrepreneurial ecosystem culture and identifies the underlying norms of culture in an entrepreneurial ecosystem. In this study of a specific entrepreneurial ecosystem, it's identified that entrepreneurial orientation is of limited operational importance and here is less entrepreneurial activity in numbers. However, this stance diminishes the fact that there is entrepreneurial behavior, rank of motives, that is no different than what is expected of an entrepreneurial population, The Schumpeterian stance also diminishes the fact that entrepreneurs may have other ambitions with its entrepreneurial endeavors, such as autonomy, independence and creativity. Economic achievements, however important, may not be the main objectives. Communities as bricolage of culture then cover the whole range of entrepreneurial behavior, not limited to a performance-based definition. Entrepreneurs in this study have been in operation for five years when studied, so they have found a market niche to prosper in, although not based on breakthrough technology and a strategic posture of entrepreneurial orientation.

5.2. Layers of entrepreneurial ecosystem communities – influence on culture

When identifying entrepreneurial culture as a bricolage of communities it becomes less interesting to view the entrepreneurial ecosystem as an aggregate on rigor, non-flexible dimensions (Gill, 2013), top-down, and more of as sum of community instigated effects. Community instigating operational effects such as, who is included or excluded from resources, networks, collaborations, influence,

markets and knowledge as depicted in figure 2. Lindelöf, 2002 and Wigren (2003) identified this important aspect as 'belonging' to a community. Individual and context, on one hand, and spatial spheres, on the other, are heavily intertwined, all of which affect entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour. The socio-spatial context can also be a liability, as evident in depleted communities (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004), or viewed as assets in the form of the as so-called 'community spirits' that seem to thrive in certain settings. The contextualisation of communities for entrepreneurship takes the notion of community spirits beyond the confines of the simple ecosystem. Bearing in mind the broad impact of individual behaviour, it attempts to unite larger social constructs in a broader spatial context. First, as Gartner (1995) argues, there is a tendency in individual-driven research to overestimate individual factors and underestimate contextual ones as the primary means of influencing individual behaviour. Second, according to Baumol (1990), the prerequisites for entrepreneurship change over time and place shift, rendering a strong need to analyse differences and tendencies that emerge from context (Zahra and Wright, 2011). Neumeyer et al. (2019) propose ecosystem identity based on the collective identities of participating actors as an important moderating factor. The importance of embeddedness on social structures is dependent on its usefulness to the firms that are continuously engaged in a market awash in a sea of variable conditions, both internal and external, that belie permanence. Constant change is the order of the day. Hence, even if existing or proposed community might not meet new demands and/or provide the firm with the appropriate resources that are relevant and needed to meet the changing demand for new information, markets, technology and knowledge (Gulati et al., 2000), all the interaction, taken as a whole, serve an overarching purpose in prolonging enhanced innovation and business performance in their own singular ways (Lindelöf and Löfsten, 2003; D'Ambrosio et al., 2017). The central understanding of entrepreneurship within communities seems to further organized attributes of proximity - physical, virtual or cognitive (culture) -- within the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Lindelöf and Löfsten 2006; Rydehell et al. 2019), The interaction within the communities as a part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is plainly multi-dimensional, Interaction is intertwined in multiple and layered community-generated structures, with each organization or firm benefiting from its own community logic. As a result a firm needs to incorporate and handle multiple community logics in the organisational kernel. By studying individual behaviour and the contextual sociology that characterizes a given situation, it is possible to untangle the influence of embeddedness in the communities that makes out the milieu has on satisfying the economic ecosystem's larger ability for developing operative models. The patterns of value creation and value capturing that emerge from community participation and influence informs the way the larger context operates as an entrepreneurial milieu. Figure 2. Describes the meta dimensions of the entrepreneurial ecosystems communities that identifies, through utility (Lindelöf and Hellberg 2023), boundaries and layers as well as community participation of individuals and their interaction and exchanges.



Arrows indicates entrepreneurial ecosystem community exchanges as well as actors that are include or excluded from community participation.

The definition of these multi-layered, actor-driven communities that the archetypes interact with is as follows:

1. Community of technological regime: The community of technology consists of actors that support the creation, development, adaption and maintenance of an organizational mode that enables invention, value creation. The actors that operate within the community value paradigm do so through partnership, knowledge transfer, information/intelligence exchanges, and the adept utilization of infrastructure.
2. Community of market exchange: The community of market exchange consists of any actor that supports an organization's effort to achieve market value capturing and utilization in the face of a changing organisational mode. It can define this as an organization's ability to innovate and to adjust to swings in marketplace logic. The actors within the community value exist through economic and business information/intelligence exchanges, and the adept utilization of business infrastructure (e.g. marketing, operations, financial management and/or accounting systems).
3. Community of consonance: the community of consonance consists of institutional agency that set the standards for value interaction, culture exchanges, corporate value and related norms. The community value exists by utilizing the infrastructure of social contracts that emanate from established ties of trust and reciprocity that facilitate behaviour, creativity, lateral thinking and dynamic organizational flexibility.
4. Community of institutes: the community of institutes consists of public and private professional actors, expert associates and peers that supplement the organization's core resources and capabilities, in concert with additional resources and capabilities for enhancing organizational dynamics. The community value exists by supporting the community's infrastructure as the overall enabler (catalyst) of economic exchanges. Furthermore, the utilization and safeguarding of economic value against catastrophic breaches must be enforced by securing and regulating the community of consonance.

Figure 2. Proposed model of entrepreneurial ecosystem as a bricolage of communities.

5.3. Boundaries conditions and levels and the culture within entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Boundaries in milieu ecosystems is a comprehensive approach that potentially address Santos and Eisenhardt (2009)'s criticism. Their understanding and presentation of boundary conception (efficiency, power, competence, identity) (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2005) and entrepreneurs' boundary establishments in nascent marked (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009), may also serve as a suitable framework to the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach to boundaries. As well as other, already mentioned, theories such as network-theory (Granovetter, 1973; Obstfeld et al., 2020) and resource dependency theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). In an entrepreneurial ecosystem each actor, as a member of population embedded in a milieu, will evolve its own unique set of boundaries. These will be the outcome of the actor's choice of industry, product and marked, as well as

other external and internal factors such as social networks, alliances, competence requirements, and power strategies. In other words, each actor will be affected differently of the efficiency, power, competence, and identity boundaries, as proposed by Santos and Eisenhardt (2005). The understanding of context is based on the bottom-up approach, suggest that boundaries in entrepreneurial ecosystem is blurry, and based on individual behaviour, utility, and cognition (Lindelöf and Hellberg, 2023), and as such forming communities. Consequently, it emphasizes the importance of relations and community participation among its individuals. Likewise, the boundaries, the populations and community, are unique for this entrepreneurial ecosystem alone. However, it is important to stress that these boundaries are not the aggregated sum of the individual boundaries, but rather a product that arise through interaction and cooperation, based on utility among its participants influenced by structures as industry and institutional dimensions as culture, values, openness that is embedded in the population. But then again as a unique set, based on behaviour as utility as boundaries and through the interaction and cooperation among these within a context e.g., geographical as country, region, town, or behavioural as communities' organisations, platforms/projects. This perspective promotes a dynamic view on behaviour and its contextual interdependence in forming the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In terms of scale, the degree of embeddedness within an entrepreneurial ecosystem shape both the intensity of entrepreneurial activity and the boundary conditions under which ecosystem mechanisms operate. Prior research emphasizes that entrepreneurial action is highly context-dependent, with local embeddedness facilitating trust, knowledge spillovers, and coordinated learning among ecosystem actors (Autio et al., 2014). These mechanisms, however, rely on spatial proximity and repeated interaction, suggesting that their effectiveness diminishes as ecosystems expand beyond localized settings. Consequently, the benefits commonly attributed to entrepreneurial ecosystems are conditional on the geographic and institutional context in which they are embedded.

In terms of scope, entrepreneurial ecosystems increasingly span local, regional, national, and global levels, forming multiscale configurations rather than bounded spatial units (Autio et al., 2018). While expanded scope can enhance access to capital, talent, and markets, it also introduces boundary conditions related to coordination costs, institutional misalignment, and cognitive distance (Boschma, 2005). As ecosystems extend across disparate geographies, the relational foundations that sustain collective learning may weaken, thereby constraining the transferability and scalability of ecosystem dynamics. This implies that scale effects are not linear; instead, they depend on how local ecosystems are connected to, and governed within, broader national and global networks.

The interaction between scale and scope is further conditioned by the composition of ecosystem actors and the structure of formal and informal networks. Anchor organizations such as research universities, public research institutes, and large R&D-intensive firms can function as boundary-spanning

institutions that connect local “buzz” with global “pipelines,” thereby mitigating spatial and institutional constraints (Bathelt et al., 2004;). However, entrepreneurship remains fundamentally place-based, shaped by historical trajectories, cultural norms, and the availability of locally embedded skills (Audretsch et al., 2023). These localized characteristics define critical boundary conditions that limit the extent to which entrepreneurial ecosystems can be replicated or successfully scaled across contexts, reinforcing the view that ecosystems are context-specific systems whose performance depends on the alignment between local conditions and extra-local connections.

5.4. Implications for policy actors

Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional expression that renders a closer understanding of the inner working of entrepreneurial ecosystem. Need for fine tuning were “one size fits all”. There is need to take in different aspects of how entrepreneurship emerges, what entrepreneurship comes out of it and what is even possible. The entrepreneurial archetypes identify why individuals become entrepreneurs and their motives to become so and more so opportunity. This entrepreneurship in a context makes up of multitude of entrepreneurial types and multitude of entrepreneurship needs to be incorporated in the policy model to generate a better understanding of the contextual entrepreneurship and adjustment of policies accordingly. Furthermore, the results of this study challenge the “bright and rosy” picture and “the lonely hero” of why people become entrepreneurs not previously been fully accounted for in the current policy model regarding entrepreneurship. And finally, there might be a revision of what entrepreneurship as a toll can do for economic development.

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Appendix

1. Characteristic of business by number of employees – Eskilstuna Municipality		
Main industrial Activity, (standard Industrial activity) [Sic xxxx]	number of employees, sample (mean)	number of employees, population (mean)
1. Manufacturing (Sic 1-3)	9.86	8.58
2. Construction (Sic 4)	11.92	7.96
3. Retail (Sic 50-52)	3.40	3.61
4. Hotels and Restaurants (Sic 55)	3.52	3.15
5. Transport and Communication (Sic 6)	2.70	4.00
6. Other services (Sic 7-9)	3.91	4.44

2. Characteristic of business by industry structure – Eskilstuna Municipality

Main industrial Activity, (standard Industrial activity)	percentage sample	percentage population
[Sic xxxx]		
1. Manufacturing (Sic 1-3)	16.7	21.7
2. Construction (Sic 4)	14.3	10.9
3. Retail (Sic 50-52)	19.1	17.1
4. Hotels and Restaurants (Sic 55)	5.9	7.4
5. Transport and Communication (Sic 6)	7.1	6.9
6. Other services (Sic 7-9)	36.9	36.0
Total number	100.0	100.0

3. Characteristic of business by industry structure by gender and legal form – the municipality of Eskilstuna

Gender	sample		population	
	female	male	female	male
Percentage	35.4	64.6	36.1	63.9
Legal form	limited	other	limited	other
Percentage	77.7	22.3	74.9	25.1