

THEMATIC ARTICLE

Becoming an entrepreneur in the Metropole: resisting incubators' recolonizing attempts

SEVERINE LE LOARNE LEMAIRE ¹GLORIA HADDAD ²ROLA AL ALI ¹GAËL BERTRAND ³¹ GRENoble ECOLE DE MANAGEMENT, GRENoble – FRANCE² SAINT JOSEPH UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT, BEIRUT – LEBANON³ ESSCA SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, AIX EN PROVENCE – FRANCE

Abstract

This study investigates the decolonization process among nascent entrepreneurs from formerly colonized nations, operating within underprivileged areas of developed countries. Through a two-year ethnographic inquiry involving entrepreneurs from former French African Colonies and Departments conducting business in the Metropole, the paper recounts their journey from being subject to attempts at recolonization to achieving decolonization. Using colonialist theory and the approach of entrepreneurship as a practice, it explores how entrepreneurs resisted efforts by incubators to impose colonial ideologies, ultimately embracing their own entrepreneurial practices. Three distinct decolonization processes emerge from this analysis. This paper contributes to colonialist theory in three key ways. Firstly, it proposes a methodological framework for identifying signs of colonialism and decolonization through the observation of entrepreneurial practices. Secondly, it extends the applicability of colonialist theory beyond traditional Global South contexts, demonstrating its relevance within immigrant communities from former colonies. Lastly, it clarifies the concept of decolonization, emphasizing the adoption of entrepreneurial practices reflective of individual choice and agency rather than mere rejection of colonialist norms.

Keywords: Colonialism. Decolonization. Entrepreneurship. Developed Countries.

Tornando-se um empreendedor na Metrópole: resistindo às tentativas de recolonização das incubadoras

Resumo

Este estudo investiga o processo de descolonização entre empreendedores nascentes de nações anteriormente colonizadas, que operam em áreas desfavorecidas de países desenvolvidos. Através de uma investigação etnográfica de dois anos envolvendo empreendedores de antigas colônias e departamentos africanos franceses que conduzem negócios na Metrópole, o estudo relata sua jornada desde serem alvo de tentativas de recolonização até alcançarem a descolonização. Utilizando a teoria colonialista e a abordagem do empreendedorismo como prática, explora como os empreendedores resistiram aos esforços dos incubadores para impor ideologias, abraçando, por fim, suas próprias práticas empreendedoras. Três processos distintos de descolonização emergem desta análise. Este artigo contribui para a teoria colonialista de três maneiras principais. Em primeiro lugar, propõe um quadro metodológico para identificar sinais de colonialismo e descolonização por meio da observação de práticas empreendedoras. Em segundo lugar, amplia a aplicabilidade da teoria colonialista para além dos contextos tradicionais do Sul Global, demonstrando sua relevância nas comunidades de imigrantes das antigas colônias. Por último, esclarece o conceito de descolonização, enfatizando a adoção de práticas empreendedoras que reflipam escolhas e autonomia individuais, em vez de uma mera rejeição das normas colonialistas.

Palavras-chave: Colonialismo. Descolonização. Empreendedorismo. Países desenvolvidos.

Ser emprendedor en el territorio metropolitano de Francia: resistencia a los intentos de recolonización de incubadoras de empresas

Resumen

Esta investigación se enfoca en el proceso de descolonización entre nuevos empresarios de naciones anteriormente colonizadas que operan en áreas desfavorecidas de países desarrollados. A lo largo de un periodo de dos años, se realizó un estudio etnográfico que involucró a empresarios provenientes de antiguas colonias y departamentos africanos franceses que llevaban a cabo actividades comerciales en el territorio metropolitano de Francia. El artículo detalla la transición desde los intentos de ser colonizados nuevamente hasta lograr la descolonización. Utilizando la teoría colonialista y el enfoque del emprendimiento como práctica, se examina cómo los empresarios resistieron a las tentativas de las incubadoras de imponer ideologías coloniales hasta que, finalmente, desarrollaron sus propias prácticas empresariales. De este análisis surgen tres procesos de descolonización distintos. Este artículo contribuye a la teoría colonialista de tres maneras clave. En primer lugar, propone un marco metodológico para identificar signos de colonización y descolonización a través de la observación de prácticas empresariales. En segundo lugar, expande la aplicación de la teoría colonialista, evidenciando su relevancia también en las comunidades de inmigrantes de antiguas colonias. Por último, aclara el concepto de descolonización, enfatizando la adopción de prácticas empresariales que reflejen la elección y acción individual, en lugar de simplemente contraponerse a las normativas coloniales.

Palabras clave: Colonialismo. Descolonización. Emprendimiento. Países desarrollados.

Article submitted for the Call for Papers "Decolonizing perspectives and decolonial pluriversity in management praxis & research" on March 14, 2023 and accepted for publication on November 05, 2024.

[Original version]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120230057x>

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism, extending far beyond mere economic and political conquest, deeply embeds itself into the cultural and epistemological tapestry of subjugated communities, imposing profound shifts in identities and societal norms (Kohn & Reddy, 2006; Pinto & Blue, 2017). The exploration of the postcolonial environment reveals enduring remnants of colonialism within societies, illustrating how these legacies persistently shape power dynamics and social structures, perpetuating entrenched hierarchical systems (Mbembe, 1992, 2001, 2006). These manifestations are evident through the enduring presence of authoritarian governance structures inherited from colonial rule, along with the sustained influence of colonial ideologies on constructs of identity, citizenship, and knowledge dissemination (Mbembe, 1992, 2006). Moreover, prior research unveils the intricate interplay between colonialism and knowledge transmission, highlighting the imposition of Western epistemologies and educational paradigms, often marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems (Mbembe, 2001, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Central to understanding these enduring consequences, Spivak (1994) discusses the concept of epistemic violence, which refers to the suppression and silencing of non-Western modes of knowledge to perpetuate the colonial notion of intellectual inferiority among colonized peoples. In this context, Bancel et al. (2010) underscore the urgent need for critically examining colonial histories and their contemporary implications, both within former colonial territories and in developed nations dealing with the persistent legacy of colonialism. However, despite the extensive scholarly attention directed towards the dynamics between colonizing metropolises and their overseas colonies, there remains a notable oversight regarding the subtler forms of colonialism experienced by individuals from previously colonized nations within the very metropolises that once exerted colonial dominance (Bancel et al., 2010). This research gap emphasizes the pressing need to broaden the scope of inquiry, shedding light on these overlooked nuances and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of colonial legacies and their enduring impact.

Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) examination of decoloniality, power dynamics, and alternative epistemologies offers a chance to link entrepreneurship with colonialism, particularly in contexts shaped by historical legacies and ongoing oppression. Traditional entrepreneurship research, often rooted in neoliberal capitalism and Western-centric views, tends to ignore how it perpetuates inequalities and marginalizes certain groups. By neglecting the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on entrepreneurial ecosystems, existing literature fails to address the complex intersections between entrepreneurship and colonial histories. Integrating insights from colonialist theory into entrepreneurship research can offer a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics, access to resources, and knowledge production within diverse socio-cultural contexts, ultimately contributing to the development of socially just entrepreneurial ecosystems. Informed by Mbembe's (2016) and Spivak (1994, 2015, 2023) seminal research on colonial structures in education, this study aims to uncover signs of colonialism in contemporary business incubators. Specifically, it examines how standardization and the emphasis on Western business models may erode entrepreneurs' cultural identities and how incubators may reinforce colonial practices, echoing past colonial legacies (Amezcu et al., 2019). Further, inspired by Mignolo (2013) concept of epistemic disobedience, this research investigates how immigrant entrepreneurs in underprivileged neighborhoods in France confront and navigate Western business paradigms. It aims to uncover their strategies for decolonization within these frameworks, particularly focusing on their resistance to entrenched colonial practices inherent in established incubator models, which are further reinforced by governmental economic initiatives. Through this inquiry, it seeks to advance a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship in marginalized communities and advocate for inclusive, decolonized approaches within entrepreneurial education and support systems.

The study is grounded in a two-year ethnographic investigation spanning from 2019 to 2021, focusing on entrepreneurs originally from former French African colonies now residing in the French Alps region. The context is significant as France's initiative to foster a "start-up nation" has extended to economically disadvantaged areas, including rural and urban suburbs characterized by high unemployment rates, limited education opportunities, and a diverse ethnic population. This expansion facilitated access to two incubators, enabling research into the diffusion of Eurocentric entrepreneurial models and their reception among local entrepreneurs in these regions. Through extensive field observations and interviews, the paper delves into how these entrepreneurs navigate, adapt, or resist colonial practices as they strive to cultivate decolonized entrepreneurial identities and approaches.

Our findings suggest that entrepreneurs from Villeneuve may potentially resist attempts by incubators to recolonize them. By adopting their own entrepreneurial practices, they demonstrate a capacity to challenge imposed norms, though the process of decolonization is not always guaranteed or uniformly successful across all cases. We identify three types of processes in their journey.

This paper offers three significant contributions to the traditional Eurocentric theory of entrepreneurship: Firstly, it provides a methodological advancement by asserting that colonialism primarily manifests through the educational practices of incubators. Our methodology focuses on observing these practices enacted by both colonizers and the colonized, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of colonial dynamics. Secondly, our theoretical contribution expands the conventional scope of the colonialist theory, which traditionally centers on individuals from the Global South formerly colonized by Western European countries. Our study demonstrates that this theory is equally relevant within territories that were once subjected to colonial rule. We illustrate how entrepreneurship, through business incubators, can serve as a mechanism for reproducing colonial relations by imposing Eurocentric norms and values. These incubators often press entrepreneurs to conform to a unique set of cultural and business practices, thereby reinforcing the colonial legacy of cultural dominance rather than fostering diverse or locally rooted alternatives. Thirdly, our study enriches the theoretical understanding of decolonization by clarifying its meaning. We argue that decolonization does not inherently entail the complete rejection of praxis rooted in colonialist culture. Rather, it involves individuals making deliberate choices to adopt certain practices based on their own agency and autonomy. This nuanced interpretation underscores the individualized nature of decolonization processes.

The initial section of our paper introduces the theoretical framework, elucidating the conceptual underpinnings guiding our investigation. Following this, we delineate the research design and methodology employed in our study. Subsequently, we present and analyze our findings followed by the theoretical and practical implications of our study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colonialism and the challenge of intellectual colonization

Colonialism has historically been viewed as a practice of domination, in which one group of people subjugates another for imperial dominance and exploitation. This practice involves not just political or economic dominance, but also cultural dispossession and assimilation, where the dominant colonial powers' values, conventions, and practices are forced on colonized communities, resulting in a restructuring of their identity and customs (Kohn & Reddy, 2006). Such cultural imposition is crucial to the colonization process and can have long-term consequences for the colonized nation (Pinto & Blue, 2017).

The entanglement of modernity with colonization and European expansion underscores the complex interplay between colonialism and knowledge production and transmission. Modernity, deeply rooted in colonial and Eurocentric worldviews, operates through principles such as universalism and rationality, which have historically served to justify colonial domination and perpetuate hierarchical relationships within knowledge systems (Decault, 2016). This colonization of knowledge accompanied territorial and epistemological expansion in Europe, establishing mechanisms of authority and dominance that privileged certain forms of knowledge over others (Decault, 2016). Crucially, race and colonialism became intertwined, with European imperial dominance predicated on racial hierarchies that positioned whiteness as superior and blackness as inferior, thereby legitimizing the imposition of Western epistemologies and educational systems (Decault, 2016; Mbembe, 2017). The theories of philosophers like Descartes and Kant were applied to reinforce this racialized hierarchy by linking white males to knowledge production and moral superiority based on race, perpetuating colonial power dynamics, and marginalizing alternative knowledge systems (Decault, 2016).

In her groundbreaking analysis of the postcolonial condition, Spivak (1994, 2015, 2023) studies the persistent signs of colonialism in detail. She explains how the subaltern is silenced by the institutional and social frameworks of colonialism and imperialism. She popularized the idea of "epistemic violence" which is defined as a type of violence against the subalterns' knowledge systems. This entails the suppression and silence of indigenous epistemologies and the non-Western modes of knowledge and expression, hence upholding the colonial claim that people living under colonial rule have inferior intellectual and cultural capacities. This is evident in the way that these peoples' voices and knowledge are handled by the dominant social systems. She draws attention to how the colonial powers impose their own knowledge systems, so determining what is known and how it is known without sharing this epistemic authority. The reason behind the subaltern's inability to speak is not because they lack agency or voice; rather, it is because the dominant colonial frameworks do not recognize their ways of communication. The voices of the subalterns are then either entirely muted, misunderstood, or co-opted. She also critically examines the problematic of Western and postcolonial intellectuals trying to "speak for" oppressed subaltern communities, challenging the idea that one can really represent another without oppressing or distorting their voice. She contends that

such acts of representation may wind up silencing them by forcing Western interpretive frameworks on people they are meant to assist and perpetuating a kind of colonial domination.

Furthermore, in examining the postcolonial condition, Mbembe (1992, 2001, 2006) delves into the enduring signs of colonialism, particularly in African societies. He explains how colonial legacies continue to shape power dynamics and structures within these societies, perpetuating hierarchies and systems of domination established during colonial rule. These signs of colonialism manifest in various forms, including the persistence of authoritarian governance models inherited from colonial administrations and the enduring influence of colonial ideologies on notions of identity, citizenship, and belonging (Mbembe, 1992, 2006). Furthermore, Mbembe explores the intimate connection between colonialism and knowledge production and transmission, revealing how colonialism imposed Western epistemologies and educational systems while marginalizing indigenous forms of knowledge (Mbembe, 2001, 2017).

Building upon his foundational work, Mbembe (2016) expands on the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial contexts, critiquing the imposition of Western-centric identity categories through education. He reveals several signs of colonialism within higher education institutions, including the persistence of apartheid architecture, reflecting spatial inequalities inherited from colonial oppression. Additionally, he highlights the bureaucratic control, standardization, and marketization of education that perpetuate colonial ideologies of uniformity, exploitation, and profit-making. Furthermore, he criticizes obsessive assessment practices and the reduction of academic excellence to quantitative measures, which further reflect colonial legacies of prioritizing measurable outputs over intellectual inquiry. Finally, he discusses the portrayal of students as consumers of educational commodities, which underscores a colonial mindset that instrumentalizes education for economic gain rather than fostering a pursuit of knowledge for its intrinsic value.

In parallel with Mbembe's critical analysis of colonial legacies in postcolonial contexts, scholars like Bancel et al. (2010) provide nuanced insights into the complex dynamics of colonialism within developed nations, notably France. Their examination sheds light on the persistent reverberations of colonial histories within contemporary French society, challenging conventional narratives that confine postcolonial discussions solely to former colonial territories. Through a meticulous dissection of various societal domains, including urban landscapes, cultural representations, and social stratifications, Bancel et al. (2010) illuminate the enduring inequities and injustices rooted in colonial legacies within the French context. Particularly, they foreground the experiences of immigrant communities and racial minorities, revealing their ongoing struggles with issues of identity, belonging, and citizenship within a postcolonial milieu. By unraveling how colonialism perpetuates power differentials and shapes societal frameworks even in affluent nations like France, Bancel et al. (2010) advocate for a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and decolonized approaches that prioritize marginalized perspectives and narratives. Moreover, it may also appeal to differentiate between a grand narrative of harmonious social change, counter-narratives challenging this vision, and small narratives exploring new territories by examining social paradoxes and ambivalences (Dey & Steyaert, 2010).

Decolonization as a path to autonomy

Mbembe (2016) portrays decolonization as an assertion of self-ownership, involving the retrieval of identity and autonomy from colonial influences. It's depicted not solely as a negation of history but as a reconstruction of both present and future, grounded in a nuanced comprehension of indigenous identity and interconnectedness. Mbembe (2016) explains that the contemporary resurgence of decolonization entails critiquing the Eurocentric academic model and countering epistemic coloniality through the promotion of pluriversal knowledge systems. This movement aims to reshape higher education by nurturing epistemic diversity and contesting the prevalence of Western-centric ideologies. Moreover, it confronts the neoliberal globalization of education, emphasizing the commercialization of knowledge, stark inequalities, and the undermining of democratic principles, advocating for a reassessment of the political economy of knowledge production to cultivate a more equitable educational environment.

In reaction to intellectual colonization, some individuals surrender to colonial powers and develop a disposition of openness and respect for the dominant pole (Reyes, 2011). They find that compliance with the colonial practices is their only way for improvement, so they end up imitating the dominant pole while repressing who they are. The imitation process is a taken-for-granted belief that compliance with colonial knowledge yields a disposition towards alleged quality (Abreu-Pederzini & Suárez-Barraza, 2020). However, other individuals keep on defending their own cultures. The choices they make reflect the meanings that people reflexively attach to themselves and the claims of who they could be so other individuals learn how to

relate to them (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Kothiyal et al., 2018). Decolonization is therefore the process of challenging, refuting, and removing colonial narratives to create space for new ways of knowing, being, and performing (Fellner, 2018; G. H. Smith & L. T. Smith, 2018). It reflects the need to question what matters and for whom—specifically in education—hence acknowledging the importance of community and its associated cultural and social values (Hindle & Moroz, 2010).

Entrepreneurship and the diffusion of colonialist praxis within incubators

Incubation is described as a support activity that offers expert business guidance and counseling to early-stage entrepreneurs (Patton, 2013). An incubator's mission is to provide a strategy to nurture and assist in new venture survival (Hackett & Dilts, 2004). Voisey et al. (2013, p. 455) state that "[...] incubation is now viewed as a key component of regional and national economic development." As a result, the fundamental concept is that incubators foster socially beneficial entrepreneurship that meets the requirements of the local community while simultaneously promoting employment and economic progress. According to Marlow and McAdam (2015), business incubation is a process that tries to promote the growth and development of an organization throughout its early stages. This process provides a suitable atmosphere for entrepreneurs during the beginning stages, connects entrepreneurs to the networks and resources required for developing a business, helps in decreasing the costs involved with establishing a firm and increases the entrepreneur's confidence. Hence, business incubation promotes a company's growth, saves the company time and money, and creates social and economic advantages (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). The incubator aims to offer its participants strategic, value-added monitoring and business assistance mechanisms (Hackett & Dilts, 2004). These mechanisms can be adapted or partially applied based on the context. Existing literature views entrepreneurial businesses as objective units of study, assuming that the support efforts and physical benefits of incubation are impartial, independent components (Marlow & McAdam, 2015).

However, the tendency of incubators to model and create their praxis based on traditional, non-specialized business norms may not adequately address the demands or needs of diverse entrepreneurial backgrounds (Amezcuca et al., 2019). The concept of intellectual colonization highlights how entrepreneurial praxis is often imposed within incubators and business schools through the replication of success stories and the development of standardized theories, primarily influenced by the "Silicon Valley effect" (Frost & Crockett, 2006; Ogbor, 2000). This form of praxis refers to the overarching adoption of entrepreneurial processes and theoretical models that reflect dominant entrepreneurial norms (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). These norms, embedded in incubator environments, become collectively accepted and shape entrepreneurial thought and behavior (Reckwitz, 2002). As a result, the imposition of standardized praxis limits the diversity of entrepreneurial approaches, constraining individual practices, which are the routinized and organized activities entrepreneurs engage in, often blending both routine and unforeseen elements (Champenois et al., 2019).

Critical perspectives on entrepreneurship (Calás et al., 2009; Derry, 2002; Peredo & McLean, 2013; Tedmanson et al., 2012) critique the portrayal of entrepreneurship as an inherently positive economic activity, often prioritizing economic gains over social and environmental well-being. They reveal exploitation, power imbalances, and the reinforcement of capitalist ideologies, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of its societal impacts and the diffusion of practices. By advocating interdisciplinary approaches and amplifying marginalized voices, these studies promote responsible entrepreneurship that moves beyond profit-driven motives. Additionally, they align with decolonial efforts by challenging dominant Western economic paradigms and addressing the complexities of entrepreneurial practices within diverse socio-cultural contexts, underscoring the importance of reflexivity and ethical considerations. Scholars further argue that traditional entrepreneurship education mirrors colonial approaches to assimilation that, when directed at indigenous people for example, fail to disrupt hegemonic power inequalities (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Revely & Down, 2009) and suppress the potential for culturally specific forms of entrepreneurship, particularly in globalized contexts (Peredo & McLean, 2013).

They claim that western theories developed in elite business schools may not adequately grasp the complexities of practices such as stitching in Pakistan, leadership dynamics in South Africa, or the motivations behind a Mexican individual starting a sidewalk 'changarro' for selling quesadillas rather than pursuing a more conventional business (Abreu-Pederzini & Suárez-Barraza, 2020). The Western-centric approach to entrepreneurship education can suppress or restrict local entrepreneurial practices and languages, mirroring the broader dynamics of colonialism (Sasakamoose & Pete, 2015). This form of praxis, particularly in globalized contexts, risks perpetuating a colonial mindset and reinforcing colonialist tendencies, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged countries (Shahraki & Heydari, 2006).

There are several reasons why a particular praxis may or may not succeed in different contexts, as “[...] the specific patterns of practice adaptation will depend on the fit between the diffusing practice and the adopting organization” (Ansari et al., 2010, p. 68). As research on diffusion has advanced, scholars have increasingly recognized that organizations respond differently to socio-cultural influences and that the transmission of ideas typically involves some level of institutional “translation.” This process entails interpreting and reshaping ideas to align with various socio-cultural norms as they spread across different contexts (Ansari et al., 2010; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). The translation perspective emphasizes that, for ideas to diffuse successfully, they must be understood by recipients, who actively interpret and adapt these ideas (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Ansari et al. (2010) argue that the diffusion process is a dynamic interaction between the praxis and the adopter, shaped by political, cultural, and technological factors, with the diffused praxis evolving as it moves through different times and spaces (Sewell, 1996). To sum up, we argue the diffusion of praxis highly depends on the context.

Decolonization through entrepreneurial practices: an Entrepreneurship-As-Practice lens

The distinction between practice and praxis underscores that entrepreneurial endeavors are not solely shaped by purposeful and reflective actions but are also profoundly influenced by the cultural and social contexts in which they occur (Thompson et al., 2016). “Practice theory is gaining popularity as a valid means to understand how people do things on an individual level, a collective level and the actions that navigate the space in between these two” (Thompson et al., 2016, p. 813). Anderson and Ronteau (2017) argue that to gain better knowledge of entrepreneurship, researchers are encouraged to incorporate the practice-based approach to studying what entrepreneurs really do in their local contexts. This approach views entrepreneurship as a daily, continuing practice of inventively managing resources and people (Johannisson, 2011) and aims to provide important insights into what entrepreneurs do, as well as how and why they do it (Anderson & Ronteau, 2017). In practice approaches, the actors do not hold fixed or pre-defined roles; instead, they are recognized as players via their various sayings and doings (Nicolini, 2012) such as the way they move their bodies, treat others, manage things, explain objects, and comprehend the world around them revealing how common widespread practices can limit or constrain some people’s actions while supporting others’ (Nicolini, 2012; Thompson et al., 2016).

Following De Certeau’s (1984) notion of everyday practices, Sabella et al. (2019) focus on indigenous entrepreneurial practices and experiences as everyday forms of resistance which represent ordinary acts of defiance by which people express their dissatisfaction with colonial domination, especially in depleted communities and the periphery in general. These are illegal entrepreneurial practices conducted by informal and disenfranchised entrepreneurs (Imas et al., 2012) who enjoy legitimacy, operate within informal institutional boundaries, and get access to resources and social networks. These entrepreneurs adopt unconventional and countless ways of using laws, rituals, and representations to their own ends and wishes in ways that differ from those promoted by the dominant system. Their creative approach to entrepreneurship enables them to exercise power and to challenge the strategies and techniques of the dominant entity (Sabella et al., 2019). This form of decolonization through entrepreneurial practices highlights the agency of entrepreneurs in transforming their economic realities, subverting imposed structures, and reclaiming their own ways of knowing and doing business (Imas et al., 2012). This approach aligns with the concept of epistemic disobedience by Mignolo (2013), which entails opposing entrepreneurial theories that are mostly Western-focused and reminds Dey and Mason (2018) who stipulate that the creative use of humanities would help to “emphasize how disruptive truth-telling” may “[...] actualize possibilities for imagining future realities that seem impossible from the standpoint of dominant imagination” (Dey & Mason, 2018, p. 84).

In the context of indigenous entrepreneurship education, Woods et al. (2022) propose four ways of learning that can produce a shift from the diffusion of praxis to the decolonization of practices: first, conceptual ways of knowing which refer to reframing and retheorizing learning concepts to fit with the context; second, cultural ways of knowing which refer to connecting and combining colonial and context-specific practices; third, political ways of knowing which refer to challenging the colonial foundations and creating alternative and emancipatory frames; last, relational ways of knowing which refer to knowledge built through interrelations between humans, objects, spaces, and places. Thus, in decolonized contexts, teaching strategies should embrace the lifelong practices of learners and extend beyond reusing, revising, remixing, and redistributing knowledge to recontextualizing it (Olivier, 2020).

The theoretical review reveals that the diffusion of praxis within business incubators are mostly driven by a colonialist mindset, which is heavily influenced by Western standards and values. As a result, non-Western perspectives on entrepreneurship are dismissed, resulting in intellectual colonialism. Such techniques may fail to satisfy the diverse cultural, social, and economic

backgrounds of entrepreneurs, particularly women. This analysis contends that more contextualized, culturally sensitive, and personalized support in entrepreneurship education is required. As a result, the goal of this research is to discover and investigate the entrepreneurial practices of immigrants in an economically deprived zone in France, examining and evaluating their activities, behaviors, routines, and relationships with their coaches, trainers, and incubators. It seeks to ascertain alignment or resistance to the prevalent colonialist praxis vehicle outlined in the literature and to bring new insights into the complex dynamics of colonialism within developed nations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Generic research design

An ethnographic study for catching a critical approach of entrepreneurial practices

In order to grasp how entrepreneurs resist to the diffusion of praxis that gets brought about by incubators, we adopt, thus, a critical perspective on entrepreneurship, as theoretical length, but also a feminist (Ahl & Marlow, 2012) and a feminist-colonialist epistemological approach (Imas & Garcia-Lorenzo, 2023): We assumes that the field of entrepreneurship, in which individuals are more or less free to operate, ontologically contains and conveys inequality in terms of degree of actions, especially for women and for non-WASP persons. In this vein, entrepreneurial praxis immigrants, especially women immigrants from former countries that have been colonized in the past, struggle becoming entrepreneurs, are showing signs of resilience and resistance to make them build what Imas and Garcia-Lorenzo (2023) call “their own identities as entrepreneurs.”

In this vein, we decided to follow a research design similar to that adopted by Berglund and Tilmar (2015) while seeking to enrich the EAP Approach with the concept of game applied to women entrepreneuring and to use data collected through an ethnographic study. Their initiation intuition is based on the assumption according to which women fail becoming “good entrepreneurs”, in a sense of being the creator of a venture that grows and generates wealthiness. From a critical perspective, they question what entrepreneuring, as a process by which entrepreneurs can free themselves, really means in practice. For that purpose, they argue the ethnography study remains the best option in terms of research design for catching what nascent (women) entrepreneurs really do, what they can really do beyond discourses they could convey. That what we did and, more precisely, here, we conducted a participative ethnographic study (Fernandez et al., 2019). Such a process allows the capture of women entrepreneurs’ practices “on the run” and generates affection between scholars and women entrepreneurs and, being embedded into the entrepreneurial process of these women allows better trust and, therefore, better knowledge sharing between the two types of actors.

The place: once segregated district in France that has been targeted as to be a place of full entrepreneurs

To understand how incubators diffuse praxis and how these are embraced by entrepreneurs and in addition to the general need to adopt an ethnographic approach, we selected a specific place for our investigation. We wanted that place to be considered segregated, or, at least, distant from typical entrepreneurial practices. Given our location in France, we chose to focus on deprived economic zones known in public policies as “Quartiers Prioritaires des Villes” or QPV (literally, priority city districts). These zones are defined as areas in larger cities in France where the average yearly income per family is below 23.000 euros. Unemployment is typically high, and a significant portion of the inhabitants rely on Social Welfare. These areas are habited by immigrants, not necessarily recent ones, and French natives of foreign origin. Most of these residents moved to the area because they already had family members there. We argue that these places are marginalized as most inhabitants feel segregated due to their ethnicity, religious beliefs or, simply because they live in these areas. Geographical studies reveal that these places remain the poorest in France, year after year, as those who earn more, regardless of their ethnicity, tend to move to a wealthier area. However, we agree with Talandier et al. (2016) who argues that we should describe these places in terms of flow rather than revenue: newcomers are generally poorer than those who arrived before them, and when they leave, they are richer than those who left earlier.!

French Public Authorities, including the state, cities, and regions, not only created the concept of QPV but have also been trying for years to promote capitalism in these areas. In the 1990s, these places became tax-free zones for companies who decide to establish themselves there. The key idea was that employees, even if they did not come from the district, would contribute

to local consumption, creating a demand for restaurants, shops, services, thereby generating indirect jobs. Additionally, these companies, benefitting from tax cuts, subsidies and low-cost rentals would make profit they could reinvest into job recruitment. However, this policy had limited impact. While some companies, mostly SMEs, relocated to these areas, did not necessarily hire local residents. Moreover, as they grew, they tended to leave, seeking to enter clusters with subcontractors, clients, etc.

Ten years later, the newly created “Banque Publique d’Investissement” (BPI) identified these QPV as areas needing to be “entrepreneuried.” Indeed, the new bank, with its authority in terms of investment, aimed to promote entrepreneurship regardless of location and nature across France. To this end, the BPI provides financing and support for entrepreneurs in these districts.

Studied place, studied persons and incubators

To that end, and based on those criteria, we selected Grenoble (in the French Alps), specifically the La Villeneuve area in the Southern part of the city. La Villeneuve was built in the late 1960s and was initially considered as an architectural and social experiment aiming to mix social classes. The idea was also to create a car-free environment where everything, including schools, kindergartens, and small shops, etc., could be reached within a 10-minute walk. Over the years, members of the upper social classes left the area while poor immigrants from former Maghrebian and Sub Saharian French Colonies, and more recently from Eastern European countries arrived. New Migrants chose this place because they were welcomed by former migrants with whom their families were in touch (Maalaoui et al., 2019). Over generations, La Villeneuve became home to communities that adopted the culture and living practices of their countries of origins. While not all migrants necessarily remain in their initial district, many stayed in La Villeneuve. Struggling to integrate into the French education, religious and social systems, the unemployment rate in La Villeneuve rose, and the district was identified as having the lowest per capita income in the city, thus becoming a “QPV” (Toussaint, 2023). As in many poor districts (Mehlum et al., 2005), the crime rate especially related to the illegal drug trade, also increased. La Villeneuve gained notoriety in 2020 when President Nicolas Sarkozy stigmatized the area in a “famous” widely remembered speech¹. We ground our analysis on an ethnographic study we conducted within an incubator in France, aimed at integrating nascent ventures led by women or mixed entrepreneurial teams where women are dominant. The ethnographic study, which began in September 2019, spans over a year and takes place in the Rhone-Alpes Region (Southeastern France). This incubator is part of a French-speaking network of incubators founded in the early 2000s, sharing a common brand image and a standardized training and coaching process for women entrepreneurs. Initially, during the first years that followed the creation of the incubator and the national network, each incubator in the network, including ours, had the freedom to define its coaching program.

However, in 2015, the head of the national network decided to restructure it into a sort of franchise-like model, ensuring that all affiliated incubators adopted the same training and coaching program. This decision was made in 2014 following the secession of the Parisian incubator. At that time, the women entrepreneurs who took control of this new independent incubator had either developed new tech ventures or eventually acquired existing ones. They embraced a belief that successful ventures should be based on technological innovation, led by women and financed through fundraisers. Success metrics are measured through the number of fundraising operations, revenue growth, increasing number of employees and international expansion. To maintain a competitive edge, the network recruited a male CEO who, with the support of a like-minded woman entrepreneur, established a common training and coaching program for all women entrepreneurs who integrate any incubator of the network.

In that sense, the incubator where our ethnographic study takes place teaches standardized entrepreneurial practices to women. Located in wealthiest part of Lyon, close to business districts and hosted by a well-established French and international tech company, the incubator welcomes women who aim to create ventures following the Silicon Valley Model (Welter et al., 2018). The training programs invite women to learn how to navigate a male-dominated context (Marlow & McAdam, 2012). The incubator offers three types of training programs. The first is a 2-day session where women are invited to reflect on their entrepreneurial ambitions, profile, and a preliminary business model associated with their business idea. The second program focuses on proof of concept and initial business structuring. The third prepares nascent women entrepreneur for fundraising. Throughout these programs, particularly, the latter two, women entrepreneurs receive individual coaching from

¹ <https://www.france24.com/en/20100730-sarkozy-looks-strip-citizenship-threaten-security-forces-french-immigration/> and for the French version look at https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discours_de_Grenoble

professional experts in entrepreneurship and regularly present their project to a jury of experienced women entrepreneurs who have already developed high-growth and profitable ventures.

The participative ethnographic study has been ongoing since 2020, with our roles extending beyond scholars to board members of the incubator that is introduced below, including leading a sub-section focused on women entrepreneurs in economically deprived areas of the Alps region, about 90 miles from Lyon. This choice of investigation site is thus based on “methodological opportunism” (Girin, 2011).

Additionally, we had the opportunity to work on how to promote entrepreneurship in Villeneuve through a second incubator. One of the authors has been given the opportunity to serve as the “head of pedagogy” for this location, implementing the national pedagogical program and recruiting local professors and teachers on the local level of Grenoble.

This incubator differs from the first in two main respects. First, it serves both men and women, rather than only women. Second, it does not aim at promoting and enhancing entrepreneurship regardless of the context, but instead specializes in QPV areas. The development of this second incubator is notable. Similar to the first one, this incubator is funded by BPI and private companies. It was created in the 2010s through a partnership with a reputable business school. This initiative began when an MBA student decided to collaborate with his professor, who had secured funding to establish both a startup incubator and an accelerator. Together they first launched a national social business and ultimately an incubator specifically for individuals living in QPV areas. The professor developed a national program based on his coaching methods used in the business school. The key stone of this teaching approach is the Business Model Canvas and pitch presentations. The business model canvas highlights the need to cover basic marketing concepts, including web marketing, and basic strategic management. It particularly focuses on strategic positioning, which is crucial for defining a company's core value proposition and its ability to deliver on it. The ongoing ethnographic study began in 2020 and continues to this day.

Data collection process

In line with most ethnographic studies, the data collection process for both incubators follow a consistent approach: one of the authors seizes every opportunity that gets offered to gather data. This includes exchange with heads of both incubators, the selection process of nascent entrepreneurs, meetings to promote incubator's program, and of course, any interaction with participants. To facilitate this, one of the authors teaches or leads conferences within the programs but does not coach any individual participant.

Moreover, all participants and stakeholders involved in managing both respective incubators are aware of the fact the co-author collects data for conducting research on how to better do entrepreneurship in QPV.

Since it is impractical to register all meetings and exchanges, we adopted the widely diffused practice of the diary: Each day, the researcher involved in the two incubators documents the day's events in a factual way.

Data analysis: an abductive and collective process

One risk of ethnographic studies is the potential for “data overflow” (Eisenhardt, 1989). To mitigate these risks, we followed processes similar to those used in previous research on colonialism and entrepreneurship. For instance, Morrison's (2008) study on the entrepreneurial practices of the Samoans facing neocolonialism and globalization provided a useful reference. While the first author collected most of the data, the other co-authors were responsible for analyzing it.

This approach, which traditionally separates the work of the ethnographer (who collects data) and the ethnologist (who analyzes data) is not merely justified by the need to divide work but a strategy to introduce more neutrality into the process of data analysis. This practice helps researchers maintain awareness of “criticality” and distance from the observed object (Anteby, 2013; Locke et al., 2008). This approach is particularly beneficial given that the primary researcher, who collected data, is a white woman from a colonialist background. Obviously, the “white” and “colonialist ethnicity” dimensions of the primary researcher involved in the data collection may seem to reduce her ability to maintain a critical perspective, especially when considering the colonial and decolonial aspects of this study. Inevitably, “*qualitative researcher is part of the story*” (Langley & Klag, 2019) and we were fully aware of this, which is why we adopted this tasks division approach between researchers. Furthermore, the primary researcher followed Plowman (2016) in developing trust over time with women entrepreneurs to facilitate the sharing of personal experiences, which effectively minimized de facto its “white colonialist” identity during data collection.

For that purpose, every three months, the author involved in the two incubators reports what happened to the other authors. Two of these authors are from countries previously colonized by the same metropole but having never lived in this metropole and one author resides in the metropole as an immigrant from a country that was never colonized by it. The involved author presents key findings and supporting evidence to justify her purpose (Anteby, 2013). Meanwhile, the other authors review the data and assess whether the claims are reasonable. If they find inconsistencies, the involved author must revisit her notes and gather additional evidence. This process aligns with Plowman (2016) who emphasized the value of interaction between diary-keeping researchers and their colleagues for deepening understanding and analysis.

More specifically, all co-authors started by qualifying and describing the practices and values being developed in the deprived economic zone, as well as how observed nascent entrepreneurs from this zone naturally interact with other actors to develop their own businesses. In that respect, we followed the assumption developed by Georgiou et al. (2013) that entrepreneurial networking, as an entrepreneurial practice, can suffer from colonialism. Next, we identified signs of colonialism or decolonialism in the practices of the two incubators and examined how reactions from the potentially “colonialized” individuals could be seen as signs of resistance against colonialization. Using an abductive approach, we referred to the literature, identifying “Acts of colonialization” Barnett (2009) as practices of imposing one’s beliefs and practices on a particular subaltern population. We also identified signs of intellectual decolonization, following the work of Woods et al. (2022) which include: signs recontextualization of concepts and praxis learned by entrepreneurs; signs of connection between the praxis and the culture of the entrepreneurs; signs of challenges to colonial foundations and creation of alternative, emancipatory frameworks and, finally, signs of building of new knowledge through the interrelation between actors.

Finally, and once again, to reduce subjectivity in our collective interpretation, and following Morrison (2008), we presented our on-going research results in 2022 to an audience of women entrepreneurs from the deprived area we studied. They had the opportunity to react, confirm or criticize our conclusions. Their feedback confirmed most aspects of our interpretation of the situation through the lens of colonialism. In an intersubjective manner, the following paragraphs present the results that these entrepreneurs also felt were signs of colonialism.

FINDINGS

In this section, we present our findings through the use of vignettes, following the methodology of Jarzabkowski et al. (2014). These vignettes were selected for their ability to illustrate typical practices and behaviors observed among incubator members and entrepreneurs, which have been identified as indicators of colonialism. To ensure clarity and facilitate discussion, we have organized our findings thematically, in line with the recommendations of Langley (1999).

To maintain the anonymity of the individuals mentioned in the text, pseudonyms have been used. However, to preserve their ethnic and familial identities, these pseudonyms reflect traditional names associated with their respective ethnic backgrounds.

The first section of our findings addresses the indicators of colonialism perpetuated by incubators and their members. The second section presents our findings on the indicators of decolonization among nascent entrepreneurs as they establish their ventures, drawing on the work of Wood et al. (2022). The final section identifies three types of processes employed by entrepreneurs in their journey toward decolonization.

Incubators: the “weapon” for a national and local political willingness to “reconquer” a lost territory

Generic description of the process to diffuse entrepreneurship in the deprived zones

The introduction of our findings originates from our direct observation as participants of both incubators. Incubator 1, established in Grenoble in 2016, aims to promote and coach women entrepreneurs in the region. Its initial goal was to replicate the success achieved in Lyon, another city in the region, over the past decade. The strategy involved extensive advertising on social networks and organizing “information meetings.” Nascent women entrepreneurs attended these meetings to learn about the program. Those interested in pursuing a relationship with the incubator would complete a registration form and present their project to a jury a few weeks later. Following this presentation, the jury would evaluate the quality of the project and the incubator’s ability to coach and assist the women who decided to register and pay the program fees. These fees partially covered the program’s expenses, with additional funding provided by regional and city public funds.

However, in 2017, during a meeting with local city representatives to discuss funding, it was explained that training only women conflicted with the city's policy, which did not favor women over men nascent entrepreneurs, except in one situation: working and promoting women in economically deprived zones (QPV). We discovered that most women in these zones come from very low-income families, and some immigrants face challenges integrating into French society, finding employment, and moving beyond their district where they live within their community. In this context, entrepreneurship is seen as a viable way for them to create their own jobs. With no other means of financing and maintaining their presence in the city, the leaders of Incubator 1 decided to target women from these zones and established a free two-day program organized annually, sometimes twice a year. The criteria for joining shifted from the project itself to the applicant's residential street, information requested by city representatives to ensure the program served the intended target.

This local initiative quickly inspired a national program called "French Tech Tremplin." Launched by the French Public Bank of Investment, this annual competition directly supports deprived nascent entrepreneurs, defined as either students or residents of QPV. Selected participants receive funding to join an incubator that holds the French Tech Label, including Incubator 1, which applied to be part of the program. They also receive funding to develop prototypes, though less than other programs not targeting QPVs. Additionally, the program aims to integrate selected nascent entrepreneurs into the local entrepreneurial network. Regular meetings are organized to empower these entrepreneurs within the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Who has the right to coach? When do entrepreneurial coaching initiatives from QPV get rejected by the entrepreneurial system?

These initiatives are being developed in parallel with local efforts originating from the residents of these deprived zones. Over the years, we have observed that collaboration between the two groups remains unwelcome. There are clear signs of distrust between members of the new incubators and the QPV inhabitants who initiated local entrepreneurship initiatives. Vignettes 1a and 1b illustrate our observations and conclusions.

Vignette 1a – "I support women entrepreneurship, but I fought so hard to make my event done."

In 2020, we had the opportunity to meet a woman well-known in the QPV for her work with a public association that assists people in need. This association is part of the city services, and Nacera has been employed there for at least ten years. We were able to meet her not through city channels, but with the help of a resident who suggested approaching her as researchers rather than as members of the two incubators. Nacera exhibited signs of distrust, and we had to assure her that we were not there to undermine her initiatives. She explained that the district already had numerous initiatives and there was no need for new ones, except for funding the existing ones. She also mentioned and described an initiative she had organized a couple of weeks prior – an event we were not invited to and had received no information about. The event centered around an ideation game focused on environment and sustainability, specifically targeting women. The results were impressive. We were particularly drawn to a project that involved using natural lime to renovate and decorate the interiors of homes in the neighborhood, with a well-developed prototype. However, Nacera revealed that she had to fight for ten years to organize such an event, as her boss deemed it a waste of time. When we suggested involving these women in our incubator programs, she once again showed signs of distrust, fearing that we might steal their projects or fail to provide meaningful support. She emphasized that the projects belong to the women and that they might not be interested in what we propose.

Vignette 1b – "I know the needs of these persons more than you know."

We first met Mohammed online during the selection process for the French Tech Tremplin competition. We knew we would not select his project since the incubator we worked with targets either women-owned projects or mixed-gender projects. Mohammed's project was a digital platform designed to connect nascent entrepreneurs with various stakeholders in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, from incubators to partners. Despite this, we scored his project poorly because the pitch was unclear, and we believed such a task should be handled by public services or established associations, not entrepreneurs. Other jury members, independently, gave similar low scores for similar reasons, leading to the rejection of Mohammed's project.

This marked the beginning of a conflict between Mohammed and local actors. Every year, he re-applied to the program, and every year, representatives of the incubators, who were often different and unaware of his history, judged his project as unprofessional. In October 2021, we observed him applying to another BPI program, where he described his project as helping local incubators by being the right person to recruit. Each year, he demanded numerous justifications, complained

to national authorities, and posted on local QPV social networks, claiming that the program was “fake.” We also learned, through other nascent entrepreneurs from the QPV, that he accused us on the dark web of exploiting QPV entrepreneurs for publicity without genuinely helping women entrepreneurs. He comes to every session that gets organized by local incubators, often late, most of the time without being invited or without registering. Each time, he remains silent, just looking at what’s happening, observing organizers and participants, often smiling when some coaches from local associations are giving their opinions, criticizing what they do in practice, as if he did not believe them. Heads of some local incubators, especially women, are exchanging a lot about him: “[...] this would never happen in the US, we could call the security department. I really feel insecure with that person in my office.” Even the head of Incubator 2 claims to have let the door of her office open when he applied to participate in the program. Despite what she calls an uncomfortable experience, she invites him “[...] *just to see who and how many persons he can source. Last time, he claims to have brought Y (a boy who wants to create his own security company but who faces trouble following the program and delivering). This is not true, I got in touch with him thanks to another person! So, we will see [...]*”.

A couple of months later on, while working with Incubator 2, we learnt that he applied to work with Incubator 2 and his application has been rejected. His aggressive posture is one explanation but another one is also the fact that the start-up he launched a couple of years ago, on which he bases his legitimacy, remains unprofitable. However, we think this last justification is somewhat surprising since most actors we meet in the field of entrepreneurship have been entrepreneurs themselves and not all of them developed successful, profitable and sustainable ventures!

The vignettes refer to key illustrations drawn from over ten similar observations conducted during our study. Each instance follows the same pattern: local initiatives are either disregarded or their impact minimized by external actors. Local actors respond by either organizing events, voicing dissent, or, through persistence, ultimately achieving recognition as part of the entrepreneurial elite. This suggests that members of incubators originating from the most affluent economic regions have been tasked with operating within the zone and perceive local initiatives as uncertified actions.

In conclusion, our findings highlight a trend of mandated incubators entering communities with high concentrations of marginalized individuals, many of whom are immigrants. These incubators often operate independently from existing local initiatives, imposing their own standards and entrepreneurial practices on recruited entrepreneurs. This can inadvertently or deliberately disregard the successful practices already in place within these communities. Vignette 3 demonstrates how some mentors working within these marginalized areas perceive this approach to entrepreneurship.

Vignette 3 – Showing entrepreneurs

The latest strategy identified for locating female entrepreneurs is not directly related to the program itself. Incubator 1 has chosen to implement a researcher’s suggestion: a photo exhibition showcasing women from economically disadvantaged areas. All invited women have agreed to participate and pose for a professional photographer. The exhibition is scheduled to travel, with the Villeneuve location already secured. Local authorities have approved the event, and to enhance its accessibility and appeal, the incubator has partnered with a local restaurant. This restaurant, also a social enterprise, employs individuals facing long-term unemployment. The social enterprise proposed a pricing strategy that would be higher than typical prices found in Grenoble’s wealthier neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the incubator approved the restaurant manager’s idea to host a roundtable discussion, which she would moderate. She invited a researcher affiliated with the incubator, though she clarified that this individual was not a researcher but rather the incubator’s organizer. As the researcher explained their work, the moderator remained silent and did not offer any explanation or clarification. In the meantime, she invited a scientist to the event, prominently featuring her affiliation with the University of Grenoble and her specialization in migration studies on her promotional materials. During the event, the researcher, an Algerian studying migration from Algeria to France, made a bold statement: she declared that promoting entrepreneurship among women from Algeria was a “futile,” a futile effort. To her surprise, the audience did not share her perspective, and local authorities seemed to downplay her presence. Disheartened by the response, she abruptly left during the cocktail reception.

A confirmation that incubators vehicle Eurocentric if not global entrepreneurial praxis

Methods that are currently being used to coach entrepreneurship are shared by all incubators: Without any surprise, we note that the pitching exercise, the business model canvas, the business plan are commonly used. All students from business but also from engineering schools learn these tools. In the QPV, nascent entrepreneurs we met, except Mohammed (mentioned

in vignette 1b) and his sister, are not familiar with most of these tools. However, this is not because they do not use these tools that the business, they developed is not profitable. For instance, we met Gloria who is graduated in Human Resource Management. She opened her venture by “providing a service to companies to help them recruit and work with persons who come from diversity” as she explains. We learned later that she also created a small on-line venture that consists of selling shoes and importing them to France. She succeeded in creating all of these ventures without any coaching or help. Her intuition guided her towards the right market and she had a good sense of managing figures. We also met other nascent entrepreneurs with little education in management. This lack of education was perceived by coaches and trainers as to be problematic: “We lose lots of time to explain basic things”, explains one of them in 2021 (Trainer 3, working for Incubator 1). In such circumstances, incubators face the issue of patience and benevolence towards these entrepreneurs that need to be coached and to be “at the right level to be able to prepare any ban meeting” (Trainer 3). What confused the heads of Incubator 1 but also members and professors who work for Incubator 2 is the fact that participants do not follow the rules. The head of projects who is in charge of organizing the logistics of the program for Incubator 1 blames most of the women from QPV to be late during meetings, to neither confirm nor cancel their attendance, and to fail to prepare ahead their meetings and make coaches lose time. Such reclaims are noted almost every week in our ethnographic diary following observations in Incubators 1 and 2 for more than 2 years.

Signs of decolonialization of nascent entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey

Beyond some colonialist signs that we identified among incubators, we also observed signs of disobedience from entrepreneurs. Basing our analysis on the work of Woods et al. (2022), we reconstitute and describe these signs into four categories.

First, we identify signs of recontextualization of concepts or praxis that have been learnt, or at least exposed to entrepreneurs. Besides recontextualization, we also note the rejection of some practices (Vignette 2a).

Vignette 2a – Cindy: Playing with performative practices but rejecting others

Once she integrated the incubator, Cindy traveled to her native country, which is also the place of her market, to start working on her business. Therefore, she missed part of the training program. Sometimes, the internet connection did not allow her good online participation. During our exchanges, per WhatsApp or when we met, Cindy claimed to reject the “*French practices of entrepreneurial networking that made (her) lose her time and made her inefficient.*”

Despite initially declining our offer to join a network providing funding, mentorship, and a business partner to scale her venture, Cindy accepted my proposal to write a press release highlighting her progress. This press release aimed to attract potential investors and broaden her audience. In the weeks following our meeting, Cindy consistently kept me informed of her recruitment efforts. She explained that she was seeking “[...] *a social network consultant who is capable of posting things on her on the web so that she could communicate to her audience and be recognized as an expert in phone schooling and education.*”

Second, besides the presence of signs of contextualization, we mostly observe signs of adaptation of the entrepreneurial praxis to the culture of the entrepreneurs. The first sign refers to the way the value proposition is developed per se. In Incubator 2, we noted that most of entrepreneurs express the willingness to develop products that fit their community. Nascent Entrepreneurs who originate from Morocco claim to propose clothing or food that fit the Muslim culture. Besides the value proposition per se that can be observed while making participants work on the business model canvas, other signs of adaptation of the praxis to the culture of the country can also be illustrated by Cindy’s case. This incubator typically assists with business setup, but Cindy’s cost analysis raised concerns. The incubator director, slightly exasperated by the delay, offered to collaborate on the costing to stay on schedule. The business plan, which requires funding from French Tech for prototype development, was nearing its deadline. Cindy, however, intended to outsource the prototype development to Cameroon, citing lower hourly rates and costs compared to France. However, she also acknowledged the complexities of navigating taxes in Cameroon, which were not readily understood by the incubator team. This outsourcing strategy to a foreign country deviate from the usual practices observed among digital startups in France. While engaging in tax avoidance, Cindy acknowledges the corrupt ecosystem, implicitly suggesting a potential accommodation with its prevailing culture.

Third, decolonialization is evident in the entrepreneurial practices chosen by participants. This manifests in the embrace of multi-incubation and a shared sense of “shopping around.” Participants frequently engage with multiple incubators simultaneously, attending only when specific training aligns with their current needs. While individual entrepreneurs select

different practices based on their unique projects and beliefs, there's a common thread: a strong conviction regarding what constitutes successful entrepreneurship. This conviction is often shaped by social media trends, particularly advice from influential figures on platforms like TikTok, and the collective wisdom of their entrepreneurial communities.

Finally, we observe evidence of new knowledge creation arising from the interplay between actors. The case of Cindy, presented in vignette 2a, exemplifies this phenomenon, although it is not an isolated instance. Cindy's decision to establish her business in France, within a QPV, while developing an application for Cameroonian high school students, disrupts the conventional practices of incubator 1 and simultaneously generates new knowledge. The incubator primarily focuses on companies operating within the French market, potentially expanding to international markets at a later stage. However, Cindy's venture deviates from this norm. Her target market resides in Cameroon, where labor costs are significantly lower than in France. This unique approach raises significant questions regarding the transfer of funds provided by French Tech to Cameroon, as well as the appropriate legal status for Cindy's company. These challenges are not unique to Cindy, but rather represent broader issues that nascent and young entrepreneurs are pushing established companies to address. While solutions may ultimately be determined by accountants, they are likely to have financial ramifications for Cindy.

Three types of processes by which nascent entrepreneurs get decolonized

Once we identified signs of decolonization, refereeing to the typology of Woods et al. (2022), the question is how did these entrepreneurs decided to practice, and, undirectededly, show these signs? We find it hard to dress any generic model (Langley, 1999) that would encompass how entrepreneurs develop specific signs of recontextualization, signs of adaptation to their home culture or signs of creation of alternative frames and signs of new modes of interaction. We cannot draw any generic process, but we are capable of identifying three types of processes entrepreneurs adopt to finally develop their own entrepreneurial practices: (1) Conflict (2) Avoidance and silence and (3) Collaboration.

First process: conflict

The first process that leads to the development of a deviant entrepreneurial practice is the direct conflict. The main illustration for such a conflict is Jasmine's case (Vignette 3a). The case of Jasmine can be interpreted at two levels. At the entrepreneurial level, there is sign of disobedience to the request of the program and to the board members. Jasmine faced significant challenges in managing her business, stemming primarily from the influx of migrants relocated by the town hall to the neighborhood directly adjacent to her storefront. These individuals, struggling to make ends meet, engage in various survival strategies, including prostitution, drug trafficking, and substance abuse, creating an environment that discourages customers and staff alike. Simultaneously, she was navigating a separation from her partner, who, while entrepreneurial in his own right, has developed a delivery service catering to the final 100 meters of difficult neighborhoods, fueling jealousy over her own ambitions. Despite these personal and professional hurdles, she remained committed to her business, pursuing further education and skill development to achieve a Master's level. Recognizing the immediate need to focus on her business's launch, she has decided to delay refining the economic model, a task she intends to undertake a few months after the incubation period concludes. Jasmine chose not to disclose her challenges to the incubator members, stating simply, *"It's none of their business."* This decision, however, can be understood within the context of a second level of meaning: the consequences of colonial history. The board's head had lived in Algeria during its independence from France. Her French family was forced to flee the country hastily after independence, leaving behind all but a few belongings. Meanwhile, Jasmine, though born in France, hails from an Algerian family. This shared history heightened the tension during the meeting when Jasmine justified her refusal to present the business plan. Rather than explaining her personal situation, she generalized it to the experiences of many women in her district, saying, *"You know, I come from a specific district, and I am different."*

This conflict marked a turning point, prompting Jasmine to assert her autonomy and prioritize her actions. She declared her right to decide the timing of her actions and, in part, delegated the business plan development to her accountant, who also shares her ethnicity.

Vignette 3a – "Do you really think you're really different?"

June 2021. Jasmine, like the other members of her entrepreneurial cohort in the incubator, is to present her project and its progress to a mid-programme jury. The jury is composed of the coach she's been working with during the whole period of incubation and a board member of the incubator. The board member is well-known for having been a former CEO

of a profitable company she sold a couple of years ago for several million Euros. She is also known for her outspoken and, sometimes, aggressive remarks during meetings and trainings. Jasmine is busy with her studies: she joined last September a post-graduate master's programme in which she learns entrepreneurial praxis and puts them into practice. Meanwhile, she also thinks of her new venture and does her "360" (meaning she takes a moment to identify all the elements that could play in favour – or not – of her vision. Once she gets the whole information and weighs the pros and cons, she acts). Last, she also spends time working on her own identity as an entrepreneur and developing a storytelling of her progress. Every week, she calls us, even late in the day, asking us to get connected with a famous journalist (she thinks of a famous woman journalist from diversity who became an entrepreneur) or a rapper. She asks for authorization from the school to get filmed in front of the school and to do a video of her. She orders pictures of her standing on her car, brandishing the sign "driving school" she usually puts on the roof of her car. Her vision is definitively not formalized on paper, but she wants to get known as the woman entrepreneur who comes from diversity and who is to break the rules. So, when the administration of the incubator informs, she is to present her project to the jury, she politely explains of course she accepts. However, she does not send the business plan that all women entrepreneurs are supposed to send to the jury. The board member sends her an email asking for this document, her coach in copy of the message. She kindly replies that she will not deliver that document that would only be done after her special training program organized by ISCB, so in one month [...] While coming to the meeting, the exchange with the board member is really tough and the board member loses her temper: "You really believe that you are different from the others. You believe that you are the only one to come from a deprived economic situation??? You do not even know where I come from!!". Finally, the meeting ends but Jasmine, so far, had not presented her business plan.

Second process: avoidance

The second approach to decolonialization practices is avoidance. A prime example is Cindy (vignette 2). While Cindy encountered no conflict within either incubator, unlike Jasmine, she neither shared nor explained her decisions, nor did she engage in any form of exchange. We had multiple opportunities to connect with Jasmine, who even contacted us late at night. Cindy, however, never reached out. Like many nascent entrepreneurs from the QPV, Cindy applied to and was accepted by other incubators. After leaving the first incubator, we discovered she was joining the second incubator we were involved in, but she never requested assistance from us, as fellow incubator members or colleagues. Subsequently, we learned she was participating in two, three, and even four programs concurrently, leading us to believe she would be unable to manage the demands placed upon her. Interestingly, despite most incubators requiring the same practices, Cindy never developed or presented her business model canvas or business plan, but did deliver her pitch. *"This is the only thing I need to secure funding so far. The rest is irrelevant"* she explained.

Third process: collaboration

The last type of development of practices of decolonialization is collaboration. Vignette 3b illustrates that strategy.

Vignette 3b – Gloria come and join me when I am a leader

Gloria was born in France but maintains strong ties to Senegal, where she travels twice a year. Holding a bachelor's degree in human resources management, her decision to establish her own diversity consulting venture wasn't driven by personal experience but by an insightful conversation with her former boss during an internship. As she explained, *"I was working for a large company. I was eager to contribute, but couldn't find a position that truly aligned with my aspirations. My boss simply said, 'Well, you should create your own job' and that's how I decided to start my own company."* During the incubation program, Gloria embraced an entrepreneurial approach, testing practices within her own context. However, her professional background led to her being paired with a highly successful independent consultant who became not only a coach but a mentor. This individual offered Gloria opportunities to co-develop training programs and secured speaking engagements at conferences. Several years later, Gloria invited us for coffee and excitedly announced the creation of her own incubator in Senegal. She implemented proven practices while adapting them to the Senegalese context, recognizing the significance of Tontines – a form of communal funding – in local entrepreneurial practices. Gloria invited us to join her initiative, but emphasized her leadership role in this endeavor.

We did not notice that entrepreneurs shift between different processes. The adoption of a specific process appears to be influenced by both individual personality and the resources available to the entrepreneur. Gloria's educational background and strong network facilitated interactions and boosted her self-efficacy. Conversely, Jasmine, despite her success, is investing significant effort in validating her education while navigating complex professional and personal challenges.

DISCUSSION

Our findings confirm that entrepreneurs from Villeneuve succeed to overcome attempts from incubators to recolonize them and, while adopting their own practices, they finally succeed getting decolonized. 3 types of processes are identified.

We propose to discuss our findings and allow the data to speak on three key levels. First, on the level of the qualification of the incubators' practices we observed per se: shall they be considered as signs of (re)colonialization? Second, on the level of nascent entrepreneurs, as subject to and receivers of colonialist practices: do they obey or resist? Third and last, on the level of the legitimacy of the researcher/observer and her contributions to the study.

Entrepreneurship as vehicle of (re)colonialist practices within incubators

While it sounds not obvious to associate incubation practices with colonialist dynamics, our findings reveal that in business ecosystems, like in other contexts, issues of power imbalance, dominance, exploitation, and inequities may arise.

While incubators are supposed to provide incubates with business assistance intervention mechanisms (Hackett & Dilts, 2004), with support efforts as unbiased independent components (Marlow & McAdam, 2015), some observed practices reflect the tendency of the Western incubator to impose its educational system as part of a broader effort to exert cultural and economic control. Western-centric curricula within the incubator marginalize or suppress local knowledge and language while serving as a tool for cultural hegemony and the erasure or denigration of the local community culture. This educational process leads to dependency vis-à-vis the Western cultural and intellectual systems.

The transmission of ideas within incubators entails translation, in other words, it should focus on how recipients make sense of ideas before and after adapting them (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Our observation reveals that there is no consideration of the receiver's viewpoint and that there is no dynamic fit between the educational practice and the adopter in the sense that it is neither tailor-made to the receiver's expectations and aspirations, nor contextualized to the local community's needs (Sewell, 1996) hence inhibiting the nascent entrepreneur from producing context-specific outcomes (Welter, 2011; Welter & Baker, 2020).

Aside from imposing Western beliefs through (re)colonization in entrepreneurship education, the incubator pushes nascent entrepreneurs to align with Western golden standard or norm and marginalizes those who deviate from it. This finding aligns with the definition of colonial education in prior research (Revilla et al., 2012). This also reflects hegemonic power imbalance and inequalities (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010) which perpetrate a form of (re)colonization and deny alternative knowledge that challenge colonial dominant ways of thinking. Alternative perspectives and practices that arise from immigrant traditions and subcultures are often overlooked by the incubator's mainstream educational practices, which further confirms the existence of (re)colonization practices.

On one side, we could argue that ignorance of policy makers for helping and developing abandoned places could explain a bad choice: incubators get motivated entering these places mostly for financial reasons. However, their knowledge of such contexts remains underdeveloped and coaches tend either to ignore or deny differences across participants. So, by financing incubators they trust and know, maybe local and national policies are contributing to the diffusion of praxis that do not fit all by ignorance (Barnett, 2009; Joy & Poonamallee, 2013). On the other side, we can argue that ignorance does not exist, and BPI and incubators are intentionally rejecting actors that do not adopt their rules and praxis, such as those of Rachid, the boy who comes from the marginalized place and who claims to become a coach for people "like him". In that respect, entering a new territory, refusing to play with potential local players, imposing praxis without any real attempt of adaptation can also be considered as to be a colonialist approach. This reflects standard colonial paradigms that sideline the diverse needs and experiences of local entrepreneurial ecosystems and limits the inclusivity and relevance of entrepreneurial education for the

targeted communities who evolve in distinct socio-cultural landscapes (Hindle & Moroz, 2010). The lack of adaptation also reflects cultural insensitivity which is not conducive to the success of nascent entrepreneurs in their business endeavors.

Another practice that we considered in this study is the unequal access to resources, funding, and mentorship within the incubator. Immigrant nascent entrepreneurs, who belong to underprivileged communities, face barriers and challenges in accessing the same opportunities as others in more privileged zones. This is a perpetration of the historical inequalities associated with colonialism. Further, the unequal power dynamics seem to lead to disparities in opportunities and outcomes thus mirroring colonialist structures.

Decolonization as a form of resistance that confirm (re)colonization intents

Our findings are consistent with the existing literature (Abreu-Pederzini & Suárez-Barraza, 2020; Reyes, 2011) that highlights practices of resistance against the dominant entrepreneurial models promoted by incubators. However, we extend this analysis through Mignolo's concept of *epistemic disobedience* (Mignolo, 2013), which advocates for rejecting Western-centric knowledge structures in favor of plural and contextually grounded epistemologies. The resistance observed among entrepreneurs in our study is not simply a reaction to specific business models; rather, it reflects a broader decolonial struggle for autonomy over knowledge and practices. Entrepreneurs resist the imposition of Western norms, engaging in what can be understood as intellectual and cultural resistance aimed at reclaiming agency within their own business environments. By refusing to conform to these externally imposed frameworks, they challenge the epistemic colonization that suppresses local knowledge systems and imposes frameworks that do not align with the socio-cultural realities of marginalized communities.

Furthermore, our findings confirm that dominant entrepreneurial practices, rooted in Western, male-dominated paradigms, are often ill-suited to the specific needs of marginalized entrepreneurs. This is in line with prior studies (Joy & Poonamallee, 2013) that demonstrate how dominant praxis does not fit all, particularly women and underrepresented groups. In our study, some entrepreneurs resisted the incubators' dominance, not only due to misalignment with their local realities but also because of the incubators' attempts to exert control over their communities for financial gain. Such resistance is consistent with the notion of decolonization as an act of defiance against these power dynamics (Sabella et al., 2019), challenging the homogenizing practices that seek to control and limit alternative ways of learning and entrepreneurship (Fellner, 2018; Woods et al., 2022).

Moreover, the entrepreneurial practices developed by some women in these contexts further reflect dissatisfaction with the imposition of colonial domination. This is particularly relevant to the work of Imas et al. (2012), who found that entrepreneurs in marginalized and peripheral communities often show resistance through informal and non-traditional entrepreneurial activities, sometimes even engaging in illegal practices as a form of defiance. The development of these alternative practices highlights the agency of marginalized entrepreneurs who navigate the constraints imposed by the incubators and seek out more contextually relevant pathways to success. In doing so, they resist not only economic domination but also the intellectual and cultural suppression that comes with the imposition of Western entrepreneurial frameworks.

However, resistance is not the only response to intellectual colonization. In contrast, some women entrepreneurs developed a disposition marked by openness and respect towards the dominant colonial structure (Reyes, 2011). In this adaptive approach, compliance with colonial practices is perceived as the most viable pathway to progress and advancement. This form of mimicry, driven by the necessity to succeed within the given system, creates a complex dynamic of assimilation and the suppression of one's authentic identity and heritage. While this strategy may enable some entrepreneurs to achieve short-term goals, it raises critical questions about the long-term implications of such adaptation, as it may perpetuate the very structures of domination that resistance seeks to dismantle.

The legitimacy of the researcher

To what extent can a researcher adopt a (de)colonialist approach, while belonging to the colonized world? The literature on the subject is full of authors who are far from being neutral, trying to talk for subalterns (Spivak, 2015). However, in such an approach, Spivak (2015) implicitly claims that subalterns, that refer, in her discourse, to Indian women from subaltern classes, are not given the voice. Here, our findings also reveal the following discussion: Can a white woman researcher that implicitly belongs to a specific class with its own habitus (Bourdieu, 1999) have legitimacy to talk? In other words, is there any necessity to have the same identity as those of the studied population to be able to make them speak in an ethnographic study? The decolonializing perspective implies that there is need to make participants, especially minorities who suffered

from colonialism and colonialist perspectives speak, make their voice heard and tell their “true” story. In such an approach, can a white person express their voice? From an empirical perspective, this debate can be raised at the level of the researcher and the practitioners: Rachid’s reaction implicitly confirms that opinion, or at least confirms the legitimacy of this debate. The reaction from the scientist, the head of the social restaurant, can also be interpreted in that respect since she did not consider the researcher as a scientist but as an organizer and a financier.

The critique regarding the legitimacy of the researcher’s presence is not uniformly shared by all participants, notably, it does not come directly from the women nascent entrepreneurs but rather from some local association members who are not residents of the deprived area under study. This differentiation highlights the complexity of researcher-participant dynamics, where perceptions of legitimacy and bias can vary significantly depending on one’s connection to the research context. This discrepancy aligns with broader discussions in ethnographic research concerning reflexivity and positionality, particularly when addressing minority or feminist issues (Hughey, 2010).

Being perceived as “different” or as coming from a privileged background may complicate the development of trust and rapport with participants. For instance, the researcher’s identity as a white individual might be seen as a barrier that impacts the authenticity of engagement and the researcher’s ability to fully access and represent the participants’ realities (Pio, 2007). Such perceptions can introduce biases and affect the credibility of the findings. This critique underscores the importance of reflexivity in ethnographic research, emphasizing that the researcher’s socio-cultural and economic position inevitably shapes the research process and outcomes.

Furthermore, the trust relationship between researchers and participants is context-dependent. In entrepreneurial research, particularly within environments affected by colonial legacies, the researcher’s positionality can significantly influence the nature of interactions and the interpretation of data. As Welter and Baker (2021) suggest, understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing a comprehensive and contextually sensitive research approach. This discussion adds to the methodological discourse by emphasizing the importance of researchers critically reflecting on their own positionality and the power dynamics that may influence their work. Addressing these concerns allows them to approach their studies with greater inclusivity and sensitivity to the complexities present in marginalized contexts.

CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTION, LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper investigates how entrepreneurs from a disadvantaged economic zone in France, who originate from a former colonized country, establish their ventures. The main contribution of the paper is to develop the assumption according to which incubators that are being established and financed to enhance the entrepreneurial mindset and the entrepreneurial practices of individuals who come from former colonised countries, and who are living, as former migrants, in segregated and poor districts in the Metropole, attempt to recolonize these persons by making them adopt the “right” entrepreneurial praxis, besides making them develop their own business. Based on a comprehensive list of colonialist indicators derived from current scholarship, we posit that incubators inadvertently perpetuate colonialist practices. Furthermore, it examines how these entrepreneurs resist subconscious colonialist tendencies exhibited by actors within incubators.

This paper faces several limitations. Firstly, and that might be the biggest limitation, even if the paper seeks to open the conversation between the fields of (critical) entrepreneurship and decolonial perspective, it fails opening it broadly. It thus reveals tangible signs of attempts of colonization from members of incubators, allowing the observation of signs of resistance by nascent entrepreneurs but it fails using and providing a nuanced approach of decolonialism.

Furthermore, the abductive approach employed, which eschews decolonialist interpretivist perspectives, restricts its potential contribution. Secondly, the data does not comprehensively examine the interaction between incubators and all stakeholders, particularly public fundraisers and authorities. A deeper understanding of these interactions would provide a more holistic perspective and strengthen the thesis that authorities aim to disseminate an entrepreneurial mindset, thereby fostering behavioral change in these zones. Lastly, the research lacks a clear definition of “re-colonializing zones.” These limitations, especially a more nuanced perspective of decolonization as well as a better investigation of the concept of “re-colonializing zones” underscore the need for further research.

REFERENCES

- Abreu-Pederzini, G. D., & Suárez-Barraza, M. F. (2020). Just let us be: domination, the postcolonial condition, and the global field of business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 19(1), 40-58. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2018.0116>
- Ahl, H., & Marlow, S. (2012). Exploring the dynamics of gender, feminism and entrepreneurship: advancing debate to escape a dead end? *Organization*, 19(5), 543-562.
- Amezcu, A., Pandey, S., & Simarasl, N. (2019). Are Business Incubators' Ecosystems Inclusive of Women Entrepreneurs? In V. L. Crittenden (Ed.), *Go-to-Market Strategies for Women Entrepreneurs*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Anderson, A., & Ronteau, S. (2017). Towards an entrepreneurial theory of practice; emerging ideas for emerging economies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 9(2), 110-120.
- Ansari, S. M., Fiss, P. C., & Zajac, E. J. (2010). Made to fit: How practices vary as they diffuse. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(1), 67-92.
- Anteby, M. (2013). PERSPECTIVE – Relaxing the Taboo on Telling Our Own Stories: Upholding Professional Distance and Personal Involvement. *Organization Science*, 24(4), 1277-1290.
- Baker, T., & Welter, F. (2020). *Contextualizing entrepreneurship theory*. Routledge.
- Bancel, N., Bernault, F., Blanchard, P., Boubeker, A., Mbembe, A., & Vergès, F. (2010). *Ruptures postcoloniales. Les nouveaux visages de la société française*. La Découverte.
- Banerjee, S., & Tedmanson, D. (2010). Grass burning under our feet: Indigenous enterprise development in a political economy of whiteness. *Management Learning*, 41(2) 147-165.
- Barnett, R. (2009). Knowing and becoming in the higher education curriculum. *Studies in higher education*, 34(4), 429-440.
- Berglund, K., & Tillmar, M. (2015). To play or not to play: That is the question: Entrepreneurship as gendered play. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31(2), 206-218.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999). Le fonctionnement du champ intellectuel. *Regards sociologiques*, 17(18), 5-27.
- Calás, M. B., Smircich, L., & Bourne, K. A. (2009). Extending the boundaries: Reframing "entrepreneurship as social change" through feminist perspectives. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 552-569.
- Champenois, C., Lefebvre, V., & Ronteau, S. (2019). Entrepreneurship as practice: Systematic literature review of a nascent field. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 32(3-4), 281-312.
- De Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
- Decault, C. (2016). Plaidoyer pour une décolonisation des savoirs. *Minorités lisibles*, 1(2), 18-27.
- Derry, R. (2002). *Seeking a balance: A critical perspective on entrepreneurship and the good society*. Ruffin Series in Business Ethics.
- DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of management review*, 35(4), 627-647.
- Dey, P., & Mason, C. (2018). Overcoming constraints of collective imagination: An inquiry into activist entrepreneuring, disruptive truth-telling and the creation of 'possible worlds'. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 33(1), 84-99.
- Dey, P., & Steyaert, C. (2010). The politics of narrating social entrepreneurship. *Journal of enterprising communities: people and places in the global economy*, 4(1), 85-108.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of management review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- Fellner, K. D. (2018). Embodying decoloniality: Indigenizing curriculum and pedagogy. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 62(3-4), 283-293.
- Frost, M., & Crockett, J. (2006). Limitations to the use of networks and clusters as innovation in contemporary business. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Business*, Leura, NSW, Australia.
- Georgiou, C., Dodd, S. D., Andriopoulos, C., & Gotsi, M. (2013). Exploring the potential impact of colonialism on national patterns of entrepreneurial networking. *International Small Business Journal*, 31(2), 217-224.
- Girin, J. (2011). Empirical analysis of management situations: elements of theory and method 1. *European Management Review*, 8(4), 197-212.
- Hackett, M. & Dilts, M. (2004). A Systematic Review of Business Incubation Literature. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 29(1), 55-82. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOTT.0000011181.11952.0f>
- Hindle, K., & Moroz, P. (2010). Indigenous entrepreneurship as a research field: developing a definitional framework from the emerging canon. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 6(4), 357-385.
- Hughey, M. W. (2010). The (dis) similarities of white racial identities: The conceptual framework of 'hegemonic whiteness'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(8), 1289-1309.
- Imas, J. M., & Garcia-Lorenzo, L. (2023). A postcolonial and pan-African feminist reading of Zimbabwean women entrepreneurs. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 30(2), 391-411.
- Imas, J. M., Wilson, N., & Weston, A. (2012). Barefoot entrepreneurs. *Organization*, 19(5), 563-585.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Bednarek, R., & Lê, J. K. (2014). Producing persuasive findings: Demystifying ethnographic textwork in strategy and organization research. *Strategic organization*, 12(4), 274-287.
- Johannisson, B. (2011). Towards a practice theory of entrepreneuring. *Small Business Economics*, 36(2), 135-150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-009-9212-8>
- Joy, S., & Poonamallee, L. (2013). Cross-cultural teaching in globalized management classrooms: Time to move from functionalist to postcolonial approaches? *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(3), 396-413.

- Kohn, M., & Reddy, K. (2006, May 09). *Colonialism*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/?f\[0\]=topic:1&countryid=391&f%5B0%5D=region%3A46](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/?f[0]=topic:1&countryid=391&f%5B0%5D=region%3A46)
- Kothiyal, N., Bell, E., & Clarke, C. (2018). Moving beyond mimicry: Developing hybrid spaces in Indian business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 17(2), 137-154.
- Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4), 691-710.
- Langley, A., & Klag, M. (2019). Being Where? Navigating the Involvement Paradox in Qualitative Research Accounts. *Organizational Research Methods*, 22(2), 515-538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428117741967>
- Locke, K., Golden-Biddle, K., & Feldman, M. S. (2008). Making Doubt Generative: Rethinking the Role of Doubt in the Research Process. *Organization Science*, 19(6) 907-918.
- Maalaoui, A., Razgallah, M., Picard, S., & Leloarne-Lemaire, S. (2019). From hell to... an entrepreneurial life: An Iranian refugee in France. In S. Heilbrunn, J. Freiling, & A. Harima (Eds.), *Refugee entrepreneurship: a case-based topography* (pp. 163-173). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marlow, S., Henry, C., & Carter, S. (2009). Exploring the impact of gender upon women's business ownership: Introduction. *International Small Business Journal*, 27(2), 139-148.
- Marlow, S., & McAdam, M. (2015). Incubation or Induction? Gendered Identity Work in the Context of Technology Business Incubation. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 39(4), 791-816.
- Marlow, S., & Swail, J. (2014). Gender, risk and finance: why can't a woman be more like a man? *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 26(1-2), 80-96.
- Mbembe, A. (1992). Provisional notes on the postcolony. *Africa*, 62(1), 3-37.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony* (Vol. 41). University of California Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2006). On the postcolony: a brief response to critics. *African identities*, 4(2), 143-178.
- Mbembe, A. (2016). Decolonizing the university: new directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), 29-45.
- Mbembe, A. (2017). *Critique of black reason*. Duke University Press.
- Mehlum, H., Moene, K., & Torvik, R. (2005). Crime induced poverty traps. *Journal of Development Economics*, 77(2), 325-340.
- Mignolo, W. (2013). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de) coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience. *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*, 1(1), 129-150.
- Mignolo, W., & Walsh, C. (2018): *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press.
- Morrison, K. (2008). Indigenous entrepreneurship in Samoa in the face of neo-colonialism and globalization. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 2(3), 240-253.
- Nicolini, D. (2012). *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Ogbor, J. O. (2000). Mythicizing and reification in entrepreneurial discourse: Ideology-critique of entrepreneurial studies. *Journal of management studies*, 37(5), 605-635.
- Olivier, J. (2020). Self-directed open educational practices for a decolonized South African curriculum: a process of localization for learning. *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society*, 16(4), 20-28.
- Patton, D. (2013). Realizing Potential: The Impact of Business Incubation upon the Absorptive Capacity of New Technology Based Firms. *International Small Business Journal*, 32(8), 897-917. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242613482134>
- Peredo, A. M., & McLean, M. (2013). Indigenous development and the cultural captivity of entrepreneurship. *Business & Society*, 52(4), 592-620.
- Pinto, L. E., & Blue, L. E. (2017). Aboriginal entrepreneurship financing in Canada: Walking the fine line between self-determination and colonization. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 9(1), 2-20.
- Pio, E. (2007). Ethnic minority migrant women entrepreneurs and the imperial imprimatur. *Women in Management Review*, 22(8), 631-649. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710836317>
- Plowman, P. J. (2016). Participatory methodologies for intersectional research in organisations. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 5(1), 28-43.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing. *European journal of social theory*, 5(2), 243-263.
- Revely, J. & Down, S. (2009). Stigmatization and self-presentation in Australian entrepreneurial identity formation. In D. Hjorth, & C. Steyaert (Eds.), *The politics and aesthetics of entrepreneurship: A fourth movements in entrepreneurship book* (pp. 162-181). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Revilla, A. T., Wells, A. S., & Holme, J. J. (2012). "We didn't see color": The salience of color blindness in desegregated schools. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. P. Pruitt, & A. Burns (Eds.), *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance* (pp. 284-301). Routledge.
- Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society*, 22(6), 781-807.
- Sabella, A. R., & El-Far, M. T. (2019). Entrepreneurship as an everyday form of resistance: An exploration of the experiences of Palestinian women street vendors in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(6), 1212-1235. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBr-03-2018-0174>
- Sasakamoose, J., & Pete, S. M. (2015). Towards indigenizing university policy. *Education Matters: The Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 1-11.
- Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2014). Enlarging the strategy-as-practice research agenda: Towards taller and flatter ontologies. *Organization studies*, 35(10), 1407-1421.
- Sewell, W. H. 1996. Historical events as transformations of structures: Inventing revolution at the Bastille. *Theory and Society*, 25(6), 841-881.
- Shahraki, H., & Heydari, E. (2019). Rethinking rural entrepreneurship in the era of globalization: some observations from Iran. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 9(1), 1-26.

- Smith, G. H., & Smith, L. T. (2018). Doing Indigenous work: decolonizing and transforming the academy. In E. McKinley, & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 1075–1101). Springer.
- Spivak, G. C. (1994). Can the Subaltern Speak? In P. Williams, & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Spivak, G. C. (2015). Can the Subaltern Speak? In P. Williams, & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A Reader* (pp. 66-111). Routledge.
- Spivak, G. C. (2023). Poststructuralism, marginality, postcoloniality and value. In D. Brydon (Ed.), *Postcolonism: Critical Concepts* (Vol. 1, pp. 57-84). Routledge.
- Talandier, M., Jousseume, V., & Nicot, B. H. (2016). Two centuries of economic territorial dynamics: the case of France. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 3(1), 67-87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2015.1090887>
- Tedman, D., Verduyn, K., Essers, C., & Gartner, W. B. (2012). Critical perspectives in entrepreneurship research. *Organization*, 19(5), 531-541.
- Thompson, N. A., Verduyn, K., Stam, A. M. C. E., & Gartner, W. B. (2016). Entrepreneurship as practice: grounding contemporary practice theory into entrepreneurship studies. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 28(9-10). <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2016.1251736>
- Toussaint, M. (2023). *Habitude aux ambiances de la rénovation urbaine : partage de l'expérience quotidienne à la Villeneuve de Grenoble* (Doctoral dissertation). Université Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble, France.
- Vedel, B., & Gabarret, I. (2014). The role of trust as mediator between contract, information and knowledge within business incubators. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 23(4), 509-527.
- Voisey, P., Jones, P. & Thomas, B., (2013). The pre-incubator: a longitudinal study of 10 years of university pre-incubation in Wales. *Industry and Higher Education*, 27(5), 349-363. <https://doi.org/10.5367/ihe.2013.0168>
- Wedlin, L., & Sahlin, K. (2017). The Imitation and Translation of Management Ideas. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. E. Meyer, & T. Lawrence (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2a ed.). Sage Publications.
- Welter, F. (2011). Contextualizing entrepreneurship – conceptual challenges and ways forward. *Entrepreneurship theory and Practice*, 35(1), 165-184.
- Welter, F., & Baker, T. (2021). Moving contexts onto new roads: Clues from other disciplines. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45(5), 1154-1175.
- Welter, F., Baker, T., & Wirsching, K. (2018). Three waves and counting: the rising tide of contextualization in entrepreneurship research. *Small Business Economics*, 52, 319-330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-0094-5>
- Woods, C., Dell, K., & Carroll, B. (2022). Decolonizing the Business School: Reconstructing the Entrepreneurship Classroom through Indigenizing Pedagogy and Learning. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 21(1), 82-100.

Severine Le Loarne Lemaire, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4846-6825>

Professor of entrepreneurship, Department Management and Technology, Grenoble Ecole de Management. E-mail: severine.le-loarne@grenoble-em.com

Gloria Haddad, DBA

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7791-1871>

Associate Professor, Management and Entrepreneurship Department, Faculty of Business and Management, Saint Joseph University of Beirut.

E-mail: gloria.haddad@usj.edu.lb

Rola Al Ali, DBA

Doctorate of Business Administration, Grenoble Ecole de Management. E-mail: rola_alali@hotmail.com

Gaël Bertrand, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9602-7851>

Professor of entrepreneurship, Department Strategy, entrepreneurship and international business, ESSCA School of Management, Aix en Provence

Campus. E-mail: gael.bertrand@essca.fr

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Severine Le Loarne Lemaire: Data curation (Lead); Project administration (Lead); Formal analysis (Lead); Methodology (Lead); Visualization (Lead); Writing- original draft (Lead); Writing- review & editing (Supporting).

Gloria Haddad: Conceptualization (Lead); Project administration (Lead); Validation (Lead); Visualization (Lead); Writing- original draft (Equal); Writing- review & editing (Equal).

Rola Al Ali: Conceptualization (Supporting); Writing- original draft (Equal); Writing- review & editing (Equal).

Gaël Bertrand: Project administration (Supporting); Methodology (Supporting); Visualization (Supporting); Writing - original draft (Supporting); Writing- review & editing (Supporting).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The whole dataset cannot be made publicly available due to the anonymity of the people who were observed during the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hélio Arthur Reis Irigaray (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9580-7859>

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Fabrizio Stocker (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6340-9127>

GUEST EDITORS

Michelle Mielly (EM Lyon Business School, Lyon – France). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3321-5334>

Hélio Arthur Reis Irigaray (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9580-7859>

Penelope Muzanhenamo (University College Dublin, Dublin – Ireland). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8575-9347>

Sandiso Bazana (Rhodes University, Grahamstown – South Africa; Grenoble Ecole de Management, Grenoble – France). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5177-2567>

Ana Maria Peredo (University of Ottawa / Telfer School of Management, Ottawa – ON, Canada). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5534-4834>

Gazi Islam (Grenoble Ecole de Management, Grenoble – France; Institut de Recherche en Gestion et Économie, Annecy – France). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7617-3376>

REVIEWERS

Three reviewers did not authorize the disclosure of their identities.

PEER REVIEW REPORT

The peer review report is available at this URL: <https://periodicos.fgv.br/cadernosebape/article/view/92376/86572>