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Imprinting of founders' entrepreneurial motivations on enterprises' practices and processes. The context of creative industries

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Abstract

This paper explores the imprinting of entrepreneurs' motivations on the practices and processes of enterprises. We investigate the question in the context of creative industries (CIs) as an extreme case of entrepreneurial motivations (EMs) prevalence. We analyse the EM of 14 founders of design consultancies. Three EMs emerge: *self-fulfilment*, *freedom* and *financial* motivation. The qualitative analysis reveals that the founders' EMs at the time of a venture's founding has a lasting impact on the characteristics of the venture (name, processes formalization, decision-making processes, performance measures and growth strategies). Specifically, founders driven by *self-fulfilment* tend to build ventures named after them. In

these ventures, processes are informal, decision-making is centralized, performance measures are based on personal satisfaction and recognition, and enterprise growth is restrained. Founders who seek *freedom* tend to run enterprises with semi-formal processes, semi-centralized decision-making, a client satisfaction focus, and slow growth strategies. In contrast, founders with *financial* motivations tend to create enterprises with formal processes, decentralized decision-making, financial performance metrics, and growth ambitions. By focusing on EM and adopting a holistic approach beyond some characteristics of the venture, we complement the imprinting literature.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial motivation, Founder's imprinting, Creative industry, Design

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs' motivations (EMs) are the drivers that impel entrepreneurs to engage in an entrepreneurial endeavour by founding an enterprise (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Shane, Locke, and Collins, 2003). Such motivations play a critical role in explaining the decisions that entrepreneurs make during the entrepreneurial process since the foundation of the enterprise (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Shane et al., 2003). During the foundation phase, organizations are extremely receptive and likely to retain elements from their founding environment, in particular from entrepreneurs, and these elements tend to persist in subsequent periods (Johnson, 2007; Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013; Stinchcombe, 1965).

The imprinting literature has mainly focused on how founders' backgrounds and previous professional experience influence the organizations that they create (Burton, Sørensen, and Beckman, 2002; Phillips, 2005), and researchers call for investigations into how founders' motivations imprint enterprises beyond the early foundation stages (Burton, Sørensen and Beckman, 2002; Johnson, 2007; Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013). This paper aims to investigate the EM's imprinting on enterprises' practices and processes.

We investigate such research questions in the context of creative industries (CIs). According to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the United Kingdom (2001, p.5; 2019), CIs are 'those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'. CIs have attracted the attention of researchers in management (Paige and Littrel, 2002; Chaston and Sadler-Smith, 2011) for several reasons: (i) their increasing contribution to the economies; (ii) the shift towards knowledge-based economies, in which creativity is a strategic asset and a decisive source of employment,

competitive advantage, growth and survival (Howkins, 2002; Konrad, 2013; McKelvey and Lassen, 2018); and (iii) enterprises in CIs can be considered experimental sites for managerial practices associated with permanently and continuously innovating organizations (De Filippi, Grabher, and Jones, 2007). Entrepreneurs in CIs are 'creative individuals' (Albinsson, 2018; Howkins, 2002; Kohn and Wewel, 2018) that reconcile the paradox of the imperatives of relentless creation and economic viability (De Filippi et al., 2007) that exist at the intersection of rational, non-rational and intuitive processes and cross the boundaries of different cognitive framings and managerial styles (Bilton, 2010; Howkins, 2002). Additionally, entrepreneurially creative individuals pursue the fulfilment of their artistic and creative visions; however, they also need to be financially sustainable (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006, displaying a variety of EMs. Therefore, we argue that entrepreneurs in CI can be a fertile field of investigation for entrepreneurs' motivations imprinting on firms' characteristics (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011). We investigate one specific type of CI: design consultancy. Indeed, design has drawn the attention of researchers because of its potential for innovation and competitive advantage (Verganti, 2006).

The data encompass 14 entrepreneurs that founded design consultancies, remained in charge of the enterprise (Chen, Chang and Lo, 2015) and managed creative processes and individuals. The analysis reveals three EMs, that is, *self-fulfilment*, *freedom* and *financial*, and their links with management practices and processes. The results suggest that the founders' EMs at the time of a venture's founding can predict the characteristics of the venture (name, processes formalization, decision-making processes, performance measures and growth strategies) for a long period after being founded. Specifically, founders who create an enterprise with the motivation to *self-fulfil* their passion tend to name their enterprises after themselves and to have enterprises with informal processes, centralized decision-making, performance measures based

on personal satisfaction and recognition, and restrained growth. Founders who seek *freedom* tend to have enterprises with a higher level of process formalization, semi-centralized decision-making, customer-oriented performance measures, and an ambition for slow growth. Finally, founders with *financial* motivations tend to have enterprises with formal processes, decentralized decision-making, and financially-oriented measures, and they nurture more ambitious growth strategies.

This study starts with a literature review of the EM and imprinting literature, highlighting the research question; this section is followed by the methods, findings, and, finally, a discussion of the results in light of the literature.

2. **Literature Review**

The following paragraphs highlight the literature that we rely on in addressing the research question and with which we intend to initiate a conversation.

2.1. Entrepreneurial motivations

According to Carsrud and Brännback (2011), EMs are the missing link between intention and action. In their extensive literature review on EMs, Shane et al. (2003) define EMs as motivations that influence people so that they make entrepreneurial decisions. In this paper, we define EMs as the drivers that impel entrepreneurs to engage in an entrepreneurial endeavour by founding an enterprise (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Shane et al., 2003).

EMs traditionally encompass *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations (Bird, 1988). *Intrinsic* motivation "refers to the personal interest in the entrepreneurial task" (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011, p.15) and to the satisfaction of *being one's own boss*, *having control over one's own*

destiny, and *bearing ultimate responsibility for the success of the venture* (Bird, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1997). In contrast, *extrinsic* motivation refers to the external rewards that result from the entrepreneurial task. Such rewards can be *monetary compensation* and the *accumulation of equity in the firm* (Bird, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1997) or even *power and status* (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011).

Shane et al. (2003, p.276) propose nine EMs: *need for achievement*, *risk-taking propensity*, *tolerance for ambiguity*, *locus of control*, *self-efficacy*, *goal-setting*, *independence*, *drive*, and *egoistic passion* and call for more accurate explanations of the influence of human motivation on the entrepreneurial process. Shane et al. (2003) focus more on intrinsic than extrinsic motivations. Apart from *locus of control*, which may overlap with *having control over one's own destiny (*Kuratko et al., 1997) and *bearing ultimate responsibility for the success of the venture* (Bird, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1997), and *independence*, which is similar to *being one's own boss*, (Kuratko et al., 1997), the remaining EMs from Shane et al. (2003) are new to the literature.

Although financial motivations have been considered an important EM (see Schoar, 2010), mainstream entrepreneurial literature acknowledges that entrepreneurs enter and persist in business despite the fact that they have both lower initial earnings and lower earnings growth than in paid employment (Hamilton, 2000). Furthermore, the literature also shows that financial performance is not the only predictor of enterprises' survival; one factor that may affect survival is entrepreneurs' personal enjoyment and skills, for example (Gimeno, Folta, Cooper and Woo, 1997). Such a line of research reinforces the importance of intrinsic motivations in creating and sustaining an enterprise and shows that entrepreneurs can display a diversity of motivations.

2.2. Entrepreneurship in CIs

Naffziger et al. (1994) suggest that on top of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, each entrepreneur might have a set of unique goals for his/her particular business. Indeed, entrepreneurs in CIs tend to display a variety of goals and motivations and various tensions (Bilton, 2010; Howkins, 2002, Wilson, 2009).

Paige and Littrel (2002) identify the key factors influencing the behaviour of people in small CI firms: achieving personal happiness, work/life balance, independence, and personal gratification from expressing their artistic skills, among others. Milanesi (2018) also reinforces that some individuals with a passion in a particular domain may use entrepreneurship as a vehicle by which they pursue their passions, which is often the case in creative sectors.

Although the diversity of entrepreneurial motivations and goals can also exist in other industries (see Schoar, 2010), the tensions in CIs between creative and financial motivations are indeed more pronounced. Poettschacher (2005) also argues that creative enterprises are often a 'lifestyle business' and entrepreneurs find it difficult to assume their 'commercial responsibilities'. Such enterprises fuel their founders' identity, creative vision and aspirations more than economic goals, protecting intrinsic motivation from market logic (Bergamini, Van de Velde, Van Looy, and Visscher, 2018). Chaston (2008) also show that individuals who manage small creative firms are concerned more about lifestyle by being involved in creative output than about being financially successful. Svejenova (2005) adds that authenticity is considered a fundamental contributor to individuals' career development and a precursor of their recognition and credibility. However, although entrepreneurially creative individuals value freedom (Paige and Littrel, 2002), passion (Milanesi, 2018) or authenticity (Poettschacher, 2005), similar to other enterprises, financial success is a key to their survival

(Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006).

Although the diversity of entrepreneurial motivations and creative/financial tensions in CIs are well established in the literature, the same is not true about their influence on the ventures founded, mainly the influence of non-financial motivations (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006) on the practices and processes of an enterprise that need to be competitive and survive in the market place.

2.3. Founders' imprinting

Stinchcombe (1965) defines imprinting as the process by which elements of the founding environment imprint on organizations beyond the founding stages. One of the elements of the founding environment is the founder, i.e. the "entrepreneur who stamps new organizations with the distinctive signs of their founding times" (Johnson, 2007, p. 122). Therefore, Marquis and Tilcsik (2013) suggest that entrepreneurs influence the enterprises that they create in terms of practices, processes, and structures, as they decide to incorporate certain features but not others, which can lead to variation in imprints even in organizations that are established at the same time and in similar contextual environments.

Burton, Sørensen, and Beckman (2002) note that founders' past careers with regard to education and professional experience influence the entrepreneurial process. For example, they show that founders who have worked for highly reputable organizations are more likely to imprint innovative strategies on their firms than those who have worked for less entrepreneurial organizations. Phillips (2005) also concludes that founders who worked for companies where women were in leadership positions are more likely to create firms that support women by placing them in such positions, showing that such founders' blueprints influence firms' internal gender representation for a long period of time.

The organizational practices and structures developed during the founding stages become a lasting part of the organization because they are efficient or the result of inertia forces and tradition, vested interests and institutionalization. Therefore, enterprises will continue to exhibit features of the founding phase (Baron, Hannan, and Burton, 1999; Stinchcombe, 1965). For example, in her study on Paris Opera's individual imprinting on the organizational dimensions, Johnson (2007) highlights that entrepreneurs and important stakeholders select and incorporate specific elements in their enterprises during and after the founding stages that may remain for a long period as fundamental features of the organizational structure, position, and reputation. Additionally, Johnson (2007) argues that founding actors in CIs combine elements from the political and cultural environments with their initiative and creativity, producing organizations that differ from the mainstream and that deserve to be studied. In a similar fashion, DiMaggio (1982), in his study on cultural entrepreneurship in 19th century Boston, also reinforce that the cultural background and organizational vision of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's founder imprinted not only on the Orchestra but also on Boston's high culture institutionalization (high culture entails museums, opera houses, symphony halls and theatres) in the 19th century. Finally, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) show that founders with different social identities affect the newly created firm's strategic decisions regarding the market segments that will be served, the customer needs that will be addressed and the resources and capabilities that will be deployed to produce the firm's offers.

2.4. Research Question

Research in the entrepreneurship literature suggests that founders' EMs influence the entrepreneurial process through opportunity recognition and evaluation, the development of a product or service and the assembly of human and financial resources, among others (Shane et

al., 2003; Carsrud and Brännback, 2011). The literature previously discussed shows a large diversity in the EMs of firm founders in launching ventures but does not consider the potential impact of this diversity on the ventures launched. Studies on individuals' imprinting on organizations focus either on a single case study (Johnson, 2007) or on the influence of founders' imprinting on a single organizational dimension such as innovation strategy, the ability to attract external funding (Burton, Sørensen, and Beckmann, 2002), the gender inequality (Phillips, 2005), or managerial structure typologies (Baron, Hannan, and Burton 1999). In this paper, we investigate how EMs influence the enterprises' practices and processes in holistic terms (Burton, Sørensen, and Beckman, 2002) and well beyond the founding period (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013). We investigate such a research question in the context of creative industries in which the EMs of ventures founders are diverse and salient.

3. Research Methodology

To address entrepreneurs' EMs imprint on enterprises' practices and processes, we adopted a qualitative case study methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2006). The current section describes the research setting and its specificities, the data sampling, the data collection and, finally, the data coding and analysis.

3.1. Research setting

For the reasons mentioned in the literature review, we have decided to investigate the research question in the case of the CI. More specifically, we focus on one creative industry: design as a professional applied creative service (Hill and Johnson, 2003), following the definition of Verganti (2006): 'design deals with the meanings that people give to products and with the messages and product languages that one can devise to convey that meaning'.

There are three main reasons that make design agencies a good setting for studying EMs. First, due to its low capital intensity and low barriers to entry, design is an activity where new ventures are frequently launched. Second, several ventures are still owned and managed by their original founders. Third, founders of creative enterprises display a wide range of motivations: the *bohemian* lifestyle, creative output, and financial gain, among others (Chaston, 2008; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006).

3.2. Data sampling

Given the interest in identifying the EMs of firm founders, we rely on theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sampling is "data gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on concepts of 'making comparisons', whose purpose is to go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; p. 201).

To obtain a broad range of EMs, we searched for diversity in the creative ventures: countries (across five countries), different sizes, and relatively diverse types of design. This approach increases the probability of collecting different and varied data on EMs (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These ventures (design consultancies) were selected based on their corporate longevity (over five years) and size (more than three employees); these criteria act as performance filters.

In each country, we first contacted professional design associations (e.g., the Design Council in the UK, Centro Português de Design in Portugal, Barcelona Centre de Disseny in Spain, and Agence pour la Promotion de la Création Industrielle, APCI, in France), as well as a set of experts (the director of the École nationale supérieure de création industrielle, ENSCI, design

school in France, the director of the chair of design management at ESADE, in Spain, the director of education and research on management of design and innovation at Politecnico di Milano in Italy), asking for recommendations on successful firms that fitted the criteria and that would be available for an interview. The researchers contacted 45 firms recommended by the experts, 14 of which agreed to participate in the study and to be interviewed (see Table 1) with an average existence of 24 years.

Furthermore, the meetings with the design experts, the reports and the documentation on the design industry provided background for the industry and its specificities. We contacted the design experts later in the process to validate the initial results: the EMs and the relationship with the practices and processes of enterprises.

3.3. Data collection

We exploited several data sources with the goal of facilitating data validation and triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Yin, 2006). The first source of data consisted of interviews with design consultancy founders. We conducted a total of 14 face-to-face interviews with the main founders of the 14 firms selected. All of them are still managing their firms. The interviews relied on a semi-structured protocol with open-ended and follow-up questions to improve the comprehensibility and clarity of the responses (Alvesson, 2003; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Spradley, 1979). The questions concerned the founder's motivations in creating the venture (EMs) and the venture's characteristics. The interviews addressed EMs directly and indirectly through several questions about the founder's background and previous situation (employee, freelance, already an entrepreneur, or fresh from college). The questions also covered the story of the venture's creation, the reasons behind the venture's founding, the processes and structures that the venture follows in their projects (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013; Johnson, 2007)

and the venture's reputation in the market (Johnson, 2007) and future. We guaranteed anonymity to encourage candour. The duration of the interviews was 90 minutes on average, and they were taped and transcribed, with the interview transcripts running to more than 250 pages. For each case, the data collected through the interviews matched further archival data such as firm documents (reports), press articles and firm websites.

3.4. Data coding and analysis

The data analysis followed a three-step qualitative methodology based on a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts and archival records. First, we began by creating *N-vivo* (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013) first-order empirical themes using a language as similar as possible to that of informants to explore founders' EMs. The analysis followed a cross-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994), where the researchers analysed the transcripts, selecting sentences or groups of sentences that provided information about the EMs of founders and relevant dimensions of the enterprises. The analysis was iterative and conducted separately by the researchers, who then compared their results and discussed any differences until agreement was reached.

The second phase involved an increasing level of interpretation and theorization (see Miles and Huberman 1994). Therefore, we identified conceptual categories—2nd-order categories and aggregate dimensions—grounded on empirical evidence and theoretical studies that we wanted to extend, specifically with regard to EMs (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Shane et al., 2003) and founders' imprinting (Johnson, 2007; Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013; Stinchcombe, 1965). Throughout this process, three EMs emerged, namely, *self-fulfilment*, *freedom*, and *financial*, as well as five practices and processes of enterprises, specifically *firm name*, *process*

formalization, *decision making*, *performance measures* and *growth strategies*. Figure 1 shows a representation of the data structure.

The last phase encompassed identifying the similarities and differences within and among cases through an in-depth comparative cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles and Huberman, 1994) across the EM of founders and the practices and processes of enterprises. In this stage, we built numerous matrices covering all cases under study, selecting sentences or groups of sentences for each dimension for each case. Two main matrices summarize the relevant analysis: one with the founders' EMs, background, and previous experience (see Table 2) and another that relates the EMs of founders to the practices and processes of enterprises (*firm name*, *process formalization*, *decision making*, *performance measures* and *growth strategies*) (see Table 3). During the case classification stage, for all relevant dimensions, two independent coders categorized the cases, and only three cases were ambiguous, requiring further discussion until an agreement was reached (by returning to the detailed interview transcripts). Finally, we used a theory-building explanation technique to build detailed explanations and to refine the underlying mechanisms of how the EMs of founders imprint on the practices and processes of ventures. Simultaneously, we compared the findings with the literature, entering into a dialogue between theory and data.

4. Findings

Following the methodology previously outlined, the data revealed three main EMs that lead entrepreneurs to found a design agency: *self-fulfilment*, *freedom* and *financial*. The following paragraphs expose the three EMs and their imprints on the *firm name* and enterprises' *process formalization*, *decision making*, *performance measures* and *growth strategies*.

4.1. Self-fulfilment motivation

Self-fulfilment motivation reflects a desire, a dream, or a feeling to build something of one's own that reflects the unique signature and eccentric personality of the entrepreneur. For entrepreneurs with a strong *self-fulfilment* motivation, the alignment between work and passion is essential, meaning that the venture is very important for their personal and professional self-fulfilment. Such entrepreneurs see their work and enterprises as an extension of themselves, as part of their lives, and as an opportunity to explore their passion and to create new things that can influence society. The results also show that *self-fulfilment*-driven entrepreneurs tend to have little or no prior experience with enterprise creation and are individuals who nurture very strong artistic perspectives on design; they see themselves as artists and their work as unique artistic pieces (see Table 2).

> "First, you need a dream or an objective. What would you like to live in your life? Work is part of your life. It is not a way of paying for your food and your needs. No! Work is also your life. (…) Then, what territory I feel to be my territory and my projection. I really feel that in this specific territory, it is possible to create things I will love. (…) I also want the opportunity to say it is possible to do things in a different way. The opportunity to know people or to be involved in projects where you learn and evolve and to have the possibility to project yourself there or to create something". (Case 1)

> "I was pretty much eager to start my own thing. I do not really know what I was thinking. I just kind of felt it (…)." (Case 2)

Entrepreneurs motivated by *self-fulfilment* tend to name their enterprises after themselves or, alternatively, sign the projects individually in the case of various founders. They present themselves as artists and refer to their enterprises as studios. Such entrepreneurs tend to reveal their pieces in museums; they have a star quality in the press, having collected a range of international awards and exhibitions.

> "It used to be 'Studio X', and now, it's just X (first name of the founder). The main reason why I have not used my last name is that I think it is too complicated to pronounce. (…) Now that the association with my last name is getting easier and easier for people to pronounce, we are sometimes attaching it to some projects. Again, I think that the main reason is branding and association. When it is like a gallery piece or something like that, it is easier to communicate the whole artist name, and when it is more of a brand name, it is a brand, like X for Target". (Case 2)

> "For all architectural activity, it is called Studio Y (last name of the founder), after my name, since it is a studio and my notoriety must be first identified as the creator. It was easier to identify it like that; it could have been called Atelier X, etc.". (Case 4)

Regarding process formalization at the project level, in these firms, the processes are mostly informal with no stable phases or stages. In fact, such founders like to try new processes for different projects; at the extreme, each project will have its own methods and phases. Role definition and work division are neither structured nor institutionalized, which means that everyone can do everything and that all are responsible for the final work. This mindset aligns with the creativity ideal and reflects that each project is unique and deserves a tailored approach.

> "Usually, we try different processes; we don't have a method. It is important to change your way of doing because, then, you will have different things and different outputs and surprises, and you will learn, and you will have evolution and a diverse life in your life. (…) So, yes, because if you make the same method, the typical thing is that you arrive at the same conclusion and make no evolution". (Case 1)

> "So, when I think about those directions, I don't necessarily think about what they ask or do not ask or what they can do, or can they sell … It's pretty much 'what do I want' and 'how do I feel' and 'what do I care about' that will be discussed. (…) Also, the way that I start most of projects is that I take them on… I try not to sit here but to be somewhere, like…to isolate myself in nature, in the countryside and pretty much really build a conceptual foundation for a project. But later on evolving into whatever it evolves into". (Case 2)

For both strategic and creative decisions, decision-making tends to be centralized with the founders. This practice means that the founder is involved in almost all projects, dedicating the greatest part of its time to pure design.

> "I find it very difficult to sometimes leave the office for too long because it is not like I am sitting here and they are sitting there. I am spending most of my time with everybody on a daily basis giving them instructions on what I like and I do not like, how things should progress and why we should try like this or like that". (Case 2)

> "Delegating work to someone else, well, no. It is better to make sense of the multiple parameters, to have a strength of the full proposal as well. (…) After that, it is true that we do not want… we prefer to have a human relationship, stronger with a small team, than to have a more distant relationship with people who will work on projects that will have our name and we do not know what they actually do". (Case 3)

Regarding performance measures, *self-fulfilment*-driven entrepreneurs measure performance in recognition as design awards, novelty, 'making great things', press articles, and museum exhibitions. They also have other performance measures, such as personal satisfaction and contribution to society. Overall, these entrepreneurs rely more on reputation-based measures

than on financial results. For them, a good year is when they are happy with the projects carried out and when their projects win awards and visibility rather than money.

> "Of course, it is important to make money, but if you make great things, do not worry, you will make the money that you need. But money is certainly not the objective". (Case 1)

> "For me, being successful in general is waking up every day to do what you love to do. (…) Prizes are very important, of course, a big exhibition is important, museums are important. It is all bits and pieces of something; it is kind of a combination". (Case 2)

The growth strategies of *self-fulfilment*-driven founders also depart from market logic. Their goal is to break even in terms of projects and people. They want more important projects that can give them recognition rather than larger profits. They believe that if they grow further in sales and employees, then they will lose control of the venture and will lose more time to administrative and control tasks, which will reduce the time that they have available for their passion.

> "The objective is to be economically okay and to make great things but not to grow. (…) It is a group, a family; we know each other very well, and more than 30 people is not necessary. It is a good size. You are comfortable in a group like this. One hundred is different from 1000 and 10000". (Case 1)

> "We are a small structure because I do not know how to manage big structures and because I count the projects; I am not able to leave them (the projects). I am not a manager, so I am not able to manage growth alone. (…) So, I am small because I require that quality comes first. Whatever the client or the price we pay, I never get rid of things, so, unfortunately, everything goes through me again, and this is sometimes a struggle". (Case 4)

4.2. *Freedom motivation*

Freedom as a motivation reflects the desire to be independent. These entrepreneurs' motivation to found an enterprise relates to a misidentification with the practices and processes of previous jobs. The *freedom* motivation concerns process and output: entrepreneurs found the venture to implement their own way of doing things, to select projects that they are interested in, and to freely express their ideas in the output. *Freedom* seekers tend to have previous experience in other companies and a more pragmatic perspective on design (see Table 2).

> "We have always had this desire to remain independent, and for us, independence means independence of movement. We decide what we want to do, and this independence is related to our work. If we want to take that (a project), we take it; if we do not want to take a project because it is not interesting and misaligns with our convictions, we do not have to do it". (Case 6)

> "I liked working in a design agency; everything was fine. The only problem was that I do not like their messy way of work. Here, we like to explore the project; it is a pleasure for us to understand why, to dig deeper into problems, and in my old job, this would not happen. Indeed, this led to the creation of this studio. It was the fact that we did not identify with the way that other enterprises work". (Case 7)

Freedom seekers tend to name their enterprises with their initials or name. They do so because they want to humanize their enterprises and to signal their confidence to clients, rather than achieving reputation and recognition for themselves as artists.

> "We have a philosophy that we did not want our studio to be a company, meaning an abstract company, but, instead, our names, our people, our responsibility and credibility. We do not have problems with signing our work, that it was not an abstract entity". (Case 7)

> "Felix left a couple of years ago, but we kept the name X. But it is too big a name, so we have just shortened it now. We thought about changing the name completely, but it is quite well known, particularly in America. So, we decided just to keep it and simplify". (Case 8)

Regarding process formalization at the project level, entrepreneurs who seek *freedom* tend to have either semi-formalization at the process level and/or at the level of role definition and work division. Such entrepreneurs have established some project phases; however, such phases are highly adaptable to enable creativity and customization. Other *freedom* seekers tend to have more formalized processes, varying from no established roles where everyone is multidisciplinary to a few roles, such as consultants and designers.

> "We have methods and processes, but each subject is specific. It is like a custom tailor. If you make ready-to-wear, it is different from what we do here. We are always interested in building highly customized projects. (…) We have a process, obviously, we know how to take a project, we have a way to approach it, and we trained our people to follow it. (…) For each project, there is a team of two, one consultant and one creative person, who work very closely with the client". (Case 6)

> "We don't have specialization areas. This means that we are all multidisciplinary. When we have more complex projects, we do brainstorming and informal meetings. we are a small company; we do not lose time with formality. (…) There are three stages that all projects pass through. We have a concept phase, a development phase, which is when we refine the concept, and, finally, the report phase". (Case 7)

Freedom seekers have semi-centralized decision-making, meaning that the founders control the strategic direction of projects and check for quality consistency, delegating the creative dimension to other designers. Alternatively, some *freedom* seekers are involved only in major projects that are strategic for the enterprise with regard to external visibility or financial relevance.

> "David [his partner] and I have always been extremely involved in the projects because that is what interests us. If I stop doing creation, I will slowly die. Over the years, the organization has evolved, David and I are less connected to the client, and we no longer supervise all projects". (Case 6)

> "Probably half my time is spent on business development, and the other half is serving clients that we've won. When we win a pitch, I help to bring it through the stages of the process until it is 100% over. So, you could say in a way that the vast majority of my time is business development. Moreover, some of that is marketing". (Case 9)

Regarding performance measures, entrepreneurs who found their enterprises with a *freedom* motivation have a balance between client satisfaction, financial, and recognition measures. Client retention and financial measures are important to *freedom* seekers because they allow them to invest in the business (e.g., equipment and high-risk projects that they want to develop) and to better compensate people. Reputation is also important to such entrepreneurs, not from a personal perspective, as with *self-fulfilment*-driven entrepreneurs, but because both employees and clients value their reputations as artists in the market. Design awards are also an important signal for these entrepreneurs and their clients.

> "We develop client relationships based on confidence. Our clients trust us, and at a certain point, we are 'their designers'. We see this a lot mainly in family businesses. We look at positive results but also at clients and projects that we've conquered, the quality of the projects". (Case 7)

> "I think it helps if we make a little bit of money. I know that sounds really sort of naïve from a creative person. It is very important because we give everybody a bonus if we perform well; everybody likes that as a mood, as a good mood. It also means that we can buy new equipment for people. (…) It is quite important that there is this kind of success. I think it is very useful if you have some public success in the business, if you win awards". (Case 8)

Regarding growth strategies, *freedom*-driven entrepreneurs aim to grow slowly in terms of size. Their main growth prospects lie in increasing the quality of their clients and projects, such as larger projects or international projects that bring higher profitability and visibility to the firm.

> "Twenty-five is a good size for an agency, and they always say that when you move beyond 25 people, you move from a small business to a medium-sized business and everything changes, and this is true; I have been through it. (…) I personally believe that beautiful creative organizations are probably somewhere between 12 and 25 people". (Case 8)

> "I don't think the larger, the better. I think you do not see economies of scale in design. If you are not careful, you get too big, and the quality goes down, and you are just under-producing okay or medium work. I do not think we will get much bigger. What our vision is is to get better and better, to become preeminent, to become the business by which people judge all the other businesses, to become the default, the definer of the category, if you like. I believe we can do that with maybe 120-130 people on these premises or on premises like these. This place has just enough room for 125. So, our ambition is to get to 125 (…)". (Case 9)

4.3. Financial motivation

Financial motivation expresses the goal of earning money or increasing income to have a high standard of living, to guarantee family security for current and future generations, or to build a valuable asset that can be sold or inherited. Entrepreneurs with a *financial* motivation articulate the market opportunity that they have detected and seized by creating their enterprises. Such entrepreneurs have a very pragmatic perspective on design, seeing it as a profitable activity, and most of them had previous experience in other design organizations.

> "This company starts in 1996 with the possibility of a partnership with x (large vehicle assembly company), which is our client, actually my client… My perspective in these situations is that there is the need to have a market justification to create a business. There is no point in creating a structure without a practical perspective". (Case 10)
>
> "I saw that there was a chance to start a new company profile in the creative industry absolutely tied to design and started as a freelancer. I had some success with some accounts, which allowed me to do what I dreamed. Build a structure and make it, in fact, more of a consulting than a freelancer service". (Case 11)

Regarding process formalization*, financially motivated* entrepreneurs tend to imprint higher levels of formalization during project development. The projects have a defined number of sequential phases that may vary according to the size and nature of the project but follow similar procedures. Similarly, role definition and work division are highly formalized with several hierarchical levels and areas of specialization.

> "There are three hierarchical levels: the designer, who is normally the more experienced one and who controls the project, the coordinator of the project, who is the one responsible for the project, and a younger designer. (…) We have a regular procedure that encompasses from 3 to 5 phases, depending on the project". (Case 10)
>
> "The brief phase involved everyone: the creative director, the project manager and the designers. Each project is structured around structure, function, and symbol. Then, there is a presentation meeting where the creative director, the project manager, or even one of the partners, depending on the importance of the project or the availability of each person, meet to separate the project into three main poles: structure, function, symbol". (Case 13)

Regarding management style, *financially motivated* entrepreneurs tend to have more decentralized decision-making. Typically, the role of financially motivated entrepreneurs is linked to methodological supervision and quality control in important milestones. They sometimes intervene in the conceptual stage of the project to ensure that the project aligns with client needs and to ensure that the vision and style align with the enterprise. Occasionally, they may participate in meetings with clients or intervene in larger projects; however, project development does not depend on them.

> "Every designer on the staff except the very youngest designers will actually run projects. Moreover, in this company, if you want a project, this means you are directly with the client; so, they call you, you are interacting, you are setting up meetings, and so, then, they usually have the best experience. (…) When the project is in the studio, I am working with the person who is running the project, making sure that they got the strategic vision part of it". (Case 12)

> "My role in A, first, is that of methodological definition. Obviously, it is also to conceptualize the project in master strokes, to monitor quality and style, and, above all, to have a more strategic vision from the point of view of the entire project. (…) Now, it is more difficult to carry out a detailed follow-up of the project; it was easier when there were only 10 people working in the company". (Case 14)

In these ventures, the most important performance measures are financially oriented, such as revenue, profitability, market penetration or internationalization. Contribution to society and visibility are also important because they bring more clients, larger projects, and higher revenues.

> "The most important thing is the revenue level. This is the only way to know if we are making money. We also have other intangible goals, such as the sectors in which we are present, the internationalization level, which is a differentiation point, (…), the market penetration of our products, brands, animations and entertainment for television channels". (Case 14)

> "The main idea is to be profitable in two dimensions: financially profitable, as we all have costs and we like to live in the best way possible; and the contribution to society and to the economy; this is the most emotional aspect". (Case 11)

Financial seekers obey the market logic of maximizing returns on investment and of growing the company and its profits. The growth strategies involve market leadership, sales, people and, in some cases, internationalization.

> "For 15 people, 1 million euros is relevant when looked at per capita. However, we want to improve that even more. We believe that the model that we have delineated for this year already presents a different result. Perhaps we need to double or triple our business, without doubling the team. Can you imagine?" (Case 11)

> "Internationalization is very important, mainly due to the economic situation we are suffering. We are studying different ways of doing it but do not necessarily want to do it by opening new offices. (…) It might be that we launch a network of external collaborators to be able to have a presence in other territories but without the need to open any offices. We may support universities in major European capitals to do localized studies but without having an office". (Case 14)

4.4. Entrepreneurial motivations for enterprises created by multiple founders

The previous sections focused on pure EMs based on a single founder to provide a clear illustration of the findings. In addition to these cases, there are six cases with founder teams that range from two to five founders who have homogeneous EMs (see Table 1). The consistency of the founders' EMs can be explained using several reasons. In some cases, the founders have the same background (Cases 3, 7, and 8), and in other cases, the founding team had studied or worked together before and decided to found the enterprise due to their homogenous visions and ambitions (Cases 3, 7, 8, 12, and 10). There are other cases in which it is clear that there is a dominant founder who started the project and invited the other founders to help him/her, and this founder tends to imprint on the firm the most (Case 10, Case 12). There are also cases in which, although the founders have different backgrounds (for example, management and design), they have worked together in the past and have homogeneous motivations (Case 6). Therefore, these cases with founding teams with homogeneous EMs also imprint on the organizations' practices and processes.

Our analysis also identified three cases with mixed EMs, meaning that the various founders combined more than one motivation to found their enterprises (see Table 2). Some cases present a mix of *self-fulfilment and freedom* (Case 4), *financial* and *self-fulfilment* (Case 5) and *financial* and *freedom* EMs (Case 9). They might be the result of founding teams that have

different backgrounds, types of previous experience and heterogeneous motivations. For example, founders who have a marketing or management background or several years of experience tend to have more pressing financial concerns than founders with no experience or background in design. Cases that present mixed EMs also tend to have mixed organizational practices and processes. Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that founders or founding teams tend to have a dominant motivation that imprints on most of their organization's practices and processes.

5. Discussion

5.1. Founders Entrepreneurial Motivations

In this study, we identified three main groups of EMs: *self-fulfilment*, *freedom* and *financial*. These groups represent the spectrum of extrinsic and intrinsic EMs. These three groups of EMs serve the purpose of this study and clarify the literature on EMs. Despite the fact that these EMs were already reported in previous studies, most of these studies report long lists of EMs (e.g. Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Kuratko et al., 1997; Shane et al., 2003), in which EMs overlap and/or are highly related to each other (Edelman et al., 2010).

Self-fulfilment, which reflects the desire to build an enterprise that is an extension of the founder's unique signature and personality, is similar to the concept of personal happiness and gratification in Paige and Littrel (2002), and the idea from Chaston (2008) that creative enterprise is part of a lifestyle, serving as a means to express creative outputs (Chaston, 2008) and to fuel the identity and passion (Poettschacher, 2005) of the creative entrepreneur. *Self-fulfilment* is also similar to the *need for achievement* and *egoistic passion* (Shane et al., 2003), and to *self-realization* and *recognition* (Carter et al., 2003). If we consider EMs as a continuum

between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, *self-fulfilment* represents the extreme of intrinsic motivation (Bird, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1997).

Freedom reflects entrepreneurs' desire to be independent, to choose their projects and to implement their methods and vision during the selection, process, and output phases of projects. Previous research highlights creatives' desire to be independent (Paige and Littrel, 2002) and more involved in the creative output (Chaston, 2008). Similarly, mainstream research on EMs also refers to *independence/autonomy*, in the sense of *being one's own boss* and having the *freedom and flexibility* to approach projects and control *one's own destiny* (Carter et al., 2003; Kuratko et al., 1997; Shane et al., 2003). In the continuum of EMs, *freedom* is the middle term between intrinsic and extrinsic EMs because *freedom* relates to creative freedom but also financial freedom regarding deciding on the future of the enterprise.

Finally, *financial* motivation reflects the ambition to earn money to survive and to sustain a high standard of living to guarantee family security for current and future generations, or to build a valuable asset that can be sold or inherited. This study challenges the stigma that, in CIs, enterprises are mainly 'lifestyle businesses' that often neglect commercial and financial aspects (Chaston, 2008; Poettschacher, 2005), confirming that entrepreneurs in CI display financial motivations because the financial success of their enterprises is a key to their survival (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). Nevertheless, in the mainstream entrepreneurial literature, financial motivation is one of the most commonly cited motivations, specifically to *increase income*, *acquire personal wealth*, *ensure family security* and build a v*aluable business to sell or for children to inherit* (Kuratko et al., 1997; Carter et al., 2003; Vik and McElwee, 2011). In the EM continuum, *financial* motivation represents the opposite extreme of the continuum—the extrinsic motivation (Bird, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1997).

5.2. Imprinting of founders' EMs on enterprises

This paper contributes to the mainstream literature on entrepreneurship and imprinting, suggesting that founders' EMs at the time of the venture's founding can predict the entrepreneurial path, confirming the proposition of researchers that the motivations of founders shape new ventures (see Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Hoang and Gimeno, 2010; Shane et al., 2003). Whereas Fauchart and Gruber (2011) show that founders' social identities affect a firm's market segments served and resources and capabilities deployed; this paper extends these results, reinforcing that EMs of founders also influence enterprises' name, processes, decision making, performance measures and growth strategies for a long period after being founded (Marquis and Tislcsik, 2013; Baron, Hannan, and Burton, 1999; Johnson, 2007). In this study, the interviewees were the original founders that still manage the enterprises. The fact that the average age of the enterprises is 24 years old means that the founders' blueprints last beyond the early founding stages.

Although the expectation is that entrepreneurs that pursue *financial* motivations develop the practices and processes to grow a profitable business (e.g. formal processes, decentralised decision making, financial measures), following financial logic, little is known about how non-financial EMs imprint the practices and processes of enterprises. Therefore, the main contribution of this paper is that, despite the fact that entrepreneurs need to develop financially sustainable enterprises to secure their survival, when their EM is non-financial, they can imprint their enterprises with non-financial logic long-after the foundation stages. Specifically, entrepreneurs that pursue *self-fulfilment* maintain highly informal processes and centralized decision making centred on the creative whims of the founder. These founders value personal satisfaction and recognition instead of financial measures, and their intention is to maintain the

size of the business to keep control over it. Additionally, founders who seek *freedom* tend to have a higher level of process formalization than *self-fulfilment*-driven founders and tend to control only the strategic issues. Such founders are oriented towards customer satisfaction, and their growth ambition is to improve the quality of projects and to grow slowly.

5.3. Managerial implications

The findings of this study may extend to CIs other than design. CIs encompass sectors such as advertising, marketing, crafts, designer fashion, film, TV, photography, publishing, museums, galleries and libraries, music, and the performing and visual arts (DCMS, 2001). In such industries, activities are centred on individual creativity, skill and talent, as is the case for design industries. Therefore, the results regarding EMs and founders' imprinting on ventures have practical significance for policy makers, nascent entrepreneurs, and CI managers in general.

The managerial implications of this research are particularly useful for entrepreneurs and those who support them (investors and venture capitalists) in understanding, from the birth of a venture and based on the founder's motivations, the future of the venture in terms of *the firm name and reputation, formalization of processes, centralization of decision-making, performance measures, customer relationships, and strategies for growth*. For example, *self-fulfilment*-driven founders tend to create enterprises centred on themselves, and the future of these ventures may be at risk when the founder exits the venture (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010). In contrast, *financial* seekers create companies that are decentralized from the founder and

present aggressive market growth strategies, and these ventures are potentially better able to survive their founder.

5.4. Limitations and future research

The sampling strategy was designed to maximize the heterogeneity of EMs in the design industry. However, from a mainstream perspective, these results emerged in an "extreme case". Therefore, the suggested relationships between EMs and venture characteristics need be tested on a larger scale across different contexts to understand the generalizability of these results.

To investigate the imprinting of founders' EMs on enterprises after the foundation phases, we selected a sample with ventures that have survived for more than 12 years (24 on average). This strategy may lead to potential bias in the founders' recollection of decisions and contexts. In the future, a longitudinal study should be conducted to understand how the motivations of founders may change during the course of new venture development and how these changes could influence the practices and processes of firms. Additionally, this study also questions how long founders blueprints persist after they exit their enterprises. Future research needs to investigate the extent to which organizations can deviate from imprinted patterns over time before and after the founders exit the enterprises.

This paper isolates the founders' imprinting on enterprises, sampling cases from the same industry but from various environments and institutional contexts (different ages and countries). Future research could further investigate multiple forms of imprinting, not only from founders and the founding phases but also from the environment as an institutional context of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive forces, trying to disguise the effects and durability or decay over time.

In the context of this study, survival is a proxy for performance, which is a limitation. However, performance is a nuanced measure and deserves future research. Specifically, the relationship among EMs, imprinting and performance outcomes in terms of sales and profitability deserve further investigation. In fact, because *self-fulfilment*-driven founders tend to be artists whose enterprises are informal and maintain a free creative process, they tend to present a greater novelty, generating more economic value (Howkins, 2002) despite their smaller sizes. Therefore, the suspicion is that enterprises founded by *self-fulfilment*-driven founders might present higher profitability *per capita* than other enterprises. Further research might link EMs to organizational imprinting and performance by considering such starting points.

Existing research on imprinting has established a relation between the backgrounds and previous professional experiences of founders and the organizations that they create (Burton, Sørensen, and Beckman, 2002; Phillips, 2005). Investigating how the backgrounds and previous professional experience of founders influence their Ems could be interesting. For example, founders with *self-fulfilment* motivation tend to have less experience than *financially* driven entrepreneurs. Such a proposition could be further tested in larger cross-industry samples. This also suggests that the distinction between founders' background/experience and EMs is not linear and warrants further investigation. For example, whereas some entrepreneurs tend to reproduce past experiences in their new firms (Baron et al., 1999), others tend to create their enterprises in opposition to what they experienced in previous organizations. This is the case for *freedom*-driven entrepreneurs who create their enterprises to have the freedom to implement their methods and vision in their enterprises, in contrast to their previous experiences. Then, EMs can be a variable that helps reduce the unobserved heterogeneity among founders, representing a further step towards a holistic perspective on how founders imprint on the enterprises that they create.

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Tables

Table 1. Case descriptions

Case number	Country	Foundation date	Number of employees	Number of founders	Activity
1	Spain	1989	35	1	Project design, graphic design, interior, interactive, web design
2	US	2002	7	1	Product design, architecture, interior design, art direction
3	France	1992	3	5	Industry, gallery, materials experiments
4	France	2000	8	3	Architecture, product design
5	Portugal	2006	12	4	Product design, exhibitions, editorial design
6	France	1988	30	2	Brand design, architecture, graphic design, product design
7	Portugal	1999	3	2	Product design, communication, exhibitions, editorial, product, web, etc.
8	UK	1992	63[1]	3	Packaging design (2D and 3D)
9	UK	1990	95	3	Packaging, corporate identity
10	Portugal	1997	9	3	Industrial design
11	Portugal	1993	15	1	Brand design, product design
12	US	1996	17	4	Industrial design, packaging design
13	France	1986	48	1	product design, industrial design, premium design
14	Spain	1995	40	1	Product design, software and multimedia design, brand design, own brands

[1] A total of 63 people across three different offices in London (16 employees), Chicago (35 employees), and Sidney (12 employees).

Table 2. Founders' EMs and descriptions

Case Number	EM	Founders' Background	Founders' Previous Experience
1	Self-fulfilment	Design	No (only as an artist)
2	Self-fulfilment	Design	No
3	Self-fulfilment	Design	No
4	Self-fulfilment, freedom	Design, architecture	Yes (founded other ventures before)
5	Self-fulfilment, financial	Design, architecture, management	Yes
6	Freedom	Design, management	Yes
7	Freedom	Design	Yes
8	Freedom	Design	Yes
9	Freedom, financial	Marketing, design	Yes
10	Financial	Engineering, design, architecture	Yes (little)
11	Financial	Design	Yes
12	Financial	Industrial design, management	Yes
13	Financial	Advertising	Yes
14	Financial	Design	Yes (little)

Case number	EMs	Firm named after founder	Process formalization	Decision-making (founder involvement)	Performance measures	Growth strategies
1	Self-fulfilment	Yes	Informal process with no established roles	Centralized (founder controls at the creative and strategic levels)	Personal satisfaction ("making great things")	Maintain size
2	Self-fulfilment	Yes	Informal process with no established roles	Centralized (founder controls at the creative and strategic levels)	Personal satisfaction ("doing what you love") and recognition (awards, press articles, exhibitions)	Maintain size
3	Self-fulfilment	No (individual signature)	Informal process with no established roles	Centralized (founder controls at the creative and strategic levels)	Recognition (awards, exhibitions, novelty)	Maintain size
4	Self-fulfilment, freedom	Yes	Informal process with few roles	Centralized (founder controls at the creative and strategic levels)	Contribution to society (building ethical brands)	Maintain size
5	Self-fulfilment, financial	No (individual signature)	Informal with few rotating roles	Centralized (founders control at the creative and strategic levels)	Financial (revenues), recognition (awards), and good projects (variety of projects)	Grow sustainably and increase the number of international projects
6	Freedom	No	Semi-formal process with few roles	Semi-centralized (founder control larger projects)	Client satisfaction	Increase the number of international projects
7	Freedom	Yes	Semi-formal process with no established roles	Semi-centralized (founders control at the strategic level)	Client satisfaction (retention and relationships), and financial (revenues)	Increase the quality of clients
8	Freedom	Yes	Formal process with few roles	Semi-centralized (founder controls at the strategic level)	Financial (revenues), employee satisfaction, and recognition (awards)	Slightly increase the number of employees and the number of large clients
9	Freedom, financial	Yes	Formal process with established roles	Semi-centralized (founder controls at the strategic level and checks for quality)	Employee satisfaction, client satisfaction (client return rate), and recognition	Grow slowly
10	Financial	No	Formal process with established roles	Semi-centralized (founder controls at the strategic level)	Financial (revenues, profitability) and contribution to society (projects that make a difference)	Increase profitability and the number of international projects
11	Financial	Yes	Formal process with established roles	Decentralized (founder supervises larger projects)	Financial (revenues) and contribution to society (projects that make a difference)	Grow size and revenues
12	Financial	No	Formal process with established roles	Decentralized (founder supervises projects)	Financial (revenues) and contribution to society ("influencing the world")	Grow slowly
13	Financial	No	Formal process with established roles	Decentralized (founder supervises projects)	Financial (revenues, profitability)	Grow in size and geographic reach
14	Financial	No	Formal process with established roles	Decentralized (founder supervises the projects)	Financial (revenue, market penetration, internationalization)	Increase the number of international projects

Table 3. Founders EMs and practices and processes of enterprises

Table 4. Summary of EMs and enterprises' practices and processes

Motivation Practices and processes	Self-fulfilment	Freedom	Financial
Firm name	Founder's name, or founders sign the products	Founder's name	Different from founder's name
Process formalization	Informal with no established roles	Semi-formal	Formal
Decision-making	Centralized	Semi-centralized	Decentralized
Performance measures	Personal satisfaction and recognition	Client satisfaction	Financial measures
Growth strategies	Maintain size	Slow growth	Growth

Figures

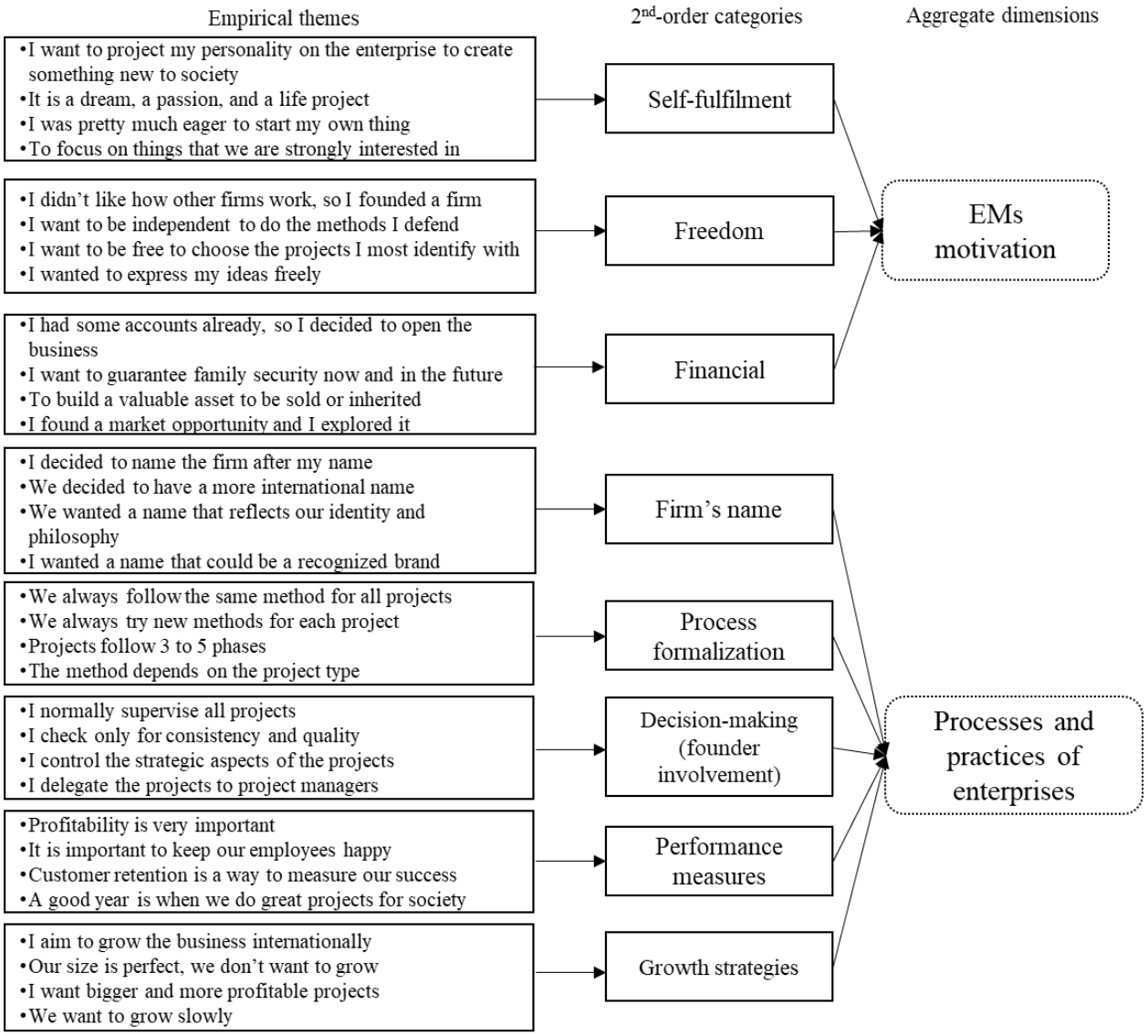

Figure 1. Data structure