



Passivity, Replication, and Creation.

The Pathway from Subsistence Entrepreneurship to Community Well-Being.

Luca Castellanza

Abstract

Why do subsistence entrepreneurs start pursuing non-subsistence economic activities? And how do non-subsistence entrepreneurial actions in the agricultural and industrial sectors respectively impact poverty in the entrepreneur's community? We build on the concept of replication opportunity, the entrepreneur's imitation of the observable economic activities enacted by her peers, and entrepreneurial embeddedness, the entrenchment of the individual within her community's norms and values, to develop a multi-level framework of poverty reduction through entrepreneurial activity. We conduct an ethnography of 104 entrepreneurs living in the rural and semi-urban agricultural communities in the province of Buea, South-West Cameroon. Due to the civil war and economic instability ongoing in the area at the time of the fieldwork, we can distinguish the features of subsistence, agricultural, and industrial entrepreneurship by observing the entrepreneurs' frequent changes in their personal economic conditions.

Our contribution to entrepreneurship theory and practice is threefold. First, we conceptualize *passive opportunities*, the non-conscious engagement in entrepreneurial activities driven by contextual necessities. Second, in opposition to extant literature, we show that replication opportunities in agricultural entrepreneurship can generate significant positive economic spill-overs

in the entrepreneur's community and play a pivotal role in tackling economic poverty. Third, we find that industrial entrepreneurship can contribute to non-economic poverty reduction through a process of dis-embedding from one's native community and re-embedding in alternative value systems.

Keywords: Opportunity Theory, Poverty Reduction, Embeddedness, Passive Opportunities, Replication Opportunities, Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Ethnography, Farming Communities

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Poverty, Entrepreneurship, and Agriculture.....	7
2.1	Defining Poverty	7
2.2	The Entrepreneurial Process in Poverty	9
2.2.1	Opportunity Identification and Exploitation	10
2.2.2	Embeddedness and Community Context	12
2.2.3	Economic and Non-Economic Poverty Reduction.....	13
2.3	Agriculture and Entrepreneurship	15
3	Methodology	18
3.1	Empirical Setting	18
3.1.1	Poverty and Instability in South-West Cameroon	18
3.1.2	Sampling Criteria	20
3.2	Data	22
3.2.1	Interview protocol	22
3.2.2	Analytical Strategy	25
4	Results	27
4.1	Subsistence, Passivity, and Marginalization	27
4.2	Agriculture, Replication, and Ubuntu	31
4.3	Industry, Creation, and Empowerment	36
5	Discussion	42
5.1	Implications for Opportunity Theory	43
5.2	Implications for Contextual Theories of Entrepreneurship	45
5.3	Implications for the Fight Against Poverty	47
6	Concluding remarks	50
7	References	51

1 Introduction

Poverty, the lack of means to sustain oneself and one's family, is among the most incumbent challenges of this century, forcing billions to struggle to achieve basic needs in life and integrate within their communities (Bruton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013; Mosse, 2010). Entrepreneurship research has increasingly focused on how the application of management principles can alleviate the marginalized conditions of individuals living in poverty (George, Corbishley, Khayesi, Haas, & Tihanyi, 2016; Tobias, Mair, & Barbosa-Leiker, 2013). Among the several possible solutions advanced for solving the poverty dilemma, scholars have examined grassroots entrepreneurship (Handy, Cnaan, Bhat, & Meijs, 2011; Sarkar, 2018), marginalized individuals' exploitation of local know-how to start a venture and generate economic value, community enterprise (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Somerville & McElwee, 2011), the building of an enterprise creating value for the individuals living in a localized community, and frugal innovation (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Hart, Sharma, & Halme, 2016), the make-doing with scarce resources in creative ways. While helpful in explaining innovations and poverty reduction in developing contexts, these approaches assume a typified definition of the entrepreneur as the innovator who creates value through new products, inventions and low-cost technological breakthroughs (Welter, 2011). We take a different stance in our research: Building on the concepts of entrepreneurial opportunities, circumstantial enablers of value-creation attempts (Davidsson, 2015), and entrepreneurial embeddedness, the entrenchment of the individual within her community's norms and values (Granovetter, 1985), we develop arguments as to how and why common entrepreneurs can have an impact on poverty within their communities (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Welter, Baker, Audretsch, & Gartner, 2017).

A nascent stream of entrepreneurship literature suggests that entrepreneurs can create value even without explicitly aiming to do so (Lutz, 2009), for example by conforming to peer pressures to generate positive externalities in the community (Zahra & Wright, 2016). Indeed, (Zahra & Wright, 2016) suggest that every entrepreneur can have an impact on society, to the extent that she contributes to advances in the community and generates economic spill-overs for those living within the enterprise's area of activity. This is especially true for enterprises in African rural areas, where the

entrepreneurs are subject to binding social pressure to comply with the logic of Ubuntu, forcing individuals to share one's wealth with the community (Lutz, 2009; Seremani & Clegg, 2016). For instance, farmers and entrepreneurs in Northern Ghana have been found unable to escape obligations from their peers: Being an entrepreneur entails empowering neighbours and the community at large, or otherwise risk social exclusion and denigration (Slade Shantz, Kistruck, & Zietsma, 2018). Adopting a dual-embeddedness perspective, the enterprise is not only an integral part of the local social reality that must conform to expectations and beliefs concerning one's behaviour (Spilling, 2011; Vestrum, 2014) but also an active agent of change that can enable formerly marginalized individuals to gain power within their community and influence the thoughts and actions of their peers (Mosse, 2010; Scott, Dolan, Johnstone-Louis, Sugden, & Wu, 2012). Through this process of embedding and dis-embedding, even one-man enterprises can reduce non-economic poverty by shaping values and beliefs in their communities (Klyver, Nielsen, & Evald, 2013; Vestrum, 2014). Although by definition subsistence entrepreneurs fail to generate economic value for others than oneself, subsistence entrepreneurship may build individuals' confidence and get them started in challenges and risks they would not undertake otherwise (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). For instance, in poor agricultural communities, entrepreneurs are motivated to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities by challenges experienced in their daily life and desire for improving one's living conditions (Yessoufou, Blok, & Omta, 2018). As such, contexts of poverty do not simply limit the possibilities for entrepreneurial actions but may also push entrepreneurs to find innovative solutions to societal problems or grow their business for the sake of themselves and their families.

Our position contrasts with the mainstream approach to poverty reduction through entrepreneurship in that we recognize the possibility for embedded value creation within rural communities regardless of the entrepreneur's firm size, innovativeness, or sector of activity. Our definition of entrepreneurs, 'individuals who engage in economic activities following the discovery of opportunities to create value for themselves and for others' (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Zahra & Wright, 2016), is broad enough to encompass agricultural entrepreneurs (i.e. those who create value through farm activities in the agricultural sector) but narrow enough to exclude subsistence entrepreneurs, whose value surplus is not sufficient to contribute economically or socially to the community (Yessoufou et al., 2018). In

our theorizing, rural communities shape entrepreneurial actions by determining the constraints, values, norms, and beliefs to which entrepreneurs must conform, and entrepreneurs, in turn, impact poverty in the community by generating economic and non-economic spill-overs. Thus, we focus our exploratory analysis on the following research questions:

1. *How do contexts of poverty shape the actions of subsistence and non-subsistence entrepreneurs?*
2. *How do different types of entrepreneurial action impact economic and non-economic poverty within the entrepreneur's community?*

To answer our research questions, we devise an ethnographic study of persons living in the neighbourhood of Buea, the capital of the Anglophone South-West region of Cameroon, and engaging in subsistence, agricultural, and industrial entrepreneurial activities. The distinction of agricultural entrepreneurship is fundamental in our study as the communities under observation feature a predominantly agricultural economy and a strong presence of rural traditions, values, and meanings embedded in agricultural practices (Fitz-Koch, Nordqvist, Carter, & Hunter, 2018). The Anglophone South-West region of Cameroon makes an interesting empirical setting for several reasons. First, the region has been historically poorer than the Francophone areas of Cameroon, failing to assimilate in the predominantly French-speaking country and obtaining scarce development funds from the central government (Fokwang, 2010). As such, entrepreneurs in the industrial sector most often engage in small businesses and one-man enterprises comparable to one-man farms in the agricultural sector. Second, at the time of the study the region has been subject to a mounting civil war and political instability (O'Grady, 2018; Shaban, 2018), forcing many entrepreneurs back and forth from subsistence level and enabling us to highlight the differences between subsistence and non-subsistence entrepreneurship. Third, due to the variance in the extent of rurality in the neighbourhood of Buea, ranging from semi-urban in the capital to rural in the close countryside, the empirical setting allows selecting both farmers from urban areas and industrial entrepreneurs from rural villages, thus disentangling the effects of practicing entrepreneurial activities from those of merely living in an urban area.

Our contributions to the entrepreneurship and development literature are fourfold. First, we provide a multi-level process framework of entrepreneurial action in contexts of poverty and poverty-reduction through entrepreneurship, encompassing individual ambitions, identity and self-awareness (Slade Shantz et al., 2018), value-creation processes and interactions within the entrepreneur's social circles (Rooks, Klyver, & Sserwanga, 2016; Sarkar, 2018), and impacts on the community at large (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; McMullen, 2011). Multi-level theories are useful to extend the academic body of knowledge as they specify how persons, collectives and society interact and how actors can mobilize resources to achieve their objectives or generate positive externalities across levels (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999). More specifically, our framework investigates the potential of subsistence entrepreneurs and marginalized actors to raise their personal status, impact the economic well-being of their communities, and contribute to change rural beliefs (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Welter et al., 2017).

Second, our findings yield interesting insights for the conceptualization of entrepreneurial opportunities and entrepreneurial practices in contexts of poverty. In contrast to dominant perspectives that advocate innovative entrepreneurship as the solution to the poverty problem, we observe that the availability of replication opportunities, the imitation of economic activities visible within the community, can have a concrete impact in shifting subsistence entrepreneurs to a non-subsistence condition. While traditional conceptualizations of entrepreneurial opportunities see the individual as the centre of entrepreneurial action (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), we discover that opportunities in poverty contexts are largely dependent on the economic and cultural possibilities available within rural communities (Davidsson, 2015; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Subsistence entrepreneurs, who engage *passively* in the economic activities dictated by the informal norms and values within their community, can gain the necessary motivation to *actively* pursue entrepreneurial actions should a shift in context present them with suitable opportunities to do so. Hence, we suggest that studies of opportunities in poverty contexts should formulate new theories focused on the environment, rather than on the individual, as the centre of entrepreneurial action. Third, we recognize that poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon involving weak institutional regimes (Mair & Marti, 2009; Webb, Bruton, Tihanyi, & Ireland, 2013), economic marginalization (Mosse,

2010; Zhao & Wry, 2016), ineducation, and lack of access to security and basic needs (Bruton et al., 2013; Hart et al., 2016; Sen, 1985). By breaking down poverty into its different components, we find that entrepreneurs contribute to the overall development of impoverished areas by dis-embedding themselves from traditional beliefs and re-constructing alternative value systems. Thus, we contribute to a burgeoning literature on the processes of community creation (Somerville & McElwee, 2011), the non-economic consequences of entrepreneurial actions (Zahra & Wright, 2016), sustainable development in rural communities (Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011), and the empowerment of marginalized individuals through entrepreneurship (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009).

Fourth, to our knowledge, our research is the first empirical comparison of the processes of industrial and agricultural entrepreneurship and their respective impact on poverty reduction. While agricultural entrepreneurship has received increased academic interest in the recent years (Slade Shantz et al., 2018; Yessoufou et al., 2018), its conceptualization is still lacking in regards to opportunity identification and exploitation. In other words, scholars have insofar assumed that the same process of opportunity discovery and enactment applies to both industrial and agricultural entrepreneurship, failing to account for the features of the agricultural sector that make entrepreneurship distinctive and characterize domain-specific constraints and enablers (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Given the predominance of the agricultural sector in low-income countries, our research provides interesting insights for policy-makers and development practitioners to foster entrepreneurial behaviour among the rural Poor and understand the conditions under which agricultural entrepreneurship can result in positive spill-overs for communities at large.

The article proceeds as follows: First, we review the literature on entrepreneurship in low-income countries, highlighting the peculiarities of poverty contexts, the ways in which poverty contexts shape entrepreneurial opportunities, the impact of entrepreneurship on individuals and communities, and the features of the agricultural sector differentiating its entrepreneurial process from that of industrial realities. Second, we present our empirical choices, data collection strategy, and analytical procedure. Third, we illustrate the iterative process of entrepreneurship and poverty reduction in agricultural and industrial contexts emerging from our analysis. Finally, we discuss how our findings can advance

research in entrepreneurship and development by enriching our understanding of the entrepreneurial process and its effects on economic and non-economic poverty.

2 Poverty, Entrepreneurship, and Agriculture

In this section, we review extant contributions on the topic of poverty alleviation through industrial and agricultural entrepreneurship. We first define poverty in low-income countries, providing conceptual descriptions and evidence from published articles. Then, we explore the process of entrepreneurship in terms of opportunity identification and exploitation, the effects of rurality on entrepreneurship, and the ways in which entrepreneurship can impact communities. Finally, we look at the specificities of rural agricultural entrepreneurship that distinguish the phenomenon from entrepreneurship in industrial and urban contexts. Far from being a comprehensive literature review, this section serves to set-up the conceptual framework we will adopt in our subsequent empirical analysis.

2.1 Defining Poverty

Within low-income countries, the threshold of abject poverty is generally defined as those people living with less than \$2 a day (World Bank, 2018). Such a definition, while helpful in setting a threshold for the identification of poverty, fails to account for more complex facets of the phenomenon and the fact that purchasing power differs among countries. More recently, scholars and practitioners have introduced the concept of relational poverty, the impossibility of certain individuals to earn enough funds to achieve a dignified standard of living within their country (Feng & Nguyen, 2014). Relational poverty does not only entail that the poverty threshold differs among richer and poorer countries, but also that poverty is a matter of affordances and whether a citizen can sustain an adequate standard of life, fulfil her basic needs and accomplish as much as her less disadvantaged peers (Sen, 1985).

Within the rural communities of low-income countries, poverty is not only of an economic nature, as it is often associated with marginalization and exclusion by more well-off community members (Mosse, 2010). Since the Poor cannot afford basic services, such as education, sanitation, and shelter, they tend to be easily affected by sickness, natural disasters and fluctuations in market demand (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Si, 2015). Poverty results in a vicious self-reinforcing circle, as the Poorest are the ones with the least means to invest in commercial activities and the least opportunities to grow

their personal economic capital (Bruton et al., 2015). Most often, economic poverty and political exclusion go hand-in-hand: The richest members of a community can maximize the efficiency of their work, having more time to invest in political participation, and reinforce their status within the community, increasing their possibilities to be elected in positions of power and chosen as political leaders (Mosse, 2010).

Moreover, rural communities are characterized by scarcely developed formal institutions and a prevalence of informal norms and traditional beliefs (Webb et al., 2013). Institutions are the rules of the game, “the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions” (North, 1991, p. 97). While in developed countries formal institutions prevail due to bodies of enforcement of laws, strong property rights regimes and a solid presence of governmental structures, the rural communities of low-income countries are often lead by traditional beliefs that influence human behaviour establishing incentive and punishment schemes and forcing individuals to conform to the dominant norms (Webb, Tihanyi, Ireland, & Sirmon, 2009).

The lack of formal institutions entails several constraints on the Poor’s economic activities that further aggravate their condition. For instance, the poor can hardly access start-up funds, except for micro-finance cooperatives that have been shown to obtain scarce results in poverty alleviation and hardly provide sufficient capital for ambitious start-up projects (Bruton et al., 2013). In addition, due to the lack of property rights and the weak regime of enforcement of contract laws, the Poor must rely on informal alternatives, such as lobbying powerful individuals within their communities or regulating contracts via social capital and repeated interactions (Webb et al., 2013). Social capital, ‘the value embedded in the social relationships of individuals or collectives’ (Gedajlovic, Honig, Moore, Payne, & Wright, 2013, p. 456), is derived from bonds of trust among individuals, conformity to community norms, and a long-term perspective towards social relationships. Failing to access economic loans and capital, the Poor can instead rely on their peers and long-term relationships to substitute for basic security needs, for example exchanging favours within the community, contributing to common saving funds or borrowing goods and capital from each other (Alvarez & Barney, 2014).

Therefore, entrepreneurship in the rural communities of low-income countries stands in stark contrast to innovative ventures and start-ups widespread in the Western world (Welter, 2011; Welter et al.,

2017). Entrepreneurs can achieve success in their businesses by becoming more embedded within their communities, knowing the community's social norms and acceptable behaviours, and exploiting their social ties with community members living in similar conditions (Vestrum, 2014). Moreover, entrepreneurship in low-income countries differs from top-down approaches for poverty reduction in that it grants the Poor a part in the development project, instead of imposing pre-defined guidelines or tailored development programs (Bruton et al., 2015; West, Bamford, & Marsden, 2007). As such, the process of entrepreneurship is not only the creation of economic value for oneself and one's community, but also the possible solution to the multifaceted problems affecting the Poor, aiming to tackle the problems of ineducation, social discrimination and economic marginalization widespread in rural communities (Rindova et al., 2009).

2.2 The Entrepreneurial Process in Poverty

As explained in Shane & Venkataraman (2000, p. 218)'s widely adopted definition, entrepreneurship 'involves the study of *sources* of opportunities: the *processes* of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of *individuals* who discover, evaluate and exploit them' (emphasis in original). It follows from the definition that a comprehensive theory of entrepreneurship should account for the characteristics and motivations of the individual identifying the opportunity (Davidsson, 2015; Suddaby, Bruton, & Si, 2015), the context originating opportunities and in which opportunities are enacted (Welter, 2011), and the processes through which entrepreneurs pass from the perception to the evaluation and action of opportunities (Moroz & Hindle, 2012; Yessoufou et al., 2018). The most discussed type of entrepreneurial opportunities is *discovery opportunities*, when the entrepreneur identifies possibilities for a new venture objectively present in the environment, evaluates them, and decides whether to act depending on her assessment of risk and potential profitability (Kirzner, 1997; Suddaby et al., 2015). Similarly, *replication opportunities* entail the identification of economic possibilities objectively present in the environment, but they involve simple activities, such as trading or milking, that can be easily imitated by observation, regardless of the entrepreneur's background, knowledge, and skills (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). A third type of opportunities, *creation opportunities*, does not originate from the entrepreneur's context but is rather

created by entrepreneurial action through repeated feedback loops and trial-and-error attempts to recombine resources within the acceptable societal norms (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Sarasvathy, 2001).

Regardless of the type of opportunity under study, the entrepreneurial context matters, either by presenting the entrepreneur with opportunities for socio-economic value creation in the form of market imperfection or institutional voids (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), offering hints on replicable activities within her community (Handy et al., 2011; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), or providing her with the set of institutional norms and rules within which she can act and perform entrepreneurial actions in the attempt of creating socio-economic value (Granovetter, 1985; Welter, 2011). Thus, entrepreneurial opportunities in extant literature have been conceptualized as a function of matching individual ambitions, knowledge and human capital with the adequate contextual circumstances to discover, replicate, create, and enact opportunities (Davidsson, 2015; Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011). We organize our review of the entrepreneurial process in a multi-level framework exploring how poverty affects entrepreneurial opportunities, the role of the community in the entrepreneurial process, and the types of impact potentially created by the entrepreneur.

2.2.1 Opportunity Identification and Exploitation

Living in a context of poverty dramatically diminishes the kinds of economic opportunities that individuals can pursue. Due to the lack of access to finance and the generally low level of human capital, entrepreneurs are unlikely to *discover* valuable entrepreneurial opportunities and, should they be able to do so, they may lack the technical know-how, funds or adequate institutional regimes necessary to successfully exploit them (Bruton et al., 2013). *Creating* opportunities is generally easier, as the process of opportunity creation requires lower initial human capital and the entrepreneur build up her skills while she engages in the process (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). Nevertheless, creating opportunities requires familiarity with one's community context, awareness of the informal institutional norms, and knowledge of the acceptable actions within society (Sarasvathy, 2001; Sarkar, 2018).

For instance, Sarkar (2018) examines opportunity creation among innovative ventures in rural India. He contacts entrepreneurs who aim to solve societal issues by recombining resources amidst severe scarcity and adverse environmental conditions. Those individuals, who received scarce professional formation and faced scarce opportunities for employment, were unable to discover pre-existing opportunities in their environment, such as market imperfections or demographic changes, but instead invested their time and effort in building affordable products with their limited resources and scarce competences (Baker & Nelson, 2005). In this process of opportunity creation, the entrepreneurs had to challenge the social norms in their community, who would not understand the attempts of assembling disruptive products and would push them to conduct a “normal” life more in line with social expectations (Sarkar, 2018).

However, opportunity creation in poverty contexts is the exception rather than the norm. Creating opportunities requires significant investments in terms of time and effort, which Poor entrepreneurs often lack, to perfect one’s skills and engage in the repeated trial-and-error process (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Sarkar, 2018). Alvarez & Barney (2014) suggest that entrepreneurs in poverty contexts tend to exploit opportunities based on a *replication logic*, imitating what other community members are doing and leveraging the limited capital and means available to them. Replication opportunities are easily available, do not require large investments in term of capital of know-how and are often incentivized by micro-finance organisations, as they can supposedly raise marginalized individuals out of poverty with little effort (Alvarez, Barney, & Newman, 2015; Bruton et al., 2015).

Rural communities in low-income countries are often isolated because of scarce access to infrastructure, lack of financial means for transportation, or disruptions in the road systems due to rain and weather conditions (Handy et al., 2011; Mosse, 2010). As a result, rural communities living in poverty are often a closed system, with limited commercial exchanges and trade with outsiders and replication opportunities as one of the only available options for economic entrepreneurial activity (Owoo & Naudé, 2017). Nevertheless, should a community at large engage in replicating opportunities, the consequences would be disastrous. Alvarez et al. (2015) provide the example of goat milk production where many entrepreneurs in the village may receive micro-loans to start an

apparently profitable milk-selling business, thus saturating the market, driving the prices down below supply costs, and eroding all the potential gains one could have realized.

2.2.2 Embeddedness and Community Context

Entrepreneurs living in poverty can exploit social ties, rather than economic capital, to achieve their business objectives (Gedajlovic et al., 2013). Scholars distinguish between binding social capital, frequent ties with friends and relatives, and bridging social capital, connections with individuals far from one's close network or living in different communities with whom the entrepreneur has only sporadic contacts (Ansari, Munir, & Gregg, 2012). Bridging social capital also includes development agents and organisations external to the community who might provide resources, knowledge, and material to the entrepreneur (Rooks et al., 2016). However, due to spatial isolation, poor technological infrastructure and difficulties in transportation, entrepreneurs living in contexts of poverty tend to have binding social capital more readily available than bridging ties with external community members (Korsgaard, Ferguson, & Gaddefors, 2015).

Binding social capital is not devoid of purpose. Through binding social capital, the entrepreneur can strengthen her bonds within the local community, obtain favours from family and friends, and reinforce her understanding of local informal institutions (Rooks et al., 2016; Somerville & McElwee, 2011). Thus, binding social capital can serve as support for rural enterprises, especially in the early phases of the venture-creation process, where borrowing from friends and relatives is one of the main means of obtaining seed capital and conforming to societal norms and expectations is fundamental to achieve legitimacy in the community (Ansari et al., 2012). Yet, empirical evidence from entrepreneurship studies suggests that the most successful individuals are not the ones well-connected in the community, but those who can harness the most from both close ties and external links (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018; Slade Shantz et al., 2018).

In their study of entrepreneurs in Danish islands, which resemble poor communities of developing countries in terms of isolation and rurality, Müller & Korsgaard (2018) find that the entrepreneurs who achieve the best results are not those who simply know better their local context of operation, but rather the ones who can bridge the local know-how to resources and networks external to the

community, thus maximizing the value created by leveraging embeddedness while overcoming isolation and resource constraints (Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Rooks et al., 2016). Similarly, Slade Shantz et al. (2018) highlight that embeddedness in rural communities is a double-edged sword.

Although knowing local customs and being familiar with the informal institutions in the community may help set up the business and gaining legitimacy with community members, it comes with several obligations that the entrepreneur has to attend (Granovetter, 1985; Welter, 2011). For instance, to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of their peers, entrepreneurs are required to give back to those they are close to and contribute financially to the necessity of their neighbourhood (Lutz, 2009).

Slade Shantz et al. (2018) find that the entrepreneurs who obtain the highest financial returns are those who migrated from external areas, thus being less exposed to community obligations and better able to escape societal pressure (Klyver et al., 2013). The community is not only a source of help and resources for poor individuals but also an environment that may stifle innovation and hinder one's personal economic achievements, as informal institutional constraints are hard to overcome within the isolated communities of low-income countries (Somerville & McElwee, 2011; Vestrum, 2014). Rural entrepreneurs in poverty contexts can hardly overcome the cultural tradition of Ubuntu, the practice of borrowing and giving back to one's community upon achieving economic success (Lutz, 2009), without facing societal discrimination and punishments. The community determines which economic activities one is allowed to pursue, at times preventing entrepreneurs from choosing the most innovative and risky paths in favour of continuing the family's occupation, thus hampering the potential for value-creation (Slade Shantz et al., 2018).

2.2.3 Economic and Non-Economic Poverty Reduction

Notably, alleviating poverty in the community does not necessarily coincide with achieving individual economic success. When societal norms force the individual to contribute to those she is close to, she might do that unwillingly and sacrifice precious capital for future business development to her community's growth and well-being (Khoury & Prasad, 2016). In this way, positive economic externalities in the entrepreneur's community result in stronger constraints to her personal growth and possibilities for business expansion (Packard & Bylund, 2018). Thus, entrepreneurial ventures can

contribute to poverty alleviations even when they fail to scale up and stay at a relatively small scale. Due to societal pressure and binding social capital, individuals living in poverty are bound to contribute to their communities to maintain the trust and social ties within their network (Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Vestrum, 2014). Hence, even the enactment of simple and non-innovative replication opportunities, when it does not lead to market collapse or drive the entrepreneurs back to subsistence level, should theoretically bring positive economic spill-overs within poor rural communities.

In contrast, Si et al.'s (2015) ethnography of peasant-entrepreneurs in the Chinese farming community of Yiwu, where the entrepreneurs' active research of industrial and commercial opportunities has resulted in the poverty reduction for the whole region, is exemplary of the processes of collective economic empowerment through opportunity creation. First, peasants were forced by severe economic challenges and a general lack of government support to pursue economic opportunities (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Yessoufou et al., 2018), for example by starting small-scale family businesses for commodity trading (an innovation in the Communist regime where private ownership was formerly prohibited). Second, by leveraging their embeddedness and knowledge within the community, the empowered peasants of Yiwu were able to craft low-cost innovations and products that may fulfil other peasants' needs and raise them out of poverty (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Hart et al., 2016). Third, the peasant-entrepreneurs worked as role models for the neighbouring communities who, following the example of Yiwu, replicated entrepreneurial activities and grew their economic wealth out of poverty (Si et al., 2015).

Entrepreneurship may also contribute to tackling the non-economic aspects of poverty by helping discriminated individuals gain legitimacy within their communities (Battilana et al., 2009; Rindova et al., 2009). When marginalized individuals engage in entrepreneurial activities, they may rise in status within their community by gaining access to additional resources, social capital, esteem and decisional power (Mosse, 2010; Rignall & Atia, 2017). For instance, in African communities, the illness of HIV is often associated with witchcraft and the sick tend to be excluded by their society (Mosse, 2010). However, by engaging in business, HIV patients can earn a living on their own, rather than depending on unreliable state-sponsored subsidies, and gain legitimacy by role modelling in a society where most members would otherwise ignore them (Hart et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2012).

Similarly, marginalized women can overcome patriarchal beliefs and gain empowerment through entrepreneurship (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013; Lindvert, Patel, & Wincent, 2017). According to traditional rural beliefs in low-income countries, the wife should depend on her husband and ask for permission to interact outside of the house or do things independently (Zhao & Wry, 2016). Nevertheless, by engaging in entrepreneurial activities, marginalized women can demonstrate their worth within their families and communities and challenge the dominant beliefs relegating them to positions of submission (Al-Dajani, Carter, Shaw, & Marlow, 2015). The entrepreneurial process itself might drive women to challenge patriarchal beliefs: Following their personal challenges in marital life and growing malcontent with the dominant institutions, women entrepreneurs gain exposure to a variety of social settings formerly forbidden (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013), build their confidence as individuals (Lindvert et al., 2017), and become an example for other women in their community (Rindova et al., 2009).

2.3 Agriculture and Entrepreneurship

Although Shane & Venkataraman (2000)'s definition does by no means restrict the context of operation of entrepreneurship, extant scholarship has been surprisingly biased in favour of the industrial and service sectors to the misfortune of agricultural entrepreneurs (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018), with a few exceptions in recent years (Handy et al., 2011; Si et al., 2015; Yessoufou et al., 2018). The sector suffers from an under-conceptualization of its entrepreneurial process and scholars ignore the possibility that it might offer a unique setting for enacting entrepreneurial opportunities, tackling global poverty, and creating value. We address these points in the three following paragraphs. Alvarez et al. (2015) suggest that entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector can contribute little to the development of rural communities because agricultural opportunities are easy to imitate and can easily drive a closed and isolated economy to collapse. However, we counter-argue that since agricultural entrepreneurs are not immune to the pressures of sharing and giving back to one's community, they most often have an impact on alleviating poverty. In addition, agriculture in Africa and low-income countries is hampered by serious challenges, such as degradation of soil, increasing pollution, ever-more frequent droughts and climatic catastrophes, and lack of adequate equipment and

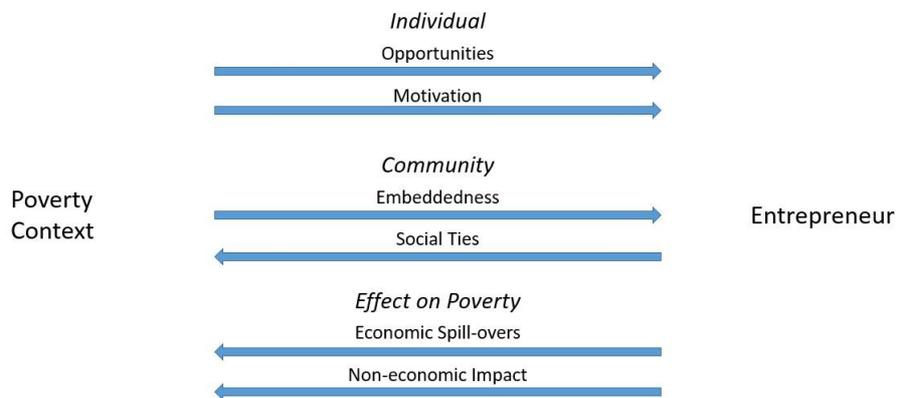
finances, which endanger productivity and lower yields (Dethier & Effenberger, 2012). In this context, easily-replicable entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture, such as investments in the farm, crop diversification, and animal rearing (Yessoufou et al., 2018), can potentially help many subsistence farmers improve their poor economic condition.

Second, dismissing agricultural entrepreneurship as unable to create value overlooks the possibility that agriculture's returns might not be fully captured by economic statistics. Although it arguably generates less economic returns than industrial entrepreneurship, farming can offer a safety net for marginalized individuals should the other entrepreneurial options fail or should there not be alternatives for employment (Dethier & Effenberger, 2012). Thus, the value of farming is not merely the income generated through sales, but also the contribution to one's own consumption and nutritional intake, which is harder to capture in sector statistics (Barrett, Reardon, & Webb, 2001). Sustainable models of agricultural entrepreneurship have been shown to help local farmers in their rise out of poverty, contributing small gains that empower them to do more in their daily lives and transition to industrial activities (Handy et al., 2011). For instance, it is doubtful whether the peasant community in Yiwu (Si et al., 2015) would have succeeded in establishing small businesses without the basic income generated from their farm.

Third, farming communities are permeated by traditional cultural values and rural informal institutions (Handy et al., 2011; Spilling, 2011). The pressure on agricultural entrepreneurs to conform to societal norms entails that entrepreneurs can be forced to contribute to their peers' wellbeing, thus generating economic spill-overs for the community at the expense of individual businesses (Seremani & Clegg, 2016; Slade Shantz et al., 2018). Furthermore, the entrenchment in rural beliefs provides rural agricultural entrepreneurs with opportunities to create value in ways other than economically, for example contributing to the re-qualification of remote communities, strengthening social bonds within the family and the village, or reinforcing the community's sense of identity and traditional institutions (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). For example, the success of Chinese entrepreneurial communities is due in part to the strong influence of Confucian values and sense of cohesion in China's rural areas (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Si et al., 2015).

In [Figure 1](#) we shortly summarize the reasoning insofar. At the individual level, finding herself in poverty limits the opportunities available to the entrepreneur and affects her motivation to start a business. At the community level, the entrepreneur's social setting determines the values and beliefs to which entrepreneurial actions must conform and the boundaries within which she can leverage social capital to improve business performance. At the macro-level, we allow for effects on poverty both in terms of economic spill-overs and impact on societal norms and values. In the following section, we elaborate on how this theoretical framework serves as a basis to explore the differences in the processes of subsistence, agriculture, and industrial entrepreneurship in poverty contexts.

Figure 1 – Theoretical Framework



3 Methodology

In this section, we introduce the empirical setting of our research, delving into the historical contingencies and features of South-West Cameroon that make the region an ideal context for our research. Then, we illustrate our sampling choices and data collection procedure. Finally, we explain our analytical strategy.

3.1 Empirical Setting

3.1.1 Poverty and Instability in South-West Cameroon

We conduct ethnographic interviews in the Anglophone South-West region of Cameroon to find empirical answers for our research questions. The South-West region has long been subject to a political crisis because of the negative feelings of the English-speaking minority towards the central Francophone government. Since most national laws and measures are taken by the central government and crafted to the advantage of the French-speaking regions, citizens in the South-West feel abandoned and have rapidly grown in malcontent within the last two years (O'Grady, 2018). Among the many critiques, the Francophone government is held responsible for the state of severe underdevelopment in the region, the heavy tax regime, the lack of political representation, the general state of corruption, and the inability to protect its citizens, as reported in the quotes below.

Paul, common man: 'West Cameroon used to thrive under the British. Limbe was the largest port in West Africa, it had cruise ships coming in, oil refineries and iron factories. When the British left, we were given the option to join Nigeria or our Cameroonian brothers, with whom we had been united during the German colonialism. Yet, our "brothers" never cared to integrate us after the referendum. At the time [1960s], since East Cameroon used to have only forests and poor natural resources, they wanted to put their hands on our properties. The harbour was moved from Limbe to Douala. The oil refineries were shut down, and a pipe was built in its place. All the governmental bodies, public offices, farming authorities and ministries for development were closed and replaced by French-speaking institutions'. Angela, tailor: 'In the last 2 months no one has bought from my shop, but I have spent CFA 30k (€20) for "price control", "hygiene and sanitation", and other fictional taxes. An officer

would come asking for money and locking the shop if you refuse to pay. It is all so subjective. Don't you think that at my old age I should know the taxes I have to pay? Why should you come and take from my shop as if you were doing me a favour? In this country, we have to bargain our taxes. [...] And the government does not even protect us. If you open your shop during the [rebel-promoted] curfew, someone can put it on fire. If you keep your shop closed, the government will come and fine you. But if your shop is on fire, the government would not intervene. They only extort our taxes, but they are unable to protect us.'

As a result of bad policies, failed integration attempts, and mismanagement in the region, today South-West Cameroon is the poorest area of the country. The regional economy is principally based on agriculture and businesses cannot flourish because of the heavy tax regime and opaque institutional environment. A protest movement started in 2016, at first operating strikes and boycotts against governmental measures, but later exploding in guerrilla warfare and open clashes as the tensions mounted (O'Grady, 2018). The political crisis has further aggravated the economic conditions in the region, inhibiting entrepreneurial activities and constraining the movement of people and goods. Due to the crisis, many have been unable to operate their economic activity efficiently and have been forced to rescale their operation, switch to safer choices, or abandon the region altogether (Shaban, 2018). As shown in the following quotes, the crisis severely impacted the industry and agriculture alike, allowing us to draw a comparison between subsistence and non-subsistence entrepreneurship in different economic sectors.

Alexis, factory owner: 'We were expanding a lot before the crisis, but now all of us are in low morals. Before things got bad, I used to recruit children, school drop-outs whose parents could not afford school fees, or women who were not taken care by their husbands, so that they may look after their family. But this year there is not enough work for them. People would look at me as a resource and ask for advice, I was planning to invest and help women open their own factories. But none of that has been possible.'

Penny, farmer and primary school teacher: 'Because of the crisis, the basket we used to sell at CFA 1500 (€2) is now traded at CFA 700 (€1). But since the expenditure is the same as it used to be, we are making a loss. We borrowed money from different angles and we have not

been able to pay back. The vegetables grew well but, due to the crisis, no one would buy. The traders were not allowed to cross the border. All of the people around here had to buy the vegetables, driving the prices down. We don't even have industries around that could take and process the harvest. [...] Things are getting worse as more farmers migrate to Buea from rural areas. We are still working the farm, but there is no market we can find out there. We are not even allowed to go sell in Douala as we used to since the police kicks us back now.'

3.1.2 Sampling Criteria

Buea is an interesting empirical setting for our research because it allows to sample a variety of individuals balanced in terms of rural/urban location and subsistence/entrepreneur level. In the words of a development practitioner coordinating a local NGO (personal communication, 21st June 2018), 'Buea is semi-urban because the city is organized around a single road, as in a village, and retains several rural organisational features, such as the administration in quarters and the involvement of traditional leaders in decision-making'. As the city developed quickly, former peasant settlements turned into commercial streets and middle-class suburbs, while the agricultural fields were progressively moved to the outer parts of the inhabited areas and up North towards Mount Cameroon, while some farmers retained their house in the suburbs (Local Geographer, personal communication, 19th June 2018). Because of the particular state of Buea, transitioning from a formerly rural area and experiencing a rapid economic growth as the capital of the South-West region, we are able to sample several farmers living in semi-urban areas. This is important as it allows us disentangling the empowering effect of agricultural entrepreneurship from the mere exposure to urban beliefs and governmental structures.

In addition, the marked incidence of the crisis has drastically impacted the lives of many individuals living in the area, moving them back and forth from subsistence to income generation. Thus, in rural and semi-urban communities around the city of Buea, we are able to distinguish features of subsistence and non-subsistence entrepreneurial activities by asking individuals to recall changes in their daily routines and business processes following an increase or decrease in income. We point out that, in our conceptualization, entrepreneurs who exploit solely 'replication opportunities' are still

considered non-subsistence entrepreneurs as long as they can create value for their community. Indeed, we can sample individuals based on their income level and economic spill-overs, but not on the opportunities they exploit, which are not observable before the actual data collection.

Another interesting feature of Buea is the presence of traditional decision-making structures and tribal beliefs in several of the communities under study. Although developmental interventions, urbanization, and education might have partially eroded traditional values, the latter still prevail in most rural villages around the city. With a word of caution, given the state of political tension and general instability at the time of the study, we would affirm that Buea is not visibly different from other African realities as far as beliefs, traditions, and rural institutions are concerned. For instance, we find widespread evidence in our data of logics of Ubuntu (Lutz, 2009), pushing entrepreneurs to contribute and give back to their communities, and ladder-climbing (Yessoufou et al., 2018), leading individuals to aspire to high-paying industrial or governmental jobs outside of their communities (Fokwang, 2010).

As a final sampling choice, we decide to concentrate our analysis mainly on women. Women in Cameroon are severely discriminated against, to the point that they are traditionally forbidden to own money or possessions, interact in public without the husband's consent or participate in decision-making and meetings in the villages (Development Practitioner, personal communication, 20th June 2018). Within the family, the woman submits to her husband, to the point that alcoholism and gender violence are common and legitimized (Founder of an NGO for Women's Empowerment, personal communication, 21st June 2018). Thus, the social empowerment and non-economic poverty reduction through entrepreneurship can better be observed by looking at women, who are motivated to escape their marginalized condition (Rindova et al., 2009).

In addition, there are extensive arguments from the entrepreneurship and development literature as to why empowered women contribute to poverty alleviation in their families and communities more than men would do (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013). While men can easily spend their income in alcohol, gambling or other self-fulfilling detrimental purposes, women would rather invest in education for their offspring and support their loved ones to achieve success in their lives (Zhao & Wry, 2016).

Therefore, given their higher commitment to society and helping others, women are better cases than men to examine socio-economic empowerment and poverty reduction through entrepreneurship.

3.2 Data

3.2.1 Interview protocol

To select our study participants, we rely on agricultural cooperatives, business networks, NGOs, governmental officials and social groups operating in our area of observation. Selecting participants through intermediaries is often necessary in poverty contexts to overcome the difficulty of lack of trust in outsiders in rural communities (Mair & Marti, 2009; West et al., 2007). In addition, by contacting intermediaries rather than participants directly, we were able to sample the interviewees according to our research needs. We practiced theoretical sampling, a form of purposive sampling consisting in choosing each study participant based on the insights and the theoretically-relevant features emerging from the previous interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). For instance, after conducting the first interviews, we realized that the individual's income level is fundamental to determine how she can impact poverty in her community at large. However, since one's income level is not observable and tends to be disclosed erroneously because of social desirability biases (Kistruck, Sutter, Lount, & Smith, 2013), we needed local contacts familiar with each individual's history and experiences to locate those subjects most relevant to our study. Last but not least, relying on networks of intermediaries and local contacts ensured that the research and data collection could be conducted in safety in spite of the mounting tensions in the region of the study. Given the danger and frequent clashes in the area under observation, the intermediaries helped organize the meetings in protected areas, like private offices, Church premises or tribal chief's palaces, where the participants and research team would be safe in case of an emergency. In [Table 1](#) below we report the full anonymized list of the farming cooperatives and business networks who collaborated to our research and provided us with access to agricultural and industrial women entrepreneurs. In selecting our organisational partners, we have been careful to balance theoretically relevant variables and ensure sufficient diversity to generate insights valid across types of group and activity (Yin, 2003).

Table 1 – List of Farming and Business Groups Participating in the Study

ID	Pseudonym	Description	Sector	Activity	Rurality	Participants
1	Alpha	Religious Group	Agriculture	Multi-crop Farming	Rural	3
2	Beta	Independent Cooperative	Agriculture	Vegetable Farming	Semi-urban	3
3	Gamma	Independent Cooperative	Integrated	Tuber Farming and Trading	Rural	9
4	Delta	Independent Cooperative	Agriculture	Tomato Farming	Semi-urban	5
5	Epsilon	Independent Cooperative	Agriculture	Vegetable Farming	Semi-urban	8
6	Zeta	Independent Cooperative	Agriculture	Multi-crop Farming	Rural	3
7	Eta	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Multi-crop Farming	Rural	5
8	Theta	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Multi-crop Farming	Semi-urban	11
9	Iota	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Multi-crop Farming	Rural	9
10	Kappa	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Cassava Farming	Rural	8
11	Lambda	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Vegetable Farming	Rural	6
12	Mu	Sponsored Cooperative	Agriculture	Tomato Farming	Rural	9
13	Nu	Independent NGO	Industry	Tailoring	Semi-urban	3
14	Xi	Tribal Group	Industry	Various	Semi-urban	3
15	Omicron	Independent NGO	Industry	Various	Rural	3
16	Pi	Governmental Program	Industry	Trading	Rural	4
17	Rho	Business Group	Industry	Various	Semi-urban	2
18	Sigma	Tribal Group	Industry	Trading	Semi-urban	5
19	Tau	Sponsored NGO	Industry	Various	Rural	5

Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, in English, French or the local dialect. Since not all the study participants were proficient and confident in English, volunteers and staff from the facilitating organisations accompanied the researchers during each field visit. If the participants could not speak English or French (in which the first author is proficient), the questions were translated to the local dialect in real-time and the answers were back-translated to English. To ensure that the interviewee understood the phrasing, the same question was asked multiple times to probe for alternative answers and dig deeper into the participant's explanations (Cope, 2005). Every interview was recorded and verbatim transcribed in the same or in the subsequent day. To cross-check the reliability of the data, local volunteers helped transcribe the parts in dialect and ensure that the transcripts correspond to the actual meaning intended by the participants. During the interview process, the interpreters also provided feedback and cultural mediation to help the researchers understand the local context and explain English concepts in the local dialect.

The interviews followed a 3-phase protocol walking the participant through her own experience of entrepreneurship, getting involved in the farming cooperative or business group, and changing her

behaviour within the community. The interviews were conducted with a phenomenological focus (Cope, 2005), asking the participant to recall specific events that led her to change her behaviour, such as the passage from subsistence to non-subsistence entrepreneurship, and how her behaviour had specifically changed following the event. The approach allows us to draw direct comparisons within each individual's history (Berglund, 2015) in case she experienced both subsistence and non-subsistence realities, diversified from agriculture into industry, or chose to abandon industrial activities in favour of farming full-time. Moreover, as in other interpretive approaches, we are able to compare the entrepreneurial processes of different types of entrepreneurs (subsistence, agricultural and industrial) by looking at the commonalities among individuals, the experiences they share and the mutual interpretations of their lived events (Langley, 1999). In interpretive approaches, the truth of the findings emerges from each participant's history and the shared interpretations of the participants' experiences. The researcher is actively involved in reconstructing the meaning of the participants' words and connecting that meaning with the participant's historical contingencies that led to its development (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

At the end of the fieldwork, we collect a total of 104 interviews, counting 835 pages (208792 words), of which 76 agricultural entrepreneurs (537 pages, 128988 words) and 28 industrial entrepreneurs (299 pages, 79804 words). Every participant in the study is offered a compensation of CFA 2000 (€3) after completing the interview. Although the amount might not look enough from western standards, we have discussed the compensation with our organisational partners and found that in our research context €3 is roughly the average daily wage of an individual. Thus, considering that 95% of the interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes, we deem our compensation appropriate and in line with that of other studies conducted in the context of low-income countries (Kistruck et al., 2013). All the interviews and quotes were anonymized by assigning each participant a random fictional name to ensure her confidentiality.

Following best practices in qualitative research, we triangulate our first-hand interviews with secondary data sources, such as documents, training material, project descriptions, and organisational web pages, for an additional 99 pages of data. Finally, we conduct frequent discussions with the staff employed at development organisations operating in the area, ministerial delegates, professors at the

University of Buea and other experts familiar with the reality under study, totalling an extra 107 pages of material. Field notes were taken during all the relevant communications between the researchers and the local partners and were transcribed in the same evening, following a strict 12h rule to preserve the first-hand impressions, insights, and information as referred by the speakers (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.2.2 Analytical Strategy

We analyse our data through the software for qualitative analysis MAXQDA 2018. In doing so, we follow the guidelines for qualitative analysis suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007), and Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein (2016). First, we conduct within-case analysis for every case and highlight the relevant pieces of content in each informant's transcript. We code in-vivo each event that influenced the participant's attitude towards entrepreneurship or caused a change in her economic behaviour. For example, the quote 'As an entrepreneur, I hopped through several jobs, switching and trying new things whenever an activity would no longer go well' was initially coded with the in-vivo code 'hopping' as reported by the participant. At the end of within-case analysis, we obtain a detailed case summary for each case defining how that individual's history evolved (Miles & Huberman, 1994), when and why she started engaging in entrepreneurial activities, how the community influenced her behaviour, and how did entrepreneurship, in turn, cause positive externalities in the individual's social setting.

Second, we carry out cross-case analysis by comparing the codes and quotes across cases, aggregating the recurring codes and dropping those mentioned only by less than five participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We adopt the insights developed in the literature review as a basis to ground our analysis in extant entrepreneurship theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). While the theoretical framework provides general guidelines for the analysis, defining the typologies of entrepreneurship and the theoretically possible actions in every typology, the analytical procedure clarifies the content of each process and answers our research questions by highlighting the differences in the economic activities of our study participants (Langley, 1999). Thus, in conducting cross-case analysis, we use the theoretically relevant typologies of subsistence, agricultural and industrial entrepreneurs (Eisenhardt

& Graebner, 2007) to investigate the dissimilarities among the entrepreneurial processes at the individual and community levels of analysis (Klein et al., 1999). For example, the aforementioned code 'hopping' was further aggregated in the category 'opportunity creation', the trial-and-error process of enacting opportunities, together with the in-vivo codes 'curiosity' and 'make-do'. At a later point in time, since we did not find sufficient evidence of 'opportunity creation' processes in subsistence and agricultural entrepreneurship, we dropped the concept from the two typologies. Third, we proceed by adding new data and repeating the first and second step until theoretical saturation (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), when new data adds only marginal information to the emerging theoretical framework. We apply theoretical sampling, iterating continuously between the emerging theory and the data, and selecting new cases that can disconfirm the propositions emerging from the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In doing so, we follow the replication logic of Yin (2003), carrying out counterfactual reasoning and selecting new cases dissimilar from the previous ones through which we can test whether the theory holds.

To illustrate, we were facing the problem that most of our cases of industrial entrepreneurship lived in semi-urban neighbourhoods around Buea as rural communities in the area under study feature a predominantly agricultural economy. However, to show convincing evidence that the process of industrial entrepreneurship shapes the individual's identity more than the process of agricultural entrepreneurship does, we had to rule out alternative explanations (Langley, 1999; Yin, 2003) by selecting and interviewing extra cases of industrial entrepreneurs living in rural areas. Thus, we contacted a developmental NGO and a trading network operating far from Buea, in the same villages of our agricultural entrepreneurs. Through the additional cases, we confirmed that engaging in industrial activities impacts one's self-confidence by providing her with more opportunities to interact with outsiders to the community and exposing her to alternative realities (Rooks et al., 2016), even when the entrepreneur lives in non-urban areas.

4 Results

In this section, we present the results of our analysis iterating across the contextual contingencies leading the entrepreneur to start a business, the individual's entrepreneurial process, and the ways in which entrepreneurial actions shapes the community process. We start from the individual level, the reasons moving individuals to choose an entrepreneurial career and the types of opportunity they exploit, move on to the community level, inquiring as to how different typologies of entrepreneurs establish social ties within their community, and iterate back to examine the individual's impact on her community in terms of positive economic spill-overs and social empowerment. We structure the following paragraphs along subsistence, agricultural and industrial entrepreneurs and present a comparison of the process of entrepreneurship in each typology.

4.1 Subsistence, Passivity, and Marginalization

Consistently with extant entrepreneurship literature, we find that subsistence entrepreneurs do not have choices concerning economic activities. They are forced to engage in whatever profession they can start, often depending on their scarce possibilities to receive basic training and the economic opportunities readily available to them (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). Surprisingly, we find that subsistence entrepreneurs do not even engage in replication opportunities, as they do not deliberately decide to imitate their well-off peers, but are rather constrained by their context, which determines what they can and should do. The economic activities of subsistence entrepreneurs are often sub-optimal choices, either healthily hazardous, non-profitable or seen negatively within the community. The quotes from Moana and Manuela exemplify this point.

Moana, tailor: 'To tell you the truth, I am a school dropout. I got pregnant at the age of 14 and all the other girls would avoid me and refuse to be my friend. I would feel deserted, not only at school but also at home, so eventually I dropped out and started street tailoring.'

Manuela, farmer: 'Since I ended my education at primary school, there are not many jobs I can pursue. I trained myself as a hairdresser, but things were not going well economically. So I decided to start farming.'

Subsistence entrepreneurs do not actively choose their economic activity, but rather engage in whatever they can to make ends meet. In Moana's case, as a school drop-out pregnant at a tender age, the only viable opportunity to work was following her mother's tailoring occupation in which she had received some basic training by observing and helping out in the family. Yet, due to her economic marginalization and lack of capital, she must engage in street tailoring, which in her society is considered negatively as a last resort against dying of hunger.

Moana, tailor: 'People insult street tailors as if they were dogs. "You cannot do anything with your life, that's why you are here". We are considered social misfits.'

An interesting aspect of subsistence entrepreneurship is the motivational push deriving from a condition of subsistence (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). From multiple instances in our data, we learn that subsistence entrepreneurs were pushed by their subsistence condition to change their way of doing business, either by pursuing alternative occupations (for example, moving from an industrial to an agricultural occupation or vice versa) or by looking for alternative means to expand one's activities (for example, joining a farming cooperative or a business network).

These are the thoughts of Donna and Dolly, similar to those of most subsistence entrepreneurs.

Donna, farmer: 'I used to sell roasted fish before, as my hometown is close to the ocean. I was suffering. Fish does not give you much money, when you don't sell, you must eat it all in the same day. As I was getting smoke-blindness from roasting, 9 months ago I decided to try and join the farming cooperative.'

Dolly, farmer: 'I joined the farming group so that I may be able to look after my children and grandchildren and provide them with three meals a day. My husband died ten years ago and now I am alone to look after the household and the family.'

As a consequence of their passive entrepreneurial actions, subsistence entrepreneurs tend to have less social ties than their well-off peers, if only because they must struggle to achieve a sufficient income and fulfill their basic needs. As a result, subsistence entrepreneurs are unable to take control of their social capital and establish ties that may benefit their business or improve their economic condition. They happen to have limited social interactions, usually only with customers and suppliers involved in their business or with their close family members, thus ending up in a condition of exclusion from

their community. Carl and Lara are clear examples of social marginalization resulting from economic difficulties.

Carl, farmer: 'The people in our village see me always in the forest. Since I am never around, never available for them and always working, they know I am poor. I do not have time for interacting with people other than those with whom I do business.'

Lara, trader and primary school teacher: 'Because of my job, I have very little time to interact with people in town. I get up early in the morning, spend three hours at the school, stay at the shop for at least five hours, and then go home to look after my family.'

In the communities under study, economic prowess is necessary to participate in societal life and contribute to collective expenses, for example by sending money when someone is in need or maintenance has to be carried out (Lutz, 2009). Since subsistence entrepreneurs have limited finances and time to dedicate to community life, their peers tend to develop negative opinions and further marginalize them. In rural communities, if a member does not contribute when someone else is in need, she will not receive help from others once she will need financial support. Hence, the Poorest amongst the Poor end up in a vicious circle where poverty takes resources away from participating in community life which in turns leads to further marginalization. In other words, subsistence entrepreneurs are dis-embedded from their social context as they are unable to leverage norms, customs, and relationships in the community where they live. Their lives are, at best, dependent upon others' decisions. Pia and Francisca mentioned the phenomenon explicitly in their interviews.

Pia, farmer: 'I am involved in too many meetings. In all the groups where I am involved, I have to contribute financially. Engaging in community life needs finances, if you don't work hard you cannot afford to participate in social groups.'

Francisca, hairdresser: 'I am in a group where we normally do our savings. But must struggle to leave something aside for the group, it's hard for me to keep up with their obligations.'

As conceptualized in extant literature (Bruton et al., 2015; Hart et al., 2016), we demonstrate empirically that subsistence entrepreneurs are highly unlikely to impact their communities economically or socially. Building on the arguments that subsistence entrepreneurs do not have full

control over their economic activity, engaging in whatever profession is available, and are rather dis-embedded from their communities, diverting energies away from socializing to struggling with their businesses, we sustain that they have limited possibilities to either support their peers economically or influence community institutions and beliefs. On logical grounds, when one does not have sufficient finances to support herself, her economic means would hardly suffice to cater for others within the community. Indeed, subsistence entrepreneurs' economic difficulties lead them to *depend* on their fellow community members, becoming the receiver, rather than the agent, of efforts to reduce poverty. Subsistence entrepreneurs often refer to their impoverished and marginalized status with words such as 'begging', 'being unable to "manage"', and 'being a burden on others', as in the quotes below.

Federica, farmer: 'My son is deaf and dumb and my husband is old and sick. Anytime I have some little money, I have to give it to them. My friends know my condition, they are aware I can't leave my loved ones alone, and they support me financially when they can.' *Roxanne, snack bar owner: 'Before joining the group I used to ask my neighbours money to buy things for the house and support my children. Now my situation has changed, I don't beg anymore and I can take care of my affairs on my own.'*

Given the extremely marginalized conditions of subsistence entrepreneurs, it is no surprise that they are unable to gain social empowerment. First, due to their dis-embeddedness from their communities, subsistence entrepreneurs often do not enjoy power or respect among their peers (Mosse, 2010). Thus, although subsistence entrepreneurs' marginalized position might lead them to develop aspirations for a better lifestyle and more human rights (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017), they would not enjoy the support from their community necessary to attain those rights. Second, in contrast to the explanation provided in the literature, we find that, in the first place, subsistence entrepreneurs do not feel the need to gain social empowerment nor have time to dedicate to societal issues. In other words, since most of their energies are invested in day-to-day survival activities, all the other concerns in one's life assume secondary importance, as Janna and Anne-Claudie elaborate.

Janna, farmer: 'I simply have no time to dedicate to the community. All my day is in the farm. On Sundays, I go to church, and that's it. I don't interact with people in the community at all.'

Anne-Claudie, shoemaker: 'I am always inside my house, making shoes most of the time. I might go out and buy material for my shoes, and then get back to work. I only participate in the strictly necessary community meetings.'

4.2 Agriculture, Replication, and Ubuntu

Unlike individuals living in conditions of subsistence, agricultural entrepreneurs show a certain pride of their economic activity and affection to their job. In South-West Cameroon, agriculture is the predominant economic sector and most active individuals engage in agricultural activities. Agricultural entrepreneurs often report sentences like 'we have been farming since forever', 'my parents taught me farming when I was a young child', and 'one cannot live without her farm'. This conversation with Serena, the wife of a successful entrepreneur, sheds lights on the social meaning of farming in the Cameroonian culture.

Research Assistant: 'Why would you farm? Aren't your husband's laundry and carpentry businesses way more profitable than being in the cooperative?'

Serena, farmer: 'Yes, the profit of the businesses is definitely more than that of the cooperative. But farming is how we grew up. My parents were teachers and my husband's were nurses. We were lucky enough to be sent to school, but we would always go to our farms.'

Agricultural entrepreneurship also differs from subsistence entrepreneurship in terms of the features of the opportunities enacted by the individuals. While for subsistence entrepreneurs we cannot talk of replication opportunities, as the entrepreneur does not deliberately choose to imitate her peers' economic activities, the agricultural sector is characterized by extensive imitation and knowledge spill-overs. In fact, the model of the farming cooperatives aims to booster each member's economic performance by sharing agricultural techniques and best practices within the group.

Loredana, farmer: 'At times we meet people from other farming cooperatives. When we come together, every group brings what they are doing. We exchange ideas so that we may learn and copy from each other, as all of us have been through different experiences.'

Lena, farmer and group leader: 'When I am with people, I always help them. I show them how to use fertilizers the local way, with organic manure rather than chemicals. At times I bring people to my farm and show them how to cultivate okra, so that they may farm on their own and share ideas too.'

At times, agricultural entrepreneurs may leverage their pre-existing knowledge to *discover* opportunities and take business decisions. For instance, should an agricultural entrepreneur gain awareness of market dynamics, she might decide to switch her production from a crop to a more profitable one in a specific planting season. Or, in case she becomes knowledgeable of basic agro-chemistry, she might change her investment behaviour to stronger seeds better able to cope with climate variability and less likely to result in crop failure. Nevertheless, even when an agricultural entrepreneur discovers a new opportunity, that opportunity is rapidly shared with the community and imitated by her peers. For example, Orietta, a well-educated young woman pursuing a Master's in Agriculture and acting as vice-president of a tomato cooperative, engaged in extensive information-sharing in spite of her recently joining the group.

Orietta, farmer and group leader: 'The president asked me to try and join the group. They know I am schooled, unlike them. Yet, they have been doing agriculture for such a long time that they know what they are doing, maybe they don't understand the technical reason, but they have practices that work. When I joined the meetings I was contributing to the discussion and bringing ideas I learned at the university, helping out with increasing yields, marketing, and food processing. Since they saw value in my insights, I got elected vice-president of the cooperative after only 4 months. I have learned a lot myself, how to conserve water, how to tie baskets, and all the things we are not taught at school.'

Agricultural entrepreneurs share some similarities with subsistence entrepreneurs in that the labour-intensive work in the farm reduces one's possibilities to participate in community life, bond with other people and establish social capital. In many cases, agricultural entrepreneurs tend to isolate

themselves and focus mostly on their job, preferring to spend time on their farm rather than in social life. As explained by a local expert in agronomics (personal communication, 25th July 2018) and confirmed by several of the study participants, farming takes a large amount of time, as farmers wake up at 5 in the morning, work the whole day under adverse climatic conditions and undermine their health through the hard work. The main distinction between agricultural entrepreneurs and subsistence entrepreneurs is that the former do have a choice as to whether isolate themselves, but prefer investing their time in farming or 'doing something useful' rather than staying with their friends. Indeed, agricultural entrepreneurs tend to establish few social ties of an instrumental nature to learn from other farmers in their communities and discuss of agricultural business. The following quotes illustrate these points.

Jane, farmer and group leader: 'Everybody does what she is doing to please herself. When you get up in the morning, you aim to get an improvement for yourself and your household. If you like the group, you come and join. You do not join groups that do not help you.' Loubna, farmer: *'My friends would say I'm hardworking, as I hardly have time to spend with them. I only spend time with people who do the same thing as me, so that we can discuss about farming. We never discuss things that do not benefit us.'*

In spite of their limited opportunities for social interactions, agricultural entrepreneurs usually enjoy the positive opinion of their community members. In fact, the rural communities around Buea boast a long farming tradition, and agriculture is the main employment sector for most people living in the area. Thus, partially isolating oneself from the community is generally well-accepted within the group as long as the agricultural entrepreneur keeps participating to the main events happening in her social setting (Korsgaard et al., 2015). Unlike subsistence entrepreneurs, whose struggles and isolation limit the possibilities to participate in community life, agricultural entrepreneurs are free to allocate their time to the farm or the community. The agricultural entrepreneurs' community is often composed of like-minded individuals, most of whom are engaged in farming activities and share the same ideas and behaviours. Hence, agricultural entrepreneurs are embedded in rural values, enjoy a generally high reputation within their community, and can exploit social ties instrumentally to their advantage (Granovetter, 1985; Rooks et al., 2016). Pina and John explain their embeddedness in the rural

community, where expanding one's agricultural business confers legitimacy, grows one's status among her peers, and reinforces the societal pressures of Ubuntu.

Pina, farmer: 'People look at me highly. They see that I always have farming tools and I almost never buy from the market. They see I have everything, so they often come beg to use my things.'

John, farmer: 'Through the farming group, the community can see the improvement in our lives. In addition, we transfer what we learn to the community members who are not part of the farming group. We can set the example, people come to learn from us and look at how we farm.'

Due to their embeddedness in their rural communities, agricultural entrepreneurs in our sample have a visible impact on local poverty. As illustrated by the quotes, agricultural entrepreneurs gain status and legitimacy in their communities by growing their business and becoming an example for other farmers living in similar situations. Agricultural entrepreneurship helps individuals build their social position in the community while reinforcing the traditional beliefs and dominant institutions that pervade rural realities. Indeed, agricultural entrepreneurs are enabled to build their status *because* in their communities it is acceptable that an enriched farmer gains power and covers roles of responsibilities (Welter, 2011). As one's position within the community rises, so does the pressures to conform to dominant beliefs. We find that agricultural entrepreneurs are increasingly subject to Ubuntu, the logic of giving back and contributing to one's community, as they rise in status. Thus, by reinforcing rural societal norms of help and collaboration, agricultural entrepreneurship in the context of our study helps communities fight poverty and generates positive economic spill-overs via donations and borrowing equipment. The quotes below exemplify this point.

Dolly, farmer: 'By expanding my activities, I have grown in respect in the community. People come and ask me to borrow things whenever I come back from the farm. They know they can rely on me in times of need.'

Juliette, farmer: 'In our community meeting, we have to report on what we do and what we harvest from the farm. After reporting, we have to visit the disadvantaged, those who can't walk, and many other people to give them food.'

Notably, agricultural entrepreneurship contributes to reducing poverty more intensely in rural communities than in urban realities. In semi-urban areas, community ties and traditional beliefs are not as strong, and agricultural entrepreneurs might contribute to their peers' economic difficulties unwillingly or unhappily, as reported by Theresa, who comments on negative instrumentality in her social relationships.

Theresa, farmer: 'Now that the people see that I have more, they all come and beg. My "friends" are getting closer because they see what I am harvesting and hope I can teach them what I have learned. They see abundance and they come because they like it.'

A final remark concerns agricultural entrepreneur's role of bringing social empowerment to their communities. We find, to our surprise, that agricultural entrepreneurs are on average not socially empowered. When agricultural entrepreneurs rise in status, they take advantage of traditional rural beliefs and in turn reinforce social expectations consistent with those beliefs. Therefore, the promotion of more equitable ways of thinking, for example by advocating women's rights and denying the dominant patriarchal structures, would lower the entrepreneur's legitimacy in the community and hamper her efforts to build status and reputation (Korsgaard et al., 2015). In support of these claims, we find that the great majority of agricultural entrepreneurs in our sample do not advocate better institutions for non-economic poverty reduction. Additionally, we find systems of checks-and-balances in the communities under study, by which one's deviance from the dominant beliefs is punished through blaming and corrective actions.

Geoffrey, development practitioner: 'The women are not allowed to participate in their village's decision-making groups or take decisions with the men. Should they speak against the chief's authority, he can punish them by imposing a fine or having them publically beaten.'

Hillary, farmer: 'When someone does not behave nicely, the president of the group decides a punishment for her. If the person refuses to take the punishment, she is sent away from the community until when she comes back and begs for re-admission.'

4.3 Industry, Creation, and Empowerment

In contrast to entrepreneurs in agriculture, motivated by traditional norms and affection to the farming profession, industrial entrepreneurs tend to pursue activities that seem economically viable and potentially profitable to the point of raising one out of poverty. Entrepreneurs starting a business in the industrial or service sectors do so either because of a difficult economic condition that pushes them to seek alternatives to farming or the availability of capital to invest in diversified activities. Fanny and Oprah are representative of the two rationales, respectively.

Fanny, trader: 'I used to make a living from my farm, working and selling every day, but I stopped because the hard work was making me sick. Now I do business, collecting bananas from the bushes and selling them in the village. Banana trading provides me with sufficient income, a healthy life, and a fast turnover.'

Oprah, farmer and trader: 'I like farming because it sustains me, most of the time I don't need to spend much on food. However, I like doing business more because I can realize a higher income through trading. I am farming so that I can raise capital to grow my business.'

Oprah is also illuminating in terms of the different features of agricultural and industrial opportunities. While industrial entrepreneurship promises higher returns and seems appealing to community members, agricultural entrepreneurship provides a safety net and allows the entrepreneur to grow steadily without incurring in excessive risks. Entrepreneurship in the industrial sector has uncertain outcomes because the entrepreneur takes many risks buying material, processing resources, and selling a finite product, thus being severely hit in case of market failure (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In contrast, should a market failure hit the agricultural sector, agricultural entrepreneurs would retain their produce and limit the extra expenses by supporting their families through their harvest (Barrett et al., 2001). These views are expressed by most agricultural entrepreneurs, in contrast to industrial entrepreneurs who often mistakenly assume high returns, as indicated in the quotes below.

Marca, farmer: 'I like farming because it does not fail me. When you plant seeds and know how to grow them, you always harvest well. When people pass by my door, they always see some vegetables I got from my farm.'

Mimma, former headmaster: 'I opened a nursery school where I was taking care of children, but due to lack of finances I had to close it. At the time, my friends thought I was having money to do big things, as it looked as a large expense, but they never really knew the investment was minimal and it yielded very little profit.'

Another comparison concerns the type of opportunities enacted in industrial entrepreneurship versus agricultural and subsistence entrepreneurship. While subsistence entrepreneurs do not have a choice concerning their activities and at most replicate what others are doing, agricultural entrepreneurs often replicate their peers' ideas and might discover new opportunities through education or market analysis. In contrast, we find that entrepreneurs in the industrial sector engage in all replication, discovery and creation opportunities.

Consider the case of Angela, a woman who went through several jobs, switching any time the financial conditions for a specific occupation would get adverse. In choosing which new occupation she would pursue, she relied on cues from observing others to infer the potential profitability of different occupations, thus replicating opportunities. Nevertheless, in the process of continuous hopping from a job to the next, she gained first-hand experience in each occupation and created opportunities by trial-and-error, perfecting her activities according to customer feedback and engaging in value-creating actions she had not foreseen beforehand (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Sarasvathy, 2001). Finally, when after landing in her final occupation of tailor, she exploited the marketing know-how she had built through her experience to discover opportunities for commercializing new colours and designs. Although not many industrial entrepreneurs in our ethnography engage in all the three processes of opportunity replication, discovery, and creation, we find evidence for each process in at least five industrial cases. The quotes below illustrate further.

Annerose, replicating opportunities: 'I chose a fish-trading business because I saw what others were doing. For example, corn cultivation has its seasonality, you can plant it only in

September and October. But fish trading is easier to manage and does not have seasonality, so I get a steady income.'

Pamela, discovering opportunities: 'People in my hometown, a village 20 miles away from Buea, traditionally grow snails. When I discovered that the market price in Buea was CFA 7500 (€12) for a bucket of snails, and I could get them for CFA 1500 (€2.4) in my hometown, I soon started trading.'

Lucie, creating opportunities: 'My business evolved according to the needs of my customers, the students of the University who live around here. I had to grow the business to a certain level to meet up with the variety of things they want to buy every day. That's how I decided to add some products, such as a call box, and drop others, such as fruit and nuts.'

Unlike agricultural activities, industrial occupations have features that help industrial entrepreneurs establish social ties and extending their network. As part of conducting a business in production or trading, one has to interact with clients and suppliers on a regular basis, possibly getting to know new people and building up her popularity within the community. All the entrepreneurs who moved from an agricultural to an industrial occupation or vice versa report an increase in their social interactions as they enter the industrial sector, which is less time- and labour- consuming and allows interacting with fellow community members while conducting business. At the same time, individuals socially marginalized by their communities might find consolation through industrial entrepreneurship and substitute community ties with commercial ties. Donna, the woman who moved from roasting fish to farming, is a case in point.

Donna, farmer: 'I am not very popular in the village because I hardly go out. At times I attend meetings, but mostly I rest or work the farm. When I used to sell fish I was more known, as I was always on the streets until 4 or 6 in the night.'

Moreover, the role of business groups in industrial entrepreneurship tends to be less instrumental than in farming groups, where many members of the cooperative join to exploit their peers' knowledge and improve one's farming techniques. At the outset, discussing together in a business group is harder as usually members own different businesses. While this may change through time, as long-established business groups improve their way of sharing information and find topics of interest across different 38

sectors, in principle it is harder for industrial entrepreneurs to join networks, unions, and cooperatives. Alberta, a restaurant owner, illustrates her difficulties in finding a suitable group that may help with her business.

Alberta, restaurant owner: 'We do not attend any business group. We were contacted by the caterers' association, but they would ask for contributions and fees without offering any concrete advantage. We have better things to do with our income.'

Most interestingly, engaging in industrial activities often leads to dis-embeddedness from one's community. On the one hand, entrepreneurs who migrate from rural areas in search of industrial occupations find it hard to join community meetings as they might be exclusive for natives or absent altogether in urban areas. On the other hand, entrepreneurs who conduct businesses in their native rural areas have problems remaining involved in the community as their fellow community members might have negative perceptions of industrial activities, which are incompatible with traditional agricultural practices (Slade Shantz et al., 2018), or the entrepreneur might devalue traditional community meetings as a consequence of becoming exposed to industrial capitalistic logic (Venkataraman, Vermeulen, Raaijmakers, & Mair, 2016). Daniela and Karla illustrate the two cases respectively.

Daniela, trader: 'When I started working, me and my husband would fight every day. He wanted me to stay home and do nothing. There was money in Cameroon at the time, so he could maintain the family by himself. He accepted that I would work only when the financial condition worsened, his salary got cut and I had to look after the house and pay all our duties alone for three months.'

Karla, phone operator: 'I am not interested in participating in collective saving meetings. In the meeting there are many arguments and quarries, it's always inconclusive. There is no point being there. If I want to save, I can just do that by myself on my Mobile Money account.'

As far as the community is concerned, our data suggests that industrial entrepreneurs are subject to a process of dis-embeddedness, by deviating from traditional practices or moving elsewhere for better economic opportunities, and re-embeddedness, by

and connections involved in the job (Korsgaard et al., 2015; Vestrum, 2014). Overall, business-related interactions tend to substitute for traditional community ties, dis-embed the individual from traditional social structures, and re-embed her in a new living context. The most explanatory case in this regard is Serena, the wife of a diversified semi-urban industrial entrepreneur, who lost most of her social connections after migrating and managed to reconstruct her social ties by participating in her husband's business.

Serena, farmer: 'We never had many friends as we are not from here. But through our laundry business, we got the opportunity to meet new people. Our customers are our friends now. On the 2nd of January this year we organized a huge party to celebrate together with all of them, and that made us very proud and happy.'

The industrial entrepreneur's dis-embeddedness from her native community generates less positive spill-overs than the agricultural entrepreneur's active community participation does. Agricultural entrepreneurs are bound by community norms to contribute to whoever is in need within their group, whereas industrial entrepreneurs might contribute only to those most close to the individual, such as friends and family. Although all the communities under study have in common a strong sense of cohesion and collaboration encouraging individuals to help others in case of difficulties, we find that among industrial entrepreneurs it is common to provide limited resources to one's community. In the following, we contrast Monica, a semi-urban trader providing sustenance for her family, with Astra, a rural trader contributing to the well-being of many in her communities.

Monica, trader: 'Through the business, I have been able to pay for the bills, help my husband with the children's school fees, put food on the table and deal with family issues. I like to contribute to saving groups for different causes, such as buying kitchen utensils.'

Astra, trader: 'When something happens and the community asks for funds, I prefer to not contribute economically. Since I have a fish-trading business, I like to supply fish to the person in need so that she may be helped personally, and not just financially.'

Nevertheless, we find that industrial entrepreneurs are more likely than their agricultural counterparts to seek social empowerment within their communities. On the one hand, industrial entrepreneurs can cultivate a diversity of social ties during their occupation, which exposes them to more diverse

experiences and information (Rooks et al., 2016). On the other hand, the dis-embeddedness resulting from agricultural communities' negative perceptions of industrial entrepreneurs provides the individuals with opportunities to further engage in dialogue with external ties without hampering their already low legitimacy (Gedajlovic et al., 2013; West et al., 2007).

In our ethnography, many women entrepreneurs engaging in industrial activities are socially empowered, speaking out within community meetings and taking decisions within group settings, regardless of whether they live in a rural or semi-urban area. Moreover, they attempt to reduce non-economic poverty more often than agricultural women entrepreneurs, for example by advocating gender equality or giving speeches in favour of independence from one's husband. These facts are consistent with the industrial entrepreneurs' dis-embeddedness and re-embeddedness in the community. Following the negative perceptions of their peers, women entrepreneurs seek to establish more social ties external to the community (Mair & Marti, 2009), build self-awareness (Rindova et al., 2009), and eventually become an example for others who may aspire to social empowerment (Si et al.,

2015). To support our explanation, we present quotes by Bessy, an entrepreneur who founded an NGO for women's empowerment, and Moana, the former street tailor who is starting a workshop to empower young girls.

Bessy, factory owner: 'When I was young, my mother lost her job. I was still studying, but I had to struggle to help her out. We engaged in every kind of business, for example producing charcoal and making fish pies. This exposure made me realize that women must do something to succeed in life, and that's when I decided to start my NGO.'

Moana, tailor: 'I have become a professional tailor, following the fashion designers, teaching myself and working for established stylists. When I see young girls tailoring in the streets, it breaks my heart. I want to help them, keep them in as apprentices and train them, so that they may get out of the streets and build their confidence as I did.'

5 Discussion

Building on the concepts of entrepreneurial embeddedness and opportunity enactment, we inquire as to how poverty contexts shape the opportunities available to subsistence entrepreneurs and how, in turn, enacting such opportunities can impact contexts of poverty. We conduct an ethnographic analysis comparing subsistence entrepreneurship, i.e. entrepreneurship that does not create positive value for one's community, to non-subsistence entrepreneurship in agricultural and industrial sectors. We find a typology of opportunity identification and enactment contingent upon the entrepreneur's economic sector of activity and level of income.

Subsistence entrepreneurs only engage in **passive opportunities**, being unable to choose whether to engage in any economic activity and forced by their contextual conditions to engage in whatever occupation is needed to survive. As a consequence, they are unable to exploit social capital or leverage community ties in their economic activity and they are mostly a burden on their societies (Bruton et al., 2015). However, subsistence entrepreneurs may change their attitude towards entrepreneurship and seek opportunities for growth if 1) their subsistence condition worsens to the point of being unsustainable, thus making risky entrepreneurial options more appealing (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Yessoufou et al., 2018) or 2) easily exploitable replication opportunities become available in their area, allowing the entrepreneurs to engage in low-risk economic activities characterized by slow growth and sustainable livelihoods.

In fact, the model of agricultural cooperatives is based on replication opportunities, easily imitable economic activities that entrepreneurs can learn and replicate in their businesses (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). Entrepreneurs who participate in a cooperative realize concrete achievements and gain visibility within their community, thus becoming role models and encouraging others to join. In addition, since farming is embedded in rural values and traditions, agricultural entrepreneurs are increasingly subject to pressures to conform to the community norms of sharing and collaboration as they rise in status. Thus, in the communities under observation, agricultural entrepreneurship results in widespread positive economic spill-overs.

In contrast, industrial entrepreneurs tend to be seen negatively by their peers as they deviate from the traditional agricultural occupations predominant in rural communities (Sarkar, 2018). Some of them experience emotional distress, adverse judgments, and pressures to abandon their business. Although non-legitimate practices dis-embed industrial entrepreneurs from their agricultural communities, they also allow the individual to establish a diversity of social ties through the interactions they involve (Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Rooks et al., 2016). Thus, industrial entrepreneurship not only causes the entrepreneur to dis-embed from her community but also helps her to re-embed in new societal ties which better suit her newly acquired identity (Vestrum, 2014). Through the process of dis-embeddedness and re-embeddedness, industrial entrepreneurs generate less economic spill-overs in their native communities than agricultural entrepreneurs do but tend to be more socially emancipated, challenging the traditional rural beliefs that limit women’s rights and consider them a belonging of their husbands.

In [Table 2](#) below, we summarize our findings and report the main differences in the processes of subsistence, agricultural and industrial entrepreneurship in poverty contexts. We conclude the article by elaborating on the implications of our findings for opportunity theory (Alvarez & Barney, 2007, 2014; Eckhardt & Shane, 2003), contextual theories of entrepreneurship (Spilling, 2011; Welter, 2011; Welter et al., 2017), and poverty reduction (Bruton et al., 2015, 2013; Si et al., 2015).

Table 2 – A Typology of Entrepreneurial Action in Poverty Contexts

Level	Construct	Subsistence	Agriculture	Industry
Individual	Motivation	No Choice	Tradition	Attractiveness
	Opportunities	Passive	Replication (Discovery)	Replication, Discovery, Creation
Community	Social Capital	No Control	Limited, mostly Binding	Binding and Bridging
	Community Ties	Dis-Embedded	Embedded	Dis-Embedded, Re-Embedded
Impact on Poverty	Economic	Beneficiaries of Effort	Extensive Positive Spill-overs	Moderate Positive Spill-overs
	Non-Economic	Irrelevant	Punished by Community Norms	Favoured by the Re-Embedding Process

5.1 Implications for Opportunity Theory

In contrast to recent conceptualizations of opportunities that regard the entrepreneur and her change in identity as the start of the entrepreneurial process (Slade Shantz et al., 2018), we demonstrate that the

entrepreneurial context matters and makes it possible to transition from passive subsistence entrepreneurship to active non-subsistence activities (Davidsson, 2015). When the entrepreneurial context offers plenty of replication opportunities, subsistence entrepreneurs are likely to perceive a lower risk in non-subsistence entrepreneurial activities and transition from a passive exploitation of the available economic possibilities to an active engagement in pursuing opportunities. Our finding has several contributions for opportunity theory and the practice of entrepreneurship in poverty contexts.

First, we move beyond the binary distinction of discovery and creation opportunities (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Indeed, the availability of replication opportunities, the imitation of entrepreneurial activities of others (Alvarez & Barney, 2014), plays a major role in driving Poor and marginalized individuals out of subsistence. Replication opportunities are similar to discovery opportunities in that the entrepreneur identifies them by observing the environment (Kirzner, 1997), but they are objectively available to all the individuals living in a community and do not require any pre-existing technical knowledge (Alvarez & Barney, 2014). While extant entrepreneurship scholarship has focused predominantly on value-creating opportunities for innovative start-ups (Welter, 2011), replication opportunities can create non-economic value and contribute to poor entrepreneurs' and their families' sustenance. Especially when replication opportunities are enacted in the agricultural sector, the entrepreneur can build a safety net, obtaining basic food security and protecting herself from the risks of market collapse and adverse environmental conditions (Barrett et al., 2001). Second, we conceptualize **passive opportunities**, an oxymoron indicating subsistence entrepreneurs' reliance on economic opportunities objectively present in their context without the active effort or awareness of conducting an entrepreneurial activity. In the composite noun 'Passive Opportunities', 'opportunity', a concept indicating contextual contingencies that favour action, is juxtaposed to 'passivity', the acceptance of events without active response or resistance (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). Passive opportunities differ from discovery and creation opportunities in that they do not require the entrepreneur's active identification of a new economic activity, but rather involve her non-conscious involvement in economic activities as prescribed by the values and beliefs in her community context (Ansari et al., 2012; Korsgaard et al., 2015). In the case of subsistence entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship

is the only choice one can conceive for her professional career. Subsistence entrepreneurs are not aware of conducting entrepreneurial actions, but rather engage in the activities prescribed by their community context to generate income and cope with their survival needs.

We show empirically that entrepreneurial opportunities in poverty contexts differ drastically from those found in Western and developed realities. Rather than driven by the individual's perceptions, decisions, and intuitions, passive and replication opportunities are determined by one's social context and by the value system defining what practices are acceptable within that context (Welter et al., 2017). Future research is warranted to investigate further the conditions under which replication opportunities can create value within one's community and the environmental contingencies triggering subsistence entrepreneur's passage from passive opportunity exploitation to active replication of their peers' economic activities. For example, how does the entrepreneurial context determine the passive opportunities subsistence entrepreneurs engage in? Under what conditions can replication opportunities lead entrepreneurs out of subsistence? How do entrepreneurs evaluate the attractiveness of replication opportunities?

5.2 Implications for Contextual Theories of Entrepreneurship

Moreover, we contribute to a growing body of literature studying entrepreneurship embedded in its societal context and exploring how entrepreneurs can create non-economic value through their actions (Granovetter, 1985; Spilling, 2011; Zahra & Wright, 2016). Traditionally, theories of entrepreneurship have been context-agnostic, attempting to generate insights valid across contexts while focusing only on the value-creation processes of start-ups and entrepreneurial firms (Welter, 2011). In contrast, we show that entrepreneurial actions in environments of poverty cannot be understood in isolation from their context.

The entrepreneurial context provides norms for entrepreneurs to follow when they engage in entrepreneurial activities (Welter et al., 2017). Poor entrepreneurs' economic activities have sense only within their specific context, where actions gain value insofar as they allow to bind embedding ties to the community (Rooks et al., 2016), thus reinforcing traditional values and beliefs, or to bridge ties with external actors with different perspectives (Gedajlovic et al., 2013), thus leading to new

sense-making and the emergence of alternative value systems. Through this process of dis-embeddedness and re-embeddedness (Vestrum, 2014), women industrial entrepreneurs are able to partly escape the societal obligations of sharing and contributing to one's community while gaining emancipation and permission to conduct activities prohibited by traditional norms and beliefs, such as owning personal wealth or taking decisions independently from their husbands (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013; Lindvert et al., 2017).

The entrepreneurs' embeddedness in societal contexts enables us to generate theory grounded in the African reality that accounts for local traditions, beliefs and value systems (George et al., 2016). We raise our findings' credibility by providing a rich contextual description and integrating the participants' quotes with each individual's history. Our methodological approach can be replicated to further generalize our theory and explore how the process of poverty reduction through entrepreneurship varies across contexts. For instance, the meaning of agricultural and industrial entrepreneurial activities largely depends on the norms historically accepted within African agricultural communities. While Ubuntu and ladder-climbing are widespread in African contexts (Lutz, 2009; Yessoufou et al., 2018), the impact of agricultural and industrial entrepreneurial actions could differ sensibly under other societal beliefs.

In addition, our findings on industrial entrepreneurs' dis-embeddedness from their native communities has implications for the broader literature on embedded entrepreneurship. A particularly promising area for future research is the inquiry into the role of social capital in embedding and dis-embedding entrepreneurs in their communities (Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Rooks et al., 2016). Consistently with past empirical observations, we find that binding social capital limits discovery and creation opportunities by reinforcing community beliefs and dis-incentivising the pursuit of bridging ties (West et al., 2007). However, our investigation of industrial entrepreneurship highlights the value-creating function of bridging ties in challenging community norms and re-embedding the entrepreneur in alternative social circles more supportive of her newly acquired independence. While our argument resembles to some extent the dual-embeddedness of community entrepreneurs (Spilling, 2011; Vestrum, 2014), who leverage their knowledge of local norms to escape societal constraints, we find

evidence that entrepreneurs might use bridging social capital to re-embed themselves in alternative communities or create parallel value systems with more positive attitudes towards their activity.

We see abundant opportunities for theoretical extensions in the nexus between the entrepreneur's dis-embeddedness from her native community and re-embeddedness in alternative contexts. Namely, how do individuals become embedded in their community? Are entrepreneurs aware of the re-embeddedness process? Or does it arise spontaneously out of social aggregation through industrial entrepreneurship? What is the role of individual agency in the community creation process?

Alternatively, scholars willing to further explore the topic could examine re-embeddedness's effects on the entrepreneur's native community. Under what conditions can the entrepreneur's native social capital and newly established bridging ties merge? How is the value system in the entrepreneur's native community affected by the parallel value system? To what extent does the dis-embedding and re-embedding process lead to societal fragmentation or positive institutional change? While these questions require longitudinal data and are out of the scope of our analysis, we urge scholars to seek answers that may move forward knowledge on entrepreneurial embeddedness, community creation processes, and non-economic poverty reduction in the context of low-income countries.

5.3 Implications for the Fight Against Poverty

Finally, our findings have several implications for the debate on reducing global poverty. In contrast to dominant positions arguing that industrial entrepreneurship and breakthrough innovations are necessary to raise the Poor out of poverty (Bruton et al., 2013; Si et al., 2015), we find that agricultural entrepreneurship and embedded replication opportunities achieve better economic results within the African communities under observation. Firstly, they create the conditions for subsistence entrepreneurs to move into non-subsistence activities by imitating their peers. Secondly, they generate positive economic spill-overs for the community at large by reinforcing the social norms of sharing and collaboration (Lutz, 2009). Thus, our findings partly contradict the mainstream academic orientation in entrepreneurship and development studies to focus on industrial entrepreneurship as the only possible bottom-up agent of change. If necessary, replication opportunities could even be

orchestrated top-down by development practitioners who promote training programs and educational activities in their communities of interest (Venkataraman et al., 2016).

Recent theoretical debates have de-valued replication opportunities because they 'are not scalable and are rarely sources of employment for anyone except the funding entrepreneur' (Alvarez & Barney, 2014, p. 162) or do not 'generate excess capital that can be pooled in other activities' (Bruton et al., 2015, p. 9). Nevertheless, such arguments oversee that 1) replication opportunities are the ones that can most easily drive entrepreneurs out of subsistence, 2) replication opportunities may indeed generate income and employment for many within the entrepreneur's family and close circles, and 3) replication opportunities in agriculture generate value in providing sustenance and basic security for the entrepreneur, which is usually non-captured in trade statistics or studies of economic development (Barrett et al., 2001).

Although we agree with Alvarez & Barney (2014) and Alvarez et al. (2015) that replication opportunities in industrial contexts can hardly lead to widespread economic development in an area, we posit that replication opportunities *in agricultural contexts* may cause high economic spill-overs in traditional rural communities and be the best way to tackle issues of economic poverty because of their acceptability within community contexts and their embeddedness in norms of sharing and contribution (Granovetter, 1985; Spilling, 2011).

Thus, we advance an alternative development model through agricultural entrepreneurship, where agriculture serves as a basis for further industrial activities to develop.

However, industrial entrepreneurship in the farming communities under observation has a unique role in tackling non-economic poverty by helping women integrate in their societies when traditional beliefs prescribe submission to the husband and exclusion from public life (Al-Dajani et al., 2015; Lindvert et al., 2017). This suggests that industrial entrepreneurship is necessary in reducing non-economic poverty and establishing inclusive institutions (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), but might not be the most appropriate type of entrepreneurship to raise Poor individuals out of subsistence. Indeed, the Poor we interview often report that they would rather engage in agricultural activities as they 'feel they have no skills for factory work', 'agriculture is all one can do' and 'one cannot do business in rural communities'. Thus, we posit that industrial entrepreneurship is better introduced in rural

communities only after most subsistence farmers turn to non-subsistence employment and become more open to engage in alternative economic activities.

Although the development of a holistic model of poverty reduction is out of the scope of our analysis, we review the example of Yiwu's poverty reduction in farming communities (Si et al., 2015) through a replication and sectorial logic to better illustrate how it may work. In 1950 through 1970, Yiwu's farmers had started engaging in industrial entrepreneurship through petty trading and small businesses out of necessity, as the agricultural income would not suffice to maintain their families. After some decades, when trading had become more tolerated by public officers, the entrepreneurs would still retain agricultural values, conducting agricultural activities next to petty trading, pursuing small profits, preserving trust among their social ties, and exploiting this trust to maintain legitimacy within their community. This slow sustained growth through agricultural entrepreneurship contributed to the success story of Yiwu, making it possible for neighbouring communities to replicate the city's opportunity exploitation process and achieve economic development on a larger scale.

6 Concluding remarks

As with all ethnographic and qualitative studies, our work faces several limitations, such as the consideration of a single geographically limited area in South-West Cameroon or the non-longitudinal research design. The grounding in the Cameroonian context might hamper our study's generalisability to other realities where agriculture is less prominent or industry is more developed. Moreover, the ongoing civil war at the time of the study, while providing us with an ideal setting to study the passage back and forth from subsistence to non-subsistence entrepreneurship, might further hinder the study's generalisability to contexts with higher political and economic stability.

Nevertheless, our analysis and framework of opportunity enactment generate interesting insights that stimulate further discussion on tackling global poverty through agricultural and industrial entrepreneurship. First, we posit that opportunities in poverty contexts differ sensibly from those in developed and industrialized realities. Second, we find evidence that practicing entrepreneurial actions in different sectors affects diverse aspects of poverty. From our insights, we propose to investigate further the effect of agricultural entrepreneurship on poverty reduction and promote replication approaches to tackle poverty within rural communities.

Finally, we encourage scholars to build on our work by replicating our results in contexts with other traditional beliefs where the value-creating potential of agricultural and industrial entrepreneurship might differ. Scholars can find promising directions for future research by extending our work through longitudinal analyses of the processes through which individuals establish communities and shape societal beliefs, or conducting quantitative comparisons of the differences in poverty reduction amongst communities and organisations adopting diverse strategic approaches.

7 References

- Al-Dajani, H., Carter, S., Shaw, E., & Marlow, S. (2015). Entrepreneurship among the Displaced and Dispossessed: Exploring the Limits of Emancipatory Entrepreneurship. *British Journal of Management*, 26(4), 713–730. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12119>
- Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B. (2007). Discovery and creation: alternative theories of entrepreneurial action. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 1(1–2), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.4>
- Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B. (2014). Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Poverty Alleviation. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 38(1), 159–184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12078>
- Alvarez, S. A., Barney, J. B., & Newman, A. M. B. (2015). The poverty problem and the industrialization solution. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(1), 23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-014-9397-5>
- Ansari, S., Munir, K., & Gregg, T. (2012). Impact at the “Bottom of the Pyramid”: The role of social capital in capability development and community empowerment. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(4), 813–842. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01042.x>
- Baker, T., & Nelson, R. E. (2005). Creating Something from Nothing: Resource Construction through Entrepreneurial Bricolage. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50(3), 329–366. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2005.50.3.329>
- Barrett, C. B., Reardon, T., & Webb, P. (2001). Nonfarm income diversification and household livelihood strategies in rural Africa: Concepts, dynamics, and policy implications. *Food Policy*, 26(4), 315–331. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192\(01\)00014-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192(01)00014-8)
- Battilana, J., Leca, B., & Boxenbaum, E. (2009). How Actors Change Institutions: Towards a Theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 3(1), 65–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520903053598>
- Berglund, H. (2015). Between cognition and discourse: phenomenology and the study of entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 21(3), 472–488. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-12-2013-0210>
- Bruton, G. D., Ahlstrom, D., & Si, S. (2015). Entrepreneurship, poverty, and Asia: Moving beyond

- subsistence entrepreneurship. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(1), 1–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-014-9404-x>
- Bruton, G. D., Ketchen, D. J., & Ireland, R. D. (2013). Entrepreneurship as a solution to poverty. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(6), 683–689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.05.002>
- Cope, J. (2005). Researching entrepreneurship through phenomenological inquiry: Philosophical and methodological issues. *International Small Business Journal*, 23(2), 163–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242605050511>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. Basics of Qualitative Research Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Vol. 3). 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230153>
- Davidsson, P. (2015). Entrepreneurial opportunities and the entrepreneurship nexus: A re-conceptualization. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(5), 674–695. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2015.01.002>
- Dethier, J. J., & Effenberger, A. (2012). Agriculture and development: A brief review of the literature. *Economic Systems*, 36(2), 175–205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecosys.2011.09.003>
- Dorado, S., & Ventresca, M. J. (2013). Crescive entrepreneurship in complex social problems: Institutional conditions for entrepreneurial engagement. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(1), 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.02.002>
- Eckhardt, J. T., & Shane, S. A. (2003). Opportunities and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Management*, 29(3), 333–349. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063\(02\)00225-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063(02)00225-8)
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1989.4308385>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., Graebner, M. E., & Sonenshein, S. (2016). Grand Challenges and Inductive Methods: Rigor without Rigor Mortis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(4), 1113–1123.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.4004>

- Feng, J., & Nguyen, M. C. (2014). Relative versus absolute poverty headcount ratios: the full breakdown. Retrieved September 4, 2018, from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/relative-versus-absolute-poverty-headcount-ratios-full-breakdown>
- Fitz-Koch, S., Nordqvist, M., Carter, S., & Hunter, E. (2018). Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector: A Literature Review and Future Research Opportunities. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 42(1), 129–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258717732958>
- Fokwang, J. (2010). Youth Subjectivities and Associational Life in Bamenda, Cameroon. *Africa Development*, 33(3), 157–162. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ad.v33i3.57314>
- Gedajlovic, E., Honig, B., Moore, C. B., Payne, G. T., & Wright, M. (2013). Social Capital and Entrepreneurship: A Schema and Research Agenda. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 37(3), 455–478. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12042>
- George, G., Corbishley, C., Khayesi, J. N. O., Haas, M. R., & Tihanyi, L. (2016). Bringing Africa In: Promising Directions for Management Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(2), 377–393. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.4002>
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), 481–510. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228311>
- Handy, F., Cnaan, R. A., Bhat, G., & Meijs, L. C. P. M. (2011). Jasmine growers of coastal Karnataka: Grassroots sustainable community-based enterprise in India. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(5–6), 405–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.580166>
- Hart, S., Sharma, S., & Halme, M. (2016). Poverty, Business Strategy, and Sustainable Development. *Organization & Environment*, 29(4), 401–415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026616677170>
- Khoury, T. A., & Prasad, A. (2016). Entrepreneurship Amid Concurrent Institutional Constraints in Less Developed Countries. *Business and Society*, 55(7), 934–969. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650314567641>
- Kirzner, I. M. (1997). Entrepreneurial Discovery and the Competitive Market Process : An Austrian Approach. *Journal of Economic Literature*, XXXV(March), 60–85. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2729693>

- Kistruck, G. M., Sutter, C. J., Lount, R. B., & Smith, B. R. (2013). Mitigating principal-agent problems in base-of-the-pyramid markets: An identity spillover perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(3), 659–682. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0336>
- Klein, K. J., Tosi, H., & Cannella, A. A. (1999). Multilevel Theory Building: Benefits, Barriers, and New Developments. *Academy of Management Review*, *24*(2), 248–253. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1999.1893934>
- Klyver, K., Nielsen, S. L., & Evald, M. R. (2013). Women's self-employment: An act of institutional (dis)integration? A multilevel, cross-country study. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *28*(4), 474–488. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.07.002>
- Korsgaard, S., Ferguson, R., & Gaddefors, J. (2015). The best of both worlds: how rural entrepreneurs use placial embeddedness and strategic networks to create opportunities. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *27*(9–10), 574–598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2015.1085100>
- Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data. *Academy of Management Review*, *24*(4), 691–710. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1999.2553248>
- Lindvert, M., Patel, P. C., & Wincent, J. (2017). Struggling with social capital: Pakistani women micro entrepreneurs' challenges in acquiring resources. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *29*(7–8), 759–790. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1349190>
- Lutz, D. W. (2009). African ubuntu philosophy and global management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *84*(3 SUPPL.), 313–328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0204-z>
- Mair, J., & Marti, I. (2009). Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *24*(5), 419–435. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.04.006>
- McMullen, J. S. (2011). Delineating the Domain of Development Entrepreneurship: A Market-Based Approach to Facilitating Inclusive Economic Growth. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, *35*(1), 185–193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00428.x>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. a. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook. *Evaluation and Program Planning*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0149-7189\(96\)88232-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0149-7189(96)88232-2)
- Miller, D., & Le Breton-Miller, I. (2017). Underdog Entrepreneurs: A Model of Challenge-Based

- Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 41(1), 7–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12253>
- Moroz, P. W., & Hindle, K. (2012). Entrepreneurship as a Process: Toward Harmonizing Multiple Perspectives. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 36(4), 781–818.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2011.00452.x>
- Mosse, D. (2010). A relational approach to durable poverty, inequality and power. *Journal of Development Studies*, 46(7), 1156–1178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2010.487095>
- Müller, S., & Korsgaard, S. (2018). Resources and bridging: the role of spatial context in rural entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 30(1–2), 224–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1402092>
- North, D. C. (1991). Institutions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1), 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.5.1.97>
- O’Grady, S. (2018). Africa’s next civil war could be in Cameroon. Retrieved August 31, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/05/30/africas-next-civil-war-could-be-in-cameroon/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e89e9d57c607
- Owoo, N. S., & Naudé, W. (2017). Spatial proximity and firm performance: evidence from non-farm rural enterprises in Ethiopia and Nigeria. *Regional Studies*, 51(5), 688–700.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2015.1131896>
- Oxford Dictionary. (n.d.). passivity | Definition of passivity in English. Retrieved September 11, 2018, from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/passivity>
- Packard, M. D., & Bylund, P. L. (2018). On the relationship between inequality and entrepreneurship. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 12(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1270>
- Patzelt, H., & Shepherd, D. A. (2011). Recognizing opportunities for sustainable development. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 35(4), 631–652.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00386.x>
- Peredo, A. M., & Chrisman, J. J. (2006). Toward a theory of community-based enterprise. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(2), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2006.20208683>
- Rignall, K., & Atia, M. (2017). The global rural: Relational geographies of poverty and

- development. *Geography Compass*, 11(7), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12322>
- Rindova, V., Barry, D., & Ketchen, D. J. (2009). Entrepreneurship as Emancipation. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 477–491. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2009.40632647>
- Rooks, G., Klyver, K., & Sserwanga, A. (2016). The Context of Social Capital: A Comparison of Rural and Urban Entrepreneurs in Uganda. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 40(1), 111–130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12107>
- Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 243–263. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2001.4378020>
- Sarkar, S. (2018). Grassroots entrepreneurs and social change at the bottom of the pyramid: the role of bricolage. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 30(3–4), 421–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1413773>
- Scott, L., Dolan, C., Johnstone-Louis, M., Sugden, K., & Wu, M. (2012). Enterprise and Inequality: A Study of Avon in South Africa. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 36(3), 543–568. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2012.00507.x>
- Sen, A. (1985). Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82(4), 169. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2026184>
- Seremani, T. W., & Clegg, S. (2016). Postcolonialism, Organization, and Management Theory: The Role of “Epistemological Third Spaces.” *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 25(2), 171–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492615589973>
- Shaban, A. R. A. (2018). Cameroon mayor warns Buea businesses over ghost towns on Mondays. Retrieved August 31, 2018, from <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/22/cameroon-warns-buea-businesses-don-t-obey-ghost-town-orders-from-separatists/>
- Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 217–226. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2000.2791611>
- Si, S., Yu, X., Wu, A., Chen, S., Chen, S., & Su, Y. (2015). Entrepreneurship and poverty reduction: A case study of Yiwu, China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(1), 119–143. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-014-9395-7>

- Slade Shantz, A., Kistruck, G., & Zietsma, C. (2018). The opportunity not taken: The occupational identity of entrepreneurs in contexts of poverty. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 33(4), 416–437. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2018.02.003>
- Somerville, P., & McElwee, G. (2011). Situating community enterprise: A theoretical exploration. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(5–6), 317–330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.580161>
- Spilling, O. R. (2011). Mobilising the entrepreneurial potential in local community development. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(1), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.540406>
- Suddaby, R., Bruton, G. D., & Si, S. X. (2015). Entrepreneurship through a qualitative lens: Insights on the construction and/or discovery of entrepreneurial opportunity. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.09.003>
- Tobias, J. M., Mair, J., & Barbosa-Leiker, C. (2013). Toward a theory of transformative entrepreneuring: Poverty reduction and conflict resolution in Rwanda's entrepreneurial coffee sector. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(6), 728–742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.03.003>
- Venkataraman, H., Vermeulen, P., Raaijmakers, A., & Mair, J. (2016). Market Meets Community: Institutional Logics as Strategic Resources for Development Work. *Organization Studies*, 37(5), 709–733. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840615613370>
- Vestrum, I. (2014). The embedding process of community ventures: creating a music festival in a rural community. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 26, 619–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2014.971076>
- Webb, J. W., Bruton, G. D., Tihanyi, L., & Ireland, R. D. (2013). Research on entrepreneurship in the informal economy: Framing a research agenda. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(5), 598–614. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.05.003>
- Webb, J. W., Tihanyi, L., Ireland, R. D., & Sirmon, D. G. (2009). You say illegal, i say legitimate: Entrepreneurship in the informal economy. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 492–510. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2009.40632826>

- Welter, F. (2011). Contextualizing Entrepreneurship—Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 35(1), 165–184.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00427.x>
- Welter, F., Baker, T., Audretsch, D. B., & Gartner, W. B. (2017). Everyday Entrepreneurship—A Call for Entrepreneurship Research to Embrace Entrepreneurial Diversity. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 41(3), 311–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12258>
- West, G. P., Bamford, C. E., & Marsden, J. W. (2007). Contrasting Entrepreneurial Economic Development in Emerging Latin American Economies: Applications and Extensions of Resource-Based Theory. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(1), 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2007.00214.x>
- World Bank. (2018). Poverty Overview. Retrieved September 4, 2018, from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>
- Yessoufou, A. W., Blok, V., & Omta, S. W. F. (2018). The process of entrepreneurial action at the base of the pyramid in developing countries: a case of vegetable farmers in Benin. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 30(1–2), 1–28.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1364788>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case Study Research . Design and Methods. *SAGE Publications*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/FCH.0b013e31822dda9e>
- Zahra, S. A., & Wright, M. (2016). Understanding the Social Role of Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(4), 610–629. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12149>
- Zhao, E. Y., & Wry, T. (2016). Not all inequality is equal: Deconstructing the societal logic of patriarchy to understand microfinance lending to women. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(6), 1994–2020. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0476>