

The Institutional Origins, Diffusion, and Establishment of Entrepreneurial
Identities in the Global South: The Case of Brazil

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The Institutional Origins, Diffusion, and Establishment of Entrepreneurial Identities in the Global South: the case of Brazil

Abstract: The category of the entrepreneur has been increasingly adopted as a social identity in Brazil, a country where even the term ‘entrepreneurship’ was absent from ordinary language until recently (Melo, 2008). Where did this category come from? How does it disseminate in Brazil? And how do people come into contact and experience it? Research suggests that the end of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a socioeconomic agenda, policies, and discourses that placed entrepreneurship and the associated values of individualism, self-reliance, and enterprise culture in evidence (Audretsch, 2007; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004; Keat & Abercrombie, 1991). These studies leave largely unaddressed the concrete mechanisms through which the category of the entrepreneur diffuses to the Global South. This thesis addresses this gap in the literature by applying an analytical framework that shines a spotlight on the practices of organizations that promote entrepreneurship in Brazil. Taking Empretec, Endeavor, and Online Networks of Support as case studies, I draw conceptual and methodological insights from policy diffusion and institutional analysis, science and technology studies, and organizational studies (Stone, 2012; Callon, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019) to analyze data generated through interviews and content analysis. I argue that controversial aspects of post-War knowledge associated with the category of the entrepreneur gave way to an institutionalized normative and seemingly neutral depiction of the entrepreneur. I show how a growing number of organizations deploy varied strategies to encourage entrepreneurship and constitute entrepreneurial subjects in Brazil. It results in new groups performed across gender, racial, and class lines, with varying symbolic capital, and receiving support of different magnitude. Organizations that promote entrepreneurship are thus central in the dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur, but they inadvertently create a system of distribution of resources that exacerbates social inequalities.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Organizations; Performativity; Diffusion; Inequality; Brazil

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Introduction

“Don’t think about the crisis, work!” was the first official pronouncement of Michel Temer, the Brazilian president who took office after the controversial impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. The sentence became the motto of the new government. It referenced the social, political, and economic crisis that had been crippling Brazil since 2013, and proposed “hard work” as a solution to overcome the socioeconomic turmoil. At that time, unemployment rate had reached 11.5% of the economically active Brazilian population (Castro, 2017). Businesses were closing, people were laid off, and protestors were taking to the streets. It was difficult to avoid thinking about the crisis, and hard to be optimistic about the near future.

Despair and pessimism, however, were not universal. Renowned organizations that promote small businesses and entrepreneurship in Brazil set a distinctive tone from the more sombre economic diagnostics of the time. For example, Sebrae (Brazilian Micro and Small Enterprises' Support Service), the largest Brazilian non-profit institution that provides services to support small enterprises and promotes entrepreneurship in the country, published a number of online pieces explaining how it is possible to grow one’s businesses during economic turmoil (e.g., Andrade, 2016; Comini, 2016; Sebrae, 2016a). On its website, Sebrae posted a Chinese character for “crisis”, and explained that this character is formed by two ideograms, one meaning “danger”, and the other “opportunity” (Sebrae, 2016b). Likewise, Endeavor, a world-leading organization that promotes high-impact entrepreneurship in the Global South, has a Brazilian affiliate that published several online articles about how crises are, in fact, “opportunities in disguise” (Srougi, 2016; see also Endeavor Brazil, 2016). As the argument goes, it is up to one’s entrepreneurial capabilities to assess the situation and to find opportunities to innovate. An entrepreneur, as these organizations claim, finds

opportunities where others fail. No crises impose insurmountable barriers on skilled entrepreneurs.

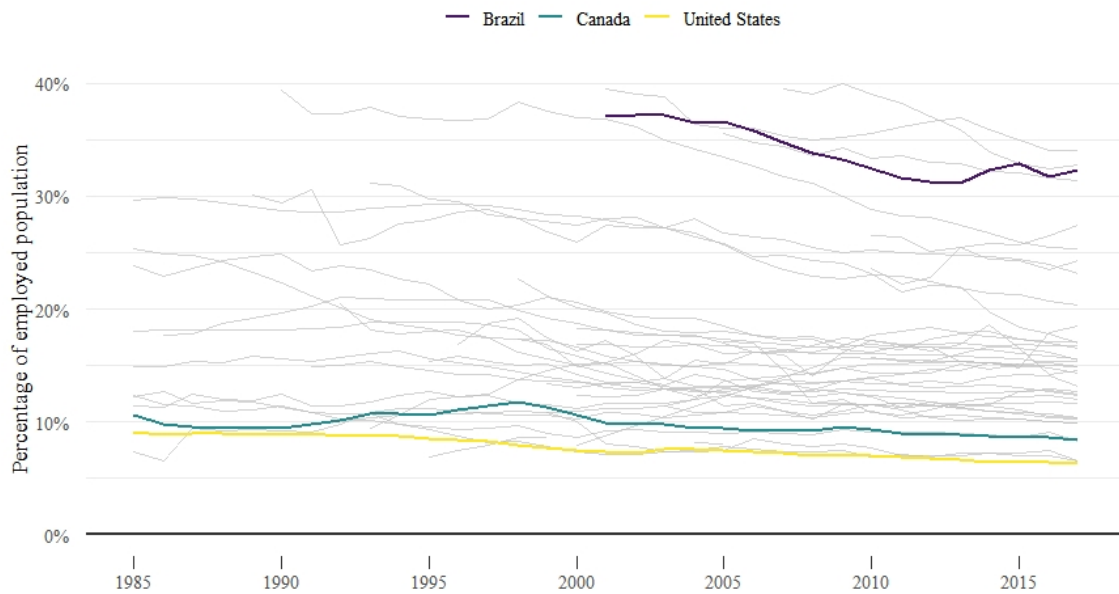
A casual observer may have thought little about these views, and not even realized that the words “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” are relatively recent additions to the Brazilian Portuguese lexicon. Derived from the French verb “entreprendre”, coined by economist Richard Cantillon in the mid-eighteenth century to loosely refer to any sort of self-employment (Ahmad & Seymour, 2008), the word “entrepreneur” and its variants have long been incorporated into the English vocabulary. But it is only in the early 1990s that these terms became more common in ordinary language in Brazil; it was a time of intensive restructuring of the economy and of establishment of programs to support small businesses in the country (Cruz, 2005, p. 27; Melo, 2008, p. 87). Since then, the terms “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” have diffused, and people talk about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship as if there is something fundamentally special about this economic subject and activity. Among scholars and policymakers, entrepreneurship is celebrated as a driving force for economic growth, poverty reduction, and social improvement. As such, entrepreneurship became the focus of much economic development policy (Kantis, Ishida, & Komor, 2002) and one of the keystones of economic discourse around the world (Marttila, 2013).

In this thesis, I report on research conceived for the purpose of exploring what programs and organizations that promote entrepreneurship in Brazil do to facilitate the diffusion of the socioeconomic categories of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship in a country in which these terms were virtually absent not long ago, as well as how individuals who participate in these programs experience and interpret these “new” categories. The thesis contributes to an emerging literature that studies the cultural,

economic, political, and institutional contexts in which entrepreneurship as a practice is embedded (cf. Anderson & Smith, 2007; Welter, 2011; Zafirovski, 1999). The contribution of this thesis is threefold. I identify the organizational practices that promote and disseminate the socioeconomic category of the entrepreneur in Brazil; I describe the institutional origins that inform the views about entrepreneurship that organizations hold and disseminate; and I elucidate how people report experiencing such labels and categories. Instead of looking at entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur merely as an economic practice and subject, I examine them sociologically - as a socioeconomic category that is encouraged by organizations with a political and developmental agenda to transform and govern the culture and the economic behaviours of people in the Global South.

Brazil is an interesting case for this research. The country has gone through markedly rapid socioeconomic changes since the end of the military regime in the 1980s: from the democratization of its political process to the liberalization of its economy. Several waves of privatization, the reduction of trade barriers, and the opening of the national economy to international finance have been the topic of several books and articles (Carvalho, 2018; Luna & Klein, 2006; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2003). What is less discussed, and largely ignored, is the dissemination of the “entrepreneur” as a socioeconomic category with which an increasing number of individuals identify. Brazilians have always founded businesses and commercialized innovative ideas. Indeed, Brazil has a much higher rate of self-employment, a common proxy for entrepreneurship activity, when compared to countries known for their entrepreneurial culture such as the United States and Canada (Figure 1). Nonetheless, since the 1990s, an increasing number of organizations and initiatives have promoted entrepreneurship and sought to teach people how to become entrepreneurial (Melo, 2008).

Figure 1: Self-employment rate, a national comparison, 1985-2017



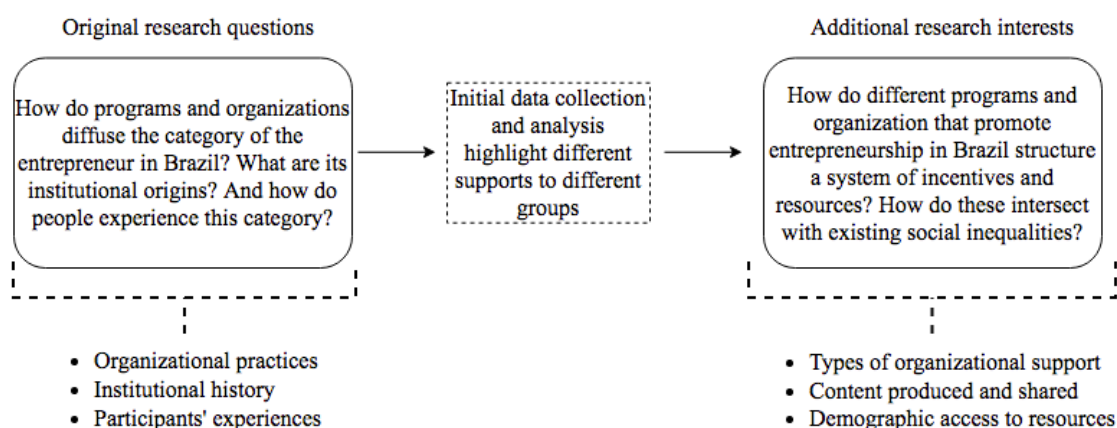
Source: OECD (2020), Self-employment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/fb58715e-en (Accessed on 11 March 2020).

To make sense of the recent dissemination and adoption of the categories of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur in Brazil, I chose to focus on the practices of celebrated organizations and programs that encourage entrepreneurship and support entrepreneurs. My premise is that the dissemination of “new” socioeconomic categories is not spontaneous, but catalyzed by educational and other initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship. This thesis consists of three articles, each focusing on one specific program or organization. The first article focuses on Empretec, a training program that encourages people to adopt the behaviours of high achieving individuals. Launched by United Nation Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Empretec is offered exclusively in Brazil by Sebrae. The second article focuses on Endeavor, a global organization that promotes high-impact entrepreneurship in emerging economies by selecting and supporting entrepreneurs, and by advocating for policies that encourage

entrepreneurship. The third article investigates what I call Online Networks of Support for women entrepreneurs (ONS hereafter), which are numerous in Brazil, some of them gathering a followership of as much as three hundred thousand individuals via social media platforms. These ONS serve as a new type of support system through which women learn about entrepreneurship and connect with other aspiring entrepreneurs.

All three articles are independent, but they complement each other by offering a historical and critical overview of organizational practices intended to encourage entrepreneurship, and through which the category of the entrepreneur disseminates in Brazil. Although the list of organizations studied in this thesis is by no means exhaustive, the selected organizations are renowned for their efforts to promote entrepreneurship and encourage individuals to adopt entrepreneurial behaviours. However, because Empretec, Endeavor, and ONS engage in different strategies and have different resources to support entrepreneurs and promote entrepreneurship in Brazil, my research focus evolved to include questions of inequality. Ultimately, I decided to address another research question: *How have organizations that promote entrepreneurship assembled a system of incentive structures and distribution of resources that contributes to, and even justifies, inequalities of opportunity in Brazil?* See Figure 2 for a schematic outline of the research questions orienting this thesis.

Figure 2: The evolving research interests and questions of this thesis



I take a qualitative approach to study the organizational efforts to promote and disseminate the socioeconomic categories of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur in Brazil, and how people experience this new category. Each article, as I discuss further on, draws inspiration from a particular theoretical framework and methodological approach to better examine the history, mandate, and strategies that each organization and program carry out to promote entrepreneurship, as well as the meanings and moral values associated with category of entrepreneur. Although the research design of each article is emergent, that is, adapted to each case study, the analytical umbrella under which I discuss all cases is based on an organizational and institutional lens to make sense of the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in Brazil. In doing so, I prioritize the analysis of organizational strategies that promote entrepreneurship, which allows to understand the diffusion of the category of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship as a process embedded in an organizational context that goes hand in hand with the constitution of social groups and the implementation of a broader unequal system of resource distribution and incentives structure.

There is no consensus, either in scholarship or in ordinary language, about the definition of entrepreneurship or who is an entrepreneur (see Table 1 for a brief overview). I do not intend to resolve this conceptual ambiguity. Instead, this thesis is the result of an investigation of how organizations that promote entrepreneurship disseminate socioeconomic categories with which an increasing number of individuals identify and draw group distinctions with other economic actors. According to the long tradition of social identity theory, members of the “in-group” (i.e., the group one associates with) tend to engage in self-flattering comparisons (Hogg, 2006; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995) and take part in discriminatory behaviours towards members of the “out-group” (Tajfel, 1982; Owen, 2006). It means that the category of the

entrepreneur is above all a social category, one that is used to draw societal distinctions, but which has a volatile meaning depending on who is uttering it. Furthermore, as I will argue, the category of entrepreneur is charged with values and beliefs that justify inequality while supposedly helping economic development. While providing support to particular individuals or groups, organizations encourage them to adopt the category of the entrepreneur (or variants such as the category of micro-entrepreneur, high-impact entrepreneur, women entrepreneurs, and so on) as a social identity. This identity mostly rests on meritocratic ideals and beliefs, which are used to create “moral boundaries”, broadly defined as symbolic distinctions centred on moral beliefs of integrity, resilience, hard work that distinguishes one group from another (Kantola & Kuusela, 2019). These cultural schemas and moral boundaries legitimize inequality and the “symbolic capital” - a concept that refers to how groups have different access to resources depending on their relative prestige and recognition (Bourdieu, 1980, 1989) - associated with the social position of the entrepreneur.

Table 1: Select list of definitions of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship

Author	Definition	Main idea
Frank Knight (1942)	“The owner [of an enterprise] may be an individual or a group, organized in some way as a legal entity; most typically, it is a ‘corporation’, particularly under American conditions. In either case, this owner, who normally hires productive services from others for a fixed compensation, uses them to make a product and sells the product for what he can get, is what is meant by an entrepreneur” (page 126-127)	Profit-seeking Risk-taking
Joseph Schumpeter (1942)	“We have seen that the function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by reorganizing an industry and so on.” (page 132)	Creative destruction – disruptive innovation
Israel Kirzner (1973)	“The key point is that pure entrepreneurship is exercised only in the absence of initially owned asset. [...] The pure entrepreneur observes the opportunity to sell something at higher prices than that which he can buy it. It follows that anyone is a potential entrepreneur, since the purely entrepreneurial process role presupposes no special good fortune in the form of valuable assets. [...] The entrepreneur’s activity is essentially competitive” (page 16)	Opportunity-seeking Competition
William Gartner (1985)	“Entrepreneurship is the creation of organizations. What differentiates entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurs create organizations while non-entrepreneurs do not” (page 11)	Firm creation

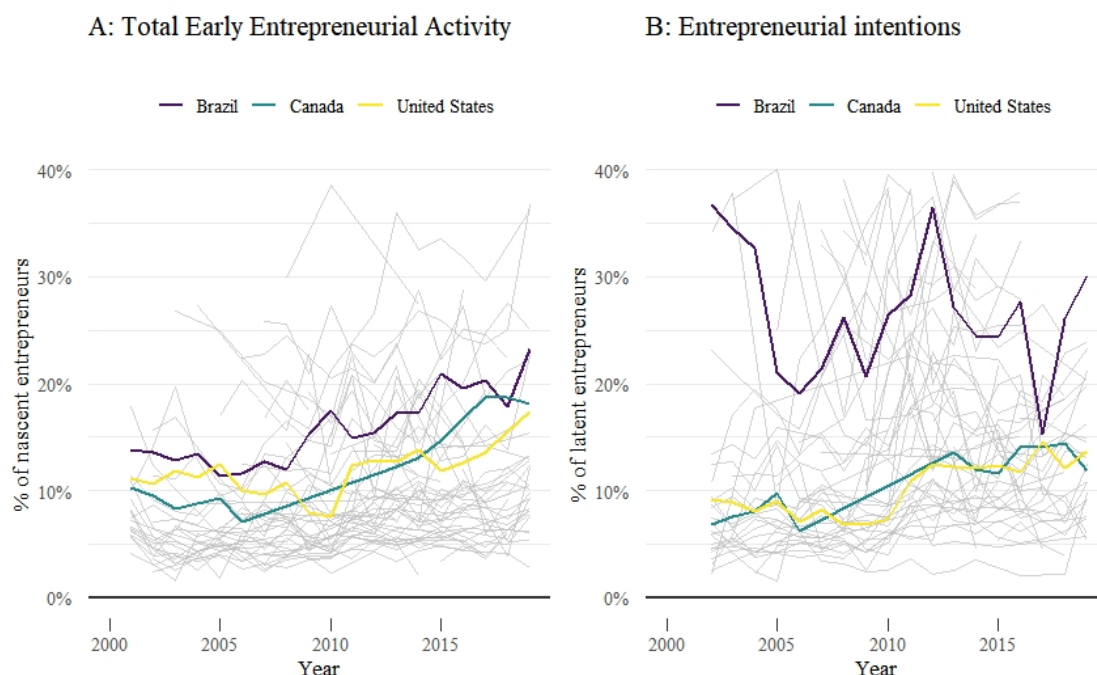
Author	Definition	Main idea
William Baumol (1990)	“Here no exhaustive analysis of the process of allocation of entrepreneurial activity among the set of available options will be attempted. Rather, it will be argued only that at least one of the prime determinants of entrepreneurial behavior at any particular time and place is the prevailing rules of the game that govern the payoff of one entrepreneurial activity relative to another” (page 898)	Economic activity that can increase production, but which is highly influenced by rules and regulations
G. Lumpkin and Gregory Dess (1996)	“The essential act of entrepreneurship is new entry. New entry can be accomplished by entering new or established markets with new or existing goods or services. New entry is the act of launching a new venture, either by start-up firm, through an existing form, or via ‘internal corporate venturing’” (page 136)	New entry – firm creation
Scott Shane (2003)	“Entrepreneurs create new organizations through a dynamic process that involves such activities as obtaining equipment, establishing production processes, attracting employees and setting up legal entities” (page 247)	Creation of corporations, joint-ventures
Nadim Ahmad and Richard Seymour (2008)	“Entrepreneurs are those persons (business owners) who seek to generate value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets. Entrepreneurial activity is the enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets. Entrepreneurship is the phenomena associated with entrepreneurial activity.” (page 14)	Value creation Exploitation of new markets, processes, products

My findings suggest that the organizations and programs studied in this thesis encourage a particular view of entrepreneurship that is heavily associated with meritocratic ideals. The entrepreneur is represented as a new type economic hero, the representation of someone who rises to success and leads the country to a path of economic growth through their own merits. As I will argue, the dissemination of this category, which is based on a morality that is decades old, through programs and organizations that have set in place a highly unequal system of support to individuals who start or desire to start new businesses, inadvertently contribute to the reproduction of inequality of opportunities. As the category of the entrepreneur gains popular credence and more people identify as such, access to human capital and other resources to develop one's business remains highly concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. Only a handful of individuals with social capital receive considerable support and access to financial, marketing, symbolic capital, and long-term educational resources. Not surprisingly, those who receive significant resources have become the poster children of entrepreneurship, increasing their symbolic capital. However, their widely shared stories obscure the intensive support they received and the wide range of resources available to them, while at the same time inspiring many others, at the fringes of this support system, with substantially less resources and opportunities to embark upon a difficult path.

This thesis thus addresses the emergence and diffusion of a socioeconomic category in a country with a strong early entrepreneurial activity and a large number of people desiring to open a business (see Figure 3), but which lacked the terminology of “entrepreneurs” and “entrepreneurship” not long ago. Together, the three articles go beyond contextualizing the emergence of this category in the current political and economic environment. They provide an analysis of the organizations that facilitate the

diffusion of the categories of entrepreneur, and how the promotion of this economic category, and the specific morality associated with it, deepen social inequalities while changing people's perceptions about themselves.

Figure 3: Entrepreneurial activity in Brazil, a national comparison, 2001-2019



Source: Adult Population Survey by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Retrieved from <https://www.gemconsortium.org/data/key-aps>. (Accessed on March 2020).

Note: Total Early Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) indicates the percentage of population aged 18 to 65 who are nascent entrepreneur, or owners of new businesses. Entrepreneurial intentions indicate the percentage of population aged 18 to 64 who are latent entrepreneurs, or intend to start a business within the next three years.

Contextualizing the emergence of entrepreneurship as a solution to the economic crisis

From the managed to the entrepreneurial economy

For much of the twentieth century, the economies of Europe and North America had the characteristics of what researchers call “the managed economy” (Audrestch & Thurik, 2001; Thurik, Stam, & Audretsch, 2013). During and after the industrial revolution, a new type of organization became the motor of economic growth: large corporations.

These firms increasingly adopted sophisticated management strategies and specialized assembly lines, which boosted mass production. Gradually, these displaced small family firms and small scale manufacturing as the mainstay of the American economy (Chandler, 1977; Piore & Sabel, 1984):

Managerialism offered America a set of organizing principles at precisely the time when many Americans sensed a need for greater organization and these principles soon shaped every dominant American institution precisely as they helped those institutions become dominant. The logic of routine, large-scale manufacturing first shaped its original business environment and then permeated the larger social environment (Robert Reich, cited in Audretsch, 2007, p. 34).

The rise of large corporations and mass production led to a number of economic consequences. Small businesses were increasingly driven out of the market. Unprecedented productivity and the competition among large firms led to a downward pressure on the price of manufactured goods, and generalized cutthroat pricing practices (that is, to set a price below total cost) resulted in chronic price slumps and market volatility. Economic instability was frequent despite the productive prowess and oligopolistic attributes of large corporations (see Audretsch, 2007 for a more in-depth discussion).

To govern this new form of organization and the emerging economy of scale, governments enacted a number of regulations, interventions, and policies in the mid-century to constrain the oligopolistic power of corporations. These include antitrust policies, anti-merging jurisprudence, and preservationist policies to assist and protect small businesses (Audretsch, 2007). The rise of the large corporation is thus a key variable that explains the emergence of a big and interventionist government. There is, obviously, much variation across Western European countries and North America, both

in terms of the social insurance systems and other components of big state, such as revenue-expenditure flows and business regulations (Flora, 2017; Lindert, 1994).

In the United States, the share of employment accounted by large corporations steadily increased throughout the twentieth century (Francis, 2017). Although today the largest employers are in the high-tech sector, companies in the manufacturing sector with 10,000 employees or more were the largest employers in the mid-twentieth century (Francis, 2017). These large corporations provided well paying careers to a rising class of managers, and job stability to a substantial blue-collar workforce. The American middle class as we conceive today is a by-product of the managed economy (Audretsch, 2007).

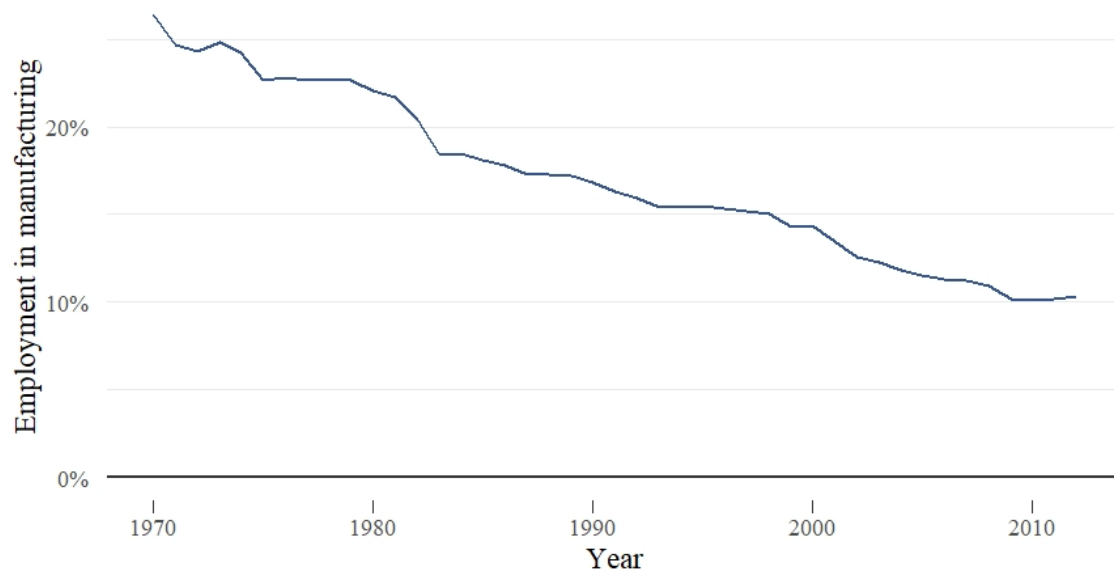
Large manufacturing corporations required a workforce capable of performing standardized assembly line work, and managers who could assure the smooth operation of production plants and employees' compliance with organizational procedures, rules, and regulations. Conformity, predictability, and respect for organizational hierarchies were highly praised behaviours, despite efforts of an increasingly unionized workforce to restrict the exploitation of labour (Audretsch, 2007). The large corporation became a central institution that shaped the American lifestyle based on a growing suburban life, a rising middle class, and a gendered division of labour. Middle class white men typically sought employment with corporations while their wives stayed in their suburban homes managing household chores and raising their offspring (Esch 2018). Amy Goldstein, whose work documents the social trauma caused by the closure of an assembly plant in Janesville, illustrates the impact of large corporations in the daily lives of many Americans living in industrial towns:

General Motors started turning out Chevrolets in Janesville on Valentine's Day of 1923. For eight and a half decades, this factory, like a mighty wizard, ordered the city's rhythms. The radio station synchronized its news broadcasts to the shift

change. Grocery prices went up along with GM raises. People timed their trips across town to the daily movements of freight trains hauling in parts and hauling away finished cars, trucks, and SUVs. (Goldstein, 2017, p. 2)

Large manufacturing corporations were the economic engines for much of the twentieth century in the United States. However, a set of conjoined factors shook the foundations of the managed economy and the role of industrial manufacture in the economy. Through a cartel-like intergovernmental organization, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), oil-producing countries imposed embargos and reduced the supply of oil throughout the 1970s. This caused a steep rise in prices of both crude and refined petroleum-based products. Meanwhile, technological advances and lower costs of transportation incentivized corporations to establish its manufacturing plants in low wage countries, especially in Asia and in Latin America. With a rising tide of pro-market policies and deregulation, world trade became easier. As economies became more globalized, and as production was outsourced to offshore manufacturers and assembly lines, industrialized economies experienced a sweeping process of deindustrialization. To remain competitive, corporations increasingly cut costs. Downsizing corporate America became the agenda of the day. From the 1970s on, the United States have witnessed a steep decrease of manufacturing jobs (Figure 4), and the stagnation of middle-class wages (Milanovic, 2016). Since the 1980s, midsize corporations account for the largest share in employment in the manufacturing sector (Francis, 2017). A wave of market deregulation and the increasing economic globalization further undermined the managed economy (Audretsch, 2007).

Figure 4: The declining rate of manufacturing employment in the United States, 1970-2012



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

The offshoring of manufacturing plants deindustrialized the economy, shifting the economy to the retail and service sectors. Large high-tech corporations rose to prominence and gradually became the main employers in the United States (Francis, 2017). The institutional hallmarks of the managed economy – industrial manufacturing, large corporations, a unionized workforce, and a wide-ranging interventionist state - have either declined in strength or retrenched to minimal tasks. Greater value seems to be extracted more from commercializing and capitalizing on promising ideas and scientific knowledge than from manufacturing goods. Some scholars call this series of socioeconomic changes the dawn of the ‘post-industrial society’ (Bell, 1974; Boeckelman, 1995; Fligstein & Sharone, 2002), the ‘network society’ (Castells, 1996), or even, the ‘entrepreneurial society’ (Audretsch, 2007).

The road to an entrepreneurial Brazil

The rise of entrepreneurship policies in Brazil was not a response to the inefficiencies of

a managed economy, like what happened in the United States as described by Audretsch (2007). The Brazilian industrialization took place much later than the American case. Indeed, it was only in the 1930s, during the government of Getúlio Vargas, that the Brazilian economy began the transition from agro-export economy to a more industrialized one (Diniz, 2011). By the 1950s, the industrial sector accounted for a larger share of the Brazilian GDP than the agricultural sector (Cano, 2015), and the model of economic development based on import substitution industrialization (ISI) was fully consolidated in the 1960s (Diniz, 2011). This developmentalist model had three main characteristics: a protectionist state with great capacity to intervene in the economy, governmental economic planning that sought economic development on a national scale, and a corporatist style of governance that enhanced the corporate influence upon the government (Diniz, 2011). The concomitant development of a domestic market and the adoption of increasingly protectionist policies (such as import tariffs and subsidies to domestic manufacturers) led to a fast rate of industrialization, high economic growth, and the emergence of capital-intensive intensive industries such as the automobile industry in Brazil (Markoff & Barreta, 1990; Suzigan, 2000). However, as the Cold War led to political instabilities in the Latin American region at the beginning of the 1960s, Brazilian industrialists sided with agribusiness and financial elites to counter the growing influence of a left-leaning governmental agenda (Cano, 2015). This was the beginning of a long period of authoritarianism in Brazil, which led to the 1964 coup and a subsequent military government (Diniz, 2011).

During the military regime, industrial developmentalism policies advanced under the mandate of strengthening national security. This model of national developmentalism rested on a centralized and authoritarian political control of the economy (Diniz, 2011; see also Markoff & Barreta, 1990). Not only did the government

control prices, it also controlled the administration of ports, railroads, telecommunication services, enterprises that produce energy, steel, minerals, fuel, chemical products, and so on. Public investments and state monopolistic enterprises were at the heart of the Brazilian industrialization (Luna & Klein, 2006). At the same time, economic policies subsidized agricultural exports, stimulated the production of manufactured goods, and incentivized national public enterprises to invest in infrastructure (Luna & Klein, 2006, p. 40-43). By the end of the 1970s, the Brazilian industrial sector was considerably more diverse and complex than the industrial sectors of other economies in Latin America (Luna & Klein, 2006, p. 49).

The industrialization process during the military regime was distinctively antidemocratic. The military regime unveiled fiscal and labour reforms (including the sale of government bonds, new laws on wages, and restrictions on union activities) that sought to reduce the governmental budget deficit, but had led to a systematic decline in real wages (Luna & Klein, 2006). Even in the periods of highest economic growth led by the intensive industrialization - the so-called “Brazilian Miracle” - wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few business and political elites, and the promised sharing this “growing pie” never came close to being realized (Markoff & Barreta, 1990). That period is perhaps the most illustrative example of the problems associated with trickle-down economics, the doctrinarian assumption that growth in wealth necessarily leads to wealth distribution. The prominent development economist William Easterly once claimed “economic growth frees the poor from hunger and disease. Economy-wide GDP growth per capita translates into rising incomes for the poorest of the poor, lifting them out of poverty” (Easterly, 2002, p. 8), with the caveat that “for poverty to get worse with economic growth, the distribution of income would have to get much more unequal as income increased” (Easterly, 2002, p. 14). Yet, this is exactly

what happened in Brazil: a somewhat miraculous high rate of growth, with benefits near exclusively concentrated at the top. Nonetheless, the expansion of manufactured consumer goods, the establishment of a domestic consumer market, and the establishment of a system of consumer credit led to the growth of a Brazilian middle class (Luna & Klein, 2006). However, this middle class did not have the same incomes and purchasing power as its counterparts in wealthier countries.

At the end of the 1970s, economic growth had stalled. The Brazilian economy also suffered from rising inflation and a growing public debt (Luna & Klein, 2006). The ISI model began to crumble after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the damaging OPEC's oil embargo in the 1970s, and the resulting debt crisis. In the 1980s, a new policy model, the Export-Oriented Industrialization (EOI), became the mainstay orthodoxy to develop Global South economies (Gereffi & Wyman, 1990; Gereffi, 2005; Gereffi, 2014). During this time, mounting criticism of state interventionism in the economy and barriers to international trade in the form of economic protectionism (industrial subsidies, trade tariffs and quotas) reflected a broader disposition towards the liberalization of the economy in the Western world.

Throughout the Global South, and more specifically in Latin America, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) pressured national economies to adopt market-oriented reforms, the so-called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The SAPs rested on the assumption that to tackle the debt crisis, governments ought to reduce excessive domestic spending, and balance payments. The Brazilian government thus started to reduce public spending and investments, increase interest rates, control minimum wages, and devalue exchange rates (Luna & Klein, 2006, p. 51). However, the liberalization of Southern economies cannot be read as a simple imposition from foreign

powers such as the IMF and the WB. Indeed, Brazilian business elites and industrialists adopted pro-market principles of privatization and market liberalization, and advocated for a less interventionist state and a free market economy. Domestic business and corporate elites are so powerful that, during the democratization period in the 1980s and the Constitutional reforms, their interests overshadowed the concerns of organized labour organizations and unions (Diniz, 2011).

The election of Fernando Collor in 1989 advanced the governance agenda of a smaller state, free trade, free market, and privatization. Throughout the 1990s, and most specifically after the Plan Real in 1994, the Brazilian economy increasingly opened to the international market and finance. Brazilian government decreased taxes over imports, expanded credit, increased dependence on international financial resources, and started a wave of privatization that led to an overall openness of the national economy. Inflation was now under control, but economic growth remained stagnant and unemployment increased (Luna & Klein, 2006). In the late 1990s, the government adopted a new economic model, the “economic tripod” (*tripé econômico*) as it became known, which focused on balancing budgets, controlling inflation, and a floating exchange rate. The economic tripod remained the dominant economic model for the next fifteen years or so (Carvalho, 2018).

The transition from a developmentalist model to an approach based on economic liberalization led to a multitude of conflicts and protests, both from civil society and sectors of the business community (Diniz, 2011; Gereffi & Wyman, 1990; Gereffi, 2014). Some blamed the economic reforms for the increasing poverty rates and growing inequality. Others expressed discontentment with the economic hardships and costs associated with state retrenchment. Either way, market liberalization and the reorganization of the industrial sector led to increasing socioeconomic unrest. This

eventually led the IFIs to reassess the failures and risks of its conditional loans, and to engage, as Best (2014) describes it, in a more provisional type of economic governance. Nonetheless, as the quote below illustrates, at least in the Brazilian case, market-oriented reforms led to the denationalization of the industrial complex and to an overture to international capital and transnational elites:

Between 1995 and 1997, bankruptcies, the closing of factories, joint ventures with foreign enterprises, mergers and acquisitions, a substantial decline of industrial employment, and a broad denationalization became part of the everyday life of the country's economy and especially of the textile, machinery and equipment, auto-parts, and electronic-products industries. Therefore, although no deindustrialization took place, the changes produced a widespread reorganization of the industrial sector and the country's productive structure, with the formation of huge conglomerates led by international capital. As the primacy of large transnational enterprises was being consolidated, the space of private national capital was being compromised. Thus, in addition to the gradual concentration of industry typical of globalization, there was a denationalization of industrial elites. The extent of the penetration of the industrial elites into the new international economic order constituted not merely an economic but also a political break with the old model. (Diniz, 2011, p. 61)

Although the Brazilian industrialization depended on public investment and state enterprises, privatization and competition with international firms became a priority during the 1990s. It was during this period that the figure of the entrepreneur gained increasing relevance, and programs to develop entrepreneurship became more common.

The category of the entrepreneur in the Brazilian socioeconomic landscape

The Brazilian economy witnessed growth during the 2000s, bringing a halt to the economic stagnation of the 1980s and 1990s. One could adopt the argument that entrepreneurial activities are the main drivers of economic growth in post-industrial societies (see, for example, Audretsch, 2007), and think that entrepreneurship is behind

the Brazilian economic growth. After all, many Brazilians now identify as entrepreneurs, and the discourse that entrepreneurship brings economic development has gained the attention of business groups and policy circles.

However, a competing argument is that, in case of Brazil, it was not the entrepreneur or private business investments that stimulated economic growth in the 2000s, but rather growth was achieved mostly as a result of commodity exports, the construction sector, and employment in the service sector over the last 15 years which led to an insurgence in consumer spending (Carvalho, 2018; Morgan, 2018). Between 2002 and 2006, the international demand for Brazilian commodities soared amid rising prices (Luna & Klein, 2006). This boom in commodity exports balanced government budgets and increased GDP. Between 2006 and 2010, the government introduced a number of policies that redistributed income and reduced inequalities, including a steady increase in minimum wages, extended access to credit for low-income individuals, and the expansion of the Bolsa Família, which became one of the world's most famous cash transfer programs that lifted millions out of extreme poverty (Carvalho, 2018). In addition to this economic growth that increased the demand and employment in the service sector, the Brazilian government unveiled the Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (Growth Acceleration Program), better known as PAC, which increased the rate of public investment in industry and infrastructure. As the economist Laura de Carvalho put it,

[...] growth is only led by internal market from 2006 on. Between 2004 and 2005, a boom in exports led to growth, which could hardly be assigned to domestic economic policy. Between 2006 and 2010, one cannot ignore the effects of the rising minimum salary, the universalization of cash transfer programs, the expansion of credit, and public investment on the economic growth and the dynamism of labour market. (Carvalho, 2018, p. 42 – my translation)

By 2011, the price of commodities sharply declined, and the world was facing a recession. To make matters worse, in 2013, officials of the American Federal Reserve signalled the possibility of the US Central Bank increasing interest rates and reducing foreign security purchases. This signalling became known as the Tapering Talk, which had negative impacts on the financial and economic health of emerging economies (Poonam & Eichengreen, 2013). Brazil witnessed a dramatic capital flight, which quickly devalued its currency, and had a clear impact on the rise of prices (Carvalho, 2018, p. 63). Pressured by several business groups, the government of Dilma Rousseff changed the economic policy that was set in place in the preceding decade. The Nova Matriz Econômica (New Economic Matrix) decreased the rate of public investments, slashed corporate taxes, and subsidized private business in an effort to promote economic growth. Despite subsidies, tax cuts, and other incentives to private businesses, growth stalled, inflation increased, and unemployment rose abruptly during the mid-2010s (Carvalho, 2018). An economic and political crisis ensued. Social protests made international headlines. Dilma Rousseff was impeached, and Brazilians turned to anti-establishment alternatives in the polls. The right-wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro was elected in 2018 with an ultraorthodox neoliberal economic program that commended a minimalist state. Amid the socioeconomic and political crisis, the entrepreneur remained in the social imaginary as a leading actor who could bring economic growth. Even Bolsonaro's proposed governmental plan stated:

The current model of research and development in Brazil is over. There is no more space to base this important area of the modern economy on a centralized strategy, concentrated in Brasília and dependent exclusively on public resources.

United States, Israel, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan incentivize decentralized strategies. They create technological hubs where young researchers and scientists from local universities are stimulated to seek partnerships with private enterprises to transform ideas into products. This creates wealth, wellbeing and development

to all. [...] In all countries [Bolsonaro] visited there are these hubs. Including in the countries that have been leading the advancement of such agenda. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea place great emphasis in technical courses and STEM careers. Our intention is to create a favourable environment towards entrepreneurship in Brazil. As such, we will value national talents and attract others from abroad to create new technologies, jobs, and wages.

Universities, in all courses, must stimulate and teach entrepreneurship. Young people must leave university thinking of transforming their knowledge in pharmacy, engineering, nutrition, odontology, agronomy, etc., in products, business, wealth and opportunities. They must stop having a passive vision about their future. (Bolsonaro, 2018: 48 – my translation)

Entrepreneurship is portrayed as the opposite of idleness. Beyond an economic activity leading to economic development, entrepreneurship has turned into a revered way of life. The entrepreneur, more than an important economic actor, has become a social identity, that is, a marker of economic ingenuity and personal resilience.

Despite the fact that, for much of the twentieth century, it was public investment, industrial manufacturing, and agricultural exports that spearheaded Brazilian economic growth, current calls to reduce the state and establish an entrepreneurial society in Brazil seem to place excessive emphasis on the entrepreneur as the engine of economic growth. These calls ignore scholarship that questions the idea that a small state (or a reduced state interventionism) leads to thriving private businesses and innovations (Block, 2008; Chang, 2008; Evans, 1995). Recent research debunks the widespread myth that innovation and economic growth are due to the work and vision of lone entrepreneurs and private businesses by providing compelling evidence to suggest that even the paragon of entrepreneurial firm, Apple, builds on the state's groundwork and highly risky investments on revolutionary technologies such as GPS, touchscreen, and the Internet (Mazzucato, 2015, p. 93-119). The state, the argument goes, is crucial to create and shape markets, and it has been a key driver of innovation in

the nanotechnology, pharmaceutical, biotech, clean energy, and information technology industries. Where economic stagnation persists, the state seems to be reduced to the role of just fixing market failures and/or regulating markets.

In the case of Brazil, heavy public investments in the construction, naval, and energy industries led to higher rates of economic growth (Carvalho, 2018). More recently, the move to provide tax relief to the private sector in the hope that it would lead to investment in machinery, research and development, and innovative solutions proved a failed fiscal policy (Carvalho, 2018). Meanwhile, the private entrepreneurs have gained prevalence in the social imaginary of what and who drives growth in Brazil. For many years, Eike Batista, once the eighth-richest man in the world, embodied the entrepreneur persona: he was portrayed as the charismatic entrepreneur whose fierce capacity to identify business opportunities led to a meteoric wealth accumulation – from being absent in the Forbes list in 2007 to an impressive net worth of \$27 billion dollars in 2010 (Cuadros, 2016, p. 137). Eike also embodied the contradictions around entrepreneurship, such as the impressive creation and accumulation of wealth - facilitated by governmental investments and secured public contracts - in a country with historical and high levels of income and wealth inequality (Cuadros, 2016). Social mobility has never been widespread in Brazil, even as almost forty million were lifted from extreme poverty since the turn of the millennium; Brazil has an incredibly rigid class structure (Carvalho, 2018; Cuadros, 2016). And yet, icons of meritocratic social mobility, such as Eike Batista, have captivated the country, and the “myth of the lone entrepreneur”, as Mazzucato puts it (2015, p. 7), continues to gain traction.

Theoretical and analytical framework

There are a number of ways to explain the emergence of the category of entrepreneur in

the Global South. One could apply scholarly work that focus on the economic restructuring in the last decades of the twentieth century that placed entrepreneurship as a central solution to reoccurring economic crisis. Some political theorists, for example, discuss the rise of an “enterprise culture” in the 1980s that consists of an economic reconstruction, but also of a cultural re-engineering in which commercial enterprises and self-reliant individuals are the idealized models of economic and social organization (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991). More recently, Peck (2010) wrote about the complex and unstable process of “neoliberalization” in which pro-market rules and ideologies diffuse across the world, challenging traditional Keynesian modes of government. While some philosophers interpret the rise of the “neoliberal subject” as a social fact, and examine the roots of a utility-maximizing subject who behaves as if they were an enterprise (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Laval, 2007), sociologists study the ideological justifications that have accompanied the economic restructuring in the last decades of the twentieth century (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). This economic restructuring of the 1990s, according to Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), goes hand in hand with the rise of a particular type of economic subject, *l’homme connexioniste* (or networked man), oriented by moral norms that compel individuals to continuously invest in their social capital, personal development, and engage in networking. As the argument goes, firms are now expected to be innovative, flexible, adopt lean production and encourage teamwork, and abandon traditional bureaucratic hierarchies so common in the 1960s (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). In entrepreneurship studies, Audretsch (2007) brought attention to the rise of an “entrepreneurial society” characterized by a form of economic organization in which small innovative businesses displace the predominant role of big corporations as the motor of economic growth. Entrepreneurial societies, Audretsch argues, prioritize research and development, innovation, and commercialization of

knowledge. In the United States, for instance, a number of economic policies facilitate the shift from a managed economy to an entrepreneurial one. Examples would be the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, efforts to encourage private and public partnerships (PPPs) to create innovation clusters, and bills to incentivize the commercialization of research, such as the Bayh-Dole Act in 1980.

Alternatively, one could choose to interpret the rise of the category of entrepreneur as a by-product of policy changes. Since the 1980s, there is a growing conviction that a higher rate of entrepreneurial activity leads to economic development and growth, as well as social inclusion (Vianna, 2008). Consequently, government policy towards businesses changed the focus from regulating large corporations and restricting market concentration to enabling new and small businesses (Audretsch, 2007; Naudé, 2011). This policy shift occurred at all levels of the American government and in many other Western governments (Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004).

In the past decade, policymakers and development practitioners started to devote attention to a new development strategy inspired by the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach, a rising scholarly body of literature that sees entrepreneurship as embedded in a cultural, social and political context. Mostly taking a normative tone, the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach encourages policymakers and practitioners to focus on developing a socioeconomic environment that promotes and advances high-growth entrepreneurship¹ rather than simply increasing the overall number of new firms.

The concept of an entrepreneurial ecosystem alludes to a biotic community and its environment (Acs, Stam, Audretsch, & O'Connor, 2017). As such, it encompasses a multitude of interrelated entities that impact on entrepreneurship, either symbiotically or

¹ A common definition of high-impact or scale-up firms refer to those companies that grow 20% or more, either in terms of revenue or number of employees, for the past three consecutive years.

competitively. A widely accepted definition of entrepreneurship ecosystems is “a set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship” (Stam, 2015, p. 1765). A policy framework based on the notion of entrepreneurial ecosystems thus seeks to promote the socioeconomic, cultural, and material factors and actors that impact entrepreneurship (Stam & Spigel, 2017). Cultural elements broadly refer to the attitudes toward entrepreneurship, the ways of thinking that can prevent or encourage the founding of businesses; social elements encompass social networks through which entrepreneurs access resources such as financial and human capital, knowledge and information; and material factors include the infrastructure necessary for founding and developing businesses, such as support organizations, regulatory policies, urban infrastructures, accessibility to local markets (Spigel, 2017; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). It is worth noting that this literature on entrepreneurship ecosystems focuses on understanding which of these factors promote scale-ups or high-growth start-ups, that is, those firms that show great potential to grow (Acs et al., 2017; Stam & Spigel, 2017). This focus on context, however, is not unique to this body of scholarship.

Since the late 1980s, the increasing attention to the context of the process of entrepreneurship essentially replaced the research tradition that looked mainly at the subjective traits and behaviours of entrepreneurs as ultimate driving factors of value-creation (Thornton, 1999). As a result of this shift in focus, scholarship on “industrial districts”, “industrial clusters”, “innovative systems”, and “business ecosystems” gained prominence, and served as antecedents to the entrepreneurial ecosystems approach²

² The industrial districts literature emphasizes the industrial division of labour among firms. The clusters approach concentrates more on the interrelationship between cooperating and competing firms within a delimited territory. Clusters of firms can increase the competitive advantage of new ventures and serve as catalysts to entrepreneurs. That is

(Acs et al., 2017; Stam & Spigel, 2017; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). These studies are inspired by an ecological thinking, that is, by a way of understanding contextual environment as a system composed by interdependent societal and economic factors and actors that can be combined in such a way as to increase value creation and other desired outcomes (Acs et al., 2017).

Prominent organizations such as OECD and the Kauffman Foundation have adopted the entrepreneurial ecosystems approach as a new type of development strategy (Spigel & Harrison, 2018), which helps the diffusion of policies that focus on promoting entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. With the widespread adoption of the entrepreneurial ecosystem framework and the rising academic literature that seeks to inform policymakers on where they should focus to promote economic growth, the

because the presence of other firms facilitates entrepreneurs' access to opportunities and resources such as knowledge spillovers, specialized workforce, technologies and other inputs. Scholarship on innovative systems investigates the connection between firms and knowledge hubs. This latter literature examines how entrepreneurs draw on knowledge produced by universities and other research centres, and how this networking activity facilitate access to valuable resources for innovation, such as a trained workforce (for a brief review of these literatures, see Acs et al., 2017; Stam & Spigel, 2017; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Industrial districts, cluster approach, innovation systems, and business ecosystems all provide a systemic view of the factors and actors that impact start-ups and development of firms within a region. The same can be said about entrepreneurial ecosystem approach. However, there are substantial differences between the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature and scholarship on industrial districts, clusters, and innovation systems. First, the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach emphasizes the role of entrepreneurs not only in creating the ecosystem, but as crucial actors within. Without actors' ability to access and use available resources, an ecosystem would be largely a pool of untapped opportunities. Second, the entrepreneurial ecosystems approach stresses that increasing access to knowledge about entrepreneurship is also an essential factor that promote entrepreneurship. Thus, learning about entrepreneurship is a fundamental step to encourage entrepreneurship (see Spigel & Harrison, 2018 for a detailed comparison of these theoretical literatures).

entrepreneur has gained solid popularity in policy circles. As Audretsch say, citing Heike Grimm, “entrepreneurs have emerged as the local heroes of the globalized economy” (2007, p. 185).

Although looking at policies that seek to encourage entrepreneurship is a possible way to make sense of the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship in Brazil, I argue that focusing on the actual strategies of organizations and programs that promote entrepreneurship is a more promising analytical approach for a few reasons. First, policy has to be enacted in order to be effective, and organizations are important actors that do so. Organizations are entities that embody collective action with specific strategies and procedures to accomplish instrumental goals. Because they are “dual structures”, organizations consist of resources and “cultural schemas”, that is, they embody a set of values and beliefs, not just technical regulations and procedures, which end up creating a distinctive organizational identity or logic (Acker, 1990; Selznick, 1948; Sewell, 1992). Organizations are thus a suitable unit of analysis to study the diffusion of particular policies and their underlying body of knowledge and categories, as they can be a carrier of institutional norms, cognitive beliefs and categories, and regulations (Scott, 2008). Policy doesn’t diffuse randomly, and the stature of some organizations, in terms of capital, reputation, or even geographical presence, can increase the reach of diffusion of these policies. What is more, tracing back the formation of organizations allows the identification of the institutional regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive frameworks that give rise to sets of values and rationalized beliefs that form organizations (Scott, 2008). Second, organizations and programs offer a range of content and resources that help people learn about entrepreneurship and develop their businesses. Organizations are thus important channels through which many individuals come in contact with knowledge about

entrepreneurship that convey specific views about the category of the entrepreneur. Finally, as a result of organizations and programs that provide support (material and otherwise) to individuals, the dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur is harnessed to a system of resource distribution that benefit some more than others. Resources and cultural schemas are intrinsically related to the social and symbolic capital that some groups access through organizations. The analysis of organizations thus allows a unique understanding of how the dissemination of a new socioeconomic category is interrelated with a system of resource allocation and incentive structure.

Hence, the main questions that I seek to answer in this thesis are: *What strategies do the main organizations and programs that promote entrepreneurship in Brazil deploy to disseminate the category of entrepreneurship, and where does this category come from in terms of institutional origins? How do people experience this “new” category? Lastly, how do different programs and organizations structure incentives and distribute rewards, and how do these intersect with existing social inequalities?* To answer them, I rely on a number of theoretical and methodological frameworks that are adjusted to the idiosyncrasies of each case study - Empretec, Endeavor, and Online Networks of Support - and that will be further discussed in each article. For now, I'll briefly introduce and justify my theoretical choices.

As Empretec relies on a body of knowledge that was first introduced in the 1950s, it is important to understand the emergence and resilience of programs that seek to change the behaviour of economic agents. The first article thus draws inspiration from the literatures of policy diffusion (Coleman, 2012; Stone, 2004; 2012) and institutional analysis to make sense of the institutional origins of the traits approach to entrepreneurship and its underlying view of the category of entrepreneurs, which continues to diffuse and enjoy legitimacy despite mounting academic critique.

Endeavor encourages a particular kind of entrepreneur, the high-impact entrepreneur, or individuals with a fast-growing, potentially high-revenue business. The Brazilian branch has developed unique strategies to accelerate the formation of entrepreneurial ecosystems and encourage high-impact entrepreneurship in the country. Aside selecting and providing support to select individuals, this affiliate produces a number of studies and metrics to influence policy and decision making by a number of authorities, ranging from university to municipal government decision makers. Science and technology studies thus provide conceptual tools to think of entrepreneurs not as naturally occurring economic subjects, but as the outcome of a “performative work” in which knowledge making has a central role (Callon, 1998, 2006, 2010; Latour, 2005; Çalışkan & Callon, 2009). The concept of “translation” is particularly helpful for making sense of how Endeavor enrolls and mobilizes different “actants” (a concept that highlights the importance of non-human beings) to engage with its agenda, worldviews, and categories (Callon, 1986). Additionally, drawing inspiration from relational inequality theory (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019), the investigation of Endeavor’s strategies to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Brazil brings attention to the organizational mechanisms that reproduce durable inequalities.

Finally, Online Networks of Support for women entrepreneurs is a recent source of support for women who wish to start or develop a business in Brazil. They carry out substantially different strategies to provide support for a group that is traditionally marginalized from formal forms of support such as banks and organizations that provide assistance to businesses. Because ONS is a completely new form of support provision that mainly operates online, different from Enpretec and Endeavor, I build on the notions of “organizational logic” and “dual structure” (Acker, 1990; Sewell, 1992) to emphasize the particularity of the organizational practices that ONS carry out, but also

the symbolic content about entrepreneurship that is posted on social media on a daily basis. This conceptual and theoretical framework advances an analysis of the organizational and discursive practices that create cultural images about female entrepreneurship, and structures women's opportunities and access to resources.

As previously stated, these different theoretical frameworks were chosen to reflect the particularities of each organization and program. However, in combination, they allow to make sense of the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur through an organizational lens. As I discuss in this thesis, the identity of entrepreneur is a social construct, and part of a development agenda focused on bringing economic prosperity through the establishment of new businesses and the promotion of a culture of innovation and opportunity-seeking. It is true that there is substantial literature on the emergence of an enterprise culture (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991), on the governmentality aspects of projects that promote specific economic and entrepreneurial behaviours, such as self-reliance (Rankin, 2001; Williams, 1999), and on the specific meanings of the concept of entrepreneur in a neoliberal context (Marttila, 2013). But there has been much less interest in the sort of sociocultural change brought by organizational efforts to promote entrepreneurship in the Global South, and how that impacts distribution of resources and the structure of incentives.

What began as a research project to understand the institutional origins and the organizational practices that made the category of entrepreneur increasingly popular in Brazil, soon also became a quest for understanding how different organizations that promote entrepreneurship distribute resources and impact social inequalities. The diffusion of the entrepreneur as an economic category is not without social and material consequences. For a country with historical high levels of inequality, to portray entrepreneurship as an avenue for economic development raises the question of how the

promotion of entrepreneurship impacts the distribution of resources and structures of incentives.

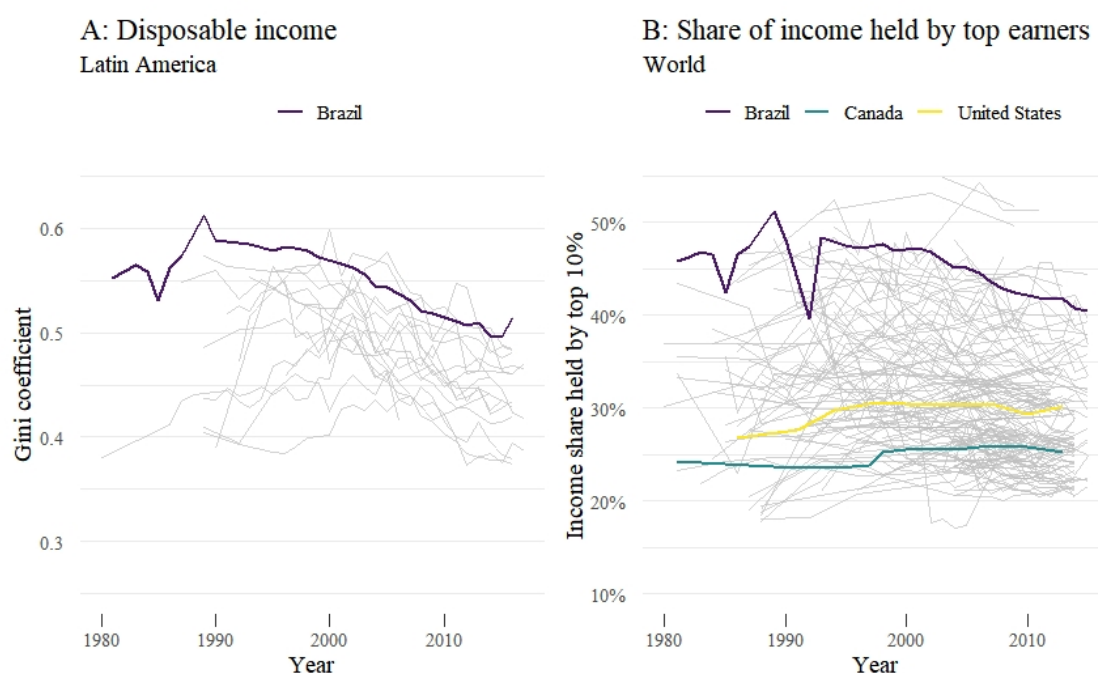
A growing number of economists and sociologists are paying attention to growing levels of socioeconomic inequality. For example, Richard Reeves (2017) argues that the American upper middle class has created a kind of “glass floor” and shielded itself from intergenerational downward mobility by hoarding opportunities for their offspring (through exclusionary zoning, unfair legacy college admissions, and informal allocation of internships), and adopting and reinforcing meritocratic ideals even when the opportunities to develop skills and attributes that are valued in the market are distributed quite unequally. Indeed, despite the fact that Americans and much of the Western world still believe in meritocracy (Solt, Hu, Hudson, Song, & Yu, 2016; Mijs, 2018a), Reeves provides compelling evidence that the United States has a rigid class structure with very little relative intergenerational mobility³. In Canada, intergenerational mobility has been declining for recent birth cohorts (Statistics Canada, 2020). In the United Kingdom, a “class ceiling” thwarts upward mobility into prestigious occupations (Friedman & Laurison, 2019). Even those who manage to breakthrough the barriers, end up earning a lower income than those coming from upper

³ Reeves (2017) differentiates relative and absolute intergenerational mobility. The latter refers to one’s net worth compared to their parent’s net worth when they were the same age, while the former refers to one’s position in the income distribution compared to their parent’s position in the distribution. To exemplify, if a male in his twenties has an income of fifty thousand Canadian dollars, and his father made only forty thousand, adjusted for inflation, the former would be better off than the latter, and have gone up the ladder in absolute terms. However, if this same male making fifty thousand dollars today is placed in the bottom half of the income distribution, while his father’s forty thousand dollars income a generation ago placed him above the bottom half, the person making fifty thousand dollars today would have faced a downward mobility in relative terms.

class backgrounds. This all means that, in what Audretsch (2007) called “entrepreneurial societies”, increasing inequality has become an undeniable fact.

In Brazil, income inequality is much more conspicuous and substantial, ranking among the highest in the world (Figure 5). In the past fifteen years, policies targeting inequality, such as cash transfers and growing real minimum wages, focused mainly on the bottom of the distribution. The middle 40% was mostly left out of redistributive policies, even as their wages have been stagnant for decades (Morgan, 2018). It is in this context that the category of entrepreneur disseminates in the country. I argue that an analysis of the practices of organizations that promote entrepreneurship highlights how the dissemination of the socioeconomic category of entrepreneur is intrinsically linked to a system of distribution of resources and opportunities.

Figure 5: Inequality of income in Brazil



Data sources: SEDLAC (CEDLAS and The World Bank) based on microdata from household surveys (chart A); World Bank Poverty and Equity database (chart B). Both datasets retrieved from: Our World in Data, <https://ourworldindata.org/income-inequality>.

Note: A higher Gini index indicates a more unequal distribution of income. The estimates of income are not necessarily fully comparable because definitions of income may change, but the World Bank dataset

is presently one of the most reputable sources regarding income inequality. See PovcalNet (<http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/WhatIsNew.aspx>) for further statistical definitions and methodology. I have included Canada and the United States in 5B for comparative purposes. The dataset used for 5A does not have data on the Gini coefficient for Canada or the United States.

On method

This thesis falls in the tradition of qualitative research, which is more appropriate to unveil practices, processes, meanings, and experiences (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2010). As previously stated, this thesis consists of investigating the organizational practices that disseminate the category of entrepreneur, analyzing people's experiences and meanings they attach to this category, and understanding how organizational efforts to encourage entrepreneurship impact the distribution of resources and incentive structures.

Each organization studied is fundamentally different in terms of institutional origin, organizational blueprint and practices, and targets of intervention, requiring a range of methodological strategies and techniques to gather and analyze data in order to highlight the particularities of each organization's efforts to encourage entrepreneurship and disseminate the category of entrepreneur. It is important to clarify that certain methodological strategies and techniques were not chosen *a priori*, but emerged and were adapted as initial findings revealed organizational practices and characteristics that required attention. The methods used for each article are described in detail in the articles themselves. I give a cursory overview here in order to describe the overall methodological orientation of the research, and provide a sense of the decisions made in the course of the fieldwork.

In the first article, I investigate the emergence and continuing diffusion of the theoretical knowledge behind Empretec, the traits approach, which focuses on identifying behavioural traits that impact economic outcomes, and which are now portrayed as the fundamental characteristics or competencies of entrepreneurs. I

collected archival documents and historical research on the role of different organizations involved with funding, designing or promoting the traits approach. The analysis of these documents and secondary scholarship allows for the identification of the worldview and categories, agents, and organizational links behind Empretec. It also gives insight into the mechanism of diffusion of Empretec to the Global South. I conducted interviews with certified trainers who provided information about Empretec's training program and other resources offered. I requested to attend Empretec's workshop sessions, but access was denied, a difficulty that other researchers also report (cf. Melo, 2008). Despite not being granted access to the workshops, I interviewed 15 participants who agreed to talk about their experiences with the workshop and how they feel it has impacted their lives. All interviews were carried between 2015 and 2016, and lasted 50-70 minutes. Interviews were voluntary, and identities kept confidential.

For the second case study, initial interviews with key informants suggested that Endeavor Brazil became a celebrated affiliate because it carried out innovative strategies to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country, such as producing a vast array of content about entrepreneurship, and offering online resources for the general public in an online platform. Methodologically, this second article focused on identifying Endeavor Brazil's translational and performative practices to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem and constitute a particular type of economic subject, the high-impact entrepreneur in the country.

There were three phases of data collection and analysis. Through semi-structured interviews with key informant staff (N= 4), I first gathered information about Endeavor's organizational structure and the evolution of strategies to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem and constitute entrepreneurial subjects in the country. These interviews happened between October 2015 and May 2016, and lasted approximately

60-80 minutes. Simultaneously, I retrieved annual reports from Endeavor Global and the Brazilian affiliate's websites, which were coded in NVivo for the types of strategies and interventions that Endeavor claims to implement, the partnerships that Endeavor Brazil engages with, and the values and morality that Endeavor imputes to high-impact entrepreneurship. A second phase of data collection consisted of gathering Endeavor's research reports about entrepreneurship in Brazil. The analysis of these documents identified the main issues addressed by Endeavor Brazil, and their main strategies and prescriptions for the development of entrepreneurship in the country. Here the focus is to identify how knowledge and other nonhuman devices mobilize different organizations and institutions to develop ecosystems. Finally, to understand who is granted access to the resources provided by Endeavor, I gathered demographic information such as gender and socioeconomic status of the individuals who are selected by Endeavor Brazil, and their firms ($N = 178$). I also gathered information about the select team of Endeavor Brazil's mentors ($N = 12$). This data is publicly available at Endeavor's profile webpages and Bloomberg executives' profile webpages. To analyze people's experiences after being selected by Endeavor, I sent 15 interview requests, but only three consented to interview. Although in small number, these key informant interviews yielded information about the selection process and how this experience impacted their view about entrepreneurship and about themselves.

In the third article, I purposely selected the four largest ONS (in terms of Facebook followers, a proxy for online popularity). I started data collection by inviting the founders and/or vice-presidents of each ONS for an interview. This yielded five interviews, each consisting of 60-90 minute conversations, semi-structured by a pre-established schedule. In this first stage of data collection, I was interested in the history and mission of each ONS. As such, I invited research participants to talk about the

motivation behind founding the ONS, and how the network provides support for women business owners or those who wish to enterprise. These semi-structured interviews produced information on the history and organizational blueprint of each ONS.

Preliminary results indicated that Facebook is a major form of disseminating information and providing support for women entrepreneurs. As such, I built a dataset with all Facebook posts of each ONS from the beginning of their operation until the last day of 2017.

In a second phase of data collection I coded the content of a total of 6362 Facebook posts from all four ONS according to pre-established criteria presented in Table 2, which allowed an initial exploration of the information (and other resources) that is posted online.

Table 2: Code scheme for content analysis of ONS Facebook posts

Organizing criteria	Rationale of the organizing criteria
1. Content of post	1. What the post is about, that is, the theme of the post.
2. Origin of post	2. If the post is original content or shared from other channels.
3. Source of shared posts	3. Where the shared material comes from.

I then coded the content of the posts according to the following coding procedure. Firstly, I sought to identify main code “themes”, that is, a set of distinct thematic meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I subsequently used the themes that emerged in the first phase as “retrieval codes” (Olsen, 2012) to classify all online posts of all four ONS. This allows comparing online activity across each organization. I further broke down the most common types of content into other subsets of code in order to have a more in-depth understanding of what types of resources and symbolic material each ONS convey.

In regard to offline events, I curated all events organized by each ONS, and classified them according to the descriptions provided in the invitations: a workshop, a

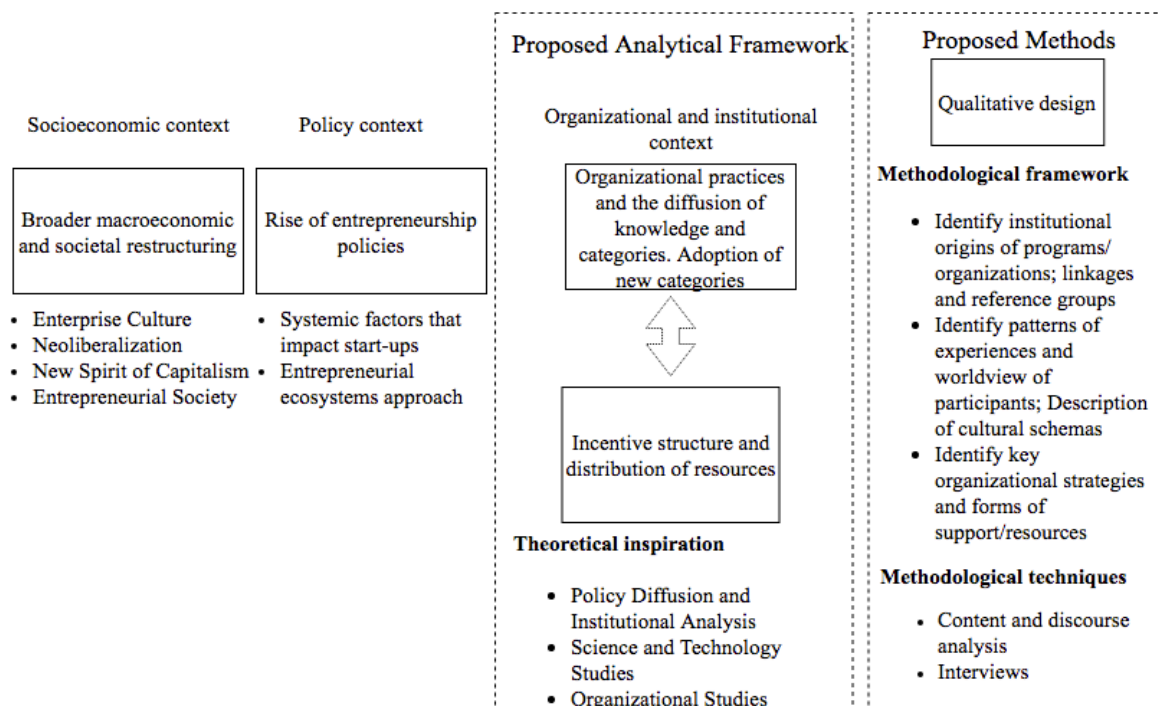
peer-based mentoring reunion, a conference-style gathering, or any other type of offline event. This allows for a better understanding of what type of offline activities ONS coordinate in order to provide support for women entrepreneurs. I had the opportunity to attend three events in 2016. One was a conference followed by a networking activity. The other was a session of a workshop on entrepreneurship (in which participants learned what is entrepreneurship, and basic tips to add value to their products and services). Finally, I attended a fair on entrepreneurship hosted by Sebrae in 2016, which had emphatic support from three ONS. I do acknowledge that my participant observations were not systematic, making them mainly anecdotal. The reason I did not engage in a systematic ethnographic participant observation was due to a budgetary constraint: these events are sparse in time, making difficult to afford travel and lodging arrangements. However, my limited observations generated a superficial idea of what topics are addressed in these events, as well as how support and information is provided in an offline setting. This content analysis allows a comparative understanding of how ONS allocate resources and provide information while disseminating a very specific economic category: the identity of entrepreneur, most specifically of women entrepreneurs.

The interviews and data collection carried out for all three articles followed ethical procedures agreed upon by the University of Ottawa (i.e., research consent, options of anonymity, voice recording of interviews, etc.). All interviews were coded using NVivo to identify core themes. The coding procedure followed the flexible coding approach, which consists of first identifying the main stories in the data, and then reducing the data into analytical codes that can be applied across the cases to increase reliability (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Instead of abiding to the central prescriptions of ground theory, such as saturation and inductive analysis, previous scholarship sensitizes

the coding procedure (Deterding & Waters, 2018). In this thesis, the coding of interviews and organizational data was informed by organizational discourse analysis, a theoretical approach that views organizational actions as an ontological activity that constructs or performs reality (Chia, 2000). It means that I coded the data to highlight how organizations and individuals create moral boundaries, establish names, labels, and classifications that have constitutive effects and shape the way we think about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviours. Special attention was given to the resources offered by organizations or received by individuals who participate in these organizations, and to the codes of behaviour, scripts, and morality associated with entrepreneurship.

In Figure 6, I provide a schematic view of the theoretical, analytical and methodological choices that inform the three case studies that compose this thesis.

Figure 6: Schematic representation of the analytical, theoretical, and methodological choices



Thesis structure

This thesis consists of three articles that, together, provide an overview of how the category of entrepreneur disseminate through organizations that promote entrepreneurship in Brazil, how it goes hand in hand with a system of distribution of resources and opportunities, and how people experience this new category in a country with already high rates of entrepreneurial activity. The articles do not overlap but allow a critical comprehension of what has become a popular development agenda and practice: the promotion of entrepreneurship and the engineering of entrepreneurial subjects in order to lead to economic growth. I am the sole author of all three articles.

In what follows, I briefly describe the three articles that compose this thesis.

The first article, *Empretec and the quest for behavioural changes in the Global South: The diffusion of the category of the entrepreneur*, sheds historical light on the institutional context of the emergence of theories behind programs that seek to promote the constitution of entrepreneurial behaviours in the Global South. It invites the reader to view the entrepreneur not as the natural embodiment of special traits and behaviours, but as social category embedded in a body of knowledge and set of values gradually institutionalized into developmental policies and programs, which disseminate a specific understanding of entrepreneurship.

Advancing discussions about how different contexts shape the way we understand entrepreneurship (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2014; Rehn et al., 2013; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Welter, 2011; Zafirovski, 1999), I propose to investigate not the current socio-political context, but to trace back the institutional origins and the diffusion of behavioural programs that promote entrepreneurial

behaviours (and a popular understanding of who is an entrepreneur) in emerging and developing countries. Firstly, this opens possibilities to explore where popular ideas about entrepreneurship come from, and second, it helps us reason why and how a particular understanding of the category of entrepreneur continues to diffuse despite academic scepticism towards the theories behind it.

Around the 1960s and 1970s, research on entrepreneurship was mostly concerned with identifying the subjective characteristics and behaviours associated with founding businesses and economic innovation. However, the search for the personality traits of entrepreneurs encountered considerable criticism in the 1980s, when researchers became increasingly interested in the objective factors that impact entrepreneurial rates (Gartner, 1988; Thornton, 1999). Nevertheless, behavioural programs based on the traits approach remain quite popular, and continue to train a large number of people across many countries. Taking the case of Empretec, a world-renowned behavioural program to promote entrepreneurship in the Global South, the article reveals i) the institutional origins of the theoretical framework behind behavioural programs, ii) how these programs endure and continue to diffuse despite critique to its theoretical foundation disseminating specific ideas about entrepreneurship, and iii) how participants of Empretec understand and report experiencing this category.

Drawing inspiration from the literatures on institutional analysis and policy diffusion, I gather and analyze archival and secondary data to document the rise and institutionalization of the traits approach behind Empretec. I then identify the institutional mechanisms that enable its continuing legitimacy and diffusion, both across different institutional spheres (from academia to policy circles,) and then to the Global South. Finally, interviews with both Empretec trainers and trainees (participants),

provide qualitative evidence on how the category of entrepreneur (and the value system and knowledge associated with it) disseminated by Empretec is adopted and experienced by individuals in the Global South, particularly Brazil.

I found that behavioural programs, and its underlying knowledge about the behaviours of highly motivated individuals, emerged as a response to concerns about the economic behaviour of marginalized communities. In the beginning, the traits approach relied on stereotypical and normative views about racialized minorities, and as time passed, it received increasing criticism within academia. I argue that there are three mechanisms enabling the continuing diffusion of Empretec and its subjacent knowledge despite academic critique.

First, the institutionalization of the traits approach into programs such as Empretec cannot be understood without reference to influential and highly connected individuals who open channels of diffusion from academia to policy circles in international organizations. Ideas don't flow randomly, but the chances of a body of knowledge - one that is specifically under threat in academia - to be institutionalized into policy depend on channels opened between different knowledge networks. Being hosted and funded by powerful Northern institutions (Harvard university and Ford Foundation) gives the traits approach privileged access to individuals who navigate across institutional spheres, being later introduced to policy circles. Second, as knowledge is increasingly institutionalized, controversial norms and ideas that can be interpreted as racist or prejudicial (in this case, ideas about the lack of motivation from particular marginalized groups) are institutionally erased, that is, they no longer explicitly appear in training or advertising materials. This allows transforming the category of entrepreneur from a possibly contested classification to a universal, technocratic, and somewhat neutral set of prescriptive traits. Potential contestation

based on structural critiques is undermined a priori. Finally, an important mechanism that facilitates the diffusion of Empretec to the Global South is the legitimacy signalling of the expert system behind this program. There is not only a continuous reference to the organizations and renowned individuals involved both with the traits approach and its institutionalization into entrepreneurship policies, but only renowned domestic organizations can petition to host Empretec. This multi-layered legitimacy signalling only reinforces the validity of the knowledge (and all categories) behind Empretec.

Interviews with participants of Empretec illustrate how Brazilians adopt and experience the category of entrepreneur. The diffusion of the values systems associated with entrepreneur happens not only across temporal and geographical borders. The morality associated with entrepreneurship, as conveyed by Empretec, disseminates to other spheres of life: from business administration to the management of household life. The category of entrepreneur thus is at the centre of policy-driven efforts to bring about a cultural and behavioural revolution in the South.

In the next article, entitled *Social dynamics and implications of organizational efforts to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems: Evidence from a case study in Brazil*, I engage with a rising body of scholarship that emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurial ecosystems to economic growth and development. Most of this recent literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems seeks to identify what socioeconomic factors impact business founding rates and scale-up firms, taking a prescriptive tone to inform policymakers (Alvedalen & Boshma, 2017; Cavallo, Ghezzi, & Balocco, 2018; Mack & Mayer, 2016; Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2017). I advance this literature by exploring existing organizational practices that try to create entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South.

The second article of this thesis thus reports on a case study of Endeavor, perhaps the most renowned international non-governmental organization invested in the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems and high-impact entrepreneurship in emerging economies. Although it operates in several countries, little is known about Endeavor within the entrepreneurial ecosystems literature. And much less is known about its organizational practices to promote high-impact entrepreneurship and encourage ambitious entrepreneurs.

Drawing conceptual and methodological inspiration from science and technology studies (Callon, 1986, 1998, 2006, 2010; Latour, 2005; Çalışkan & Callon, 2009), I explore Endeavor's strategic practices to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem and encourage the ambitious entrepreneur in Brazil, that is, what it does to promote high-impact entrepreneurship. Beyond that, inspired by relational inequality theory (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019), I examine who are the individuals, demographically speaking, that receive support from this organization, and how that constitutes a particular category of entrepreneur? And finally, what sorts of incentive structure and resource distribution does the promotion of entrepreneurial ecosystems lead to in Brazil? The reason I focus on the Brazilian affiliate is because it selects and assists the largest number of entrepreneurs in the world (Endeavor 2016a). Endeavor Brazil has become the poster child of innovative practices to promote these types of ecosystems.

The findings of this second study suggest that there are two main practices that the Brazilian affiliate carries out to promote entrepreneurship. First, it constitutes a distinguished community of entrepreneurs, and disseminates meritocratic stories that omit and naturalize visible socioeconomic disparities in Brazil. And second, through knowledge production and mobilization, Endeavor Brazil seeks to reframe the role of

several institutions (such as city governance, higher education, cultural values) to align them with market-driven imperatives. This suggests that efforts to create entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South exacerbate inequality of opportunities as it favours a particular segment of society, namely men from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. But what is more striking is that Endeavor engages in efforts to reengineer institutions by conforming them to meritocratic and market-driven values, largely abandoning alternative non market-based aspirations.

The second article provides evidence that efforts to promote high-impact entrepreneurship disproportionately favours men. I then became interested both in the gender disparity in support systems and in the gendered identities different organizations encourage. I decided to investigate popular sources of support and information to women entrepreneurs. As such, the third article, *Online Networks of Support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil: isomorphic practices, information redundancy, and the legitimization of inequality*, emerged out of a curiosity to learn about support systems catered to women entrepreneurs.

Brazil is known for its high rates of women's entrepreneurship activity (GEM Brasil, 2017; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010). However, women's ventures tend to concentrate in sectors that are labour intensive, highly competitive, and prone to high rates of business closures, such as retail and services (GEM Brasil, 2017). Access to resources and valuable information is thus essential to the establishment and development of start-ups. It is long established in the academic literature that social networks are a fundamental source of information and other resources that impact the economic outcomes of firms and entrepreneurial activity (Birley, 1985; Birley, cromie, & Myers, 1991; Friedland & Alford 1991; Granovetter, 2005; Hurlbert, 1991; Shaw,

2006; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010; Smith, Smith, & Shaw, 2017; Uzzi, 1997). In Brazil, women tend to rely much more on their social networks than on formal organizations for support (GEM Brasil, 2016; Smith-Hunter and Leone, 2010). Research has also provided substantial evidence that women's and men's social networks have different structural characteristics, which lead to different access to resources and information (Neumeyer, Santos, Caetano, & Kalbfleisch, 2019; Renzulli, Aldrich, & Moody, 2000).

During informal conversations with women who participated in Sebrae's Empretec, I learned about online groups that promote female entrepreneurship in Brazil. These groups are growing in popularity, and women increasingly seek them out to find inspiration, suggestions, resources, and even to network with other women entrepreneurs. In this third article, I shift attention to this recent source of support, which I call Online Networks of Support (ONS, here after). These are women-led organizations with the mandate to promote female entrepreneurship⁴ in Brazil. They produce and share a range of content about entrepreneurship daily, and even though they coordinate offline activities such as workshops and conferences, social media has become a preferred platform of intervention. It is through sites such as Facebook that ONS create forums in which women network and address concerns pertaining their business, as well as learn about entrepreneurship and related content.

⁴ I am aware that gender is a complex social construct. There has been an increasing discussion about the exclusionary aspects of the dichotomous categories of female/male and women/men, which erases the existence of transgender and intersex individuals. However, organizations that promote entrepreneurship continue to use these labels. I will also adopt such terms simply to reflect these organizations' goals and mission. As such, for the purposes of this thesis, female entrepreneurship mostly denotes an economic activity carried out by self-identified women entrepreneurs.

Inspired by organizational studies that bring attention to the duality of organizations and their ‘logic’ (Acker, 1990; Sewell, 1992; see also Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), I explore both the organizational practices of ONS to support women entrepreneurs, and the symbolic content regarding female entrepreneurship that informs such practices. I intentionally selected four of the most popular ONS (in terms of number of Facebook followers) as case studies, and compared their online and offline activities, as well as their content intended to motivate and inspire women entrepreneurs. In doing so, the article provides an exploratory view of the sorts of support and identities these new online support systems promote.

The findings suggest that ONS primarily provide support through social media accounts by producing and promoting content related to entrepreneurship. Most of the content posted are invitations to participate in offline events coordinated by the ONS itself. For the most part, these events consist of peer-mentoring groups or conference-style gatherings. The second most common type of online posts is inspirational material, which largely convey meritocratic ideas in the form of motivational phrases, iconic images, or suggestions for inspirational self-improvement material.

When it comes to written pieces about entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial business and role models, the findings suggest a certain redundancy and circularity of ideas. It means that different ONS post strikingly similar types of content, which could eventually lead to information redundancy. Also, ONS repeatedly share articles from similar sources; usually mainstream media such as business magazines and news outlets, but also from a small number of alternative blogs dedicated to topics of business management and entrepreneurship. Despite feedback during interviews indicating a certain amount of competition among ONS, they occasionally share content between one another.

It is true that ONS also organize offline events, most of them in the form of conferences or peer-mentoring sessions. However, these offline events are more sporadic in time (some are monthly while others are annual events) and tend to be geographically concentrated (usually in high density urban areas). To cater to audiences in remote areas, ONS established affiliated local networks led by women who are usually named “ambassadors” or “representatives”, all of them working voluntarily, committed to the cause of promoting female entrepreneurship.

Considering its increasing popularity, ONS has become an alternative source of information and resources. Compared to the more material and intensive support provided by organizations and programs such as Endeavor and Empretec, ONS seems to promote and diffuse similar views about entrepreneurship and the category of entrepreneur, one that is based on meritocratic ideals, without necessarily addressing the deep-rooted structural inequalities that women face in the country. Indeed, there is an effort to “empower women”, as the mandates of ONS suggest (and sometimes explicitly claim), but this empowerment is understood as a subjective and behavioural transformation, one that is market oriented. However, Brazil’s economic structure is historically racist and sexist in which visible minorities are faced with unequal access to resources and valuable information (Costa, 2018; de Souza, 2018; Loureiro, Galvao Carneiro, & Sachsida, 2004; Peggy, 1999).

Together, the three articles offer an analysis of how the category of entrepreneur diffuses through organizations that promote entrepreneurship. Instead of presenting the entrepreneur as a given, an almost natural identity, the thesis offers an analysis of how organizational practices and symbolic content disseminate a particular economic category which is later adopted and inform economic behaviour. As such, it becomes

clear that economic categories do not emerge and diffuse in a vacuum. Instead, the diffusion of category of entrepreneur goes hand in hand with a system of resources allocation, which favours a specific segment of society while dismissing calls for social justice. The dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in the South is a historical and organizational process with socioeconomic consequences. Table 3 presents an overview of the articles that compose this thesis.

Table 3: Overview of the articles that compose this thesis

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3
Object of study	• Empretec	• Endeavor	• Online Networks of Support (ONS)
Research questions	• What are institutional origins of the theoretical framework behind behavioural programs? • How do behavioural programs endure and continue to diffuse despite critique to its theoretical foundations? • How do participants of Empretec understand and experience the category of entrepreneur?	• What strategic practices are carried out to construct and sustain EEs in Brazil? • How and what individuals are interpellated as ambitious entrepreneurs? • What sorts of structure of incentives and distribution of resources does the promotion of EE in the Brazil involve?	• What are the primary activities and resources offered by each ONS? • What beliefs and ideas about female entrepreneurship do ONS convey? • How do the four cases of ONS compare, both in terms of organizational strategies to provide support, and the symbolic content produced?
Theoretical framework	• Institutional analysis • Policy diffusion theory	• Science and technology studies • Relational inequality theory	• Organizational studies
Dataset	• Archival data (Ford Foundation) • Historical research (on Ford Foundation) • Interview with Empretec participants (N = 15)	• Interviews with Endeavor staff and director (N = 4) • Interview with Endeavor entrepreneurs (N = 3)	• Facebook posts (N = 6362) • (Limited) participant observation • Interview with network founders

	• Interview with Empretec trainers (N = 3)	• Biographical data collected from Endeavor website	(N = 5)
Temporal range of data	-	• 2000-2018	• 2011-2017
Findings	• Knowledge subjacent to the category of entrepreneur dates back from the Cold War • Specific views on entrepreneurship (mostly based on individual and meritocratic ideals) have privileged access to policy circles • Institutional erasure of controversial meanings and the legitimacy signalling from expert systems facilitate the diffusion of traits approach to the South • Individuals who take part on Empretec readily adopt this category, and use it as a moral guide to conduct their business and private life	• Endeavor performs a distinguished community of entrepreneurs - composed mostly by middle-class men – while disseminating meritocratic stories that ignore or naturalize inequality of opportunities in Brazil • Through knowledge production and mobilization, Endeavor Brazil reframes the role of several institutions (such as city governance, higher education, cultural values) to align them with market-driven imperatives.	• The four most popular ONS offer similar type of content and events to women entrepreneurs. This indicates a certain level of institutional isomorphism in alternative support systems for women in Brazil. • The type of content shared by ONS repeats over time, and ONS source their shared content from similar sources which indicates redundancy in the type of knowledge they offer. • Inspirational material (mostly of meritocratic gist) is among the most common type of content shared while little to no material resources are available.

Significance

These studies illuminate how the category of the entrepreneur disseminates, and how it is experienced in a country that didn't have these terms in ordinary language not long

ago. The biggest contribution of this thesis is to help us understand how the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur is associated with a value system and a system of resource distribution that reinforces and legitimizes inequality. People learn about entrepreneurship and adopt new social identities in an organizational context that allocates resources and provides support. This is important because, as we will see in the following articles, the categories that are taught and disseminated by these organizations are based on meritocratic ideals, virtually minimizing (if not outright justifying) inequality of access to resources and information. As such, what is thought to save the economy end up reinforcing the *status quo*.

The implications of these findings are significant. Theoretically, they advance our understanding of the role of social categories in reinforcing long standing socioeconomic inequalities. Relational inequality theorists have long argued how categorical distinctions are keystones to generate and reproduce inequality (see Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). In this thesis, I advance these discussions by addressing how the dissemination of the socioeconomic category of the entrepreneur goes hand in hand with meritocratic cultural schemas and a system of distribution of resources that was implemented to catalyze economic growth, but which inadvertently justify and exacerbate durable inequalities, such as class, race, gender, and even geographical inequalities. Additionally, I describe how the dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur has social implications such as the formation of new groups that are socially positioned, concentrating a substantial relative amount of social and symbolic capital. The entrepreneur is not a natural economic subject, but the outcome of a complex organizational process of categorization. As such, this thesis advances a critical and sociological discussion about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs in the Global South.

Politically, the findings are important to question the dissemination of a socioeconomic category based on meritocratic ideals and the current emphasis on the private sector to promote economic development and growth. As resources and opportunities are concentrated in the hands of a few, and meritocratic ideals have become widely dispersed, the current efforts to make Brazilians more entrepreneurial could be a recipe for disaster in a country of persistent inequality and increasing scepticism towards redistributive policies.

This thesis is not about evaluating whether the strategies to promote entrepreneurship lead to job creation and economic growth. My intention is rather to understand how the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in Brazil goes hand in hand with the development of a system of distribution of resources and support to new entrepreneurs that inadvertently reproduces socioeconomic inequalities. That is because what is common to different organizational strategies examined in this thesis is the diffusion of a category that hinges on meritocratic values in one of the most unequal countries in the world (cf. Oxfam Brazil, 2018; de Souza, 2018). In other words, programs that promote entrepreneurship in Brazil may very well address the long economic stagnation that the economy has faced over the years, but they also diffuse socioeconomic categories that mask (and even justify) the unequal access to resource and opportunities.

ARTICLE 1

Empretec and the quest for behavioural changes in the Global South: The diffusion of the category of the entrepreneur

Submitted to: History of Political Economy.

Aline de Almeida Coutinho

Abstract: Empretec is a world-renowned program to promote entrepreneurial behaviours in the Global South based on a theoretical framework largely abandoned by academic scholarship by the turn of the century: the traits approach. This study reveals the institutional origins of the program, how it endures despite critique to its theoretical foundation, and how it disseminates ideas about entrepreneurship. I draw inspiration from institutional analysis and policy diffusion literatures, and analyze archival and secondary data, to document the rise and institutionalization of the traits framework as a response to concerns about the economic behaviour of marginalized communities. I then identify mechanisms that facilitate its diffusion: i) privileged access to policy circles enabled by influential individuals, ii) institutional erasure of controversial meanings regarding entrepreneurial behaviours, and iii) legitimacy signalling by continuous reference to expert systems. Finally, through interviews with participants of Empretec I show how Brazilians learn about and experience the category of entrepreneur.

Keywords: Empretec; institutional context; diffusion; erasure; legitimacy signalling

Introduction

In the 1980s, an increasing number of economic policies and programs began to focus on enabling and developing small business and fostering innovation in the United States (Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004; Audretsch, 2007; Marlow, Carter, & Law, 2008). The rise of these so-called “entrepreneurship policies”⁵ (Gilbert, Audretsch, &

⁵ Over the years, scholars have provided several definitions of entrepreneurship, which creates conceptual ambiguity and confusion. Lately, Ahmad and Seymour (2008) provided an influential definition according to which entrepreneurship refers to the economic activity

McDougall, 2004) rests on the Schumpeterian idea that entrepreneurs are economic actors who disrupt the production process by introducing and exploiting innovations, ultimately leading to economic change and growth (see Schumpeter 1942 for his broad discussion of entrepreneurship). Since then, several governments, both in the Global North and South, have introduced policies and programs to promote entrepreneurship (Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004).

In places like Brazil, where the term entrepreneurship was virtually absent in ordinary language in the 1980s (Melo, 2008), some efforts to promote entrepreneurship were even more elementary: instead of removing barriers to entrepreneurial activity, programs and initiatives were established to teach what is entrepreneurship. During the last decades of the twentieth century, policymakers embraced market-oriented institutional reforms, encouraging privatization and market liberalization (Diniz, 2011; Luna & Klein, 2006). It was then that programs seeking to create a culture of entrepreneurship and to foster entrepreneurial behaviours were first implemented and became increasingly popular. This is the case of Empretec, a world-renowned behavioural program supported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to promote the so-called “entrepreneurial competencies” in emerging economies (UNCTAD, 2018a). The category of entrepreneur has since entered ordinary language in Brazil, with an increasing number of people identifying as such. This is not to say that entrepreneurial activity was inexistent before the 1980s, but

of generating value through the identification and development of new products, processes or markets. Such definition is adopted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s Entrepreneurship Indicators Project, a widely popular framework that provides performance indicators for measuring and assessing entrepreneurship in specific contexts. Primary examples of these entrepreneurship policies are the Bayh-Dole Act and the federal program Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) established on 1980 and 1982, respectively.

the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship have become socioeconomic categories that signal a set of values and behaviours admired and strived for.

Programs to develop entrepreneurial behaviours are increasingly popular. Following World War II, scholars of entrepreneurship were mainly focused on identifying the traits of successful and achievement-oriented entrepreneurs. By the end of the 1980s scholarship have largely abandoned the effort to exclusively identify the behaviours and personality traits of entrepreneurs, focusing on understanding and the entrepreneurial process and its socio-political context (Gartner 1988; Thornton, 1999). Despite this epistemological shift, behavioural theories about entrepreneurship continue to serve as theoretical inspiration behind programs such as Empretec. In this article, I explore the institutional context in which programs that promote entrepreneurial behaviours in the Global South emerged. How do these programs diffuse across contexts despite mounting scholarly criticism? And how do people experience and adopt the categories these programs disseminate?

Postpositivist approaches teach that entrepreneurship is a societal phenomenon (Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2014; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Zafirovski, 1999). These approaches shed light on the discourses and narratives through which we understand entrepreneurship (Steyaert & Katz, 2004), the moral values that legitimize certain actions as entrepreneurial (Anderson & Smith, 2007), the contexts in which entrepreneurship happens (Welter, 2011), and the widespread assumptions and myths about entrepreneurship (Rehn et al, 2013). Most of this work focuses on the contemporaneous contexts of entrepreneurial activity. I propose to shift the attention to the institutional context in which programs designed to promote a particular understanding of entrepreneurial behaviours and subjectivities emerged. I also seek to identify the mechanisms that facilitate the diffusion of behavioural programs, and their

underlying knowledge, across the globe. This is important because it initiates a discussion about the institutional motivations behind popular approaches to promote entrepreneurial behaviour in places where even the notion of entrepreneurship was absent not long ago, and how particular meanings and normative ideas associated with the category of entrepreneur travel throughout time and space without necessarily losing legitimacy.

Taking Empretec as a case study, I draw on and unite the literatures of institutional analysis (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and policy diffusion (Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett, 2008; Stone, 2004; Weyland, 2004) to trace back the institutional context in which the interest and concerns to develop entrepreneurial competencies in the South took shape, and to identify the mechanisms through which Empretec's widely popular interpretation of the category of entrepreneur diffuses and retains legitimacy despite mounting academic critiques to its foundational framework. I draw on secondary analysis of research findings and interviews with Empretec trainers and trainees (N = 15) to yield data on both the institutional context of the program and its diffusion, and on how individuals experience the knowledge they encounter. Empretec rests upon a body of knowledge about economic behaviour originated in the 1950s, a time in which powerful Northern philanthropic and academic institutions were heavily invested in understanding the principles of human behaviour and promoting a capitalistic socioeconomic order. Although the Cold War is long over, Empretec's understanding of entrepreneurship and its associated categories (the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial behaviours) continue to linger on, devoid of political intent and universally legitimate.

In this article I contextualize Empretec's understanding of the categories of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur in a broader institutional agenda of economic

governance in which Global North institutions continue to set the parameters of appropriate economic behaviour. If a set of behaviours is universally praised as entrepreneurial, I argue, it is due to a development agenda that has “erased” initial controversial meanings associated with entrepreneurial behaviours as to appear technical and universally neutral. As the category of entrepreneur diffuses across the South, it loses some of its disputed and controversial morality without necessarily losing its legitimacy because reputable organizations continue to signal the expert system behind it. The ongoing “legitimation signalling” partly explains why Empretec’s specific knowledge about entrepreneurial behaviours and the category of entrepreneur continue to diffuse almost unquestioned. Increasing number of individuals in the South strive to identify or behave accordingly, and what is more, conduct not only their businesses but also their personal lives.

This paper is structured in four sections. First, it provides a brief description of the Empretec program and the background of the research addressed in this article. The second section discusses the theoretical framework and the methodological strategies that guide the investigation of the development, diffusion, and resilience of behavioural programs and its underlying knowledge system. Following, the article describes and discusses the main findings. Finally, it concludes with a brief discussion of avenues for future research.

Contextual Background

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the focus of economic policymakers in the United States shifted from antitrust efforts and regulating large corporations to promoting small business innovation and commercialization of knowledge (Audretsch, 2007). The belief of the time was that the retrenchment of industry regulations and the implementation of “entrepreneurship policies” would lead to a cascade effect of

autonomy, creativity, innovation, and ultimately, economic growth (Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004; Audretsch, 2007).

Meanwhile, in places like Brazil, where even the term entrepreneurship and the category of entrepreneur as an economic identity was virtually absent in ordinary language in the 1980s (Melo, 2008), economic policy was addressing trade liberalization and privatization (Diniz, 2011; Luna & Klein, 2006). The promotion of entrepreneurship seemed to have required a fundamental change: that of culture and behaviours. As entrepreneurship policies became increasingly common in the Global South (Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004), so did programs to promote behaviours deemed entrepreneurial.

It was during the 1990s that such programs began to operate in Brazil. Having reached 30 years of operation in 2018, Empretec is a representative case. A behavioural program designed by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to “motivate” and promote “entrepreneurial personal competences” (UNCTAD, 2017a), it was later incorporated by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The core of the program is the Empretec Training Workshop (ETW), delivered in 40 countries at the time of writing. The ETW consists of 6 days of meetings (approximately 48 hours), and offers standardized content across countries. Globally, there are approximately 600 certified trainers, and 60 international master trainers, all of which assumed to have some entrepreneurial experience (UNCTAD, 2018b).

The ETW is based on a behavioural approach inspired by the work of David McClelland, a psychologist at Harvard University who, since the 1950s, was interested in identifying the psychological traits behind societal economic success and growth. Participants of the workshop are expected to develop their “inner motivation to improve” (UNCTAD, 2018b). In McClelland’s terminology, the workshop seeks to

cultivate one's "achievement motive" (McClelland, 2010 [1961], 1965) by unleashing dormant entrepreneurial capabilities. As stated in Empretec's website,

The behavioural approach, which the ETW is based on, aims at developing entrepreneurship as a set of specific competences and practices that can be observed, recognized, applied and acquired by entrepreneurs in their daily lives. By fostering participants' motivation and self-confidence, the ETW manages to show entrepreneurs the difference merely running a business and building a growth-oriented enterprise. (UNCTAD, 2018b)

There are three parts to the ETW. The first section provides participants with suggestions and basic information about start-ups, market competition, and marketing. The second section focuses on personal development. It presents the so-called "10 Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (or PECs)" (see Table 1), and engages participants in a number of individual and group activities to develop these competencies. The last section of the workshop focuses on the development of a business plan. Trainers explain the importance of incorporating the practice of business planning and calculated decision-making. In this section, participants learn how to prepare a feasible and creditworthy business plan, as well as strategies to secure funding and investments (Sebrae, 2011). In a nutshell, the ETW trains participants to develop entrepreneurial competencies and behaviours that supposedly increase their chances of business success.

Table 1: Summary of behavioural competencies developed by Empretec's traits approach

Motive for Action¹	Personal Entrepreneurial Competency (PEC)²	Empretec's Official Description of the Competence
	Opportunity-seeking and initiative	Entrepreneurs seek opportunities and take the initiative to transform them into business situations
	Persistence	When most people tend to abandon an

Achievement	Commitment	activity, successful entrepreneurs stick with it Entrepreneurs keep their promises no matter how great the personal sacrifices
	Demand for efficiency and quality	Entrepreneurs try to do something better, faster, or cheaper
	Taking calculated risks	Calculated risks is one of the primary concepts of entrepreneurship
Affiliation	Goal setting	Entrepreneurs set goals and objectives which are meaningful and challenging
	Information seeking	Entrepreneurs gather information about their clients, suppliers, technology, and opportunities
	Systematic planning and monitoring	Systematic behaviour means acting in a logical way. Planning is deciding what to do. Monitoring means checking
Power	Persuasion and networking	Entrepreneurs influence other people to follow them or do something for them
	Independency and self-confidence	Entrepreneurs have a quiet self-assurance in their capability or potential to do something

Sources: 1) Sebrae, 2011; 2) UNCTAD, 2018a.

Empretec rests on a body of scholarship aimed at identifying and promoting the subjective traits of entrepreneurial individuals. For a long time, this scholarship was mainstream. In his famous article *“Who is an entrepreneur” is the wrong question*, William Gartner (1988) questioned the traditional scholarly focus on the psychological characteristics of the entrepreneur, ‘the traits approach’ as it is usually called (Gartner, 1988: 12; see also Thornton, 1999). For Gartner (1988), research efforts to identify the subjective attributes and supposedly special traits of entrepreneurs have yielded vague and ambiguous conclusions. He argued it was better to investigate what entrepreneurs do, the actual process of creating new firms. But even as Gartner recognized the

existence of previous studies that explore the creation of new firms and the behaviours of entrepreneurs - that of creating new enterprises⁶-, the focus on entrepreneurial traits remained dominant until the end of the twentieth century (Thornton, 1999).

Gradually, researchers became more interested in understanding the context and processes through which new enterprises are created (Gartner, Bird, & Starr, 1992; Thornton, 1999). By the 1990s, studies based solely on the traits approach have been largely abandoned.⁷ Research increasingly addressed both the behaviour characteristics of entrepreneurs, as well as the socio-economic context of entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1989; for a review, see Thornton, 1999). Despite this shift in academic research,

⁶ To avoid confusion, it is important to make a terminological clarification at this point. William Gartner (1988) differentiates what he calls “the traits approach” from the “behavioural approach” to entrepreneurship. The former refers to a body of scholarship interested in unveiling the psychological traits of entrepreneurs, to discover the personal characteristics that differentiates an entrepreneur from a non-entrepreneur, while the latter examines the behaviour and actions of entrepreneur, defined not as someone with special qualities, but someone who simply creates a new organization (Gartner, 1988, p. 26). For Gartner, a behavioural approach, thus, considers the full process of creating new firms, and the entrepreneur solely as an ancillary factor in this process, not a special entity with extraordinary characteristics (Idem, p. 21). The terminological confusion may occur because the Empretec Training Workshop (ETW) is claimed to be a “behavioural methodology” inspired by the work of David McClelland (UNCTAD, 2018a), itself identified as a “traits approach” by Gartner (1988). The ETW aims to intervene in the behaviours of its participants, by changing their state of mind and improving their “personal entrepreneurial competencies” (UNCTAD, 2018a).

⁷ In a later article, Gartner (1989) mitigates his criticism to the “traits approach”. Instead of blatantly denouncing investigations on the characteristics of entrepreneurs as theoretically dubious (or even atheoretical), methodologically feeble, and conceptually ambiguous, Garter urges entrepreneurial trait researchers to develop theories that show some causality between inner traits and entrepreneurial activity, to recognize the influence of environmental factors in the creation of firms, and to precise the conceptual work and methodological strategies necessary to create a representative and generalizable sample of entrepreneurs.

programs like Empretec, mostly inspired by the traits approach, remain highly regarded among policymakers, diffusing across the world. Empretec continues to train thousands of individuals, instigating a very specific understanding of what is entrepreneurship, what behaviours are associated with entrepreneurship, and who can claim the title of entrepreneur. If anything, this is a good indication of how conceptualizations of entrepreneurship and the category of entrepreneur are embedded in knowledge systems.

Researchers have called for investigating entrepreneurship as a societal phenomenon, more than simply a profit-making activity. It means that scholars should be attentive to the discourses and narratives that frame our understanding of entrepreneurship (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). Societal, business, political, and intuitional contexts not only shape (the possibility of) entrepreneurial behaviour, but also how we understand entrepreneurship and who we assume to be an entrepreneur (Welter, 2011). Above all, entrepreneurship is not a universal or merely technical activity (Zafirovski, 1999), but one that is permeated with moral principles. To be perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur, one must conform to certain social expectations and values (Anderson & Smith, 2007). If meanings about entrepreneurship are embedded in an institutional context, we are left wondering which values and worldviews legitimize behavioural programs such as Empretec and the particular category of entrepreneur they promote. Sociological theories about the formation of new economic paradigms may provide insights on this matter.

Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (1999), for example, argued that the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of a “new spirit of capitalism” that glorifies uncertainty, continuous self-improvement, flexibility, creativity, and, above all, networking; ideological values mostly represented and disseminated by the managerial literature in the 1990s. Similarly, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2013) speak of a

new economic paradigm that revolves around a heroic image of the entrepreneur, an economic subject that is constantly governing itself to “be as efficient as possible, to appear to be totally involved in his work, to perfect himself by lifelong learning, and to accept the greater flexibility required by the incessant changes dictated by markets” (Dardot & Laval, 2013, p. 263). More than just a revival of liberal values of competition, opportunity-seeking, individual responsibility, and risk-taking, the new economic paradigm must be understood in light of a new form of power. The entrepreneurial subject, the argument goes, not only adheres to the ethos of intense competition and opportunity-seeking, but extends this ethos to the totality of social life, fully collaborating with the interests of enterprise (Dardot & Laval, 2013). An enterprise culture (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991) might be the discursive and institutional context in which programs such as Empretec flourish and diffuse.

While the theoretical goal of identifying entrepreneurial behaviours and traits have been largely abandoned in academia, the political agenda of promoting what is understood as entrepreneurial behaviours persists. In Brazil alone, over 200,000 individuals have successfully completed ETW, more than half of the world’s total graduates, and prospective interests are far from subsiding. Instead of the demise of programs based on scholarship that have been heavily criticized in academia (see Thornton, 1999 for a discussion of the decline of the traits approach in entrepreneurship studies), Empretec is an illustrative case of how the traits approach continues to diffuse through the South as a development agenda. How that is possible is yet to be explored. To start this conversation, I argue, one must understand the context in which such agenda emerged, and the institutional mechanisms that allow it to continue to diffuse. More than providing a contextual view of entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011), this article sheds light on the constitution of entrepreneurs as part of a development agenda that

remains legitimate despite mounting academic critique against its subjacent theoretical knowledge. As such, it addresses the institutional mechanisms at the heart of the diffusion of a particular understanding of the category of entrepreneur. Where does Empretec's knowledge about entrepreneurial behaviour and conceptualization of entrepreneur come from? How does this program continue to diffuse considering that its theoretical foundation has been heavily criticized in academia? And how do people experience and adopt the category of entrepreneur as an identity? These are the guiding questions of this exploratory research paper.

Theoretical framework and methodological strategies

If institutional contexts and moral systems shape the way we understand entrepreneurship (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Welter, 2011; Zafirovski, 1999), it only makes sense to explore the context in which programs that foster certain behaviours deemed entrepreneurial emerge. Such context may inform the motivation to promote a specific understanding of entrepreneurial behaviours and category of entrepreneur, displacing or overshadowing alternatives. The category of entrepreneur promoted by Empretec, for example, is far from being universal or merely technical. As a social construct, entrepreneurship and associated categories (i.e., the entrepreneur, entrepreneurial behaviours) are culturally informed and constrained (Zafirovski, 1999). As such, I trace back when and where the interest and concerns to develop entrepreneurial behaviours and subjects in the South took shape, placing them into broader socio-political agendas. In doing so, I bring attention to the institutional context, concerns and moral imperative of the actors and organizations involved in the formation of Empretec and its economic categories.

The theoretical insights of institutional analysis shed light on the categories, classifications, and prescriptions that inform practices or organizational blueprints.

More than that, institutional analysis allows for an investigation of how categories and institutional myths become endowed with a “rule-like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 42). This is particularly important to understand how an increasing number of organizations adopt similar ideas and procedures, abiding to highly valued and legitimized structures and knowledge systems. Diffusion thus can lead to institutional isomorphism, especially if there are coercive pressures from authorities, mimetic incentives, or even normative pressures within professional and educational networks (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). I build on these theoretical insights to explore how Empretec’s behavioural approach and conceptualization of entrepreneur have retained legitimacy, despite mounting scholarly critique to its theoretical underpinnings. To that end, I identify *what* networks and institutional mechanisms facilitate the legitimacy and diffusion of programs with the mandate to promote entrepreneurial behaviours.

By diffusion I mean “a trend of successive or sequential adoption of a practice, policy or program” (Stone, 2004, p. 546). While the majority of studies on policy diffusion favour analysis of the role of the state involved in the “hard transfer” of policy instruments and practices, such as regulations, legislations, and procedures (Weyland, 2006; Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett, 2008; Levi-Faur, 2005), Diane Stone (2004) draws attention to other non-state actors and the “soft transfer” of broad policy ideas, that is, the dissemination of norms and knowledge system as policies diffuse. Building on this notion of “soft” diffusion, I focus on the institutional mechanism that facilitate the dispersion of a highly questioned theoretical framework and particular conceptualization of entrepreneur.

Different agents constitute what Stone calls “knowledge networks”, defined as “a system of coordinated research, results dissemination and publication, intellectual

exchange, and financing across national boundaries” (Stone, 2012, p. 347). These knowledge networks not only diffuse the categories and normative ideas that underpin policies and programs, but also “reinforce and legitimate certain forms of policy or normative standards as ‘best practice’” (Stone, 2004, p. 556). Conjoining the literatures of institutional analysis and policy diffusion allows for an appreciation of the institutional context in which Empretec emerged, and the mechanisms and knowledge networks that allow its diffusion despite academic critique to its underlying body of knowledge.

Methodologically, tracing the knowledge and normative ideas that underpin the Empretec back to its institutional origins involves identifying the knowledge agents that funded, hosted, developed, and disseminated the theoretical knowledge underpinning Empretec. In other words, it has to do with describing the “polycentric character” (Coleman, 2012) of the knowledge network that produces and diffuses the Empretec program. To locate the emergence and diffusion of Empretec’s behavioural approach in a broader institutional context, I identify the knowledge agents - and where possible their declared motivations - in developing and promoting entrepreneurial behaviour in the South.

This study builds on efforts to understand entrepreneurship through a postpositivistic lens (Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2014). It falls within the qualitative research tradition, well suited to develop detailed descriptions of an event or a process (Geertz, 1973), and to explore how events and issues are interpreted, experienced, and justified (Weiss, 1994). Here I tell the story of the Empretec program, and how its underlying knowledge about the category of entrepreneur diffuses across the globe. I collected historic documentation, and reviewed both official websites and literature about the emergence of applied behavioural studies in the United States. These documents and

secondary scholarship allow for the identification of the networks, agents and relationships involved in the development of the traits approach underpinning Empretec. It also gives insight into how Empretec made its way to the Global South. Research interviews are valuable sources of information on the views, experiences, and motivations of individuals. Interviews with three Empretec certified trainers provide insights on how trainers perceive Empretec and talk about it to their mentees. An interview with an international master trainer, who has been engaged with the establishment of Empretec workshops in several countries, provides information about the diffusion of this program to Brazil and other countries.

Applicants who wish to participate in the Empretec workshops must attend a presentation lecture in which the behavioural approach is explained. Attending these lectures allows exploring how hosting organizations depict the Empretec program, and the sorts of signaling that confer legitimacy to ETW and its category of entrepreneur. I requested to attend the workshop sessions, but I was denied on the grounds that the program is only for participants who sign a secrecy clause. Participants are bound by contract to not disclose the activities and group dynamics carried out in the workshop. Indeed, researchers of the Empretec program in Brazil face barriers to investigate the training dynamics of Empretec. For example, Natalia Melo (2008) documented the multiple refusals when she made requests to trainers, coordinators, and general staff for research interviews. The justification, when one was offered, was that orders from superiors forbid the disclosure of information about the workshops (Melo, 2008, p. 100).

I was not granted access to the workshops, but I interviewed 15 participants who agreed to talk about their impressions of the workshop and how they feel it has impacted their lives. These interviews provide information on the sorts of knowledge,

values, ideals, and identities people claim to have encountered by participating in the ETW. All interviews were carried in 2015 and 2016, and lasted 50-70 minutes. Interviews were voluntary, and identities kept confidential.

The rise of behavioural approaches to economic development

The Empretec program builds on the work of David McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (2010 [1961]), a book about the psychological factors and subjective behaviours behind the economic development of different societies. In the book, McClelland acknowledges indebtedness to the Behavioural Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation, both for its significant financial support and research inspiration. As McClelland states, “It was my good fortune to be associated with the Division in its early days and to absorb some of its spirit of hope and enthusiasm for the role that knowledge of human behaviour might play in helping man control his destiny” (2010 [1961], p. x).

The quote above refers to a ‘spirit’, a disposition of the time towards applied behavioural approaches that later swept the social sciences and transcended disciplinary boundaries. Philanthropic foundations heavily financed this ‘behavioural revolution’ through grants, awards, and other investments disbursed between the 1950s and 1960s. Despite ambiguous accounts about the size of governmental investment in the social sciences in the postwar period, it has been agreed that philanthropic foundations such as Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller, and Ford Foundation shared similar postwar concerns with peace maintenance, promoted interdisciplinary knowledge, and heavily funded applied social science research (Geiger, 1988; Hauptmann, 2012). But it was Ford Foundation that became the largest and most influential philanthropic sponsor of the social sciences in the United States by mid-1950s (Geiger, 1988; Pooley & Solovey, 2010; Hauptmann, 2012).

At the time, the expectation was that social research modeled on the natural sciences could reveal underlying patterns about human behaviour (Pooley & Solovey, 2010; Roelofs, 2015). Applied research should, thus, investigate and eventually provide solutions to the social problems of the time. The Ford Foundation adopted this neopositivist agenda, and had become heavily invested in the so-called ‘behavioural sciences’.

In September of 1950, the Ford Foundation released a programmatic agenda to ‘advance human welfare’. This agenda had five interest or sections, as they were called: i) the establishment of peace, ii) the strengthening of democracy, iii) strengthening of the economy, iv) education in a democratic society, v) improving scientific knowledge of individual behaviour and human relations (Rosenfield & Wimpee, 2015). This latter section V sought to advance statistical and interdisciplinary research on human behaviour in order to solve practical social problems (Geiger, 1988). As Francis Sutton, an official for over three decades of the Ford Foundation, once put it, “[...] the expectation, very much in the spirit of the times, was that better knowledge, effectively applied, would improve both public policy and practice; the infusion of a professional spirit and technical competence was required if social problems were to be dealt with” (Sutton, 1987, p. 51).

The section V harboured the prominent Behavioural Sciences Program (BSP), established in 1951. In 1957, the BSP came to an end. Some argue that its termination was due to trustees’ increasing scepticism about the efficacy of behavioural sciences (Geiger, 1988; Hauptmann, 2012; Sutton, 1987). There is also the suggestion that the political anxieties originated from the Reece Committee hearings, which unravelled concerns about tax-exempt grants making foundations and the sorts of political values they were promoting, also shortened the longevity of the BSP (Sutton, 1987). No matter

what reasons led to the demise of the BSP, it is undeniable that the grants it disbursed, estimated to be between US\$24million and US\$43million across its seven years of operation, had lasting impacts on American higher education, especially in regards the creation of interdisciplinary academic programs and the development of behavioural approaches in many academic disciplines (from psychology and sociology to political science and economic development) (Geiger, 1988; Hauptmann, 2012; Pooley & Solovey, 2010). For the duration of the BSP, the Ford Foundation heavily funded studies seeking to identify generalized patterns of the human behaviour that could be intervened upon in order to solve social problems (Hauptmann, 2012).

McClelland's research agenda was part of a voluminous postwar literature about the role of high-achieving individuals in the economic development of Global South countries (see Leff, 1979). His focus on the psychological and behavioural characteristics of entrepreneurs fit well with the BSP's vision for a behavioural and applied social science. McClelland's study had clear policy implications. In fact, not many years after he published his seminal work (1961), he wrote an article (see McClelland, 1965) questioning the reasons why policymakers haven't yet developed policies to change people's achievement motives. For McClelland, foreign aid and development policies usually failed because partly because they intervene 'on the environment', either through infusion of capital, building infrastructure or providing income-generating opportunities. To be effective, McClelland argued, policies that seek to stimulate economic growth or "help the poor" should focus on changing the mentality and inner motives of people, much more so than just provide economic opportunities. McClelland continued, 'there are plenty of opportunities around the poor that they are not exploiting because of their low achievement motives' (McClelland, 1965, p. 25).

Changing the behaviour of the poor through behavioural workshops

Stereotypes about “poverty”, “the poor”, and the Global South underlie McClelland’s policy views. For him, many businessmen from countries such as India, Tunisia and Mexico, don’t have an adequate level of need for achievement, the motive to work hard, or even lack “the real spirit of enterprise” (McClelland, 1965, p. 7). The root of the problem of Southern countries would lie on the idle behaviour of the poor, in their inner motives. At some point in his writing, McClelland explicitly endorsed condescending stereotypes of the poor, but he refuted the more conservative notion that the behaviours of the poor are deterministic:

Up to a point the conservatives have an irrefutable case. It is not *enough* to change the environment alone. The response of people to such changes is *not* quick or automatic. Many with low achievement needs *will* sit around and do nothing. But suppose the achievement motive is an acquired characteristic which can be developed by certain special training techniques, just the way a language skill can be acquired in adulthood?

If so, the policy consequences would be great. A way would be opened to making poor people more active in finding and seizing opportunities available to them.
(McClelland, 1965, p. 8 – italics in the original text)

In an optimistic, though still prejudicial tone, McClelland argued that it is possible to teach the destitute to aim for higher achievement. For him, policymakers should focus on people’s behaviours rather than providing better labour opportunities, financial credit, or a better infrastructure. The argument was that Marshall Plan-like policies would not succeed in the poorest economies because people in underdeveloped countries do not record the same level of achievement as Western Europeans (McClelland, 1965). Racial stereotypes also appear in McClelland’s policy suggestions. He argued that achievement training is necessary to raise African descendants from poverty because they don’t fully exploit the few opportunities they have. In his words:

“Certainly opportunities have to be increased by breaking down discriminatory practices, but we also know from a number of studies that lower class Negroes have very low needs for achievement” (McClelland, 1965, p. 178).

Through behavioural training techniques, McClelland argued, policymakers could make “poor people more active in finding and seizing opportunities available to them” (McClelland, 1965, p. 8). He designed a pilot training workshop to a group of executives of an American company in order to improve their business performance. This experimental course consisted of a week of training for 16 people. Participants were taught about the achievement motive and “how to think, talk, act, and perceive like a person with a high need for achievement” (McClelland, 1965, p. 10). Later, McClelland offered a 10-day motivational training program in several cities in India to test if the program would yield positive results in “an underdeveloped country”. The program was well received in India. Participants seemed engaged with the idea of personal change, especially through a method developed in world-renowned academic institutions. As McClelland described,

For instance, the very fact that the men from Kakinada voluntarily decided to take time off to go some distance to attend the course at some expense to themselves signified that they had to some degree accepted the notion which was the basic goal of the course – namely, that they *could* change, that certain prestigious institutions (Harvard University, the SIET Institute) might have come up with a new technique which would make them better business men. Extensive research on attitude change, psychotherapy, and other types of psychological influence points to the great importance of ‘prestige suggestion’ – creating a strong belief that one can and should change. (McClelland, 1965, p. 14 – italics in the original text)

McClelland reported that approximately two thirds of participants in the Indian experiment “had become unusually active in business in some readily observable way” (McClelland, 1965, p. 20). Following the enthusiastic reception of McClelland’s book

and the positive results yielded from McClelland's training experiments, the traits approach to entrepreneurship gained force in the academia for decades to come.

The behavioural approach becomes entrepreneurship policy: channels of knowledge transfer and institutional erasure

During the 1970s, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was the main organization within the United Nations system for tackling the issue of economic development in the least developed countries (UNCTAD, 2013). At that time, there was growing discontentment about the unsatisfactory outcomes of the type of assistance given to the poorest economies, which consisted mostly of lines of credit and other funding opportunities to businesses. In 1982, the Management Systems International (MSI), a company specialized in managing development projects, and the consulting firm McBer and Company, founded by McClelland in 1963, joined efforts to carry out research to identify the behavioural competencies that lead to the growth of firms. The research took two years to be completed. With the findings, Marina Fanning, then vice president of MSI, developed a workshop catered to businessmen. The first workshop was tested in England in 1985, and during the following three years, more than 500 individuals from 18 different countries took part in the workshop (Melo, 2008). In 1988, the UNDP officially launched the Empretec program based on McClelland's behavioural approach.

At a first glance, it appears a fortuitous act that the UNDP reached out to the MSI and the McBear and Co. to develop a new strategy to support impoverished economies. However, scholarship provides empirical evidence that elite individuals move across organizational boundaries between public, private, and civil society organization (Carroll, 2010; Roelofs, 2015), creating a complex network that facilitates

the transfer and mobilization of knowledge and know-how (Roelofs, 2007)⁸. Even before the Empretec program, the UNDP seemed to have established channels of knowledge transfer and mobilization with the Ford Foundation. The case of Paul Hoffman is an illustration of these close connections.

Paul Hoffman was a previous administrator of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the U.S. agency responsible for the Marshall Plan, and had a deep faith in the mission of the United Nations. After working for ECA, he served as the president of the Ford Foundation from 1950 to 1953, and was responsible for appointing Rowan Gaither, the same person who developed Ford Foundation's programmatic agenda, to oversee the section V. After leaving the Ford Foundation in 1953, Hoffman helped to establish and manage the UNDP (Sutton, 1987). This anecdotal evidence supports the claim that key individuals from the Ford Foundation had strong ties with both the U.S. government and the UNDP. These ties suggest it was through the channel opened by Hoffman, that McClelland's behavioural approach (heavily funded by the Ford Foundation) had privileged access to the policy world of the UNDP.

During the 1990s, UNCTAD became the primary UN body invested in promoting entrepreneurship (UNCTAD, 2013). It has since developed the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF), a structured set of policy suggestions designed to assist policymakers from the Global South to develop policies and strategies to promote bureaucratic, political, economic, and social environments conducive to the

⁸ Roelofs incisively argues: "Foundations are powerful members of coalitions and collaborations that may include overt and covert government departments, U.N. agencies, E.U. committees, the NATO funding arm, universities, billionaires, celebrities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)" (Roelofs, 2015, p. 665-666). That seems to be the case of the Ford Foundation, UNDP, and scholars at the Harvard University.

creation and development of businesses (UNCTAD, 2012, p. 2). The EPF eventually incorporated the Empretec program, adding it to UNCTAD's inventory of good practices in entrepreneurship building, and placing special emphasis on behavioural training workshops as a crucial tool for economic development. By the time Empretec became the model of best practices of entrepreneurship policy, any explicit morality associated with promoting entrepreneurial behaviour in the poor, racialized, and Southerner communities had been erased. The category of entrepreneur and what was understood as entrepreneurial behaviours had become technical and universal knowledge, devoid of explicit stereotypical meaning, and fully legitimized by international and developmental organizations such as UNCTAD.

The diffusion of Empretec in Brazil: institutional legitimization signalling

The implementation of the Empretec program in a country depends on the request of a local organization to host the program (UNCTAD, 2015; UNCTAD, 2018c). To qualify as a host, the local institution must meet several requirements set by UNCTAD, such as, organizational prestige, political neutrality, and capacity to finance the center. In Brazil, a state bank from the South, Banresul, initially hosted Empretec in 1991. However, since 1993, Sebrae (Brazilian Micro and Small Enterprises' Support Service), a Brazilian non-profit autonomous institution that provides services to develop micro and small enterprises, became the institution that exclusively hosts the Empretec program (Melo, 2008).

Sebrae is part to the so-called "System S", a set of nine non-profit institutions⁹ with the mandate to provide professional training, technical assistance, consulting,

⁹ The nine institutions that form the System S are: National Service of Rural Apprenticeship (SENAR), National Service of Trade Apprenticeship (SENAC), National Trade Social Service (SESC), National Service of Corporativism Apprenticeship (SESCOOP), National

research, and other social services to the public (Brazilian Federal Senate, 2018). The 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution requires the Federal Government to collect a monetary contribution from enterprises to finance the System S (Brazilian Government, 2018, article 149). In 2016, it is estimated that the Brazilian Federal Government passed on R\$ 16 billion Reais (or around US\$ 5.3 bi in 2017 dollars) collected from this compulsory contribution to the System S.

Since the 1990s, Sebrae is the leading organization that provides assistance to micro and small enterprises in Brazil (Dias, 2012). The resources available from the mandatory contributions to the System S explains Sebrae's capacity to offer services and establish offices in all regions of the country. Sebrae offers the ETW in 27 states, and it is estimated that it has trained over 230,000 individuals since inception (Sebrae, 2018), more than half of all people who successfully completed the training worldwide (UNCTAD, 2017b). It is not an exaggeration to state that Sebrae has much to do with Brazil becoming a case of success of the implementation and reach of Empretec (Dias, 2012).

The Empretec program diffuses throughout the South not through coercive pressures, but rather through a voluntary adoption from the part of local institutions that petition to host the program. The dissemination of the program depends on the resources and capacity of the hosting institution, as stated by a key Empretec international master trainer:

[...] Brazil has 80% of empretecocos in the world [...], and that is due to SEBRAE. UNCTAD has no other hosting partner with the economic power, reach, and

Service of Industrial Apprenticeship (SENAI), Industry Social Services (SESI), Social Service of Transportation (SEST), National Service of Transportation Apprenticeship (SENAT), and the Brazilian Micro and Small Enterprises' Support Service (Sebrae).

organizational structure that SEBRAE has. Brazil offers more ETW than all of the rest of world combined. (Interview carried out on July 2016)

However, Sebrae's resources do not fully explain Empretec's popularity. In Empretec's advertising materials and presentation lectures, there are repeated references to the legitimacy and reputation of institutions involved with Empretec, which signal the legitimacy of the behavioural approach. Repeated references that this program is designed and endorsed by expert institutions communicate a reputation status with significant credibility in the South. These findings corroborate scholarship that suggests that legitimacy perceptions are important mechanisms of policy and knowledge diffusion (Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett, 2008). The broad social acceptance of policies and programs facilitate the institutionalization of knowledge, norms, values, and social categories over time (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and the role of expert endorsement is crucial for the social acceptability of policies and programs (Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett, 2008). The case of Empretec is no exception.

While Empretec's advertising material often references UNCTAD, Sebrae and David McClelland, the role of the Ford Foundation in funding and inspiring McClelland's agenda is largely overlooked. There are no references to Cold War concerns about rising threats to a capitalist economic order, nor references to change the behaviours of specific communities in the South. The traits and behaviours that McClelland claimed to be of high-achieving people (see McClelland, 1965) are now portrayed more impartially, without references to what communities are more likely to lack them. As such, current descriptions of the goals of the Empretec program refrain from referencing classist and racial stereotypes of the Southerner. However, Empretec's meanings of entrepreneurial behaviour continue to rest on an individualistic morality, mostly conveying discourses of radical self-responsibility for one's economic destiny,

self-sufficiency, self-monitoring, instrumental rationality, and self-interest. These are now highly held values and behaviours in business and policy circles in the Global North, in accordance with the value system of entrepreneurship policies (Audretsch, 2007). Empretec has become an important mechanism to diffuse a very individualistic view of the category of entrepreneur as a self-sufficient and heroic economic agent.

The interviews I carried out suggest that participants of the ETW are quite receptive of the category of entrepreneur and the morality associated with it. The ETW is reported to impact three main areas of participants' lives: business attitudes and practices, self-categorization, and personal and household finance. In regard to business, participants recount that Empretec trainers encourage them to adopt McClelland's ten PECs to run their business. The category of entrepreneur is presented as a special type of economic actor, one that participants are made believe attainable. Some stated that Empretec first introduced them to the category of the entrepreneur. Others claim to have heard the term before, but it was participating at Empretec that helped them understand what entrepreneurship is. The behaviours learned seem to be transferable to their personal life. Indeed, while some individuals claim that they did not have the chance to apply what they learned to their private lives, many others stated that Empretec provides tools to change the use of their personal time and finances. Even the few participants who do not identify as an entrepreneur nor express desire to open a business after Empretec, claim that this program prompted them to manage their household finances and personal affairs differently (see Table 2).

Table 2: Reported impacts of ETW on business and personal behaviours, and self-categorization

Areas of impact	Interviews excerpts
Practices and attitudes concerning business	- Interviewee 1: [...] The material they give us in the Empretec workshop is the bible of the business administrator. I can't tell you the details, but the

	material guides you to what you should do through all the practical exercises. Now, the entrepreneur who loves entrepreneurship, Empretec foments this entrepreneurship. It gives you the desire to grow, to invest, and this is what is missing today, in 2015. - Interviewee 2: They [Empretec] really work on the internal “locus of control”, that is, that you have to own the responsibility [...]. For me, for my business, after the course, I had other ideas, I made new partnerships, I started new initiatives, things that I never had strength to do or no idea of how to do it. Empretec helped me to be courageous.
Understanding of entrepreneurship and self-categorization	- Interviewee 1: [...] entrepreneurship is to know how to sell a dream. It is to know how to realize it so you can enjoy it. - Interviewee 3: [...] it was at Empretec that I first learned the word “entrepreneur”. I first thought it was just a fashionable term. But it does not matter what they call the term, what matters is the concept. I think the concept of entrepreneur very cool. - Interviewer: And what is it? - Interviewee 3: For me, the entrepreneur is the guy, let’s say, [humming], it is so hard to explain. The entrepreneur is the guy that invests in something, not financially, but that he knows how to invest, to innovate, and to build. (Interview held on 24/06/2015). - Interviewee 4: [...] One of the things that we saw at Empretec is the internal locus of control, that you must assume responsibility for your failures. [...] The internal locus of control, the blame is yours. If you did something wrong, you are to blame! - Interviewee 5: I’m a little uncomfortable with the word “entrepreneur”. I think it is trendy [...]. Not only people want to be entrepreneurs, but they want to show they are entrepreneurs. [...] I notice that people want to look more like an entrepreneur than to actually being one. [...] So, I’m a bit cautious to say I’m an entrepreneur. I’m more comfortable with saying that I am a businesswoman.
Personal finances and household management	- Interviewee 1: [Empretec] gives you a vision for personal administration. There are disorganized people that participated in the Empretec, and started to have guidance even in their personal finances.

-
- Interviewee 2: [At Empretec,] they start to tell you things that you start to see that you were not doing it right [...] I was bothered to see my own faults. So, I understood this, and I applied this not only to my business, but also to my life.
 - Interviewee 6: [Empretec] changed the way I manage my household. I'm saying more 'no, you can't; no, you can't' when I had to pay bills. I was always sure of myself, but I always, as any mother, let my head drive me. From that moment on [the Empretec], no more, no more letting the heart rule.
-

Data source: interviews with participants of Empretec in Brasilia and Sao Paolo, 2015-2016 (N = 15).

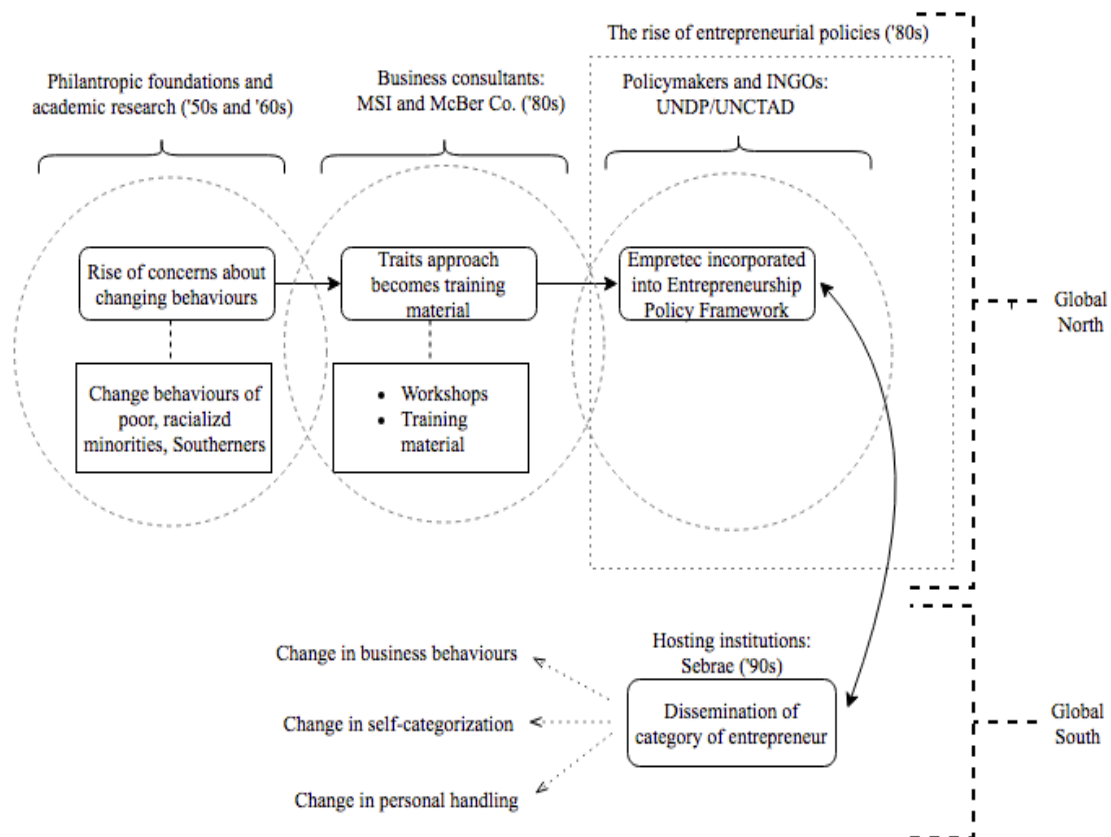
Discussion

The findings above provide an overview of the institutional context in which a specific way of understanding the category of entrepreneur and their behaviours emerged and diffused. As sketched in Figure 1, a body of knowledge regarding individual behaviours that supposedly lead to economic growth emerged during the Cold War. Funded by philanthropic organizations such as the Ford Foundation, and responding to political concerns of the time, academic researchers sought to identify the behaviours of a specific category of people: "high-achievers". This economic subject was portrayed as diametrically opposed to racialized minorities and impoverished peoples depicted as morally feeble. Business consultants later mobilized and institutionalized this body of knowledge into training material and workshops first administered in India. With the success of these workshops – they reportedly increased business revenue and were highly praised by participants –, it didn't take long for a new behavioural program to be launched and incorporated into best practices of development policies. By this point, with the rise of entrepreneurial policies, the presumed behaviours of high achievers became indiscernible from that of entrepreneurs. These two categories merged, and any explicit contrast to minorities (the poor, the racialized, the Southerner) was erased. Legitimized by international organizations, the behavioural knowledge associated with

the category of entrepreneur had become technical expertise, universally applicable, uncontestably neutral, and devoid of provocative connotations.

One could easily assume that the body of knowledge associated with the category of entrepreneur diffuse indiscriminately throughout different spheres – from academia to the Global South, passing through business consultants and international non-governmental organizations. However, the case of Empretec provides evidence to suggest that diffusion happens through channels opened within a network of organizations. Highly connected and influential individuals (such as Paul Hoffman) seem to facilitate the diffusion of the behavioural approaches, linking researchers in the academia to international institutions. Empretec and its underlying theoretical framework had privileged access to renowned international institutions. Once incorporated into legitimized policy frameworks, Empretec diffused to the Global South. Adding to the legitimacy of international institutions, the reputation and resources of hosting institutions were crucial to the acceptance and popularity of a specific understanding of entrepreneurship.

Figure 1: The institutional context of the emergence and diffusion of a popular understanding of the category of entrepreneur



Source: the author.

As the traits approach became institutionalized (that is, the basis of training materials and programs listed as best practices in development efforts by reputable organizations), the morality associated with behaviours that were later linked to the category of entrepreneurs were partly erased. It means that instead of depicting a set of behaviours in relational terms (that is, referencing social groups that supposedly have or lack certain traits), organizations and training material now refer to these behaviours in absolute terms, that is, as a set of universally desirable set of traits that can be taught through specific programs. I argue that this erasure is central to making the category of entrepreneur and its underlying knowledge universal and easily disseminated, once it diverts attention to the difficulties and barriers faced by marginalized groups of people. To say that the poor or racialized groups engage in less entrepreneurial behaviours may be charged with racism or confronted with evidence of existing structural barriers and historical oppression. However, to depict a set of behaviours and attitudes as something

we should strive for because “expert knowledge” claims they lead to economic development is much less likely to face criticism from the general public.

With the legitimacy signalling from powerful organizations, both international and domestic, the category of entrepreneur and its behaviours, now considered universally true and absolute, have become a prominent identity in Brazil through which individuals evaluate their business practices, their characters and that of others, and their personal finances.

Conclusion

This article contributes to the literature that brings attention to the contexts that inform the way we understand entrepreneurship. Taking the case of Empretec, I explore the institutional origins and mechanisms that facilitate the diffusion of a particular understanding of the category of entrepreneur in the Global South, most specifically in Brazil. Empretec, a development program seeking to change the economic behaviour of people in emerging economies, is based on a theoretical framework first developed in the postwar context as a response to concerns with the feeble morality and economic behaviour of the Southerner poor. This framework, later called the traits approach, identified a set of behaviours and traits that supposedly characterize high-achieving individuals. As the traits approach became part of training materials and development programs, this body of knowledge merged with the category of entrepreneur, leading to an understanding of the entrepreneur as a special class of economic agent distinguished by an individualistic ethos and self-reliant behaviours.

How can we comprehend the diffusion and continuing popularity of the traits approach (and the subjacent category of entrepreneur) in policy circles despite the mounting criticism in academia since the 1980s? I identify three mechanisms that facilitate this diffusion. First, highly influential and connected individuals enable the

dissemination of bodies of knowledge from the academia to international policymaking organizations by opening privileged access paths across organizational networks. Paul Hoffman may have been crucial to link Ford Foundation, McClellan's consulting firm, and the UNDP. Diffusion thus is not random, but assisted by knowledge brokers who may go unnoticed or unaccredited. Second, with the institutionalization of the traits approach in development programs, initial controversial references to the behaviours of marginalized individuals were dropped. I call this "institutional erasure", and argue that it facilitates the dissemination by transforming the category of entrepreneur into a universal, technocratic, and normative attribute hard to be contested. And third, the constant signalling to the expert system behind Empretec legitimizes its foundational theoretical framework. Empretec's website, the training material, and the presentation lectures all reference the fact that this behavioural program rests on research conducted by a Harvard scholar and endorsed by United Nations, something proudly recalled by participants.

As people in Brazil increasingly identify with the category of entrepreneur, they not only adopt an identity that places the responsibility for their economic success on subjective behaviour, but also change the way they manage their personal affairs. Empretec's category of entrepreneur has diffused not only through the South, but also is reported to impact diverse domains of life. This exploratory article denaturalizes and historicizes an economic category that is portrayed as universal, timeless, and apolitical. Considering that Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world, it is unclear if the popularity of this category will result in economic change, or even displace alternative meanings more sensible to the local and current context. Only time and future research can answer these questions.

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ARTICLE 2

Social dynamics and implications of organizational efforts to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems: Evidence from a case study in Brazil

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There is a growing interest in entrepreneurial ecosystems on the part of policymakers and practitioners, and among scholars of entrepreneurship. Much of the recent scholarship concentrates on describing these ecosystems in the Global North, with some scholars calling for a better understanding of how they form and develop. This article explores the dynamics and social implications of organizational practices to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems in Brazil. Taking Endeavor as a case study, this article provides a rich description of how a leading international organization implements a number of strategies to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems by assembling and mobilizing an array of individuals and organizations to promote entrepreneurship. Drawing conceptual and methodological inspiration from science and technology studies and relational inequality theory, this article advances the argument that organizational efforts to establish ecosystems in Brazil involve the creation of a special class of entrepreneurs through an intensive work of categorization, as well as an extensive effort to reframe a wide range of institutions according to market-friendly principles. As new subjects are performed and institutions are urged to change, resources are concentrated in the hands of a privileged few while meritocratic schemas legitimize durable inequalities.

Keywords: entrepreneurial ecosystems; performativity; ambitious entrepreneurs; relational inequalities

Introduction

In recent years, policy actors have increasingly adopted a new approach to economic development that consists of establishing and advancing entrepreneurial ecosystems, broadly defined as “a set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory” (Stam &

Spigel, 2017, p. 407). The underlying idea of this approach is that socioeconomic context influences entrepreneurial rates and businesses' revenue growth rate. As such, an effective way to increase economic growth and value creation is by fostering a context conducive to high-impact entrepreneurship, a special class of entrepreneurial activity particularly oriented to continuous innovation, steep revenue growth, and wealth creation on a large scale (Acs, 2010; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Following this new interest by policymakers and practitioners (Audretsch, 2007; Thurik, Stam, & Audretsch, 2013), scholars have begun theorizing and empirically investigating the characteristics of entrepreneurial ecosystems and how different elements impact productive entrepreneurship (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017; Baumol, 1990; Brown & Mason, 2017; Cavallo et al. 2018).

Scholarship on entrepreneurial ecosystems is still in its infancy, consisting mainly of descriptive case studies and static accounts of North American and Western European ecosystems (Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2017; Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Thompson, Purdy, & Ventresca, 2018). Although there have been advances in developing more dynamic frameworks (Mason & Brown, 2014; Mack & Meyer, 2016; Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Thompson et al., 2018), existing scholarship provides little insight into the sociological processes involved in the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems, especially in places with poor performance on entrepreneurial metrics such as Latin America (Acs & Amorós, 2008; Acs & Virgil, 2010; Thurik, 2011). Questions remain as to what actors are invested in the promotion of a socioeconomic environment conducive to high-growth firms in the Global South, and what sorts of social dynamics and power differentials it entails.

To address these gaps in the literature, this article reports on the results of a case study of Endeavor's organizational efforts to promote high-impact entrepreneurship and

build entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Global South. Endeavor is an international non-governmental organization invested in the development of these ecosystems and high-impact entrepreneurship in emerging economies. Although Endeavor operates in several countries, little is known about this organization within the entrepreneurial ecosystems literature. This article focuses on the Brazilian affiliate, which is known for having selected and supported the largest number of high-impact entrepreneurs, as well as having developed acclaimed strategies to build ecosystems in the country.

Drawing conceptual and methodological insights from science and technology studies (Callon, 1986, 1998, 2006, 2010; Latour, 2005; Çalışkan & Callon, 2009) and relational inequality theory (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019), this study investigates Endeavor Brazil's strategic practices to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem and promote a particular economic subject, the "ambitious entrepreneur" (Stam et al., 2012), and their social implications. The findings suggest that the Brazilian affiliate carries out two main strategies: the selection, mentoring, and showcasing of entrepreneurs, and the production of research in order to influence policymaking. These strategies entail two main social dynamics: a process of categorization that relies on an intensive and complex work of performance of ambitious entrepreneurs who ultimately concentrate social and symbolic capital, and a concerted effort to reframe the role of several institutions to adjust to market-driven principles. This article contributes to the literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems by providing a meso-level sociological analysis of organizational strategies that sheds light on some of its social implications, such as the unintended exacerbation of existing social inequalities, and the initiation of a broader institutional re-engineering that mimics a shift in governance that took place in the last decades of the twentieth century in many advanced economies.

The next section reviews what is known about the emergence of entrepreneurial ecosystems, and lays out the theoretical framework used to investigate Endeavor's efforts to build these ecosystems in the South. Following, the article describes the research settings and the methodological procedures of data collection and analysis. The main findings are subsequently presented, followed by a discussion. The article concludes with considerations of policy implications and suggestions for future research.

Building entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South

Policymakers and entrepreneurship practitioners have increasingly taken the approach of creating entrepreneurial ecosystems as a strategy to promote economic growth (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Concomitantly, academic scholars have also shown increasing interest in entrepreneurial ecosystems, but the literature is mostly comprised of descriptive analysis of successful ecosystems, such as Silicon Valley or Boulder, Colorado (Alvedalen & Boshma, 2017; Cavallo, Ghezzi, & Balocco, 2018; Mack & Mayer, 2016; Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2017).

Scholarship on entrepreneurial ecosystems examines what cultural, social and material elements in the ecosystem influence high-growth entrepreneurship. It draws heavily from previous research traditions that look at how the external environment impact entrepreneurship. For example, the literature on industrial clusters investigates how the productivity output of firms is enhanced by the proximity of competing and cooperative firms in the same industry, which gives entrepreneurs access to skilled labour force, knowledge, and technology. Likewise, the regional innovation systems (RIS) theory examines how the interactions between entrepreneurs, firms, and researchers impact innovation and economic growth, but this scholarship emphasizes the role that knowledge making organizations, such as universities and research

laboratories, have on innovation (for a review see Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Stam & Spigel, 2017). The entrepreneurial ecosystems literature, in its turn, places the entrepreneur as the focal point of analysis, particularly the so-called ambitious entrepreneurs, defined as individuals who engage in entrepreneurial practices with the goal of creating as much value as possible (Acs, 2010; Stam et al., 2012). As Spigel and Harrison (2018, p. 155) put it, the entrepreneurial ecosystems approach “addresses weaknesses in how cluster and RIS theories approach entrepreneurship and focuses on the unique needs and trajectories of innovative high-growth ventures rather than of all firms in a region”. The ambitious entrepreneur is consequently seen as a core actor in the ecosystem, imbued with the agency to develop and transform the ecosystem itself (Acs, Stam, Audretsch, & O’Connor, 2017; Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2017).

More recently, there have been attempts to develop process-based frameworks (e.g. Spigel & Harrison, 2018) and understand on how ecosystems form, evolve, and become established (Acs et al., 2017; Brown & Mason, 2017; Stam & Spigel, 2017). Drawing from field theory, Thompson et al. (2018) describe how Seattle social entrepreneurs were first working in isolation, and then engaged in more coordinated activities to build entrepreneurial ecosystems. Taking an evolutionary perspective, Mack and Mayer (2016) describe how different elements (entrepreneurs, government programmes, incubator facilities, influential business elite, support organizations, universities) interacted over time and came to form an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Phoenix, Arizona. Similarly, Colin and Mason (2014) identify an evolutionary logic to ecosystem formation. They claim that at the heart of each ecosystem is at least one large and established corporation (or “blockbuster firm” as they put it) that attracts promising talent, trains a highly-skilled labour force, provides resources to start-ups, and contributes to the creation of entrepreneurship programmes, as evidenced by the cases

of Nokia in Helsinki, Microsoft in Seattle, and RIM (Blackberry) in Kitchener-Waterloo. As different elements that enable entrepreneurship become available, “liaison-animators” or “deal-makers” (defined as well-connected individuals with fiduciary roles in the business community, actively and repeatedly connecting people and resources) facilitate the formation of local linkages and access to resources. An array of spin-off processes ensues, such as the circulation of resources and a higher rate of value creation, but this inadvertently creates spatial and other forms of inequality (Colin & Mason, 2014).

These path-breaking studies provide insightful clues about bottom-up interactional dynamics involved in the development of ecosystems, but little is said about actual policies and projects that seek to establish or advance entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Global South. Questions also remain about how different actors adopt the identity of entrepreneur and get involved with ecosystem building. What sorts of strategic practices are carried out to construct and sustain these ecosystems in places with few high-growth businesses and where not many individuals identified as an entrepreneur until recently? Who become high-impact entrepreneurs, demographically speaking, and how these individuals experience this new category? And what sorts of social dynamics and implications does the promotion of entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Global South entail?

Background research identified Endeavor as a leading organization in promoting high-impact entrepreneurship in emerging economies. Endeavor was founded in 1997 by Linda Rottenberg and Peter Kellner, Harvard and Yale alumni, and is headquartered in New York City. Currently, it has 25 affiliates in different countries in the Global South. The Brazilian affiliate stands out for selecting and assisting the largest number of entrepreneurs, at least 167 entrepreneurs from 91 companies (Endeavor, 2016a). Having

only received limited scholarly attention (exceptions are Sahlman, 2009; Sahlman, Nanda, Lane, & Mazzanti, 2013), much is unknown about the organizational strategies that Endeavor puts in place to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South. As a privilege case study, the examination of Endeavour's organizational practices allows an empirical understanding of how a multitude of actors and factors assemble to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The words “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneur” were absent in official language dictionaries at the turn of the century in places like Brazil and Argentina. Today, entrepreneurship has become a widely known term in large urban settings in both countries. The founder of Endeavor, Linda Rottemberg is often heard saying how, during her trips to Argentina in the late 1980s, entrepreneurship was not a career option in the South. She launched Endeavor to provide support to aspirant entrepreneur and to develop a culture that nurtures entrepreneurship in emerging economies unacquainted with these economic categories.

To make sense of Endeavor's efforts to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem and economic subjects, this article adopts a practice-oriented theoretical lens, allowing for an understanding of the organizational processes required to implement a new societal arrangement and to constitute a new community of entrepreneurs. Science and technology studies provide a theoretical framework that eschews static interpretations of societal groups and socioeconomic contexts by accounting for the work involved in group-making efforts and in redefining elements of the world (Latour, 2005). The concept of “translation” (Callon, 1986) is particularly fruitful to explore how actors assemble and act to draw group boundaries and crystalize their definitions of reality. Briefly, translation refers to material and discursive formulations, and the assemblage of

a network of actors, each attempting to qualify and characterize a situation in a particular way (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005). The theoretical premise is that socioeconomic contexts are the contingent result of ongoing and complex collective work of stabilization involving a myriad of actors (humans and nonhumans) invested in a particular outcome (Callon, 1986; Sayes, 2014). In following this theoretical principle, this article places analytical priority on identifying Endeavor's organizational strategies involved in developing high-growth entrepreneurship; on describing how Endeavor encourages specific economic behaviours; and on exploring how Endeavor mobilizes other entities to partake in the agenda of developing entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Instead of assuming that ambitious entrepreneurs exist *in natura*, as the literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems seems to suggest, this article also builds on the notion that discursive practices and material devices contribute to the "performance" of subjectivities (Callon, 2006; Fridman, 2010a, 2010b; Licoppe, 2010). Economic subjects such as the *homo economicus* are not naturally occurring, but rather "formatted, framed and equipped with prostheses which help him in his calculations and which are, for the most part, produced by economics" (Callon, 1998, p. 51). Such theoretical insight places attention on the practices and discursive devices (including metrics, calculations, techniques, and research instruments) that perform individuals as ambitious entrepreneurs endowed with the mission to advance entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South.

As with any organization, Endeavor operates under an "organizational logic", a concept proposed by Acker (1990) to refer to the underlying assumptions and practices that structure an organization. It means that to fully grasp how an organization operates, a researcher must account to its dual structure, that is, the resources and cultural schemas that ultimately empower or enhance the position of particular groups to the

detriment of others (Sewell, 1992). Both resources (material forms that could be both human and nonhuman, such as contracts, rules, human resources, procedures, different forms of capital) and cultural schemas (cognitive frameworks, tools of thought, scripts, myths, conventions, and categories that frame the way we interpret the world) tend to privilege groups across gender and racial lines (Acker, 1990; Ray, 2019). Organizations are thus “inequality regimes” in which groups that pertain to different categories, both within and across organizations, are perceived, evaluated, and esteemed hierarchically, thus having different access to resources and opportunities (Acker, 2006; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Indeed, as relational inequality theory suggests, organizations draw or reinforce categorical distinctions between groups of people, a process of categorization that creates durable and relational inequalities, those lasting social interactions involving an unequal access to resources and opportunities (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Some organizational mechanisms benefit particular groups, increasing their social and symbolic capital, concepts that refer to the different access to resources that groups have, depending on their relative social ties, prestige, and recognition (Bourdieu, 1980, 1989). Accordingly, a theoretical framework conjoining insights from science and technology studies and relational inequality theory brings attention to the relational dynamics and social implications involved in Endeavor’s efforts to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem and create a group of entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Research setting and methodological strategies

Endeavor Brazil was among the first affiliates to produce a vast array of content about entrepreneurship and to offer online resources for the general public in an online platform, called Portal Endeavor, which has been accessed by more than 3 million individuals (Endeavor, 2016b). For these reasons, it has gained notoriety. This article

focuses on Endeavor Brazil's translational and performative practices to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country, as well as some of the social consequences in terms of relational inequality derived from organizational efforts to constitute an entrepreneurial environment in the Global South.

There were three phases of data collection and analysis. The first phase consists of gathering information about Endeavor's organizational strategies to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Brazil, including retrieving organizational documents and annual reports from Endeavor Global and the Brazilian affiliate's websites.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews with Endeavor Brazil's general director and three specialized staff from Endeavor Brazil (all of whom waived anonymity, but are nonetheless indicated by numbers in this article) yielded information ranging from Endeavor's organizational model, interventionist approaches, collaborative practices, support to Brazilian entrepreneurs, access to resources, liaison-making, entrepreneurial values, and ambitious entrepreneurship. These interviews happened between October 2015 and May 2016, lasting approximately 60-80 minutes.

A second phase of data collection consisted of gathering Endeavor's research reports about entrepreneurship in Brazil (see Table 1 for a complete list of research reports published by Endeavor Brazil, as of January 2017). The analysis of these documents identified the main issues addressed by the Brazilian affiliate, and their main strategies and prescriptions for the development of entrepreneurship in the country.

Table 1: List of Endeavor Brazil's research

Name of Research	Year of Publication / Editions	Research done in partnership or collaboration with
Entrepreneurship Statistics	2012, 2011, 2010	IBGE (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
Challenges of Brazilian	2016	Neoway Business Solutions

Entrepreneurs		DataFolha
Entrepreneurship in Brazilian Universities	2016, 2014, 2012, 2011	SEBRAE (Brazilian Micro and small Enterprises' Support Service) Support from: Instituto Data Popular, for data collection
Bureaucracy in Businesses	2015	Methodological support from: EY and SEDI
Potential to Undertake with High Impact	2014	META Profilling Support from: Opinion Box
Scale-Ups in Brazil	2016	Neoway Business Solutions
The Observatory of Entrepreneurship	2013	SAP UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)
Entrepreneurship Culture in Brazil	2014	Grupo Troiano Meta Profilling Support from: Opinion Box
Brazilian Entrepreneurs	2013	IBOPE (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics)
Entrepreneurial Rio de Janeiro	2014	Support from: Itaú Bank Sebrae - RJ
Entrepreneurial Cities Index	2014, 2015, 2016	Brain&Company Grupo Troiano SEDI Spectra Investments

Source: Endeavor Brazil; Research reports retrieved from <https://endeavor.org.br/pesquisas-da-endeavor/>

In the final phase of data collection, I compiled the demographic information about the individuals who are selected by Endeavor Brazil and their firms (N = 178), as well as Endeavor Brazil's network of mentors (N = 12). This information is publicly available at Endeavor's profile webpages, Bloomberg executives' profile webpages, and LinkedIn profiles. A total of 15 interview requests were sent to Endeavor entrepreneurs

based in São Paulo, but only 3 consented to interview. Although in small number, these key informant interviews yielded valuable information about the selection process, the sorts of resources select individuals have access to, and how they view their experiences with Endeavor.

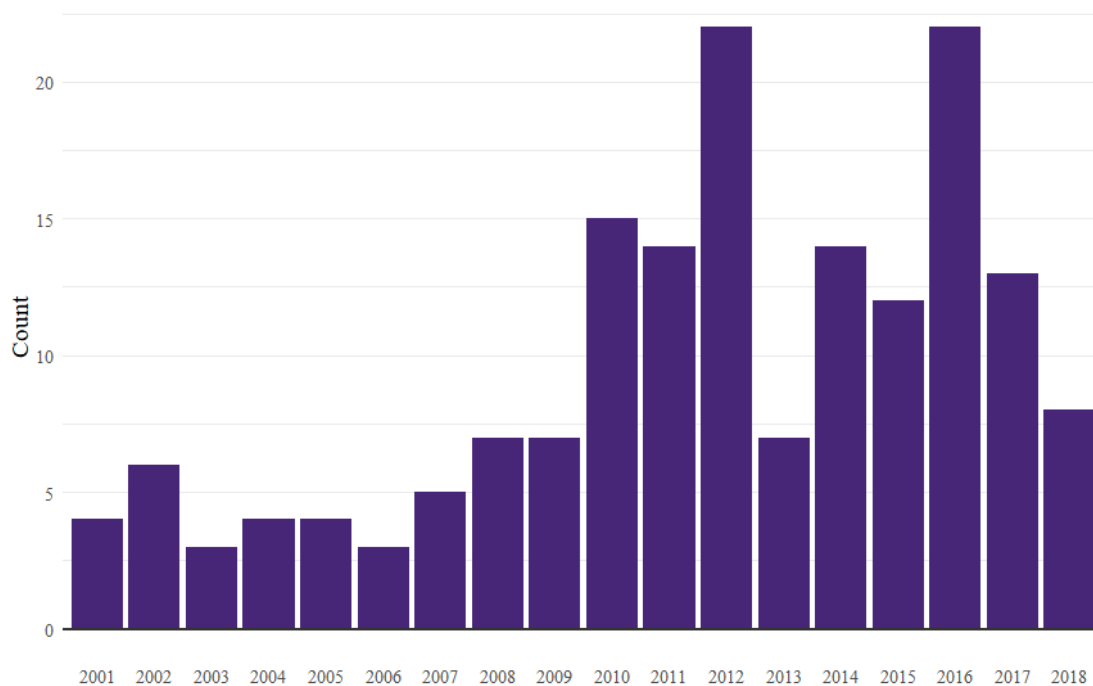
All interviews and documents were coded in NVivo. The coding procedure followed the flexible coding approach, a two-step analytical procedure that first identifies the main stories in the data, and then reduces the data into analytical codes that are applied across all cases (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Flexible coding relaxes the central prescriptions of ground theory, such as saturation and inductive analysis, by allowing previous theories to sensitize the coding process (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Organizational discourse analysis (Chia, 2000) informed the coding of interviews and Endeavor's documents by highlighting how organizations and individuals create and establish names, labels, and classifications that shape the way we think about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviours. Special attention was given to the strategies that Endeavor claims to implement and the resources offered, as well as the codes of behaviour, scripts, and morality associated with high-impact entrepreneurship.

Findings

Endeavor relies on the cooperation from local individuals to open affiliates in the Global South. Usually, prominent local business leaders fund the launch of an affiliate, and participate in the local board of directors. In the Brazilian case, the board consists of prestigious businessmen such as Carlos Alberto Sicupira and Jorge Paulo Lemann (both founders of 3G Capital, an investment firm that owns Burger King, Tim Hortons and Kraft Food), Pedro Moreira Salles (CEO of Unibanco), and Julio Ribeiro (founder of Talent Group). These are celebrated individuals in the business community, and regularly appear as distinguished guests at the main events hosted by Endeavor.

There is a basic model of organizational strategy that all Endeavor's affiliates carry (Endeavor, 2017a). All branches select and assist entrepreneurs to scale up their businesses, and then showcase them as models of entrepreneurial virtue in order to inspire other individuals to get involved with entrepreneurship. Endeavor's international headquarters may recommend additional interventionist strategies, but it does not determine all the activities of local branches. Some affiliates may thus develop localized strategies beyond the selection and assistance of entrepreneurs. In the case of Brazil, the affiliate not only selected and offered support to an increasing number of individuals over the years (Figure 1), but also produces a number of reports and research documents in order to influence policy and change local institutions to conform to market-oriented principles. In addition, the Brazilian affiliate produces and curates a wide array of content about entrepreneurship published online at Endeavor Portal (see figure 2).

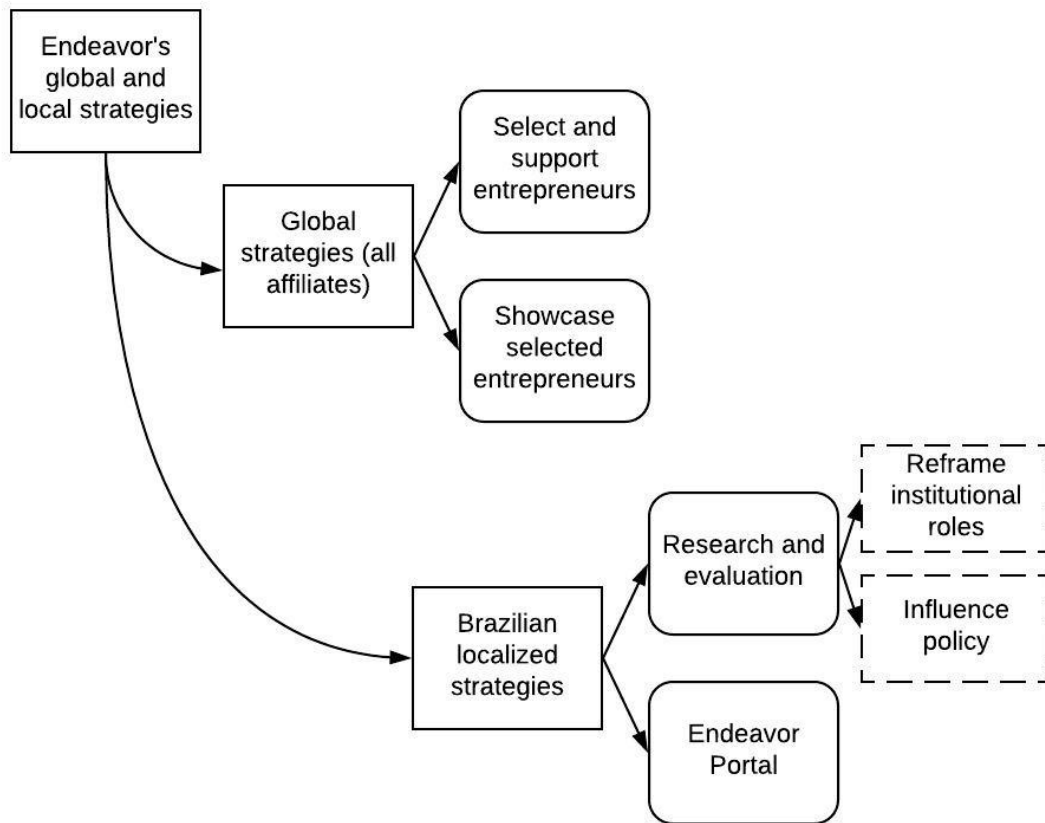
Figure 1: The number of individuals selected by Endeavor Brazil, 2001-mid-2018, N = 170*



Source: the author

Note: there is missing data (N=8) for the years in which 8 entrepreneurs were selected by Endeavor Brazil.

Figure 2: Endeavor's strategies to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems



Source: The author

These organizational strategies to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems entail two main social processes: the categorization of individuals, which lead to group formation, and the mobilization of institutions in an effort to change their role to conform to a market-oriented agenda focused on entrepreneurship. These processes involve different social dynamics, which are presented in what follows.

Endeavor's global strategies: creating a community of ambitious entrepreneurs

In line with scholarship about entrepreneurial ecosystems, Endeavor's organizational strategies to develop these ecosystems in emerging economies place the entrepreneur (or most specifically ambitious entrepreneur) at the center of concern. The efforts to

create a community of ambitious entrepreneurs entail a process of categorization involving complex and multifaceted performative work. The findings suggest three main performative processes that not only constitute new subjects but also create groups based on categories with relative reputation and esteem: i) selection and mentoring practices, ii) devices that facilitate behavioural evaluation and adjustment, and iii) the adoption of a pay it forward culture.

Endeavor's selection process and mentoring network

All Endeavor affiliates select promising high growth entrepreneurs, providing them with mentorship and other resources to scale up their business. Interviews indicate that the selection process is long, emotionally draining, and highly competitive, during which candidates present their business model to several evaluating panels composed by world-class business leaders. Once selected, individuals are given the prestigious title of “Endeavor entrepreneurs” and receive continuous assistance in the form of mentorship, funding, and privilege access to pursue education in world-renowned universities:

the core business of Endeavor, and that is what we do in all the countries, is to select the best entrepreneurs of each country, those that we believe that have the best businesses, the best teams, the dreams, the biggest dreams. We select these guys; they become Endeavor entrepreneurs, and from there, they have access to a multitude of mentors, great people, great executives, business leaders that will help them become better entrepreneurs, to grow their businesses, to shorten this path to growth. (Interview conducted with informant staff 1 on October 7th, 2015)

Endeavor entrepreneurs are depicted as innovative, creative, and relentless individuals in their profile pages at Endeavor websites. More than portraying utility-maximizing businesspersons, Endeavor hails its entrepreneurs as individuals with a “burning ambition to think big” (Endeavor 2016a, p. 5). Interviews suggest that, from the selection process, candidates are encouraged to increasingly think about scaling up

their firms. Endeavor entrepreneurs are expected to “learn to think bigger and make better decisions” (Endeavor 2015, p. 12).

[...] It is normal that we [Endeavor] start to support the guy and he thinks he can have 10 stores, 20 stores, and we show him that his business has the potential to be even bigger. I think this is the biggest thing we do for these guys. (Interview with informant staff 1 conducted on October 7th, 2015)

During the selection process, individuals come in contact with more experienced mentors who provide advice on business management, as well as on attitudes towards risk and business growth. These interactions are fundamental in shaping business decision-making, worldviews, and attitudes. Two interview excerpts with Endeavor entrepreneurs illustrate the impact of the selection process and mentoring on their decision-making and attitudes:

I must say that there is an AC/DC before and after Endeavor. BE/AE in our case, right? Endeavor, the process itself was very fruitful to us because one thing is to discuss things. Who did we talk to? We talked to ourselves, sometimes to a friend, to our parents, one or other businessmen, a client that was more successful than us. Until then, we were a very small business, we didn't have experience, we didn't have a track record, we didn't have a long trajectory that would give us a solid base to make decisions. The selection process with Endeavor opened it up, I mean, it was very rich, and we got access to experienced people that mentored us a lot, even before we became entrepreneurs. This is part of the process. And this process gave us the certainty to make [business] decisions. (Interview with Endeavor entrepreneur 1 on October 10th, 2015)

Similarly:

I attended Business school, I graduated in two postgraduate studies, and you don't learn everything you need to manage a business. So, for many things, you need to talk to experienced people, and maybe this is one of the biggest difficulties here in Brazil because people, those who have more knowledge to start a new business have taken courses like myself, and I think they don't have enough know-how.

And many others have started [a business] either because they are talented or out of necessity, and obviously the business is nice, the guy is good, business works fine until a given moment when these guys need more know-how, so I think this part of learning about business governance, business models, these are the things that we have no access to here in Brazil, and having this kind of support, talking to people, and having Endeavor's support makes all the difference. (Interview with Endeavor entrepreneur 2 on September 25th, 2015)

Endeavor entrepreneurs are showcased as models of entrepreneurial virtues in attempt to create a cascade effect of inspiration, influence, and engagement - what Endeavor calls the multiplier effect (Endeavor, 2015). The basic idea is to counter negative ideas about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship:

People think that the entrepreneur is that guy that cheats on his wife, who exploits its employees and so on. What we [Endeavor] are trying to do is to change a little bit of this discourse through examples. (Interview with informant staff 1 conducted on October 7th, 2015)

Brazilian mainstream business magazines (such as *Exame* and *Época*) often publish stories about the life and business trajectory of Endeavor entrepreneurs. Additionally, Endeavor produces videos and other inspirational material that are published on its social media accounts and annual reports, with the intention to motivate a broader audience:

All content, knowledge and stories that are produced by [Endeavor Brazil's] Support Center for Entrepreneurs are examined, so we [Endeavor Brazil] work with knowledge management, knowledge production that has two elements: first, the stories of entrepreneurs that we disseminate. And second, the "learnings" [English expression used by the interviewee], that is, what kind of difficulties entrepreneurs face, and what mentors have to say about it. So, it becomes an asset of learning, a piece of knowledge, an article, a video, a long-distance course, an e-book, a webinar that will be available for free on the Endeavor portal. The Endeavor portal is an outreach tool where we gather the learning content and the

stories of this relatively small bubble, relatively small number of enterprises that we support, and then disseminate to all society, so anyone interested or already running a business could take advantage of this knowledge and in a more self-taught way, apply in the business. (Interview with informant staff 2 on July 5th, 2016)

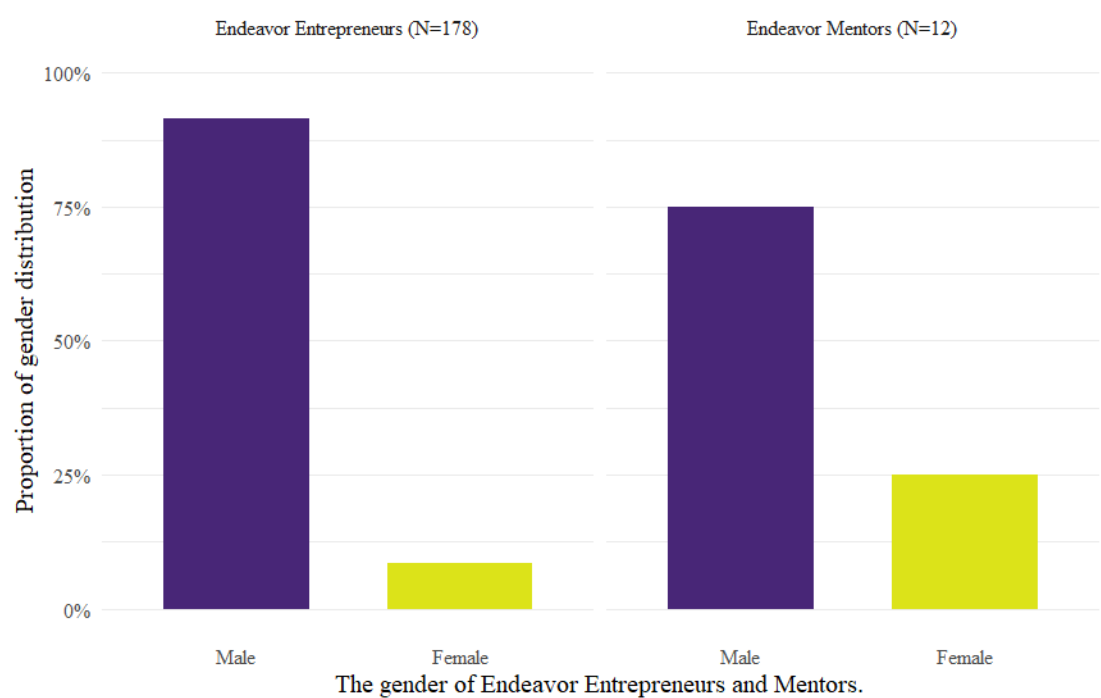
There is a clear organizational effort to transform the category of high-impact entrepreneurship and the associated group of Endeavor entrepreneurs into role models to be celebrated and emulated. Interviews with selected individuals and staff provide evidence to suggest that the entrepreneur is not only perceived as meritocratic, but as the antithesis of corrupt forms of socioeconomic organization. Kantola and Kuusela (2019) refer to these efforts to draw symbolic distinctions centred on moral beliefs of integrity, resilience, and hard work as “moral boundary work” (Kantola & Kuusela, 2019). An Endeavor entrepreneur, in interview, eloquently illustrates the moral boundary work at play:

[Endeavor] believes that through entrepreneurship an emerging economy can become a first world country. They no longer believe in political power, in public power. Oh no, it won't be our politicians who will revolutionize this country. They would destroy this country. The more entrepreneurial chains grow the economy, the more jobs are created. That's what they [Endeavor] support. (Interview with informant Endeavor entrepreneur 3 on September 25th, 2015)

The data suggest that there is a clear socioeconomic pattern of the people who are selected by Endeavor Brazil. Endeavor estimates that nearly 70% of all high-growth entrepreneurs are men (Endeavor, 2016b), mirroring an overall gender gap in established businesses despite certain gender equality in early stage entrepreneurship activity (GEM Brasil, 2016). This research found that gender disparity among Endeavor's selected entrepreneurs and mentors is even more blatant (Figure 3). In addition, most selected entrepreneurs graduated in engineering, business administration,

economics, and computer science disciplines (Figure 4A), usually from renowned private or public-funded universities (Figure 4B). In Brazil, studying in a public-funded university indicates a privileged socioeconomic background (World Bank, 2017, p.13).

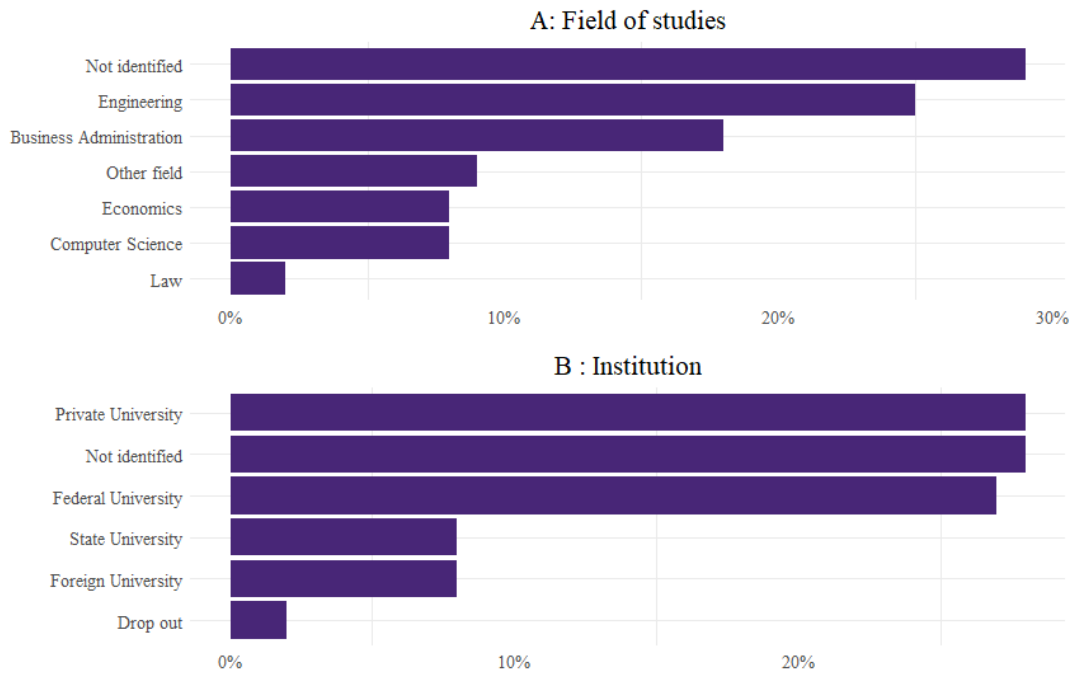
Figure 3: Gender, as measured by the author, of Endeavor entrepreneurs and mentors



Source: Biographical information posted on Endeavor’s website

Note: Gender was attributed to an individual based on assumptions about names and on the use of gendered pronouns in biographic information posted on Endeavor’s website.

Figure 4: The discipline and institutions in which Endeavor entrepreneurs attended undergraduate studies, N = 178



Source: Biographical information posted on Endeavor’s website.

Note 1: “N = 178” refers to the population of Brazilian Endeavor entrepreneurs in July 2018.

Note 2: “Not identified” refers to missing values in the dataset. Information on whether and/or where the entrepreneur attended an undergraduate programme was not available.

Not only individuals selected by Endeavor Brazil are perceived and portrayed as meritocratic individuals, despite a somewhat *ex ante* privileged socioeconomic status, at least 20% of them benefitted from partnerships between Endeavor and world-renowned academic centres, and pursued MBA programmes offered by Stanford University, Harvard University, and other centres of excellence. In interviews, Endeavor entrepreneurs stated that the mentorship and resources provided by Endeavor are directly responsible for their increasing desire and skills to scale and diversify their businesses.

Performative devices: tests and advice content

In 2015, Endeavor Brazil launched the Operational Check-up, a free online quiz designed to identify the main difficulties entrepreneurs face and the behavioural barriers to business scaling. After individuals complete the check-up, Endeavor Brazil offers a

personalized list of resources and suggestions to improve one's business and behaviours (Endeavor, 2017e). These resources are intended to identify the business hurdles one faces and how to rectify them in order to stimulate businesses. In the words of a key informant staff:

The idea is that, from ten or twelve questions, very generic questions, I can provide a business diagnostics. With this diagnostic, I suggest to entrepreneurs that took the test how they can improve their businesses. So it works like this: if you are an entrepreneur, you answer twelve questions and receive a result, a feedback.

[...]

Our idea is to make it accessible to everyone, because here, if the entrepreneur comes and talks to us about their firm, we give feedback: 'look, it makes sense you talk to this guy because he has been in your situation, this is the biggest problem of your business, we are connecting both of you and he will give you advice'. We wanted to do something like this, but with scalability, with low costs, and for free to everyone who accesses our Portal

[...]

This is all linked to the content of our Portal, so I give feedback in text format, one paragraph, and attach five, four, six links to content from our Portal with major tips. It is pretty much curated content; Super useful.

(Interview with informant staff 3 on September 29th, 2015)

Endeavor Brazil has thus put in place a device that evaluates one's business, and encourages individuals to engage with their content and underlying cultural schemas such as categories, behavioural scripts, and recipes regarding entrepreneurship. The Portal facilitates a broad access to these content and schemas, helping format a type of rationality, and disseminate entrepreneurship as an economic category in Brazil.

Pay-it-forward culture

Endeavor entrepreneurs are expected to take an active role in the ecosystem by “paying it forward” through brokering, mentoring, and investing in other aspiring entrepreneurs.

Accordingly, Endeavor entrepreneurs are required to reinvest about 2% of their financial gains, and to donate expertise and time to support the next generation of entrepreneurs. Endeavor's mission and interventionist practices are thus partly outsourced to and mediated by the same entrepreneurs it selects into its network:

The key to success is a dedicated group of entrepreneurs who, beyond scaling their own businesses, commit to supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs. They build a dense network that provides inspiration, links between employees, connections to mentors and, eventually, access to capital as the first generation of entrepreneurs become initial sources of scarce venture capital. A few entrepreneurs play outsize roles in this evolution. [...] Each time an entrepreneur is cited as an influencer (whether through inspiration, employment ties, mentoring or investing), their bubble grows. At Endeavor, we build a culture that encourages and accelerates this pattern. (Endeavor 2016a, p. 12)

Beyond providing access to a network of mentors and international educational initiatives that shape the beliefs, attitudes, and decision-making of individuals, Endeavor encourages these same individuals to share their knowledge and experiences with others. These knowledge sharing interactions are perceived as a type of community or social work, a benevolent activity that would potentially enlarge and solidify a culture of entrepreneurship in the country. If I'm allowed a small digression, it is somewhat an amusing irony realizing that this pay-it-forward culture is likely responsible for my own access to key respondents:

In a personal aspect, what attracts me the most [about Endeavor] is the educational aspect. You have access to the best schools in the world, access to the most qualified people in certain industries, and this, for me, is fascinating because I adore it, and I can multiply this to other people, and to impact their trajectories. This is, for me, the most important [about Endeavor].

[...]

Endeavor promotes a lot this aspect of social work. This is about sharing. I even dare to say that, before Endeavor, I don't know if I would be talking to you.
(Interview with Endeavor entrepreneur 2 on September 25th, 2015)

Endeavor Brazil's localized strategies: Research production and the push for institutional reform

More recently, the Brazilian affiliate expanded its activities to research and advocacy. It created a subdivision called Research and Mobilization in order to “generate knowledge to intervene in entrepreneurship ecosystem via public policy” (Interview conducted with informant staff 3 on May 25th, 2016). Through research and content development, the affiliate attempts to reframe the role of several institutions that directly affect entrepreneurship (Endeavor, 2017c). A key informant explained how the Brazilian affiliate currently works:

To improve the country, so the focus ends up being bigger, much less limited than the original model, so to speak. And somehow, Endeavor Brazil has taken, has challenged, the original model of the organization to another level of impact that, we believe, will make a difference in the long run. (Interview conducted with informant staff 2 on July 5th, 2016)

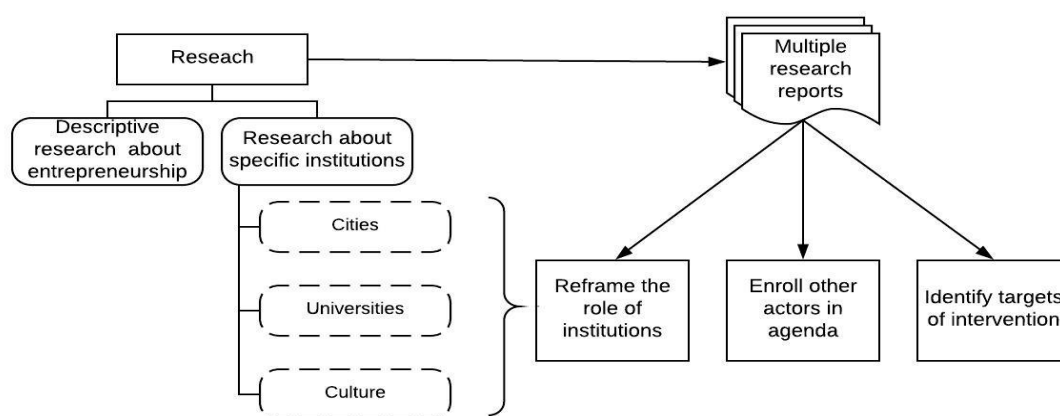
Research is not unique to the Brazilian affiliate. In 2009, Endeavor Global developed a research division called Endeavor Insight to educate policymakers, practitioners, and regional leaders in the best way to develop entrepreneurship ecosystems (Endeavor Insight, 2017). Together with the Kauffman Foundation and the World Bank Group, Endeavor Insight launched a portal that includes longitudinal surveys, efforts for data standardization, evaluation of capacity-building programmes, and other research on entrepreneurial ecosystems to assist policymakers (Endeavor, 2017d). Yet, in interview, Endeavor Brazil staff claim that the Brazilian affiliate is one

of the first ones to research and evaluate institutions with the intention to directly influence public policy on entrepreneurship.

Endeavor Brazil conducts two types of research. The first type includes descriptive studies about high-growth companies in Brazil: the number of scale-ups in the country, their typical business cycle, their employment and remuneration rates, the demographic attributes of the population employed, and sectoral analysis of high-growth firms. Some of these studies also identify typical bureaucratic challenges, such as regulatory procedures and the tax system.

The second type of research carried out by Endeavor Brazil involves evaluative studies about institutions presumed to impact entrepreneurship, most specifically, cities, universities, and culture. These studies deploy several indices, measurements, and tests to describe the performance of institutions in promoting entrepreneurship. The research reports include discussions about how institutions must align with pro-market principles, how different actors should engage in the promotion of entrepreneurship, and what environmental factors need intervention to adjust to an entrepreneurship-building agenda (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: The production of knowledge to reframe institutions as entrepreneurship-friendly



Source: The author

The research reports are uploaded online and available free of charge. They are written in lay terms, intended to reach a broad readership. Endeavor Brazil disseminates the main findings of its research in business-specialized media. Some media outlets even have exclusive rights to publish these materials. The Brazilian affiliate then uses the material printed in mainstream media to facilitate its advocacy work with policymakers, as explained by a key informant:

We [Endeavor Brazil] make strong work with the press. Every study that we undertake, we have the obligation to promote it emphatically in the media – sometimes with an exclusive material to an outlet and sometimes launching openly to everybody. What we realize is that the press helps us put pressure on policymakers. (Interview conducted with informant 2 on July 5th, 2016)

One of the most famous research reports is the Entrepreneurial Cities Index (ECI), celebrated as the Endeavor Brazil's most successful and impactful strategy to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems. Already in its third edition, the ECI ranks 32 Brazilian cities in terms of entrepreneurship-friendly ecosystems according to seven criteria (regulatory environment, infrastructure, market, access to capital, innovation, human capital, and entrepreneurship culture). These criteria signal supposedly deficiencies of urban governance on which policymakers should intervene to make cities a better environment for entrepreneurs:

Throughout the report, it is possible to identify what should be the priorities of each administration, starting from the most critical determinants to explain the performance of each city. In addition to the analysis, the report shows cases of best practices of distinct regions, which can serve as inspiration to public managers to formulate and improve their local policies with the support of the state and of civil society. It should be noted that although this study portrays the entrepreneurial environment of 32 cities, the analysis methodology used might be used for

diagnosis and improvements in every city in the country. (Endeavor Brazil, 2016, p. 121)

The ECI ranks municipal entrepreneurial ecosystems. It is used to instigate competition among cities, and the responsibility of municipal governments towards entrepreneurship building. The reports encourage public administrators and policymakers to use ECI's criteria to diagnose local ecosystems and design appropriate intervention policies to address any identified deficiencies. The ECI thus becomes a device through which Endeavor Brazil tries to influence urban governance by reframing the role of institutions such as city management.

Endeavor Brazil also investigates the performance of higher education institutions in stimulating entrepreneurship (Endeavor, 2016d). Underlying this study is the normative view that the “university must foster and inspire entrepreneurship, the big dream, and innovation of its students in order to generate economic and social development” (Endeavor, 2016d, p. 4). Just as in the case of ECI, Endeavor Brazil uses its research on universities to question and reframe the role of higher education: “This study seeks to direct the strategies of universities and other stakeholders in Brazil, be they professors, university presidents, or policymakers” (Endeavor, 2016d, p. 3). Accordingly, the Brazilian affiliate identifies a number intervention targets (e.g., faculty expertise, student behaviour, incubators, and so on), and argue that universities should encourage students to consider entrepreneurship as a career option, stimulate them to engage with innovation and to “dream big”, offer more disciplines related to entrepreneurship, develop more business incubators, and promote events to help students scale up their businesses.

In the study *Entrepreneurship Culture in Brazil* (Endeavor, 2014), Endeavor Brazil applied a psychometric test to over 9000 people in 32 cities, in order to draw a

profile of Brazilians' behaviours and attitudes towards high-growth entrepreneurship and to ultimately compare these results with those of other nations. This test was developed by a consortium of universities in Northern countries to measure four attitudes of Brazilian entrepreneurs: opportunity seeking, proactivity, creativity, and "big dream" (Endeavor, 2014). The results are used to indicate what personal behaviours and attitudes policymakers should promote in order to create a more entrepreneurial culture.

Research thus has become a central component of Endeavor Brazil's efforts to create entrepreneurial ecosystems. Non-human devices such as indices, tests, performance measures rank institutions and are used to mobilize a range of actors to partake in efforts to constitute ecosystems. By describing and ranking the attributes of institutions (such as cities, universities, and even culture), Endeavor's research paves the way to reorganize these institutions into factors that actively promote entrepreneurship. The development of entrepreneurial ecosystems entails not simply an assemblage of factors, but the re-engineering of entities into factors that are deemed essential to entrepreneurship.

Discussion

As a renowned organization involved in the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging economies, Endeavor's basic strategy consists of the selection and provision of support to a small number of promising individuals who are later presented as inspiring role models to motivate prospective entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the Brazilian affiliate engaged in extensive research activity and advocacy as additional approaches to promote entrepreneurship in Brazil. These organizational strategies entail a process of categorization and an effort of institutional reform, both having important social implications overlooked in the majority of studies about entrepreneurial

ecosystems.

First, contrary to the common assumption that ambitious entrepreneurs naturally exist and just need the proper environment to flourish, the findings of this study suggest that a complex performative work creates this special class of economic actors, frequently categorized as Endeavor entrepreneurs or high-impact entrepreneurs. The findings that Endeavor performs ambitious entrepreneurs add complexity to the discussions about the relationships between institutions and entrepreneurs (Baumol, 1990, Henrekson & Sanadaji, 2011) Organizations not simply impact entrepreneurship, but they also constitute the economic subjects that carry out entrepreneurial activities. What is more, by selecting and mentoring individuals with the intention of grooming them towards specific behaviours and attitudes, Endeavor performs a group that is socially positioned, concentrating a substantial amount of social and symbolic capital, and engaged in moral boundary work.

Those who are selected by Endeavor receive privileged access to a network of support, financial resources, and a world-class continuing education. They also receive the prestigious title of Endeavor entrepreneur, which is proudly displayed as symbols of excellence. The majority of these entrepreneurs are male with an educational background that implies an advantaged socioeconomic status. This suggests that the constitution of ambitious entrepreneurs intersect with existing categorical inequalities. Indeed, as organization scholars have long argued, durable inequalities are reproduced within and across organizations through a number of mechanisms that structure social relations that enhance the opportunities of groups pertaining to specific categories (Acker, 1990, 2006; Ray, 2019; Sewell, 1992; Tilly, 1998). Theorists have identified several of these mechanisms, from the exploitation of outsider groups, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation of unequal organizational models, to claims-making

that articulate why some groups are more deserving than others (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Some of these mechanisms are easily recognizable in Endeavor's efforts to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Brazil, such as the concentration of resources in the hands of a gendered and racialized few, and the dissemination of meritocratic schemas that create moral boundaries and justify inequality of outcomes. Additionally, Endeavor's organizational strategies entail another mechanism that also produces inequality: a pay-it-forward culture sets in place a tiered support system that creates a hierarchy within the umbrella category of the entrepreneur.

Endeavor relies on the same individuals it selects and mentors to inspire and enrol others in a culture of incessant quest for innovation and business growth. As Endeavor entrepreneurs are expected to actively promote entrepreneurship, an informal tiered system of support emerges, but it does not serve all aspirant entrepreneurs in a consistent manner. The pay-it-forward culture provides support to individuals who wish to become entrepreneurs, but of a different magnitude and without the prestige Endeavor entrepreneurs receive. Meanwhile, Endeavor continues to disseminate meritocratic cultural schemas, and design self-assessment tools that orient individuals towards specific behavioural changes. This facilitates a relative homogeneity in beliefs and attitudes that cuts across groups that are categorized as entrepreneurs, but symbolic capital associated with the category of Endeavor entrepreneurs continues concentrated in the hands of a few, mostly white men from privileged socioeconomic background.

The Brazilian affiliate also attempts to influence policymakers through research production and knowledge mobilization. This organizational strategy also has significant social implications. By ranking, testing and evaluating the performance of institutions in promoting entrepreneurship, Endeavor encourages a broad institutional

change to align with market-oriented principles. This effort to reengineer cities, universities, and cultural attitudes resembles shifts in governance models that took place in the Global North in the last decades of the twentieth century. For example, in the late 1970s, the rise of urban entrepreneurialism turned cities into competing actors motivated by the logic of capital accumulation to procure a competitive advantage in attracting direct investments and securing local firms (Harvey, 1989). Likewise, universities have been increasingly pressured to capitalize research results, to change curricula in order promote entrepreneurial values and practice, to engage in research partnership with the government and private sector, and to favour applied over basic research (Coutinho & Young, 2016; Gibbons, Limoges, & Nowotny, 1994; Mok, 2005). By ranking and evaluating institutions on their stance on promoting entrepreneurship, Endeavor's research reports reframes the role of institutions from providers of public services to crucial factors in entrepreneurial ecosystems. As such, the effort to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South is not simply about the assemblage of pre-existing factors that promote entrepreneurship, but it entails a lagged institutional shift towards a Western pro-market governance agenda.

Conclusion

Scholarship on entrepreneurial ecosystems has only begun to examine how these ecosystems establish and evolve. Current research mostly identifies two orders of ecosystem development: either through top-down interventions by government agents who attempt to replicate existing successful cases, or through bottom-up interactions between entrepreneurs who coordinate over time, setting in place a better regulatory framework and financial support to entrepreneurs (Thompson, Purdy, & Ventresca, 2018). By taking a meso-level analytical framework focused on the organizational efforts of Endeavor, this article draws inspiration from science and technology studies

(Callon, 1986, 1998; Latour, 2005) and relational inequality theory (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019) to unveil the dynamics and social implications involved in the establishment of entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Global South. The selection and showcasing of individuals, and the production of research with the intent to influence policymaking and reframe the role of institutions have important social implications.

First, one of the selection and mentoring effects is the constitution of a community of ambitious entrepreneurs who amass a considerable amount of resources and prestige. As the members of this new community have similar socioeconomic background (most are males, white, and educated in renowned universities), and are widely portrayed as role models to a broader audience, existing categorical inequalities exacerbate, especially as these individuals take part in a pay-it-forward culture that structures a tiered system of support in a context that privileges meritocratic cultural schemas. Second, through research, evaluations, and indices, Endeavor Brazil reframes the terms of debate around the functions of civic institutions in Global South, and encourages a broad market-friendly institutional change, much similar to the governance shifts that took place in the Global North such as the rise of urban entrepreneurialism and the neoliberal move in academia. These findings suggest that the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems is more than the assemblage of socioeconomic factors that promote entrepreneurship. Rather, it involves a complex performative work of economic subjects, and the re-engineering of pre-existing institutions, both of which exacerbates durable inequalities, either by setting in place organizational mechanisms that structures access to resources across categorical differences or by divesting the civic aspect of institutions in favour of market principles.

At a time when policymakers and researchers are increasingly interested in developing and understanding the emergence of entrepreneurial ecosystems, the findings and arguments of this article have unveiled the sociological dynamics involved in establishing entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Global South. Stakeholders should read this article as a cautionary tale to avoid thinking about this approach as the Holy Grail of economic policy without unintended social implications. Future research should address the limitations of this exploratory qualitative research by investigating other organizations and comparing their efforts to constitute entrepreneurship ecosystems. Another way to move the conversation forward is to address the experiences and views of individuals who are systematically excluded from the support systems and resources set in place by efforts to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems.

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ARTICLE 3

Online Networks of Support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil: Isomorphic practices and the reproduction of inequality in opportunities

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Aline de Almeida Coutinho

A new model of support system for women entrepreneurs has emerged in Brazil in the past decade. Online Networks of Support (ONS), as I call them, consist of organized groups that produce content and coordinate events to promote female entrepreneurship in Brazil. In this article, drawing inspiration from the notion of organizational logic and dual structure, I examine the rise of ONS, and explore their strategies and content produced to support women entrepreneurs. I intentionally selected the four largest ONS (in terms of online membership), systematically compared their organizational activities and symbolic content, as well as conducted interviews with founders to shed light on the institutional origins and organizational practices of this new form of support system. The findings suggest striking similarities across ONS in terms of organizational practices to support women entrepreneurs. The symbolic material regarding what is entrepreneurship is also redundant. I argue that such isomorphism and information redundancy may perpetuate inequalities faced by women entrepreneurs. Additionally, ONS promote entrepreneurial identities based on meritocratic and self-sufficiency ideals that leave social structural inequalities largely unquestioned.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; women entrepreneurs; networks of support; organizational logic; inequality

Development agencies and international organizations increasingly emphasize the role of women in economic development (GEM, 2015; IMF, 2013; WEF, 2019). It is argued that an increase in female business ownership rates has the potential to positively impact the economy through the creation of wealth and jobs (GEM, 2015). In Brazil, a country in which women are as likely as men to found a business (GEM Brasil, 2016, 2017; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010), women's businesses tend to close at high rates (GEM

Brasil, 2016; Sebrae & Dieese, 2015). Experts reason that such high rates of business closures are due to lack of profitability, difficulty in accessing finance or running out of working capital, and even changes in lifestyle or mindset (see GEM Brasil, 2016). This suggests that women are capable entrepreneurs but are held back by lack of technical and financial support, a constraining entrepreneurial ecosystem, stifling bureaucratic procedures, and even gender discrimination (Smith-Gunter & Leone, 2010).

Despite facing such difficulties, few Brazilians reach out for formal assistance to launch or manage their businesses. It is estimated that only 13.4% of all business owners seek support from formal organizations, of which 60% are men (GEM Brasil, 2016, 2017). Instead, business owners – especially women – obtain support, information, advice, and financial resources mostly from informal networks such as family, friends, acquaintances, and business partners.

In this article, I explore the emergence and organizational characteristics of a recent system of support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil. I call it *online networks of support* (ONS hereafter) to refer to organizations that seek to amplify access to information about entrepreneurship and promote interactions between women entrepreneurs. They do not resemble the traditional business support sector, nor are they composed of solely informal social networks. Rather, ONS can be thought of as small organizations that produce and share daily content about entrepreneurship on social media and websites. They also create opportunities for women to interact online and offline, share their entrepreneurial experiences, collaborate, inspire and partner with one another. Additionally, ONS provide a forum in the form of online chats and peer groups to discuss a variety of concerns related to business life (such as accounting techniques, the formalization of businesses, marketing, pricing, management).

How did this form of support for women entrepreneurs emerge in Brazil? How do ONS provide resources and information? What kind of content do the ONS produce and share? Are there differences in practices and content across various ONS? To my knowledge, there haven't been studies on such groups, perhaps because of their early stages of development. This article thus advances the literature on support systems for women entrepreneurs in the Global South. First, it shifts the traditional scholarly attention from social networks to the organizations that promote female entrepreneurship through the development of social networks and networking behaviours. Most studies looking at how women access information and resources through their social networks are quantitative in nature, shedding light on the structural characteristics of said networks (Jack, 2010). For years now, there have been calls for more qualitative studies to investigate the formation, content, and dynamics of entrepreneurs' social networks (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, 2010; Jack, Drakopoulou, & Anderson, 2008; O'Donnell, Gilmore, Cummins, & Carson, 2001; Shaw, 1999, 2006). To fill this gap, I investigate how ONS not only call themselves networks ("redes", in Portuguese), but also actively encourage women to network among themselves, creating a culture of networking behaviours. I purposely selected the four largest ONS (as measured by online followership) to serve as case studies. Drawing inspiration from organizational studies, particularly the notion of "organizational logics" and "dual structure" (Acker 1990; Sewell, 1992; see also Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), I analyze and compare the four ONS cases with respect to their institutional origins, the "cultural schemas" or symbolic messages about female entrepreneurship and empowerment they produce and share, and their strategies to promote women's entrepreneurship.

Secondly, I use original data to investigate the development and content produced by ONS. I interviewed the founders or top managers of each ONS to inquire about its history, mandate, and activities (N = 5). Realizing that most of the content promoted by ONS is published or advertised on Facebook, I subsequently coded and analyzed the content posted by each ONS (N = 6362) since the beginning of their operations until their last post of 2017. This data provides descriptive evidence regarding the type of information and resources women have access to through different ONS. I further collected and analyzed data on inspirational and motivational material in order to identify the implicit and explicit values associated with female entrepreneurship. Although less systematically, I also participated in three offline events organized and promoted by ONS to observe how women interact with one another.

Third, this article provides a systematic comparative analysis of content produced and strategies carried out across the most popular ONS in Brazil. Such comparative approach allows for a more holistic view regarding the institutional logic undergirding this new form of support for women entrepreneurs.

The findings suggest that there are substantial similarities in the content produced and shared by ONS indicating a limited variety, which eventually leads to information redundancy. Even the format of the offline events is strikingly similar. I argue that this similarity stems from foreign programs seeking to promote female entrepreneurship in the Global South. The legitimacy of these programs contributes to a substantial isomorphism in terms of the organizational logic of this new form of support system for women entrepreneurs. ONS emphasize the role of peer support and networking as a pivotal mechanism to promote female entrepreneurship. Additionally, they favour a meritocratic understanding of women's socioeconomic position in society:

entrepreneurial woman should be self-reliant and independent, and their success would eventually reflect their resilience and persistence.

These findings are problematic considering that women are already prone to redundant information and have limited access to financial and other material resources. This article also contributes to a larger policy conversation regarding the difficulties women face in accessing non-redundant information and material resources necessary to establish their business and see it thrive.

In what follows, I first introduce the background of the research and locate it within a broader concern about women entrepreneurs' access to resources and information. Second, I present the methodological approach that oriented data collection and analysis. The third part of the article consists of the findings, followed by a discussion section. The article concludes with a brief discussion of implications of the findings for scholarship on female entrepreneurship and for policy dedicated to support women entrepreneurs.

Research background and theoretical approach

For over three decades, scholars studying entrepreneurship have agreed that social networks impact the start-up and performance of enterprises. Social networks – the set of direct relationships a person has with a number of different individuals (e.g., family, friends, co-workers, business partners, acquaintances) – are important sources of information about markets, investors, and opportunities, as well as assistance, advice and emotional support (Birley, 1985; Birley, Cromic, & Myers, 1991; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Hurlbert, 1991; Shaw, 2006; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010; Smith, Smith, & Shaw, 2017). Indeed, one of the most cited works in social sciences provides the compelling argument that social networks impact a number of economic outcomes (Granovetter, 2005). Social structural analysis has become a fundamental analytical

framework to understand how the structure of social networks (such as density and heterogeneity of ties, the composition of the network) impacts entrepreneurial outcomes (Jack, 2010).

Since the late 1980s, there has been an increasing interest in comparing and contrasting men and women's social networks. Scholars found strong evidence suggesting significant gender differences: women's networks are usually composed of less diverse (Marden, 1987; Mcpherspon & Smith-Loving, 1987; Moore, 1990; Neumeyer, Santos, Caetano, & Kalbfleisch, 2019) and include more family ties (Renzulli, Aldrich, & Moody, 2000). This makes it harder to access a greater variety of information and resources (Renzulli et al., 2000). Although there seems to be no significant differences in the time and effort men and women spend in building and maintaining social networks (Reese & Aldrich, 1995), network heterogeneity does increase the odds of starting a new business (Renzulli et al., 2000). A greater variety of knowledge flowing through the network also increases the probability of business success and innovation (Leyden, Link, & Siegel, 2014).

Unsurprisingly, most of these studies focus on Global North contexts overlooking how women and men build and use their networks in the South. To address this gap, some recent case studies have looked at how networking activity help women overcome economic and societal barriers in Southern societies. Networking has become a strategy to stimulate female entrepreneurship in the face of adverse socioeconomic conditions in countries of the Middle East and North Africa regions (Tugba & Xavier, 2017), in Bangladeshi (Maas, Seferiadis, Bunders, & Zweekhrost, 2014), and Sudan (Steel, 2017). Even in high-income economies such as France, networking activity has provided an alternative for visible minority women to support each other and increase

their entrepreneurial activity in a situation of marginalization in the labour market (Karimi, 2018).

But little has been said about Brazil, a country with one of the highest rates of entrepreneurial activity in the world, for both men and women (GEM Brasil, 2017; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010). Here, women-led businesses are mostly in consumer-oriented sectors with lower barriers to entry (that is, requiring less capital investment and technical skills), thus facing intense competition and high rates of business closures (Sebrae & Dieese, 2015; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010). Even though access to finance, information, management tools, and other resources are critical elements to the start-up and survival rates of new enterprises (Kantor, 2001; Marlow & Patton, 2005; Sebrae, 2004), Brazilian entrepreneurs typically found and manage their business without seeking assistance from traditional support organizations (GEM Brasil, 2016; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010). Indeed, in 2016, it was estimated that only 13% of entrepreneurs sought some support from formal organizations, 68% of which reached out to Sebrae (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service), the largest non-profit organization that provides support for entrepreneurs in Brazil (GEM Brasil, 2017). Among those who seek support from traditional organizations, 60.1% are men and 39.9% are women (GEM Brasil, 2017, p. 52). In Brazil, women entrepreneurs seek assistance mainly from relationships with immediate alters such as kin, friends, acquaintances, most specifically from family members with entrepreneurial experience (Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010).

Social media allow entrepreneurs to build social capital and access resources (Fischer & Reuber 2014; Morse, Fawler, & Lawrence, 2007; Shaw 2006; Smith et al., 2017). It has specific features that facilitate the search for potential partners, and enable the creation and maintenance of ties that are unlikely to happen or last in an offline

setting (Kane et al., 2014). As such, social media affords behaviours that broaden entrepreneurs' social networks and deepen already established relationships (Smith et al., 2017). For women entrepreneurs, social media and digital technologies create ambiguous opportunities: women can explore market opportunities in the digital space (Richomme-Huet & Vial, 2014), establish connections, and develop business through their mobile phones (Steele, 2017), but this could also normalize home offices and reinforce traditional gender norms and expectations associated with working in the domestic sphere (Luckman, 2015).

In this article I focus not on the actions of entrepreneurs as the unit of analysis, but rather online groups that provide support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil, the Online Networks of Support. They are *online* because they mostly use Facebook to publish content about entrepreneurship, to form peer groups of support, and coordinate offline activities. I refer to these groups as *networks* to respect the popular terminology used to describe both their organization and their mission to promote networking among women entrepreneurs. Finally, they offer *support* by providing an alternative source of resources and information to traditional organizations and informal networks. The oldest and most popular ONS in Brazil was founded in 2010, but it wasn't until 2015 that many others have been established.

Because they are still in a relatively early stage of development, there are no studies, to the best of my knowledge, of what sorts of support and content ONS produce and share. Considering they have become an important source of information and resources to women entrepreneurs in Brazil, I explore their strategies and messages to support female entrepreneurship. Building on the concepts of "organizational logics", and "dual structure" (Acker 1990; Sewell, 1992; see also Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012 for a related concept, "institutional logics"), I take "material

practices and symbolic constructions” as unit of analysis (Friedland and Alford 1991, p. 248), and focus on the actual organizational structure, practices, resources, and cultural schemas, or tools of thought and symbolic assumptions, that each ONS produce and share online. Just as there is a need for more explanation of the mechanisms and processes that produce variation across entrepreneurs’ networks (cf. Jack, 2010), I argue that it is necessary to explore the strategies and cultural schemas produced by ONS in order to understand a new type of support system for women entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Traditionally, the formation and development of entrepreneurs’ social networks receive less attention from scholars than their structural characteristics (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, 2010; O’Donnell et al., 2001). To fill this persistent gap, I explore the development and characteristics of a new type of online support system that incites network formation among women entrepreneurs. I examine how ONS in Brazil came to develop their “formal structure”, that is, the blueprint for their activities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Additionally, to respond to calls for an analysis that could provide insight into the worldview of entrepreneurs and their taken for granted assumptions about entrepreneurship (Down, 2010; Down & Reveley, 2004; Gartner, 2010; Hjorth & Steyeart, 2004), I identify, contrast, and compare how different ONS define and speak about entrepreneurship.

Inspired by the concept of “organizational logic” (Acker, 1990), and trying to fill the gaps in the literature about support systems for women entrepreneurs, I explore three research questions: i) What are the primary activities and resources offered by each ONS to support women entrepreneurs? ii) What beliefs and ideas about female entrepreneurship do ONS convey? And iii) How do the four cases of ONS compare, both in terms of organizational strategies to provide support, and the symbolic content

produced? As such, this is a study that explores the rise and main characteristics of a model of support provision for women entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Research Methodology

I purposely selected four ONS for women entrepreneurs in Brazil. These networks have a strong presence on social media, with thousands of followers on Facebook. As of 2017, they were the four largest networks in terms of Facebook membership (see Table 1). There are other ONS with structural equivalence, but they have much smaller memberships and aren't well known to the larger public.

Table 1: General information about selected ONS

Name of Network of Support - acronym (Original name in Portuguese)	Number of Participants/Members (as of June 2017)	Mission/Vision (As stated in website or Facebook page)
Women Entrepreneurs Network - WEN (Rede Mulher Empreendedora)	Facebook followers: 291,668 Website: http://www.redemulherempreendedora.com.br	'Our purpose is to empower entrepreneurs, ensuring financial independence and decision-making about their business and their lives'
Pink Entrepreneurship – PE (Empreendedorismo Rosa)	Facebook followers: 221,818 Website: http://www.empreendedorismorosa.com.br/	'Mission: To inspire people to carry out entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial actions contributing to a more innovative and productive world'
Women Who Decide - WWD (Mulheres Que Decidem)	Facebook followers: 37, 192 Website: http://www.mulheresquedecidem.com.br/	'We are an Incentive Network for Women Entrepreneurship and Women's Economic Empowerment'
Entrepreneurship in High-Heels Network – EHHN	Facebook followers: 9,007	'Our mission is to encourage and support

(Rede Empreendedorismo de Salto)	Facebook page: https://pt-br.facebook.com/empreendedorismodesalto/	female entrepreneurship'
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I started data collection by interviewing the founders or vice-presidents of each ONS (they all consented to identification, but I refrain from naming them in order to focus on the ONS itself, and not on the public persona). These 60- to 80-minute interviews are informative of the history of the ONS and provide valuable information on the types of activities ONS coordinate, the support they provide, and advice they offer. Because all interviewees explicitly stated that the first priority of the ONS is to produce and curate content, the bulk of which is shared on Facebook, I decided to examine the online activity and content shared by each ONS.

I constructed a dataset containing systematic information about Facebook posts. The dataset consists of 6362 observations, each observation referring to a specific post published or shared on Facebook. I coded all posts from each ONS (except profile or cover picture changes), from the beginning of the networks' online operation until the last day of 2017¹⁰. The coding procedure consisted of a two-step process. First, I identified the content that each ONS produced or shared (the range of themes), and then I coded for the source of content that was shared (mainstream or alternative media, other ONS). A first set of code "themes", that is, a set of distinct thematic meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) for content emerged in this first step. The codes emerged inductively from the data until saturation was achieved. To avoid placing too much emphasis on content that only appears sporadically, the code "Other content" was created. Table 2 lists the rationale of the codes used to categorize the content produced and shared by each ONS.

¹⁰ The exception is WEN. I was not able to access data for WEN prior to 2015.

Table 2: Set of codes for content of ONS Facebook posts

Code for Content of Post	Rationale of the code
1. Opportunities	1. Promotion of or invitation to events, courses, programs, funding, services/goods.
2. Inspirational material	2. Motivational material, inspiring stories or persona.
3. Tips and tools	3. Business suggestions. Business best practices: business plans, canvas, pitching, networking.
4. Testimony	4. Self-promotion material. Previous events, meetings or workshops organized by the SNS.
5. Unpacking entrepreneurship	5. Discussion about what constitutes entrepreneurship. New trends in entrepreneurial behaviour.
6. Women's issues	6. Issues pertaining women's welfare: domestic violence, motherhood, and wage gap.
7. Campaigns	7. Calls for donation, health campaigns.
8. Special dates	8. Notifications about special dates. Celebratory posts.
9. Norms and regulations	9. Reminders of regulatory deadlines. Notification of regulatory changes.
10. Tests	10. Personality and /or knowledge tests. Magazine style self-tests.
11. Other content	11. Other content that does not fit the previous codes.

In a second phase of the coding procedure, I used the code themes that emerged in the first phase as “retrieval codes” (Olsen 2012) to classify the online posts. This allows comparing online activity across each ONS. Because the subcodes “Opportunities” and “Inspirational material” were reoccurring and complex, they were further broken down into other subset of codes (see Table 3).

Table 3: Subset of codes for “Opportunity” and “Inspirational material” content

Type of content	Breakdown of type of content
Types of opportunity	• Funding: Awards, grants • Courses and workshops • Program of acceleration • Goods and services: promotions or discounts (usually offered by a partner) • Public events: talks, conferences, summits • Invitation: to events organized by the ONS • Other type of opportunity

Inspirational material	• Phrase, word, material (with motivational content) • Movies or books (with motivational content) • Entrepreneurs (stories about individuals or businesses known for their assumedly entrepreneurial qualities) • Non-entrepreneurs (stories about inspirational individuals not assumed to be entrepreneurs. Ex: Malala Yousafzai, Dalai Lama, Albert Einstein)
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I further analyzed sub-codes that were reoccurring such as “Phrase, word, material” in order to identify the assumptions, values, and beliefs that underline most of the inspirational messages produced by each ONS. I argue this analytical procedure is appropriate to explore schemas pertaining that are intended to encourage women to continue engaged with a specific view about entrepreneurship. Although I make no claims for the generalizability of my findings, the dataset does provide an overview of the common cultural schemas about female entrepreneurship shared online by the main ONS in Brazil.

ONS also organize offline activities. In 2016, I attended three of these events in São Paulo (one workshop, an information fair, and a conference followed by a networking session). The observations yielded anecdotal but descriptive data regarding the structure of popular offline activities, the manner in which women engage with one another, and the issues and topics addressed in these events. I witnessed the sorts of questions women ask guest speakers, their justifications for engaging in networking, and the sorts of advice that are offered in offline events.

Findings

The Emergence of Online Networks of Support for Women Entrepreneurs in Brazil

Since 2015, ONS for women entrepreneurs have disseminated in Brazil. Two of these networks, Women Entrepreneurs Network (WEN) and Pink Entrepreneurship (PE),

were founded between 2010 and 2011, when little attention was paid to female entrepreneurship in the country. The emergence of WEN and PE cannot be explained without reference to 10,000 Women, a program launched in 2008 by the Goldman Sachs Foundation to provide business education, access to mentorship, and networking opportunities for women who own small or medium-sized enterprises in emerging economies (Babson College, 2013; Goldman Sachs, 2017). Operating in 56 countries, this program is one of the first global efforts to address the difficulties women face in starting and scaling their businesses. Other programs to promote female entrepreneurship existed previously but were smaller in scale and varied greatly across regional contexts (Babson College, 2013; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007). The 10,000 Women initiative strives for a standardized curriculum and provides classes on “marketing, accounting, business plan writing, strategic planning and e-commerce, among others” (Babson College, 2013, p. 8). In addition, it seeks to increase financial literacy and help women “apply for loans” (Goldman Sachs, 2017).

It was during their participation in the 10,000 Women program that the founders of Women Entrepreneurs Network (WEN) realized the lack of support for women entrepreneurs and the scarce information about female entrepreneurship in Brazil. They decided to launch a website to offer and disseminate content about entrepreneurship, most specifically catered to women entrepreneurs. After two years, the site was formalized into a profit-seeking business that provides a number of services to women entrepreneurs, including mentoring, networking opportunities, business roundtables, content about entrepreneurship, and workshops. However, it was not until the creation of a Facebook page in 2011 that the network gained wide public attention and increasing follower engagement. “Our strongest intervention is on social media”, said the founder in interview.

The 10,000 Women initiative was also crucial to the development of Pink Entrepreneurship (PE), the second largest network of support in terms of social media followers. While participating in the programme in 2011, the founder created a blog in which fellow participants would narrate their experiences in the 10,000 Women program. “It was there [at 10,000 Women] that the desire to create Pink Entrepreneurship emerged. To create a space for storytelling so other women would be inspired by what they read”, said the founder in interview. Soon after, PE began to produce and share information, advice, and videos related to female entrepreneurship. As of June 2017, the blog comprises approximately 28 columnists. Content is posted daily. However, most of it is accessed through their Facebook page.

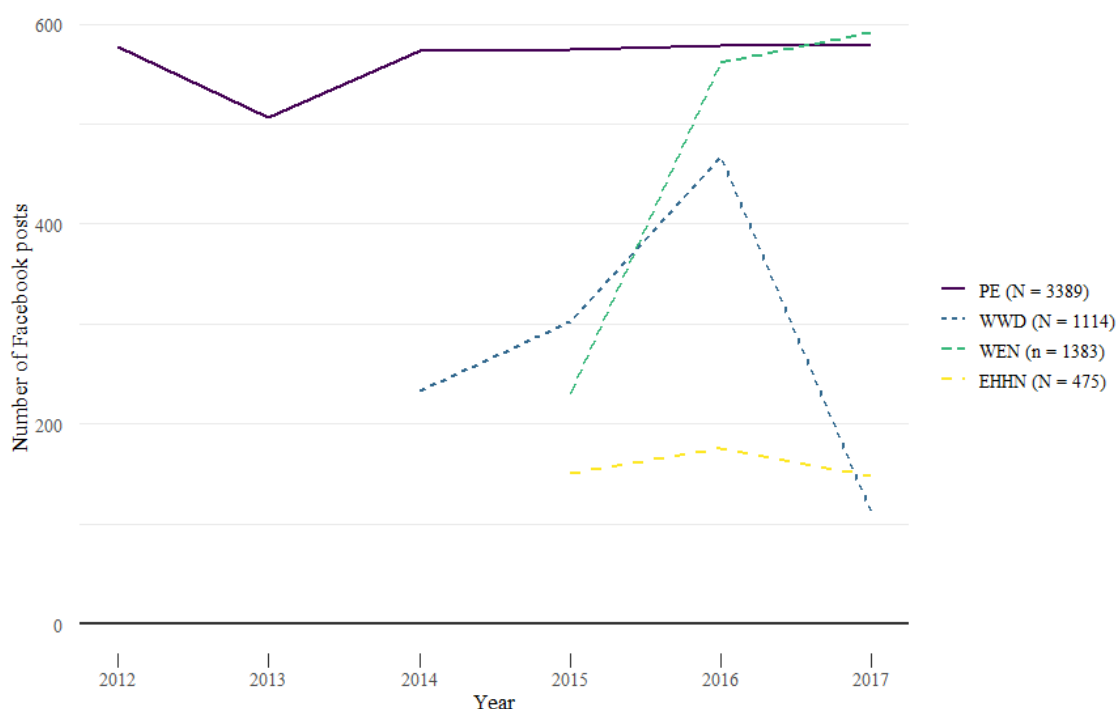
The third largest network of support, Women Who Decide (WWD), was created in 2015. While coaching a small group of women, the founder launched a Facebook page to promote female entrepreneurship and share videos, podcasts, news and advice in an effort to encourage women to start business ventures and formalize businesses. The smallest network of support investigated in this study, the Entrepreneurs in High Heels Network (EHHN), began in 2015 as a Facebook group. The founder had previously participated in other ONS, but found it difficult to participate in events that were mainly held in the metropolitan area of São Paulo. Addressing the lack of networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the interior of the state, this group rapidly drew thousands of followers on Facebook. Like other ONS, it creates and shares online content about female entrepreneurship and organizes offline events.

Online activity

During interviews, all respondents emphasized the significance of Facebook as a platform to convey information about entrepreneurship and resources, and to provide different opportunities for interaction between members. The rate of online activity of

each ONS varies significantly. PE posts at a much higher rate than WWD and EHHN (Figure 1), even in the formative years. Although I have no access to data prior to July 2015 for WEN, available data from 2016-2017 encourage the assumption that networks that originated at 10,000 Women program have higher posting rates than other ONS.

Figure 1: Number of posts on Facebook over the years, 2012-2017, N = 6361



Source: the author.

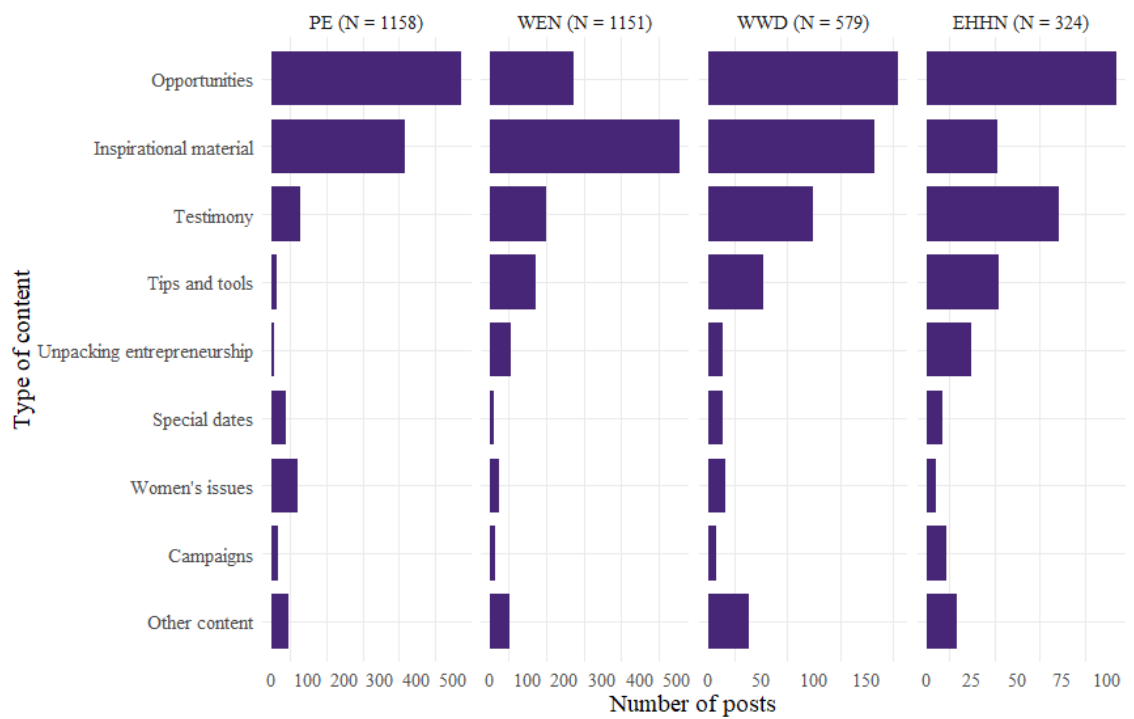
Note: the author was unable to access data for WEN prior to August 2015.

Because data for WEN is incomplete, I mostly used the years of 2016 and 2017 to compare the material posted on Facebook by ONS. The content produced and shared tend to be similar across all four ONS: the most common type of content being opportunities, inspirational material, and personal testimony (Figure2). There is some variation in terms of focus: for example, while WEN emphasizes inspirational material, PE focuses on opportunities.

ONS not only produce and post content directly on Facebook, they also share content produced by others. When it comes to the source of the content produced and

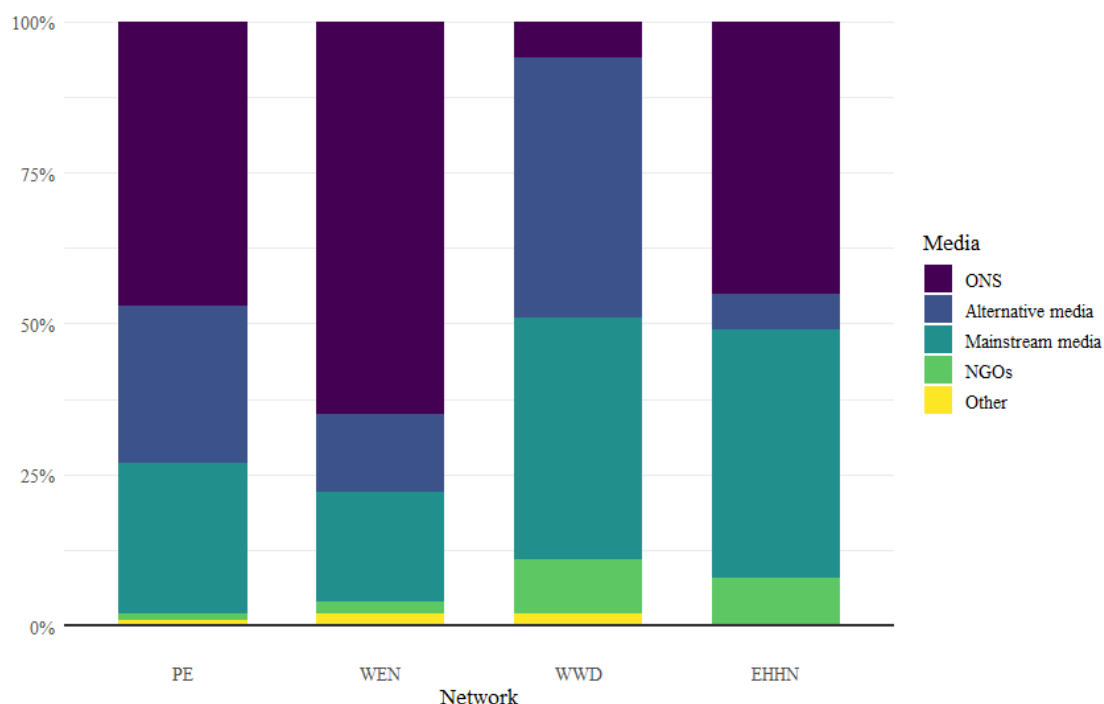
shared by ONS, there is a striking variance across ONS (Figure 3). Older and larger networks such as PE and WEN mostly share content produced by their own associates or members, that is, sourced from the ONS itself. This content is usually first published on their own websites and then shared on Facebook. The WWD and EHHN tend source content from mainstream media content, mostly pieces published in the business sections of mainstream media outlets. WWD is the one network that mostly shares content produced by/published on alternative (non-mainstream) blogs focused on business topics.

Figure 2: ONS Facebook content, 2016-2017 (N = 3212)



Source: the author.

Figure 3: The source of the content shared by ONS, 2016-2017 (N = 620)



Source: the author.

Women entrepreneurs who are associated with or participate in the ONS write the bulk of content produced by the ONS. In an interview, WEN’s founder estimated that “90% of [their] content is produced by the entrepreneurs, or the ambassadors, or people that write for us, writers, columnists”. The content is produced “by entrepreneurs who know what is happening, and in the language of the woman entrepreneur”, intended to be “more direct, from entrepreneur to entrepreneur”, regarding women’s daily struggles, and avoiding the technical jargon of experts. Similarly, columnists associated with PE also produce their own content. The founder stated in interview that PE’s posts mainly consist of advice “that makes a difference in women’s lives”. Likewise, for EHHN, the moderators of the Facebook page produce content in their area of expertise and publish it online. This content consists of business and self-help advice, conflict management techniques, and legal and accounting recommendations.

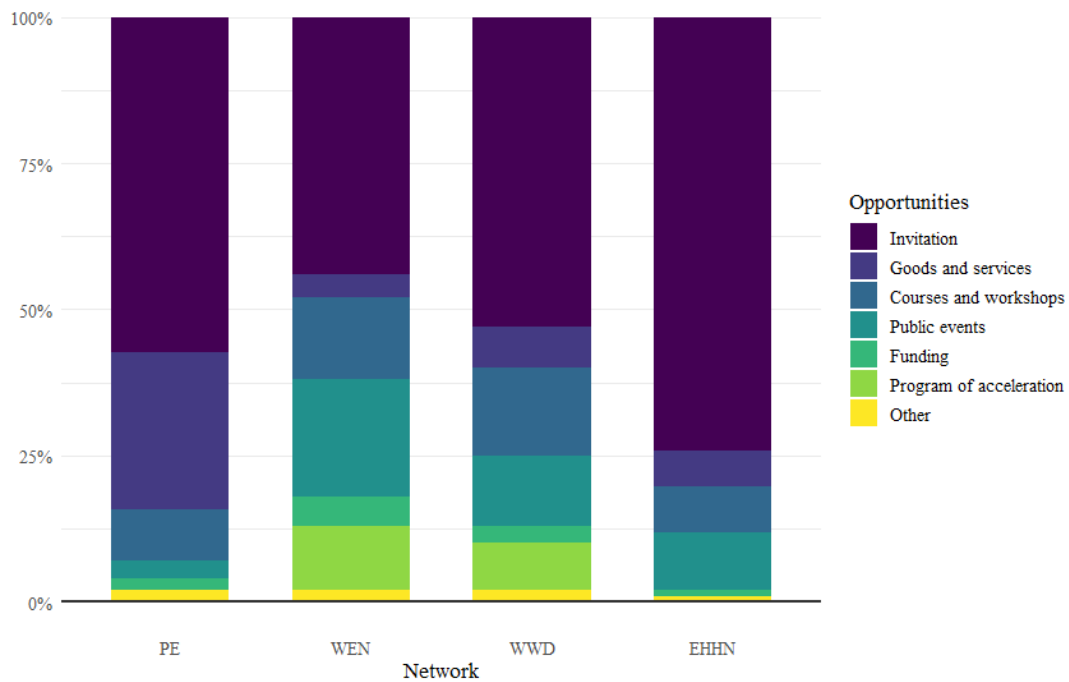
Considering only the most common type of content posted on Facebook, Opportunities, it is fair to say that ONS mostly promote offline events organized by the network itself (Figures 4A and 4B). PE also heavily promotes goods and services offered by a third party (mostly members or business partners of the network), but to a lesser extent in its most recent years. Courses and workshops are promoted in similar rates across ONS (around 15% of each ONS posts relate to opportunities), and attention to funding opportunities are rare and the majority are through WEN, whose founder also started a venture capital initiative, Angels of Brazil.

Figure 4: The types of opportunity promoted by each ONS

(4a) Total of posts about opportunity, N = 2,017 (incomplete data for WEN)



(4b) Posts about opportunity in 2016-2017, N = 1,030.

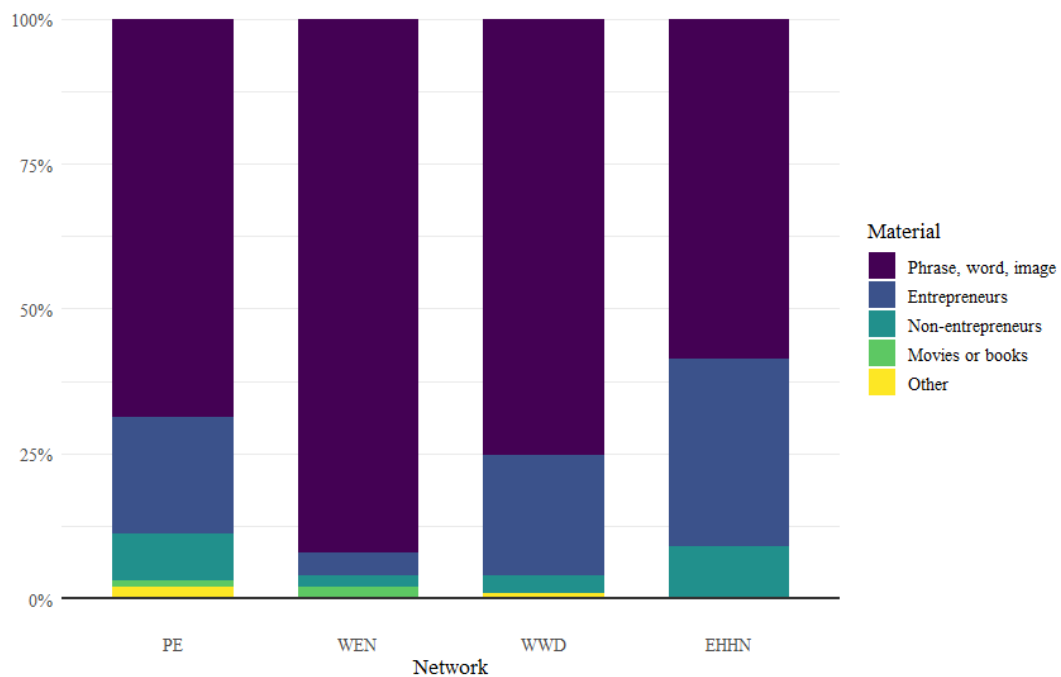


Source: the author.

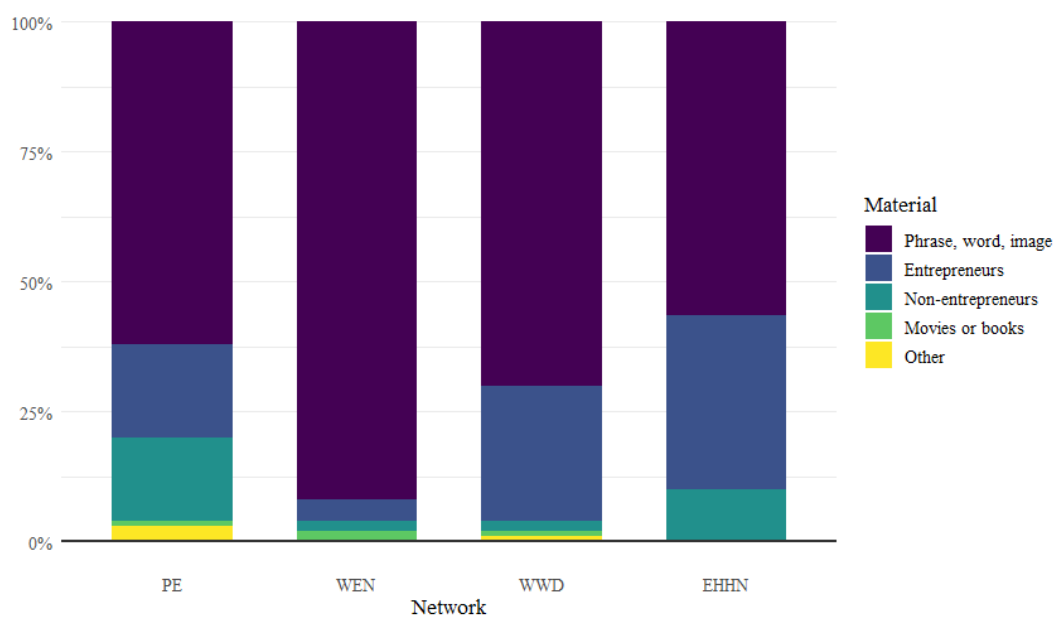
All ONS post a large volume of inspirational material, the majority of which comes in the form of motivational phrases, words, or image (Figure 5). While WEN is the network that predominantly produces this type of material, EHHN, PE, and WWD also notably produce or share inspirational stories about entrepreneurs and their business ventures. Much less prevalent are stories about inspiring individuals who are non-entrepreneurs, or suggestions of books and movies with motivational content.

Figure 5: The types of inspirational material posted by each ONS

(5a) Total of inspirational material posted, N = 2,409 (incomplete data for WEN)



(5b) Inspirational material posted in 2016-2017, N = 1,071



Source: the author.

I collected and coded all the motivational phrases to further identify their symbolic content (Table 4). Most phrases remind women that they have the power and

responsibility over their future. The second most common type of messages is about values and attitudes such as righteousness, work ethics, and self-care that the entrepreneur should adopt. This pattern is similar across all ONS and underlying messages tend to be alike (Figure 6).

Table 4: The coding rationale to examine inspirational phrases posted by ONS.

Code	Message	Example of phrase
Entrepreneurship	Hailing entrepreneurship Defining entrepreneurship Female entrepreneurship	‘Entrepreneurship, for me, is to do something, no matter the scenario, opinions, odds. It means to do something different, take risks, believe in an ideal and in a mission’
Responsibility	Being responsible to one’s failures and achievements Decisiveness Initiative Not waiting for perfect moment Risk-taking Courage Opportunity-seeking Resilience Adaptability	‘Do not blame others. Don’t wait for help. Do something!’ ‘Do something today that your future will be thankful for’ ‘The only people who failed are those who never take risks, and this is not our case’ ‘Better than taking advantage is to create one’s own opportunity’
Business	Being invested in business Business strategies	‘The soul is the secret of business’
Values	Ethics, righteousness, morality Presentation of self Work ethic Uniqueness Love, friendship, happiness, gratitude Self-care	‘The way you position yourself determines who you are’ ‘Be true in everything you do’ ‘Stop for a minute and smile’

Wishes	Wishes of good day	‘May your day be filled with good news and accomplishments!’
Women	Particularity of being a woman Femininity Sorority Maternity	‘There are no limits for what we, as women, can realize’
Leadership	Being a leader Being an example	‘The strength of a leader comes from the admiration that he acquires, and not the fear he creates’
Other	None of the above apply	

Figure 6: Subjacent messages of ONS’ inspirational phrases (n= 1817).



Source: the author.

Note: Each quarter of the tree map refers to an ONS, within which the size of the spaces associated with a specific message corresponds to the percentage of inspirational messages posted by the network.

During interviews, research participants repeatedly referred to the topic of female empowerment as the ultimate goal of ONS. However, as interviews unveiled, there are nuanced differences in the meanings associated with the term (Table 5).

Table 5: The meanings associated with the term female empowerment

Network	Interpretation of female empowerment	Interview excerpt
WEN	Help women navigate from corporate employment to business ownership	‘We work towards female empowerment through entrepreneurship [...] We [WEN] have opted to concentrate on our mission to help women at the moment they say ‘the corporate world is not for me’, ‘I can no longer stay at home’, or ‘I am at a certain age and the corporate world does not accept me anymore, and I want to venture’. We want to look at this moment for this woman. What can we do for her here? As a mother, a household administrator, we don’t work on personal themes. When do we work on personal themes? When they touch entrepreneurship’ (Interview with founder of WEN).
PE	Self-awareness, lifelong reflexivity	‘[...] empowerment is believing in my potential, in my strength, in my capacities and even my limitations [...]. It is the search for the power that I have. Not physical power, but the power of knowledge, the power of affection, the power of my own actions, and especially of my limitations. Because when we don’t acknowledge our own limitations, we cannot have power’ (Interview with PE founder)
WWD	Business formalization and contribution to the overall economy; financial independence; social responsibility	‘We [women] don’t want to take the space of [men]. We want to contribute to have a better society.’ ‘[Entrepreneurship allows women] to have their own business, to work with what they love, to generate jobs in their community. It is the opportunity to build your own history, to be a protagonist of your own history based on what you develop’ (Interview with WWD founder)
EHHN	Shared responsibilities; valuation of women’s uniqueness	‘[...] we [women] have to conquer our space, but we have to find balance and do so with our partners. Empowerment, for me, is balance. To conquer our own space, but knowing that it is our space, not someone else’s. To value what

Several times during interviews, respondents acknowledged traditional gender divisions of labour in the household and the occupational segregation in the labour market. They are aware that women work more than men and are overburdened with social reproduction work, which hinder their economic success. But their understanding of empowerment does not entail radical changes to power and market structures. Empowerment has to do with encouraging and creating opportunities for women to found and manage a business. Indeed, informants often suggested that women have specific needs and ways of venturing due to gendered traits (e.g., intuitiveness, attention to detail, greater capacity to multitask, empathy, shyness, tolerance), and that such differences simply require adaptive support to advance their businesses.

Offline activity

ONS also organize several offline events, most of them focusing on creating network opportunities, peer mentoring groups, and conference-style conventions. Table 6 presents a list of events organized by the ONS and a broad description of the type of event (until 2017).

Table 6: Set of codes for content of ONS Facebook posts

Network	List of offline events	Description
WEN	• Forum Empreendedoras ('Forum Women Entrepreneurs'). • Anjos do Brasil ('Angels of Brazil'). • Café com Empreendedoras ('Coffee with Entrepreneurs'). • Virada	• Conference with thematic panels catered to women entrepreneurs. • Conferences about 'angel investment'. • Monthly conference followed by a networking event. • 2-day fair and expositions catered to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs-to-be.

	Empreendedora ('Entrepreneurial Fair'). • Workshops de Vendas ('Sales Workshop'). • Programa de Mentoria Coletiva ('Collective Mentoring Program'). • Global Mentoring Walk.	• Workshop dedicated to teach women how to increase sales. • Peer mentoring event. • International networking and mentoring event that celebrates women's leadership.
PE	• Happy hour com prosa ('Happy hour with prose') • Gear up program. • Eu, Feliz ('Me, happy'). • Lean In Circle. • Café com pRosa ('Coffee with Prose'). • Conexão Rosa ('Pink Connection').	• Networking event. • Professional capacitation program focused in teaching 'survival kit' for the corporation. • Mentoring and networking events. • Peer support groups. • Mentoring and networking events. • Mentoring and networking events.
WWD	• Convenção Mulheres que Decidem ('Convention WWD'). • Encontro Mulheres que Decidem ('WWD Encounter'). • Publishing activities • Células ('Cells') • Entrepreneurship in the periphery	• Conference about entrepreneurship, their business and experiences to a large audience. • Conference followed by a networking event. • Publishing of books. • Peer mentoring groups (12 members). • Teach about entrepreneurship to marginalized teenage girls
EHHN	• Núcleo de Negócios ('Business Hubs'). • Chá com Empreendedoras ('Tea with Entrepreneurs'). • Criando Conexões ('Creating Connections'). • Bazar ('Bazaar').	• Peer mentoring events. • Mentoring and networking events • Networking event. • Bazaar type event in which entrepreneurs demonstrate their products/services. • Publishing of magazines with business ads for local circulation.

- Publishing activities.
 - Núcleo de Capacitação ('Capacitation hubs').
 - Capacitation workshops.
-

WEN's first offline meeting included approximately 80 women and focused on creating networking opportunities. With the success of this meeting, WEN began to offer similar monthly events called *Café com Empreendedoras* (Coffee with Women Entrepreneurs), its most popular event. At these monthly events, women attend talks on specific topics (e.g., marketing strategies, life-work balance, and branding), observe the stories of successful women entrepreneurs, and are encouraged to network among themselves. The demand for these types of meeting spread to other cities. The founder decided to appoint "ambassadors" to organize these events elsewhere. As of May 2016, there were approximately 45 ambassadors throughout Brazil coordinating local events and activities.

PE also organizes a variety of activities, such as guest talks, book clubs, and networking events for women. Each month, PE chooses a topic related to business management (usually time management, social media advertising, and business formalization), and a consultant is invited to give a lecture on this topic to a small group of women. A subsequent training workshop is offered on the same theme. PE also organizes networking events called *Café com Prosa* (Coffee and Storytelling) in which guest speakers present their entrepreneurial story. "You don't just exchange business cards here at Pink Entrepreneurship, you exchange stories", said the PE founder in interview. Their most popular activity is the leadership program Lean in Circle® by Sheryl Sandberg, which consists of creating small peer groups of women who meet regularly to discuss gender-related issues, build new business and life skills, and mentor one another. In interview, PE founder emphatically states that "this program [Lean in

Circle] is more than our success, it is our oxygen for daily empowerment”, suggesting that it is instrumental in making women believe in themselves.

WWD coordinates *Células* (Cells) or small groups of women who meet weekly to “draw strategies to disseminate and make business known, increase sales, and help each other with the daily struggles of a business enterprise” (Mulheres Que Decidem, 2016). Each week, three different women receive tailored business advice from peers. In an interview, the founder stated: “Our greatest mission is to make them [the women] understand what is a network”, and added “those who understand that it is not about selling once, they are doing very well”. Overall, this network aims to “facilitate access to information and encourage networking and the generation of businesses among the women entrepreneurs that participate in the network” (MQD, 2017). WWD sporadically offers or sponsors short-term courses and workshops, such as “WordPress for Beginners”, “LinkedIn for Business”, and “Sales Thinking”. In addition, it launched a project in schools in marginalized neighbours of São Paulo to teach adolescent girls in peripheral areas the basic premise of entrepreneurship and inspire them to consider entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to traditional employment.

Finally, EHHN also organizes several peer mentoring groups, networking opportunities, and public speaking events. Additionally, they organize opportunities for women to sell their goods/services, either through bazaar type events or through publishing a local business advertisement magazine. Sporadically, EHHN offers free 50-minute workshops covering topics such as pricing, business formalization process, and strategies for business growth.

Discussion

The four ONS are strikingly similar in terms of the strategies to promote female entrepreneurship. All of them favour Facebook as a platform to diffuse content and to

advertise activities. But they also organize similar events and encourage networking behaviours among Brazilian women entrepreneurs.

The similarities of the strategies to promote entrepreneurship suggest a high degree of institutional isomorphism, a term that refers to widespread similitude of organizational blueprint and practices across different organizations. Expert authorities and renowned organizations signal what is considered legitimate practices and organizational structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Such structures become mythical and ceremonial, that is, perceived as examples of effective or rational practices, thus increasingly adopted by a number of organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Indeed, as interviews unveiled, the founders of the oldest and largest ONS for women entrepreneurs in Brazil (WEN and PE) participated in the 10,000 Women program. The program is known for encouraging business partnerships, and promoting the importance of networks of mentorship and advice (cf. Babson College, 2013). It is not coincidental that these ONS often organize offline events that offer networking and peer-mentoring opportunities. The format and the mandate of these events are also quite similar: mainly small peer-support groups or networking receptions following conference-style events.

I argue that the reason for this isomorphism is because the initial networks that emerged from the 10,000 Women initiative – WEN and PE - soon gained popularity and served as legitimate models to be emulated. This modelling results in other ONS adopting similar online and offline strategies to promote entrepreneurship, but also in terms of content produced. Even the shared content is sourced from a small number of mainstream media outlets or from a few alternative blogs focused on entrepreneurship and business management. This reproduces a traditional problem to women's social networks, that of information redundancy, that is, a crippling lack of variety of

knowledge even when information is abundant (see Dubini & Aldrich, 1991; Leyden et al., 2014).

Even within each ONS, information about courses and workshops, as well as goods and services, tend to repeat over time. That is because ONS also serve as platforms for service brokering. When women ask for suggestions for service providers (such as marketing, branding, accounting and legal services) or courses, networks usually supply a list of providers. These providers are in a contractual relationship with the ONS. Typically, women who contract services from this list receive discounted rates, and the network gets a commission. This explains why ONS repeatedly suggest the same set of service providers, intensifying redundancy of information about services and goods.

Recent studies suggest that individual entrepreneurs and small firms use social media to accrue social capital and access valuable information about entrepreneurship (Fisher & Reuber, 2014; Morse et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2017). However, my findings suggest that the sole use of ONS might indeed increase access to information about resources and entrepreneurship, but solely relying on information and resources provided by these online networks may eventually be limiting due to the redundancy of the information generated and shared. Social media may facilitate social capital development (Smith et al., 2017), but it can also prove to be limiting if there is no variety in the knowledge accessed (Leyden et al., 2014).

ONS promote cultural schemas about female entrepreneurship that both conveys meritocratic ideas and detaches the notion of female empowerment from radical changes in the social structure. According to this logic, entrepreneurship is dependent on one's internal disposition to face risks and opportunities, on individual's responsibility for their economic outcomes. This symbolic content is recurrent across all

ONS investigated, and can be used to inform the construction of identities based on meritocratic worldview, only marginally acknowledging socio-structural barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. As such, ONS' cultural schemas might prove another obstacle to female empowerment even if helping women found businesses. The evidence that growth itself is not enough to overcome market and labour discrimination against women supports this hypothesis. A deeper societal change in attitudes, behaviours, and opportunities are necessary to fully realize economic development and reduce gender inequality (Duflo, 2012).

Entrepreneurship learning involves identity construction (Donnellon, Ollila, & Middleton, 2014; Hytti & Heinonen, 2013). Educational initiatives are thus a prolific context for identity creation, once it provides language skills, role prototyping, and scripts of behaviour (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013). The visuals and symbols, the stories that are told about entrepreneurs, the way people socialize in educational initiatives are factors that facilitate the construction of particular entrepreneurial identities (Donnellon et al., 2014). ONS produce and disseminate content charged with symbolism about female entrepreneurship, mostly through their inspirational material. Accordingly, entrepreneurship is perceived as a meritocratic lifestyle that eventually leads to a market friendly form of self-assertion.

It has long been acknowledged that representations of entrepreneurial activities and the figure of entrepreneurs reflect norms and ideas associated with masculinity (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Women entrepreneurs are constantly portrayed as having some sort of deficit of traits, intentions, behaviours, and networks compared to men (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004, 2005; Foss, 2010) and men are usually the role models of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006). Some scholars argue that social norms and discourses can marginalize female entrepreneurs' perspectives and prevent

women from participating in entrepreneurial activities (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Calas, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009), while others argue that women develop strategies to overcome barriers imposed by masculine representations of entrepreneurship, like adopting the male stereotyping, denouncing expectations to gender norms, or even resisting masculine connotations (Lewis, 2015). Either way, entrepreneurship is a gendered identity, a social construct infused with meanings that influence and predict behaviour (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Lewis, 2015).

Research provides evidence to suggest women engage in several strategies to tackle gendered discourses, such as adopting the male stereotyping, claiming femininity, denouncing expectations of gender or even resisting the masculine connotations of entrepreneurship (Lewis, 2015). My findings confirm that inspirational content is imbued with meanings and values usually associated with masculinity: courage, risk-taking, resilience, and so forth. However, these masculine values are reinterpreted and softened by a feminine interpretation. Courage is of a feminine type, risk-taking is in the context of motherhood, and resilience is a feminine trait in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, ONS embrace meritocratic cultural schemas that overlook structural barriers. When these constraints are acknowledged, the emphasis is placed on women's will and resilience to overcome them. Some popular programs among ONS, such as the Lean In[®] initiative, convey ideas that lack empirical support, such as that women are holding themselves back. These beliefs minimize significant structural and cultural barriers to access resources in a deeply unequal society. Visible minority women, for example, face stereotypes and biases that cannot be overcome with mere peer-support and will power (see Chrobot-Mason, Hoobler, & Burno, 2019).

More than promote an entrepreneurial identity that is constantly encouraged to embrace meritocratic ideals, ONS often dismiss redistributive justice as if it was a path

to unfounded “victimization”, a term used by ONS on multiple occasions to refer to critiques of social inequality. Indeed, the inspirational material shared by ONS emphasizes the responsibility one has for their own life, and characterizes any contestation of structural barriers to access resources as mere whining. Cultural schemas as conveyed by ONS invite the suspicion and displacement of non-market-based policies.

Sporadically, ONS address the reasons women usually do not apply for funding, often citing behavioural barriers (shyness, self-doubt, risk aversion) or difficulty in dealing with complex application processes. The networks raise the importance of financial literacy and encourage women to apply for formal credit, but do offer limited alternative funding services, and only sporadic courses on such issues despite the fact that there is evidence of a significant demand from the part of micro-entrepreneurs (Sebrae, 2019). As such, ONS facilitate the flow of ideas, values, and information that, as argued above, tend to become redundant over time, while actual access to financial resources and classroom training remains sporadic.

The findings suggest that, as an alternative new system of support for women entrepreneurs, ONS do provide information and opportunities to network, and create content that may be easier to access, especially for women who live in remote areas or may feel intimidated by specialized jargon-filled information. However, ONS may perpetuate socioeconomic structures for three main reasons: i) they engage in isomorphic strategies to provide support to a target population that is already prone to redundant information and limited material resources, ii) they convey symbolic material about entrepreneurship that favours a meritocratic understanding of women’s socioeconomic position in society, and iii) they over emphasize the role of peer support and networking in a society in which women have little access to financial and other

material resources. These are problematic aspects of this new kind of support system, especially when one considers that information variety affects the probability of success in innovation (Leyden et al., 2014), and that a neoliberal concept of entrepreneurship disregards or even justifies unequal balance of power and access to resources (Boeri, 2018; Drakopoulous & Anderson, 2007).

Conclusion

Traditionally, women entrepreneurs in Brazil mostly count on their social networks for support and information (Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010). But in the past decade, a new model of support system has emerged, the Online Networks of Support (ONS) for women entrepreneurs emerged. With the rise of informational technologies and social media, women can easily access information about entrepreneurship and other resources through Facebook pages of organized groups that produce and share content online on a daily basis as well as organize regular offline events to facilitate networking.

This article advances the literature on female entrepreneurship on multiple fronts. Empirically, it explores the formation and characteristics of a new system of support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil. Theoretically, the article provides an organizational account, inspired by the notion that organizations are dual structures with a particular logic (Acker 1990; Sewell, 1992; see also, Thornton et al., 2012), of the emergence, practices, and symbolic content of the biggest organizations that comprise this new support system. Such organizational framework enables understanding the organizational practices and symbolic content that informs this new type of support system, which is excessively focused on promoting social networks among women entrepreneurs. Methodologically, the article shifts the focus from how entrepreneurs use digital technologies (Luckman, 2015; Maas et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2017; Steel, 2017; Tugba & Xavier, 2017) to how online groups provide support and inform women's

behaviours and beliefs. The focus is not on women's actions per se, but on the organizational practices to support women entrepreneurs and promote particular attitudes. Analytically, the article provides a comparative analysis that allows for a holistic understanding of organizational practices and potential consequences of online support systems.

The findings indicate striking similarities across the largest and most popular ONS, both in terms of the activities organized to support female entrepreneurship and the content produced. This suggests that there are isomorphic dynamics that eventually limits the variety of information and resources available to women. Additionally, the findings indicate that ONS privilege a particular type of discourses about female entrepreneurship, one that stresses the individual responsibility women have for their personal outcomes. Such symbolic content, by far the most common type of content posted on social media, minimizes and even criticizes efforts to question structural barriers. Coupled with a focus on networking as a way to promote entrepreneurship, this content places on women - who are already materially disadvantaged - the onus to succeed economically. Together, these findings suggest ONS may be a new source of information and resources, but may inadvertently reify and even legitimize structural inequalities women face in society.

Much remains to be investigated, especially how women use these new forms of support, how ONS actually affect entrepreneurial outcomes and economic behaviour, and how women adopt and adapt the discourses about entrepreneurship conveyed by ONS. The article helps raise some hypotheses for future research: whether women who participate in offline events only have higher chance to access fine-grained information, and whether sole reliance on ONS online content has an impact on business survival rates. For now, the findings discussed in this article can inform programs directed at

promoting female entrepreneurship of the pitfalls of knowledge redundancy, a call that has previously been made (Leyden, 2014), but which has yet to get impactful traction.

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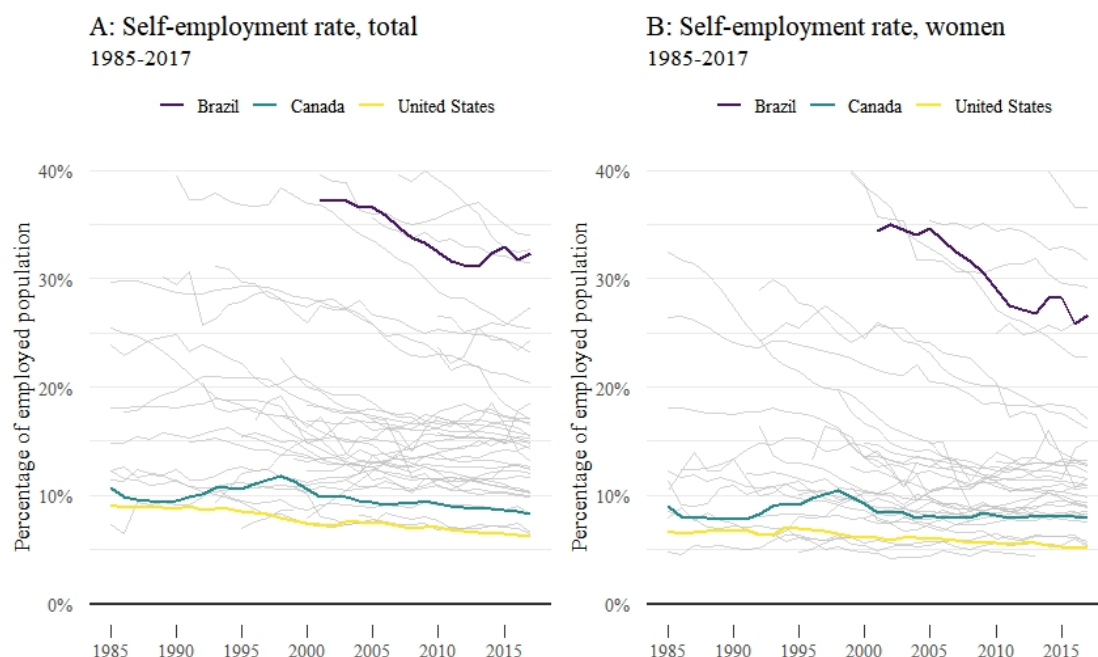
CONCLUSION

Promoting entrepreneurship has become an important strategy for economic development. With the rise of so-called entrepreneurship policies in the last decades of the twentieth century, several governments rolled out regulation to promote business creation and to foster innovation (Audretsch, 2007; Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004). Since then, numerous non-governmental organizations have also launched programs to promote entrepreneurship, carrying out a range of different strategies and serving different communities. In this thesis, I've investigated the practices of organizations to promote entrepreneurship in Brazil, how they disseminate the socioeconomic category of the entrepreneur, and how people experience this category in a country in which even these terms were virtually absent from ordinary language thirty years ago. However, before I summarize the findings of the three articles and discuss how they answer the research questions, I take this opportunity to explain why Brazil is an emblematic case to understand the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur.

Contextualizing the research: Why is Brazil an emblematic case?

The categories of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship appeared in ordinary language only in recent decades in Brazil (Melo, 2008). This doesn't mean that entrepreneurial activity was foreign to Brazilians. If one takes self-employment, for example, a common proxy for measuring entrepreneurial activity, one could assume that Brazilian men and women are more entrepreneurial than individuals in Canada or the United States, even as self-employment rate is on decline in Brazil for the past 20 years (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: High rates of self-employment in Brazil despite the sharp decline in recent decades

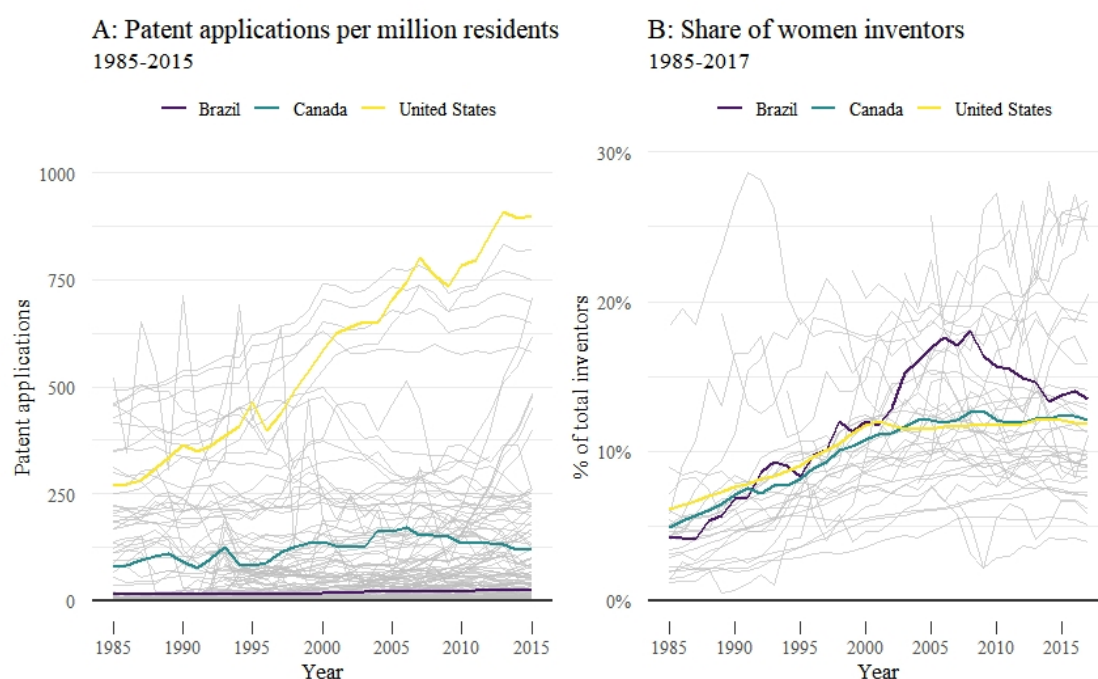


Source: OECD (2020), Self-employment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/fb58715e-en (Accessed on 11 March 2020).

Note: Self-employment, as defined by the OECD, is “the employment of employers, workers who work for themselves, members of producers' co-operatives, and unpaid family workers”. It has to do with earning an income from one’s own or from a family business; many times it is used as a proxy for an entrepreneurial spirit or activity (see <https://data.oecd.org/emp/self-employment-rate.htm>).

Other indicators such as number of patent applications, another common proxy for entrepreneurial activity (Audretsch, 2007), may provide a more nuanced picture: despite the high rate of self-employment, Brazil underperforms in patented inventions, with a strikingly lower number of patent applications than in countries such as the United States and Canada. When looking at patents through a gendered lens, one could say that Brazil has a higher share of women inventors than the United States, even though this share is declining since 2008, when women accounted for 18% of the total of Brazilian inventors (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Patent applications and the share of women inventors

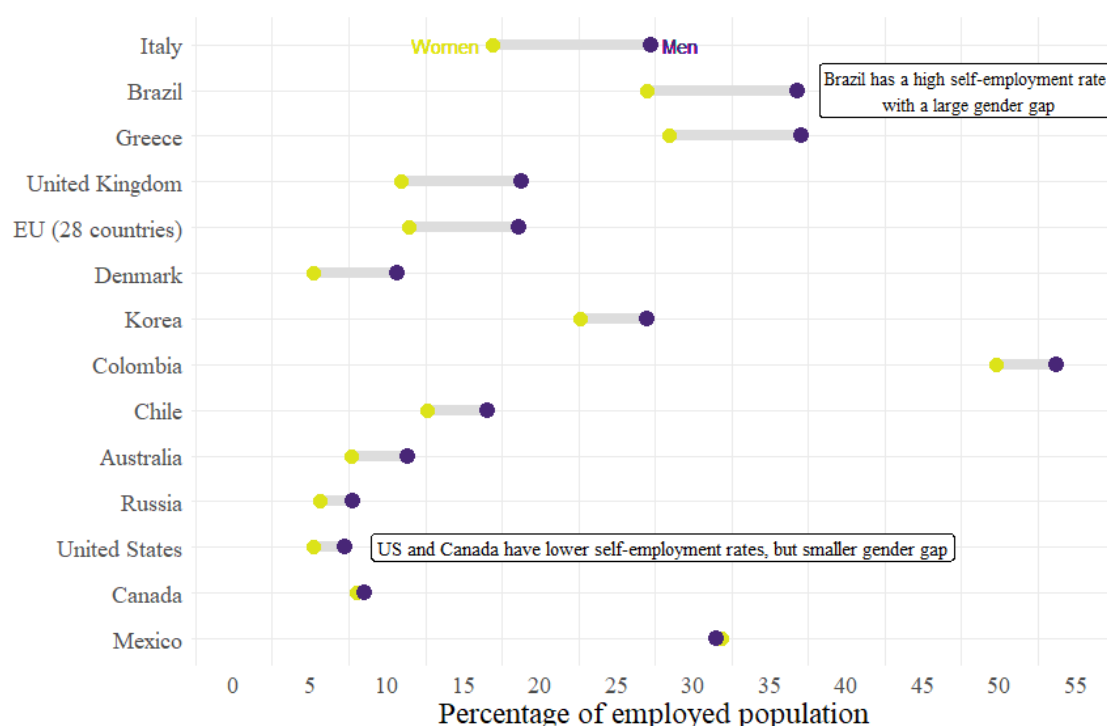


Source: For chart 6A: OWID based on World Bank, World Development Indicators & UN Population Division, retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/patent-applications-per-million> (Accessed on 10 March 2020). For chart 6B: OECD (2020), Inventors (indicator). doi: 10.1787/8e43c08c-en (Accessed on 10 March 2020).

Note: According to OECD, the data for women inventors “refer to the share of women in the total number of inventors of IP5 patent families. A patent family is a collection of patent applications filed to protect a same invention in different jurisdictions. Patents in a family are related to each other through priority filings. By definition, IP5 patent families are filed in at least two offices worldwide, one of which being one of the five largest Intellectual Property (IP) offices.” (<https://data.oecd.org/entrepreneur/inventors.htm#indicator-chart>)

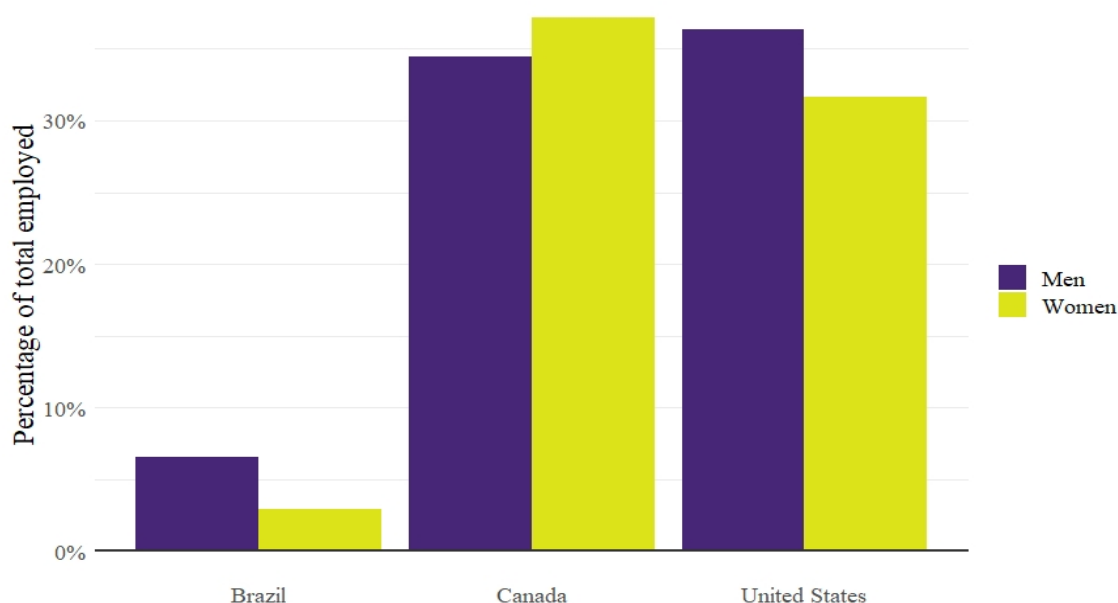
Although Brazil has a higher rate of self-employment and a higher share of women inventors than the United States and Canada, it presents a considerable gender gap in self-employment (Figure 3). When it comes to access to investment capital, less Brazilian women report borrowing money than men, although both men and women borrow at a much lower rate than individuals in high-income countries (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Brazil's high rate of self-employment and its considerable gender gap, 2017



Source: OECD (2020), Self-employment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/fb58715e-en (Accessed on 01 April 2020)

Figure 4: Borrowing money to start a business, 2017



Source: OECD (2020), Starting a business (indicator). doi: 10.1787/a22da914-en (Accessed on 12 March 2020).

In 2008, the Brazilian federal government sanctioned the Bill 128 creating the legal category of the individual micro-entrepreneur (or MEI, a local acronym), defined

as those self-employed individuals with a maximum of one employee and revenues of approximately US\$13,000.00/year. The goal of the Bill is to tackle the underground economy by facilitating the process to register microbusinesses, thus increasing tax revenue. However, it also created a new socioeconomic category with which people identify. Recent surveys provide statistical evidence to suggest that most individual micro-entrepreneurs are male, majoritarily white or mixed-race individuals, with less than a high-school diploma, and earning a monthly salary of at most twice the minimum wage (Figure 5). Although this is not representative of the entire community of individuals who identify as an entrepreneurs in Brazil, it reveals the gendered, racial, and socioeconomic status component of small business ownership in the country.

Figure 5: Demographic characteristics of individual micro-entrepreneurs in Brazil



Data source: Figures 5A, 5C, and 5D: IBGE/PNAD, retrieved from: http://sistema.datasebrae.com.br/sites/novo_datasebrae/#Empreendedores; Figure 5B: Sebrae's Data source for industry sector: Research on Micro-entrepreneurs (MEI), 2019, retrieved from: <https://datasebrae.com.br/perfil-do-microempreendedor-individual/#relatorios>.

Depending on the indicator used, one could argue that Brazil is a highly entrepreneurial country, requiring only some regulatory changes to formalize self-

employment or facilitate the founding of new businesses. At the most, it needs some cultural changes to bridge any gender or racial gap in self-employment. Other indicators suggest that, although Brazil presents a high rate of self-employment, it falls considerably behind innovation-related activities, compared to other advanced economies (cf. for example, the Global Entrepreneurship Index, GEDI, 2019). Promoting entrepreneurship would need more than regulatory changes, but a deeper sociocultural re-engineering, ranging from the behaviours and attitudes of individuals to rethinking the roles of institutions.

Irrespective of how one views the state of entrepreneurship in Brazil, there is a noticeable organizational effort to promote entrepreneurship in the country. Some organizations serve thousands of individuals in the country, and have achieved global notoriety as examples of best practices to be emulated elsewhere. To understand the organizational mechanisms through which the categories of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship disseminate, and the social consequences thereof, is thus a pressing matter that tends to be overlooked in the extant literature. Brazil is an emblematic case that provides a valuable opportunity to draw lessons about the social dynamics involved in the dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur.

Summary of findings and arguments: main contributions

In this thesis, I offered an alternative look at the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in Brazil. Scholarship on socioeconomic structural changes, focused mostly on the Global North, have provided insights on the diffusion of this socioeconomic category (e.g., Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Dardot & Laval, 2009; Keat & Abercrombie, 1991; Laval, 2007) and on the rise of entrepreneurship policies (e.g., Audretsch, 2007; Gilbert, Audretsch, & McDougall, 2004). However, this literature has not addressed or explained how entrepreneurship as a social category has

disseminated through the Global South, or how individuals in these regions experience them. To fill this gap, I have deployed an analytical framework that focuses on the practices of organizations that seek to promote entrepreneurship in Brazil. I took three different organizations as case studies: one program based on behavioural approach (Empretec) that is hosted by the largest organization that provides support to businesspersons in Brazil, one organization that aims to establish entrepreneurial ecosystems and support high-impact entrepreneurs (Endeavor), and organizations that provide a new form of online assistance to women who desire to start or mature their businesses (what I call Online Networks of Support). By examining the practices of these different organizations, I have advanced a better understanding of the different concrete mechanisms through which entrepreneurship policies are enacted and socioeconomic categories disseminate, how people come to access and experience these categories, and - which is perhaps the biggest contribution of this thesis - how the dissemination of a category goes hand in hand with the maintenance and promotion of an unequal system of distribution of resources and structure of incentives. Focusing on organizations thus allowed me to trace how entrepreneurship policies and their underlying knowledge concretely diffuse, but also how the dissemination of a new economic category is intrinsically linked to the reproduction of socioeconomic inequality.

To summarize the findings of the three articles in a cohesive way, I systematized them into four comparative groupings: the institutional origins of the program or organizations, the activities and goals to promote entrepreneurship, the resources made available by organizations, the categories constructed or promoted, and the targets of intervention. Table 1 outlines important findings that help answering the questions of how organizations diffuse the category of entrepreneur, and how the diffusion of this

category is built on an unequal system of distribution of resources and incentive structure that reproduces socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil.

Table 1: Summary of research findings

	Empretec	Endeavor	Online Networks of Support
Institutional origin	Research conducted at Harvard University, funded by Ford Foundation, and institutionalized by UNDP/UNCTAD	Yale and Harvard alumni	10,000 Women initiative run by the Goldman Sachs Foundation
Organizational activities and goals	Behavioural and attitudinal change through behavioural exercises/workshops	Behavioural and attitudinal change through mentorship and improved access to resources to select individuals Efforts to mobilize and reframe traditional institutions through research and metrics development Knowledge dissemination through online content	Behavioural and attitudinal change through motivational material and peer group support. Knowledge dissemination through online content
Available resources	Exclusive training material	Access to mentoring circles, exclusive educational and funding opportunities, open access to online content	Open access to online content Conference-style content Group-based support
Categorical creation/promotion	‘Empretec’s’ Individual micro-entrepreneurs	“Endeavor entrepreneur” High-impact entrepreneurs	Women entrepreneurs, and variants Individual micro-entrepreneurs (MEI)
Participants	Men and women	Mostly middle class White men	Mostly women

The findings suggest that the most renowned non-governmental organizational efforts to promote entrepreneurship in Brazil have originated in or are closely linked to Northern institutions. This similarity is not without consequence. The rise of the enterprise culture (Keat & Abercrombie, 1991) or the shift to an entrepreneurial society (Audrestch, 2007) in the past decades of the twentieth century in the United States and other advanced economies led to the emergence of a governance agenda of economic and cultural re-engineering that gives a special place to a new economic subject: the entrepreneur. In Brazil, however, this category was absent, and diverse strategies were set in place to perform or constitute entrepreneurs through efforts to change the behaviours and attitudes of Southerners: from workshops focused on behavioural modification, passing through the selection and mentorship of individuals leading high-growth firms, to peer-group support and motivational material for women who desire to open and mature their businesses. Additionally, organizations like Endeavor also engaged in research and evaluation metric development to mobilize and change the role of local institutions, such as city management and universities. The dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur thus is materialized through different types of organizational strategies: from efforts to change individuals' behaviours to efforts to mobilize and reframe different institutions to conform to market-oriented principles that encourage entrepreneurship. The variety of organizational strategies set in place to promote entrepreneurship has two main consequences, the constitution of social groups and the establishment of a tiered system of access to opportunities that creates privilege while promoting meritocratic beliefs. I now discuss these consequences in turn.

First, the organizations studied in this thesis create or promote a number of labels (or sub-categories) under the umbrella of a seemingly universal category of the entrepreneur: *empretecos*, individual micro-entrepreneurs, high-impact entrepreneurs,

endeavour entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs. These organizations bestow these subcategories upon individuals, sometimes as a symbol of prestige, and encourage them to adopt the behaviours that are associated with these labels. As the category of the entrepreneur disseminates through programs and organizations, new social groups and group boundaries are created. These groups hold relative social positions, receiving different levels of prestige and honour. For example, endeavour entrepreneurs, who tend to be white, male, and come from a privileged socioeconomic background, have access to restricted and valuable resources, and are more likely to be celebrated in business magazines as role models when compared to an empreteco. Although some individuals may adopt more than one category as an identity (i.e., someone who identifies as a woman entrepreneur can also identify as an individual micro-entrepreneur or as a high-impact entrepreneur), these subcategories tend to refer to groups that have different access to resources and enjoy different levels of prestige across gender, racial, and class lines. As such, the social groups that are formed by these organizations rest upon relative social positions with different levels of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1980, 1989).

Organizations that promote entrepreneurship thus crystallize group boundaries based on subcategories of the entrepreneur. The labels of empretecos, Endeavor entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs, for example, create relative societal positions of prestige and perceived talent across gender and racial lines. Indeed, organizations have “definitional power” to demarcate how we perceive merit and talent (Mijs, 2020). What is more, the same organizations that confer prestigious labels are also gatekeepers to important resources. The formation and relative social positioning of groups that are highly gendered are intrinsically linked to a structure of opportunities and incentives. This leads to the second point: the strategies and resources that flow through these

organizations create a broad system of distribution of resources and incentive structures that reinforce, and even justify, socioeconomic inequality of access to resources and incentives along gender, class, and racial lines. Because organizations are both gendered and racialized structures, meaning that they allocate resources and produce cultural schemas that benefit groups across gender and racial lines (Acker, 1990; Ray, 2019), the category of the entrepreneur is not gender or racial-blind, but rather intrinsically to an unequal system of resource distribution (cf. Hirschman & Garbes, 2019 for a discussion of how race is central to economic life).

While middle class white men have a higher chance to access substantial social, human, and even economic capital via structured and well-financed programs, support for women entrepreneurs are mostly in the form of online content and small peer-based groups. These latter types of support are more likely to create redundant information and limited opportunities when compared to the initiatives offered by Endeavor, for example. Despite the exclusive access to valuable resources, individuals selected by Endeavor are portrayed as meritocratic role models, whose stories are often celebrated in media channels that are widely shared in ONS Facebook pages without explicit reference to the privileged support they have received. Access to resources is thus structurally and substantially unequal for men and women who seek support to improve their business activities and opportunities in Brazil.

Despite providing different types of support, resources, and incentives, interviews with research participants suggest that all organizations and initiatives analyzed in this thesis disseminate a meritocratic view of the category of entrepreneur, which overlooks or dismisses the unbalanced structure of opportunities. Individuals who participate in these programs are encouraged to re-evaluate their worldviews and adhere to a meritocratic set of beliefs. There is a shared or common encouragement and

celebration of the entrepreneur as a special type of economic subject, one which is seen as the main driver of economic development, and that despite all bureaucratic and other hurdles, possess an inner resilience and self-sufficiency that explain their economic success. Studies on meritocracy suggest that organizations and institutions are “inferential spaces” that shape the way individuals make sense of inequality: either as an individualist or structural outcome, that is, a consequence of subjective traits or the result of unequal structural opportunities (Mijs, 2018b, 2020). The more the members of an organization share a similar socioeconomic background, the more likely they hold individualist beliefs about inequality, precisely because socioeconomic homogeneity emphasizes personal traits to the expense of structural explanatory variables (b, 2018). As such, as organizations such as Endeavor and ONS create highly homogeneous groups, it is fair to assume that their participants are more prone to adopt meritocratic worldviews, even as the support received is of a different order of magnitude in a country with already uneven distributed opportunities.

The cultural re-engineering and the constitution of new economic subjects is not merely an ideational or cultural process but also a material one, set in place through organizations that, perhaps inadvertently, reproduce socioeconomic inequalities. Below I summarize the four main arguments advanced in this thesis:

Argument 1: The dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in Brazil is a historical unidirectional North-South diffusion through organizations that encourage a set of values, beliefs, and behaviours that were originally racially charged, but which controversial content was institutionally erased. The traits approach (and its underlying categories) becomes race-blind, thus facilitating its continuous legitimacy.

Argument 2: As the category of entrepreneur disseminates through strategies and practices of organizations that encourage entrepreneurship in

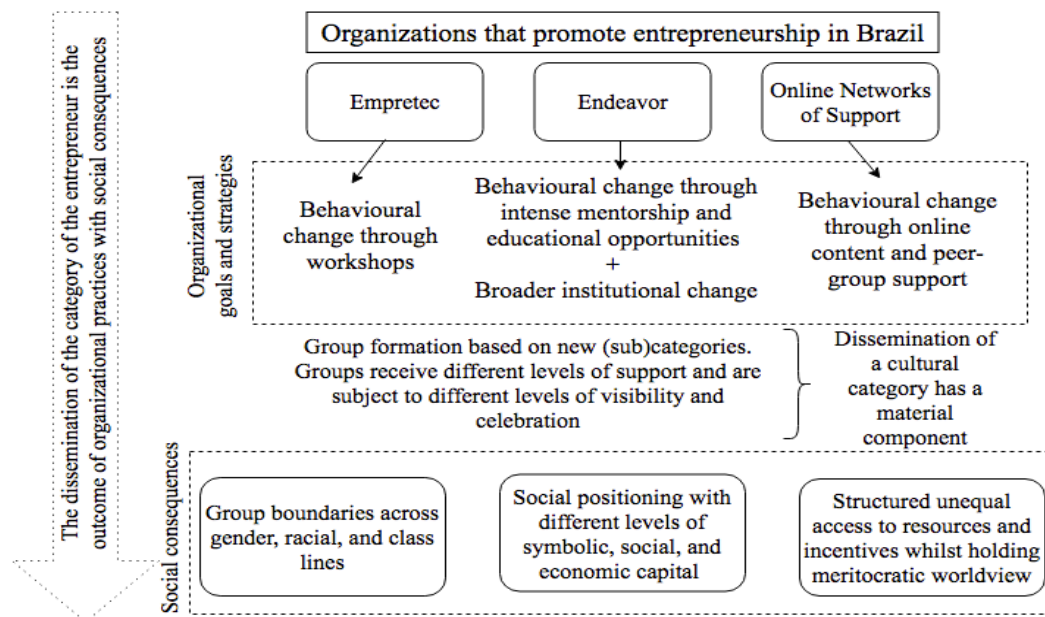
the Global South, new social groups are formed based on new-fangled subcategories of entrepreneurship. These social groups occupy relative social positions (with prestige and recognition associated with certain subcategories more so than others) and have access to resources of different magnitude.

Argument 3: The dissemination of the category of entrepreneur through organizations that promote entrepreneurship is intrinsically linked to an unequal system of distribution of resources and incentive structure. As the support provided to different groups is unequally distributed across gender, racial, and class lines, the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur and its variants exacerbate previous social inequality of opportunity.

Argument 4: Organizations that promote entrepreneurship disseminate cultural schemas that are highly meritocratic, dismissing structural inequalities as barriers that those perceived as authentic entrepreneurs can and should overcome. These organizations thus not only reproduce inequality of opportunities but also produce and disseminate cultural schemas that justify inequality as a natural outcome of different personal capabilities and resilience.

Schematically, Figure 6 presents the main arguments of this thesis. The dissemination of the category of the entrepreneur does not happen in a vacuum. It is the outcome of organizational practices engaging in a historical agenda of cultural and subjective transformation of Southerners, with material and social implications that exacerbate local categorical inequalities.

Figure 6: Schematic representation of main arguments of advanced in this thesis



This thesis offers many contributions. Conceptually, I advance the notion of *institutional erasure* to explain how initially controversial meanings and beliefs associated with the category of the entrepreneur gave way to a more universal and technocratic view of the category as the knowledge associated with it became increasingly institutionalized. The entrepreneur is now a normative category devoid of original racial connotations, depicted as universally desirable and able to be produced through proper interventions. Article 1 thus reveals that this seemingly ahistorical category is in fact a social construct, originally part of a Northern governance agenda to change the behaviours of Southerners and other visible minorities. As some academic knowledge and beliefs associated with this category are institutionalized, and potentially controversial content is institutionally erased, renowned institutions start to *signal its legitimacy*, and increasing number organizations roll out strategies to constitute entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ecosystems in the South. Theoretically, this thesis advances the argument that the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in the South does not happen in an institutional vacuum, but comes to fruition through the practices of organizations that promote entrepreneurship in the South.

I also advance an empirical understanding of organizational practices that disseminate the category of the entrepreneur. As people come to learn what is an entrepreneur, how to become one, and the values and behaviours associated with this category, they adopt this category (and its variants) as new social identities. Although organizational goals might be similar (e.g., performing new economic subjects by trying to change individuals' behaviours and attitudes), the strategies to achieve these goals entail different levels of support and incentive structures that disproportionally serve some groups more than others. Relatedly, the research reveals that, as people learn about the category of the entrepreneur (and its variants) and adopt such identities, they also re-evaluate their worldview to conform to a more meritocratic understanding of themselves and of others, which ultimately justify, if not outright dismiss, the structured inequality of opportunities set in place. Entrepreneurship might be seen as serving the common good but the practices to promote entrepreneurship exacerbate existing inequalities across gender, racial, and class lines.

Limitations of the research

The immediate limitation of this thesis is the lack of generalizability, a characteristic of qualitative studies, especially of exploratory nature. If social phenomena are specific to time and space, it becomes nearly impossible to generalize subjective perspectives and contextualized processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Indeed, the goal of qualitative social inquiry should never be to generalize precisely because of the peculiarity of each human experience and social process (Denzin, 1983). In this thesis, the problem of generalizability is exacerbated for two reasons: First, I purposely chose as case studies three organizations that promote entrepreneurship based on the subjective criteria of popularity or notoriety. I recognize the existence of other organizations, but I have left them out of examination due to time and budgetary constraints. Focusing on the more

popular cases may leave out other forms organizational efforts to promote entrepreneurship that could lessen instead of amplify unequal distribution of resources. Second, my choices for organizations that specifically promote entrepreneurship leave many other types of organizations out of analysis. Universities and other educational organizations, government-run programs, financial institutions may teach about and disseminate the category of entrepreneur through in a way that democratizes the disbursement of support and resources.

There are, however, procedures that a researcher can adopt to increase the possibility of moderate generalization (Mayring, 2007). First, although I have not analyzed all documents and activities produced by these organizations, nor interviewed all individuals who participated in their activities, I strived to collect and examine the typical material and processes that represent their efforts to promote entrepreneurship. Second, data collection and analysis underwent an iterative process. As I became acquainted with new organizations that engage in different practices to disseminate the category of the entrepreneur (as it is the case of Online Networks of Support), I have included them in my investigation to widen my case selection. Third, all three case studies in this thesis are typical organizations that promote entrepreneurship. Their role in promoting entrepreneurship in Brazil are unquestionable, and these organizations are so different in size, history, organizational blueprint, and population they serve, that together they provide sufficient variance from which on can compare and contrast, and draw more general conclusions (on variation as a procedure to generalization, cf. Mayring, 2007; Yin, 2005).

Within each case study, another clear limitation is the difficult access to the field and to key informants. For instance, in the case of article 1, it has been acknowledged by previous researchers that it is extremely hard to attend and observe Empretec's

workshops. There is secrecy involved in their operations, and key informants are known to deny interview requests (cf. Melo, 2008). Nonetheless, some trainers decided to speak to me, providing valuable information, although admittedly limited. In the case of articles 2 and 3, other limitations arose. It has become a standard practice for qualitative scholars to validating their interpretations with research participants (Charmaz, 2006). Although I am in deep gratitude for the valuable time key informants have given me in the form of interviews, in some cases, I was not able to validate my interpretations with a second round of interviews or communication. To address this problem, I tried as much as possible to compare my findings with other sources of information.

Qualitative research is often accused of analytical obscurity, anecdotal reporting, and lacking of reliability. To circumvent these issues, I have clearly communicated the steps of my coding procedures, as well as the theoretical logic underlying the process. Although the codes were induced from the data gathered, the approach followed a “flexible procedure”(Deterding & Waters, 2018) that was sensitized by the theoretical approaches that oriented my analysis. To avoid confirmation bias, I included the theme “other” in the coding process to allow the further assessment of data that diverges from emerging patterns. Within each case study, the logical steps of coding and the uniform application of these codes followed transparent criteria.

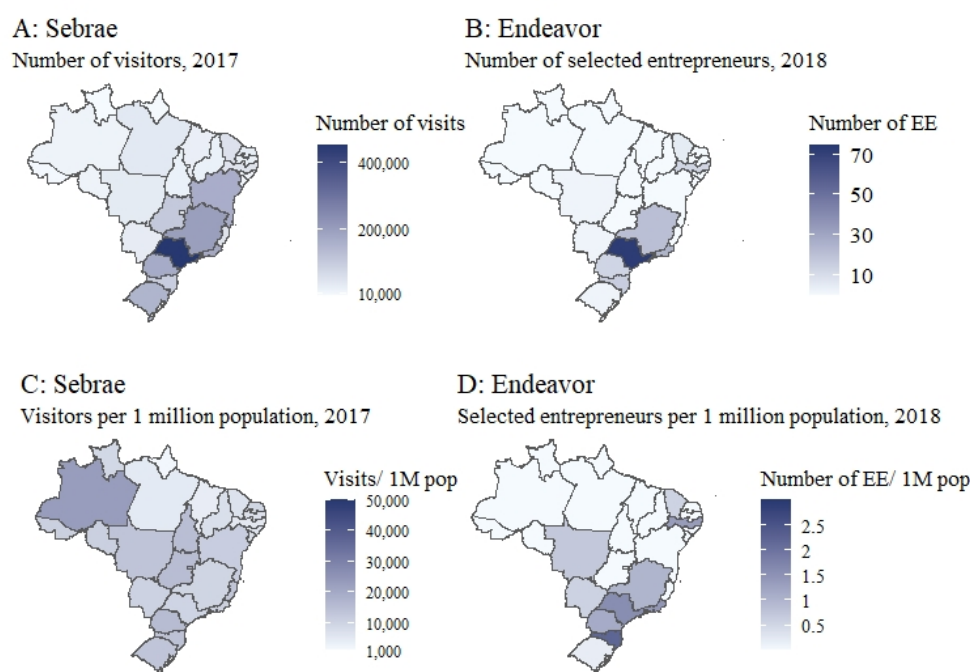
Possible avenues of future research

As this thesis brings to light a new problematic, that of the dissemination of a meritocratic category through organizational practices that exacerbate the existing inequalities of opportunity, it leaves a number of questions unanswered. In this section I provide possible directions for scholars interested in this topic. Qualitative researchers can address some of the gaps of this research by extending the case studies to more organizations beyond the most popular cases. This may include organizations with the

main mission to promote entrepreneurship or other organizations that may do so only incidentally, such as universities, schools, media, corporations, foundations, and so on.

There is evidence to suggest a striking concentration of people receiving support in the Southeast region, most specifically in the state of Sao Paulo (Figure 7A and 7B). This regional disparity in absolute number is softened if one takes into consideration per capita figures (Figures 7C and 7D). While Sebrae and its programs have a relative uniform reach across the country, Endeavor still selects the higher number of individuals per capita in the Southern states. This presents another line of questions in regards to how organizations that promote entrepreneurship may exacerbate geographical inequality of opportunity. Researchers can also compare the practices of the same organizations across multiple countries to examine variations in practices, social dynamic outcomes, and lived experiences.

Figure 7: Geographical concentration of provision of support by Sebrae and Endeavor



Source: Data for map A is retrieved from

http://sistema.datasebrae.com.br/sites/novo_datasebrae/#Atendimento_Sebrae/Total_de_atendimento

os (Accessed on November 2019). Data for map B is from author. The author's calculations for map C and D used population data from <https://www.ibge.gov.br/apps/populacao/projecao/index.html>.

Beyond merely extending the case studies to other organizations or engaging in cross-regional comparative analysis, qualitative researchers can examine how the category of entrepreneurship may take non-meritocratic meanings. Following suggestions from Gibson-Graham (2008), scholars can bring attention to organizations and efforts that try to promote diverse meanings of entrepreneurship and perform new economic subjects that subvert more common ways of perceiving the category of the entrepreneur. Additionally, ethnographic work may deepen our understanding of the social process of boundary creation between groups that identify as entrepreneurs and others, and the adjacent social consequences. Finally, given the unprecedented socioeconomic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 health crisis, and the looming rise in all sorts of structural inequality, qualitative researchers can examine how organizational efforts to promote entrepreneurship may change during an acute societal crisis, and the social dynamics they entail. One can also explore how individuals' experiences and the meanings associated with these categories may change under a context of economic duress and heightened uncertainty.

Quantitative scholars might consider measuring the engagement with the forms of support provided by different organizations. It is unclear if access and the use of resources within each organization is the same across gender, race, and class lines. Future research may also address how different levels of engagement impact the probability to adopt new identities and meritocratic beliefs. Finally, quantitative researchers may quantify the effects of organizational strategies and different levels of support on businesses, personal lives, and on the economy in general.

Non-academic researchers in think tanks and policymakers more concerned with research applications are welcome to use the findings from this thesis to create proposals and tools to alleviate the unintended consequences of organizational practices to promote entrepreneurship. Realizing how current organizational efforts to promote entrepreneurship may exacerbate structural inequalities, the design of new programs and efforts to bridge the gap in access to opportunities becomes a longed-for undertaking.

It is my hope that with this thesis I bring attention to the role of organizations in the diffusion of entrepreneurship policies and the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur in the South. It is important to understand how different organizational practices create new groups, privilege specific meanings and beliefs, and entail certain social dynamics, many of which may lead to unintended consequences. It is important to avoid celebrating the categories of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur at face value, and start looking at how the manner they disseminate are linked to the unequal distribution of social and symbolic capital. The stakes are too high when we bet the future on an agenda that ignores, and partially justifies, structural inequalities. The promotion of entrepreneurship and the dissemination of the category of entrepreneur demands increasing critical assessment.

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Appendix 1: Submission history of articles

As part of the thesis submission requirement, all three articles that compose this work were submitted to high-impact academic journals. Earlier versions of the three articles that compose this thesis were submitted to multiple outlets, not simultaneously, but after incorporating change/revision due to previous rejection. The history of submission and results is recorded in the table below.

Tentative title	Journal (impact factor)	Date of submission (dd/mm/yy)	Result
ARTICLE 1			
The global diffusion of the entrepreneur: Empretec and the quest for behavioural changes in the South Globalizations	Globalizations (1.71)	22/04/19	Rejection after first round of anonymous peer-review
Empretec and the quest for behavioural changes in the Global South: The diffusion of the category of the entrepreneur	History of Political Economy (1.15)	14/05/20	To be determined
ARTICLE 2			
Networked efforts to constitute an entrepreneurial South: Entrepreneurship building and the <i>homo auctus</i>	VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations (1.273)	12/07/17	Desk reject
Networked efforts to constitute an entrepreneurial South: Entrepreneurship building and the <i>homo auctus</i>	Economy & Society (1.56)	01/11/17	Rejection after first round of anonymous peer-review
Catalyzing entrepreneurial ecosystems in Brazil: A sociological approach to Endeavor's agenda of	Entrepreneurship & Regional Development (2.98)	13/11/18	Desk reject, but invited to re-submit after substantial

entrepreneurship building

revisions

Social dynamics and implications of organizational efforts to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems: Evidence from a case study in Brazil

Business & Society
(4.71)

14/05/20

To be determined

ARTICLE 3

A New Player in the Brazilian Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: Semiformal Networks of Support for Women Entrepreneurs

Business & Society
(4.71)

07/11/17

Desk reject

When women entrepreneurs help each other: A Study of Semiformal Networks of Support in Brazil

Small Business Economics
(1.9)

20/11/17

Rejection after first round of anonymous peer-review

Online Networks of Support for women entrepreneurs in Brazil: Isomorphic practices and the reproduction of inequality in opportunities

Entrepreneurship & Regional Development
(2.98)

14/05/20

To be determined

Appendix 2: Recruitment letter



uOttawa

Faculté des sciences sociales
Faculty of Social Sciences

École d'études sociologiques et
anthropologiques / School of
Sociological and
Anthropological Studies

Initial Contact Letter

Dear [participant]:

I am writing to you regarding a doctoral research project entitled “Seeking Capacitation: A Study on the Experiences of Aspirant Entrepreneurs in Brazil” that I am conducting at the University of Ottawa. The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons why individuals choose to become entrepreneurs, what they actually do to achieve their entrepreneurial goals, and their participation in capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs. As part of this study, I am interviewing participants and representatives of [Empretec and Endeavor] to grasp their views on [small-medium and high-impact] entrepreneurship and their evaluations on the state of entrepreneurship in Brazil.

I am inviting you to participate in this research because you [participate in Empretec/Endeavor or are a staff member of Empretec or Endeavor]. Should you agree to participate, we will arrange a time to conduct a face-to-face interview at a time and location of mutual convenience. I expect that the interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time. In the interview, I will ask about your views on entrepreneurial training and practice, on small-medium and high-impact entrepreneurship, the role and image of entrepreneur in Brazilian economy, the common difficulties that entrepreneurs face, and your predictions for entrepreneurship in Brazil. Conditional to your consent, the interview will be tape-recorded for accuracy. Participation is wholly voluntary.

Thank you for considering my request. I will contact you again in the next few weeks to see if you are interested in participating. In the meanwhile, if you have any questions you can email me at [insert email here] or at _____ while I am in Brazil. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

Sincerely,

Aline de Almeida Coutinho
[Insert mailing address here]

Pièce 10005 / Room 10005
10^e étage / 10th floor

120, rue Université / University Pvt.
Ottawa ON K1N 6N5

Appendix 3: Interview consent form



uOttawa

Faculté des sciences sociales
Faculty of Social Sciences

École d'études sociologiques et
anthropologiques / School of
Sociological and
Anthropological Studies

Consent Form

Title of Study: *Seeking capacitation: a study on the experiences of aspirant entrepreneurs in Brazil*

Researcher: Aline de Almeida Coutinho

[Insert mailing address here]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Nathan Young

[Insert mailing address here]

Purpose of Study: This study is part of Aline de Almeida Coutinho's doctoral research conducted at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons, plans and experiences of individuals who seek to become entrepreneurs, what they actually do to achieve their entrepreneurial goals, and their participation in capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs. As part of this study, I am interviewing participants and representatives of Empretec and Endeavor to grasp their views on small-medium and high-impact entrepreneurship and their evaluations on the state of the art of entrepreneurship in Brazil. Please note that this is not an evaluation of your entrepreneurial skills and abilities. This research aims to understand the daily experiences of entrepreneurs in Brazil, including while in capacity-building programs for training entrepreneurs.

Participation and Procedures: During the interview you will be asked about matters such as your previous experiences with entrepreneurship, your motivations, plans, and opinions regarding entrepreneurship and capacity-building initiatives for entrepreneurs. If you agree, I will tape-record the interview in the interest of accuracy. Should you choose to withdraw the interview, any information collected hitherto will be disregarded and the recorded audio deleted.

Pièce 10005 / Room 10005

10^e étage / 10th floor

120, rue Université / University Pvt.

Ottawa ON K1N 6N5

- ☐ I accept the interview to be tape-recorded
- ☐ I do not accept the interview to be tape-recorded

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you. However, your participation will contribute to a greater awareness of the experiences that aspiring entrepreneurs face in Brazil. The final outcome of this research will include a doctoral thesis, potential articles and related academic work (such as presentations at conferences).

Costs: There are no direct costs involved with participation, although this interview will take approximately one hour (60 minutes) of your time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: You are being given the option to remain anonymous or to have your name associated with any quotations or statements that appear in subsequent publications. Should you choose to remain anonymous, the researcher will take appropriate measures to keep your identity in strict confidence. It is possible that your statements may be quoted in future reports or other publications (such as academic articles), but you will never be identified by name. However, you should be aware that readers of subsequent publications may be able to infer your identity from the content of quotations or descriptions of your organization. You may also indicate if you wish a particular answer given in the course of the interview to remain anonymous.

Procedures for Anonymity: If you choose to remain anonymous, the researcher will remove your name from the interview transcript following the analysis phase of the research and instead use a numerical reference system.

Conservation of Data: The data retrieved from the interview (any audio files, paper copies, and transcripts of interviews) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers' work office, and electronic data will be stored on the password-protected computer of the researcher. The only persons who will have access to this data are the doctoral researcher Aline de Almeida Coutinho and the thesis supervisor Dr. Nathan Young. All data will be conserved for a minimum of 10 years and maximum of 30 years following completion of the study.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate, and if you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without any negative consequences whatsoever. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be disregarded in our research and copies destroyed. You may ask the researcher any questions at any time during the interview. The researcher does not anticipate that participation in this study will present any risks to you.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in this research study conducted by doctoral candidate **Aline de Almeida Coutinho** of the School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies, University of Ottawa, which research is under the supervision of Dr. Nathan Young.

Anonymity: Please select your preferred option. You may change your preference at any time:

- ☐ I choose to remain anonymous
- ☐ I choose to have my name appear in subsequent publications

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the researcher at _____ or at _____ while I am in Brazil.

If you have any ethical concerns regarding your participation in this study or if you require more information about your rights in this research, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1(613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is yours to keep.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study. However, you understand that by agreeing to participate you are in no way waiving your right to withdraw from the study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature (Aline de Almeida Coutinho)

Date

Appendix 4: Semi-structured interview schedule (I)

Draft: March 26, 2015

Interview Schedule, Representatives of Empretec and Endeavor

Interviewee Name: _____

Interview Date: _____

Consent form signed? _____ Anonymity requested? _____

Introduction: My name is Aline de Almeida Coutinho and I am currently working on my doctoral research on the experiences, motivations, intentions and interactions of individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs and participating in capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs. This interview is part of this research and will provide valuable information on various aspects of entrepreneurial life and on the process of becoming entrepreneurs.

Setting the tone and introductory question: I would like to start this interview by asking you about your views on the mission and the social and economic impacts of [Empretec or Endeavor] in Brazil and in the life of participants of this initiative. Please note that I am not asking you to speak in the name of this organization. I am more interested in your opinions and observations.

Section 1: Background:

I would now like to know a little bit about yourself as an entrepreneur, your own entrepreneurial trajectory and efforts in getting where you are today.

- 1) Could you tell me about your own entrepreneurial trajectory?
(Probe for previous experiences in start-ups, steps made to set up a business venture or business plan, family history in business venturing)
- 2) How have you come to get involved in this organization?
(Probe for motivation, intentions, recruitment process)
- 3) Can you tell me a little bit about your participation in this organization?

(Probe for role, tasks, length and nature of employment)

- 4) How has your education background influenced your decision to become an entrepreneur?

Section 2: The organizational structure

Transition: I would now like to know a little bit more about your views on the organizational structure of [Empretec or Endeavor].

- 5) In your opinion, what is the primary goal of [Empretec or Endeavor]?
- 6) Can you tell me about who decides the content and the structure of the program?
- 7) Do you know of any similarities or variations of the courses and events promoted or offered by [Empretec or Endeavor] across different regions of the country?
- 8) Can you describe “the typical person” that applies for this program in this area?

(Probe for socio-economic status, gender, age attributes, employment history)

- 9) How is the selection process done?

(Probe for specifics: committee decision, personality-screening methods, and employment history)

- 10) Can you tell me a little about the process of recruiting staff, instructors and directors?

(Probe for specifics: committee decision, personality-screening methods, employment history, and previous participants)

- 11) What kind of partnerships does [Empretec or Endeavor] usually engage with in the training of entrepreneurs?

(Probe for governmental agencies, other capacity-building programs, funding partners, international non-governmental organizations)

Section 3: Representations

Transition: I would like to understand what makes someone a [small/medium or high-impact] entrepreneur and the state of the art in Brazil.

- 12) What do you think are the joys and difficulties entrepreneurs face in Brazil?
- 13) How does [Empretec or Endeavor] address these problems?
- 14) Do you think that there are differences and similarities in [small/medium or high impact] entrepreneurship between Brazil and other countries? How so?

(Probe for entrepreneurial culture, incentives, and barriers for start-ups)

- 15) What do you think are the characteristics of [high-impact or small/medium] entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship?

(Probe for values, approach to business, behavior)

Section 4: Projections for the future

Transition: Let's finalize our interview session by discussing some of your predictions for the future

- 16) Where do you see this program [Empretec or Endeavor] in 10 years?

- 17) Where do you see the culture of entrepreneurship in Brazil in 10 years?

Concluding remarks: Thank you so much for participating in this research.

- 19) Would you be willing to answer any follow up question that may arise at a later time?

- 20) Would you like to receive copies of publications resulting from this research?

- 21) Is there anyone you would recommend for me to contact? Someone that you believe could provide me with information about [Empretec or Endeavor] or the state of entrepreneurship in Brazil?

_____.

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview schedule (II)

Draft: March 26, 2015

Interview Schedule, Participants of Empretec and Endeavor

Interviewee Name: _____

Interview Date: _____

Consent form signed? _____ Anonymity requested? _____

Introduction: My name is Aline de Almeida Coutinho and I am currently working on my doctoral research on the experiences, motivations, intentions and actions of individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs and participating in capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

Setting the tone and introductory question: I would like to start this interview by asking you about your trajectory into the entrepreneurial world. Could you tell me about how have you become interested in entrepreneurship, your reasons to become an entrepreneur and the journey you have gone through to start your own business.

(Probe for previous experiences in start-ups, steps made to set up a business venture or business plan, family history in business venturing).

Section 1: Background

Transition [if not discussed before]: To really understand your trajectories and story, I would like to ask a few questions on your background:

- 1) How has your education background influenced or helped you setting up your own business venture?

(Probe for specific courses on entrepreneurship, management, accounting, and economics)

- 2) How long have you been thinking of becoming an entrepreneur or how long have you been an entrepreneur?

Section 2: Motivations, Actions, Plans

Transition: I would now like to know a little bit more about the motivations and expectations you had/have about participating in [Empretec or Endeavor].

- 3) How have you come to know about Empretec/Endeavor?

(Some probes: newspapers, Internet, personal connections)

- 4) Why have you decided to apply for this program?

- 5) What did you envision to learn from it?

(Probe for specifics: skills, business or management tips, mannerisms, tacit knowledge, jargon, funding opportunities or channels)

- 6) What sort of knowledge do you think people usually acquire in these programs?

(Probe for specifics: skills, business or management tips, mannerisms, tacit knowledge, jargon, funding opportunities or channels)

- 7) What do you think is the most important subject or topic you have learned or will learn by participating in this program?

(Probe for specifics: skills, business or management tips, mannerisms, tacit knowledge, jargon, funding opportunities or channels)

- 8) What do you think is absolutely necessary for entrepreneurs to know?

- 9) Do you think that [Empretec or Endeavor] can appropriately respond to this necessity and teach [the answer given in previous question]?

- 10) Have you ever participated in other educational programs catered to entrepreneurs? If so, how different and similar are they from [Empretec or Endeavor]?

(Probe for university courses, online workshops, and governmental initiatives)

Section 3: Networks, channels of information, and interrelationships

Transition of topic: I believe much still has to be studied about the importance of personal and professional relationships in the life of entrepreneurs. I would now like to concentrate a bit on this topic.

- 11) Who do you turn to for advice about entrepreneurship, funding opportunities, and the ins and outs of setting up businesses?

- 12) How do you get updates on the trends and topics related to entrepreneurship?

(Probe for channels of information, frequency of accessing these channels)

- 13) How has participating in this program changed the way you relate with employees, other entrepreneurs, funding agencies?
(Probe for formality, nature of relationship)
- 14) How is your relationship with the instructors of [Empretec or Endeavor]? And the other participants?
(Probe for frequency, reasons)
- 15) Do you intend on keeping contact with them after the workshop?
(Probe for impact of becoming/being an entrepreneur on family dynamics, social life, and leisure time)
- 16) How do you balance work and intimate life? Did this program assist you or has changed the way you seek that balance?
(Probe for types and frequency of support or impediments)
- 17) What is the role of your family and your community in your entrepreneurial endeavor?
(Probe for types and frequency of impediments, individuals, groups or institutions that challenge or doubt interviewee's ability or actions)
- 18) Do you face and have you faced any kind of resistance to your attempts to become an entrepreneur?
(Probe for types and frequency of impediments, individuals, groups or institutions that challenge or doubt interviewee's ability or actions)

Section 4: Representations and imaginaries

Transition of topic: Part of this research is to understand the values and feelings linked to the figure of entrepreneur.

- 22) How do you feel about being/becoming an entrepreneur?
(Probe for feeling about oneself, feeling before others)
- 23) Has participating in [Empretec or Endeavor] changed the way you view entrepreneurship?
(Probe for change in worldview, start-up and management)
- 24) Can you give me an imaginary picture of an entrepreneur?
(Probe for depiction of character, everyday life, and behavior)
- 25) Can you tell me some stories of/about entrepreneurs that inspire you?
(Probe also for an idol, probe for a negative story)
- 26) Do you see yourself as being a particular type of entrepreneur?

- 27) As you know, this program is targeted to [small-medium or high impact entrepreneur]. What is unique about this “type” of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship?

(Probe for values, approach to business, behavior, relation to self)

Section 5: Everyday life

Transition of topic: I would now like to understand the everyday life of a [small/medium or high impact].

- 28) What do you think are the joys and difficulties entrepreneurs face in Brazil in everyday life?
- 29) How do you overcome these hardships?
- 30) What is your everyday life as an entrepreneur or what do you envision “typical day” of a [high impact or small/medium] entrepreneur should be?
- 31) If I were willing to become an entrepreneur, which sort of advices would you give me?

(Probe for funding or business tips, information gathering, behavior)

- 32) What kind of information you have learned here that you think you won’t be using as much or that does not really applies to you?

Section 6: Future prospects

Transition: Let’s finalize our interview session by discussing some of your projections for the future

- 33) Do you intend to participate in other capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs?
- (Probe for specifics, reasons and how they come to have learned about these programs)*
- 34) How do you intend to use what you have learned in order to achieve your entrepreneurial goals?
- (Probe for use of learned skills and business techniques, use of social network, mechanisms of self-control)*
- 35) I’d like to end this interview by asking you to depict where you see yourself as an entrepreneur and your business 5 years from now.

Concluding remarks: Thank you so much for participating in this research.

- 36) Would you be willing to answer any follow up question that may arise at a later time?
- 37) Would you like to receive copies of publications resulting from this research?
- 38) Is there anyone you would recommend for me to contact? Someone that also is trying to become or who is a recent entrepreneur?

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