

Creative entrepreneurship and resistance:

Countercultural entrepreneurs' discourses, structures and practices of liberation?

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Keywords

Abstract

Objectives: To explore if and how in the hands of the disenfranchised, social, cultural and (craft) human resources become creative tools of entrepreneurial resistance.

Prior work: The disenfranchised entrepreneur is contextualised in a range of marginal settings, including rural peripherality, depleted urban communities, socio-economic exclusion, counter-cultural social movements, post-colonialism, or belonging to an ethnic minority. In such settings, economic capital is typically largely absent or hard to come by, and dominant institutional structures remain firmly closed to would-be entrepreneurs. Studies are starting to show that - in contrast to dominant market-capitalism rhetorics of the heroic entrepreneur – that discourses, structures and practices of liberation are often developed by disenfranchised entrepreneurs, and especially through creative and craft entrepreneurship.

Approach: This study explores three case studies of likely entrepreneurial resistance, all drawn from the same network of creative counter-cultural organizations in Athens: a tattoo parlour, a small chain of skate board shops, and a punk rock band. By selecting a sample drawn from the same community, analysis of the local context is enhanced. A mixture of qualitative research methods is used to gather rich longitudinal data, including semi-structured interviews, analysis of the internet and social media artefacts generated by these entrepreneurs, and participant observation.

Results: Participants were centred towards their own worlds, beyond the mainstream (which they largely ignored), and were almost entirely engaged with the creative excellence, emotion and community this generated.

Implications: Marginality, the position of powerlessness, can be deployed as a resource permitting a special kind of liberated entrepreneurship. Not only recognizing the barriers around established institutions (with their norms, and structures of dominance) such entrepreneurship of resistance actually turns being beyond the barriers into a space of freedom, a space of play.

Value: . Entrepreneurship, can act for the disenfranchised as a vehicle to enact “the creativity involved in moving among various cultural frameworks” (Bhabha 1990; 1994; Frenkel 2008).

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Introduction

This study presents data drawn from three case studies of creative entrepreneurship, all counter-cultural in nature, and outwith mainstream institutions. Beyond the margins of institutional power, these entrepreneurs nevertheless enact collaborative strategies which transform their very marginality into a resource for creativity. They serve as an instructive example as to how entrepreneurship from beyond institutional borders can ignore, subvert and resist mainstream field dominance.

The Socio-Economic Field of Entrepreneurship

Fields are ever re-constructed by the habitus-shaped practices of field members, as they strive to achieve power within the social structures that constitute the field. Power is gained and lost through strategies, and the conversion of four forms of capital. Simply put, economic capital includes money and material assets; social capital comprises relational networks; cultural capital combines (working) experience, education, and cultural artefacts; and symbolic capital – the most valuable and powerful form – is an expression of prestige and status (see Bourdieu, 1986, Pret et al, 2014, Firkin, 2003; Shaw et al., 2008). Conformity to the rules of the field's game (as encoded and enacted through habitus), and commitment to the shared stakes of the game (illusio) are mainstream strategies by which members (and would-be members), with field-relevant capital can gain legitimacy, improve their field position, and achieve the field's illusio.

Fields are nested, overlapping, imbricated with each other. For example, consider the socio-economic field that we construct as 'entrepreneurship'. The field is composed of relational structures tying together a wide range of agents, who interact through these relationships, enacting entrepreneurship, and co-creating its meaning. Obvious field actors are entrepreneurs themselves, from new entrants to the field striving for legitimation, to well-established serial entrepreneurs with positions of power and influence. Aspirant entrepreneurs are those who desire to play an active role in the field, to construct a place for themselves within it, the newcomers striving to "belong". We scholars are active agents in this field, striving to achieve legitimacy for our propositions, to affect entrepreneurial action, and to lay bare the field's structures, habitus and practices. The media also plays a

role in co-creating, maintaining, and evolving the entrepreneurial field, as its representation of social discourse shapes perceptions of the entrepreneur, presents role models, and decries perceived anomalies and unacceptable practices. Equally, politicians and other policy makers are also active members of the entrepreneurship field, with their rhetoric and actions contributing to the construction of shared meanings, norms, and practices (habitus) of entrepreneurship.

How would we describe the stakes that the field of entrepreneurship values, and strives for? What do the dominant voices tell us about what entrepreneurship means? Such a depiction would include some mention of the pursuit of individual success, as articulated through an innovative, high-growth, wealth-creating venture. It might also incorporate Schumpeterian notions of creative destruction, and more modern conceptualizations of the opportunity-individual nexus. Here, too, we can expect to find the belief that the entrepreneur is the contemporary economic hero, whose hard work and ingenuity can wrest entire economies out of crisis and into the uplands of financial success (see, for example, Bourdieu, 2005, 10-12; Rehn and Taalas, 2004, 236-239; Levy and Scully, 2007, 16-17; Jones and Spicer, 2005, Ogbor, 200, 605, Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007). . These rhetorical characteristics have far-reaching political and social consequences:) summarizes these arguments as to the politicized socio-economic entrepreneurship field as follows:

“attracting agents and resources to its symbols of idealized, individualistic, passionate discourse of the entrepreneur forms a nexus that serves to continually re-enact and renew hegemonic power structures ... and entrepreneurship scholarship has often been complicit in reifying and mythologizing this discourse” (Drakopoulou Dodd, 2014,169).

A significant element in this discourse is the path from entrepreneurship’s margins to its pinnacles, from newcomer entrepreneur to recognized and powerful field “player”. De Clercq and Voronov describe this trajectory as encompassing both “standing out” and “fitting in”: “newcomers are likely to enact the entrepreneurial habitus successfully to the extent that they are perceived as using processes and practices that appear to align with existing rules and norms, yet also produce results that are seen as novel and consistent with socially constructed notions of novelty and worthiness” (2009, 402). They argue that field-specific cultural capital, especially as developed through previous employment history, will facilitate “fitting in” whilst symbolic capital, such as “prestige, reputation or personal

authority” permits “standing out”, by changing some of the rules of the game. What we see here are the strategies through which some (few) newcomer entrepreneurs become a part of the dominant story, institutionalized into the mainstream narrative, legitimated by it, and understood – lauded even - according to its own *illusio*. And it *is* an *illusio* - of that Bourdieu himself was fiercely convinced, reminding us of “the socially constructed, and hence arbitrary and artificial in the economic game and its stake (2005, 10). .

On the Margins

If it is dominant field members who control what passes for success, “manage” the habitus’ grammar, and so forth, what of the dominated, and marginal, field members? What of those would-be newcomers who lack the requisite cultural and symbolic capital to follow the prescribed path to success? What of those disenfranchised entrepreneurs who never follow the prescribed path from marginality to mainstream legitimacy?

Minority voices within entrepreneurship scholarship have long engaged themselves with those who are outside institutional borders, experiencing marginality and powerlessness due to their precarious socio-economic positions. Race, religion, indigeneity, gender, sexual orientation, rurality, and informality have all been considered as socially-marginalising experiences which invoke quite specific and novel forms of entrepreneurship (De Clercq and Voronov 2009a, 2009b). The disenfranchised entrepreneur is contextualised in a range of marginal settings, including rural peripherality, depleted urban communities, socio-economic exclusion, counter-cultural social movements, post-colonialism, or belonging to an ethnic minority. In such settings, economic capital is typically largely absent or hard to come by, and dominant institutional structures remain firmly closed to would-be entrepreneurs.

Studies are starting to show that - in contrast to dominant market-capitalism rhetorics of the heroic entrepreneur – that discourses, structures and practices of liberation are often developed by disenfranchised entrepreneurs. These phenomena are frequently characterised by explicit resistance against the dominant mainstream, enacted in a variety of ways. It seems ever clearer that this resistance comes to serve as a core resource which disenfranchised entrepreneurs use to set themselves apart from the mainstream, to create meaning systems, to build communities, and to maintain autonomy. Much as post-colonial theorists have argued, the disenfranchised entrepreneur hybridizes from mainstream culture when desirable, using cultural bricolage to subvert and challenge established

institutions. Rather than economic capital, contextualised social, cultural, and symbolic capital are deployed as the creative means upon which entrepreneurship of resistance is built (Pret et al, 2014).

Johnstone and Lionais argue that “in locations where capitalistic relations are less robust, such as depleted communities, the entrepreneurial process may adapt and manifest itself differently Places without (capital) power will demand, provoke and create novel entrepreneurial responses to this condition” (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004, 218). Recent scholarship exploring entrepreneurship in a variety of marginal contexts has highlighted the discourses, structures and practices of liberation which disenfranchised entrepreneurs enact. Drakopoulou Dodd (2014) explores a case study of punk rock entrepreneurship, and concludes that “powerlessness has thus been turned into a tool for resistance, which is expressed directly in discourse, and enacted through the building of alternative interlocking entrepreneurial structures. ... by staying largely outside the ambit of industry power structures – by remaining marginalized – freedom from mainstream dominance is achieved”. Similarly, Drakopoulou Dodd et al (2013) find that within the peripheral craft brewing community, “microbrewing offers an alternative model of rural enterprise and one which highlights practical and political responses to mainstream corporatist dominance”. Georgiou et al (2012) also find an entrepreneurship of resistance in their study of post-colonialism and the networks of entrepreneurs, where cultural hybrids emerge that both mimic and resist dominant forces. Entrepreneurship, then, can act for the disenfranchised as a vehicle to enact “the creativity involved in moving among various cultural frameworks and in resisting the colonizer by disrupting its imposed knowledge and practices” (Bhabha 1990; 1994; Frenkel 2008). Marginality, the position of powerlessness, can thus be deployed as a resource permitting a special kind of liberated entrepreneurship. Not only recognizing the barriers around established institutions (with their norms, and structures of dominance) such entrepreneurship of resistance actually turns being beyond the barriers into a space of freedom, a space of play. The means available beyond the barrier are not economic typically, but they are perhaps all the more powerful for that. In the hands of the disenfranchised, social, cultural and (craft) human resources become creative tools of entrepreneurial resistance. A key importance of marginal entrepreneurs, who are shut out of, or deliberately resist, the orthodox habitus, is that they provide an alternative social construction of entrepreneurship that challenges the overly-familiar and often unquestioned meme that entrepreneurship has become (culturally, economically, politically, intellectually).

The aim of this study is to explore the discourses, structures and practices of countercultural creative entrepreneurs, and to compare these to the dominant scholarly social construction of entrepreneurship. Creative entrepreneurs have been selected since Firstly, they hold an aesthetic logic in tension with an economic or commercial logic (see for example, Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005, 1037; Thompson, 2004, 2; Moore, 2007, 440-441, Bourdieu, 1993). Secondly the significance of the creative industries to economies of the developed world is also expanding dramatically, and the sector merits investigation as a core (post-) industrial institution (UNCTAD 2008, iv, see also Jones and Thornton, 2005, xi). Thirdly, cultural production of its very nature engages with meaning work, creating and sharing artifacts that tell us stories - enact narratives - of art and business, of cultural institutions, corporations and enterprise (Lounsbury and Glynn, 200, Jones and Thornton, 2005, xi; Banks, 2006, 457, Lash and Urry, 1994). Since the very fabric of creative enterprise is the production of meaning, with “sign and symbol as the center piece for entrepreneurial opportunity” (Jones and Thornton, 2005, xix) this is a privileged site for consideration of social constructions of the entrepreneur (see also Lash and Urry, 1994). Studying cultural products renders finer and more complete understandings of what counts as a legitimate and persuasive entrepreneurial story in these contested but economically-vital contexts

Methodology

This study explores three case studies of non-mainstream creative entrepreneurs, all drawn from the same network of counter-cultural organizations in northern Athens: a tattoo parlour (Sake Tattoo Crew), a small chain of skate board shops (Slut), and a punk rock band (Vodka Juniors). The individual and team entrepreneurs enacting this sub-cultural creative enterprise are all in their early thirties, and their “ventures” are between 10 and 13 years old. The participants are introduced more fully through their own words, in the presentation of findings, below. Since most of the data used is in the public domain of the internet, anonymity was not deemed appropriate or feasible. Where interviews were carried out, anonymity was offered, but firmly rejected.

By selecting a sample drawn from the same community, analysis of the local context is enhanced, and exploration of interrelationships facilitated. A mixture of qualitative research methods was used to gather rich longitudinal data, including semi-structured interviews, accessing participants’ websites, blogs, Facebook, and MySpace pages, as well as Kickstarter

and indigogo campaigns. These “formal” sources were read in the light of extensive informal participant observation with the sample entrepreneurs, in some cases extending to years of interaction. Table One summarizes the dataset, which comprises more than 11,000 words.

| Table One – Data Set | | |
|-----------------------------|--|------------|
| Creative Entrepreneurs | Data Form | Word Count |
| Sake Tattoo Crew | Web site, blog, videos, indigogo campaign | 2,777 |
| Vodka Juniors | Website, facebook page, Kickstarter campaign page, | 5,563 |
| Slut BoardShop | Interview, facebook page | 2,835 |
| | | 11,175 |

Data analysis took a qualitative approach, beginning with serial readings of the data, combined with note-taking in a research diary (Easterby-Smith et al, 1999; Halinen and Tornroos, 2005). This continued, with patterns of similarities and differences being identified, until the point where additional readings produced no new insights (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Böhm, 2004; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000; Silverman, 2000). As I worked repeatedly through the dataset, I also returned frequently to the relevant literature, following “hints” from the data, to consider the theoretical implications of the emerging findings (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). Next, I produced a narrative of about 3,000 words re-storying the patterns identified, and illustrating these with examples from the dataset. Because the patterned themes overlapped each other to such a great degree, more structured theming and tabulation was not appropriate in this case.

Given the research question and context, I was especially keen to apply a Bourdieusian lens to the findings, so that the next stage in the methodology was to reconfigure, fine tune, extend and deepen the findings narrative, using an analytic frame comprising field marginality; social capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital and economic capital. The narrative proved amenable to such a structure, as I hope the subsequent section will show. The final methodological step in the study was to reflect on the findings, from a theoretical perspective, so as to ascertain their relevance.

Findings

Beyond Field Margins?

How counter-cultural do the participants perceive themselves to be? To what degree is the anticipated marginality perceived and enacted? There were a variety of stances on this issue,

from the radical position of Vodka Juniors, to the rejection of conceptions of a counter-cultural lifestyle by Slut's Nikos. Nikos insists "ok, I think it's a big lie, that difference, a huge con... it's fake – mainstream and core – it's just a lie". Although he elsewhere admits that "for sure, we're in an urban situation, and core", he does so in the context of Slut's sustained rejection of the practices of some other board shops, which facilitated dope smoking amongst their younger clients. Interestingly, he sees this refusal to play "a bit of a bad game" as an entrepreneurial mistake "entrepreneurially for us who were "core", it was a huge mistake, but I can't do it, ok".

STC artists' roots are demonstrated to lie in urban "street subculture values", variously including graffiti, comic books, skating, punk culture, and video games. However - as well as working with other subculture players - they also routinely collaborate with sponsor companies from well inside the mainstream world of business, including Malboro, BIC and Vodafone. Vodka Juniors, in contrast, and most emphatically, describe a large Athens show as:

"a journey to spread the message that anyone can accomplish anything, against the norms and the commands of the music industry, questioning the truth of the rules enforced on everyone by the music status quo. And it is a beautiful feeling to witness their complete and utter destruction". On a European Christmas tour in 2009, the band stayed in several occupations, or squats, and shared their experiences of the early days of the crisis in Greece (<http://www.cballrec.com/tour/>).

Similarly explicit antagonism to the status quo is frequently expressed in their online writing, together with an association of the band with the underground, the street, the hidden and forgotten spaces of the urban socio-cultural environment: "I was born and raised in the basements of Athens; sometimes I am fast and driven by rage" (text from Kickstarter video).

Overall, then, no one pattern of experiencing marginality or powerlessness emerged from the study. At the risk of appearing flippant, the participants' position on the margins of the mainstream just didn't appear especially interesting or engaging for them. Whilst "street", "subculture", "core" or "underground" roots were important for all, these were seen as a source of inspiration and community, rather than primarily as an agonistic locus of opposition to the mainstream. Emphasis was generally placed elsewhere, even for Vodka Juniors, who have indeed adopted a consistent position of resistance to the status quo.

In general, relatively little emphasis in the data collected was given to articulating, justifying, or decrying the marginal field position of the countercultural entrepreneurs studied. In contrast to my own study of punk rockers Rancid (Drakopoulou Dodd, 2014), the creative entrepreneurs in this sample constructed few discourses of powerlessness, focusing instead on building alternative systems, and engaging in alternative creative practices. Rather than seeking to enter, combat or resist the mainstream (with the partial exception of Vodka Juniors), the main efforts of this sample was on the co-creation of novel cultural artifacts and performances, with the “family” that develops around them. This is the first, and unexpected, finding of the study; where I went hunting on the counter-cultural margins for resistance and rebellion, instead I found that the mainstream played little role in the lives of these creative entrepreneurs. Rather, the inherently relational nature of these processes, the critical importance of *feeling* as motive, process and outcome, and the pursuit of artistic excellence were the phenomena which rather engaged and energized study participants. Participants were centred towards their own worlds, beyond the mainstream (which they largely ignored), and were almost entirely engaged with the creative excellence, emotion and community this generated. It is to these findings that we now turn.

Social Capital

Mainstream fields are structured by power-relations, with strategies and practices focused on agents – including entrepreneurs - improving their relative socio-political position within the field. Such entrepreneurial practices can stereotypically be described as winning out over the competition, winning customers, winning sales, winning great deals from their suppliers, winning status.

The counter-cultural creative entrepreneurs in this study subvert these practices, and the power plays they represent, in a systematic and sustained fashion. Firstly, there is a rejection of the traditional customer-entrepreneur relationship. Slut’s Nikos, in response to prompting from me about my own son’s ten years of experience as a customer in their shop, replies “we’ve had kids – we’ve raised kids – who are our friends ... my best man was one of my customers; my closest mate now was one of my customers; I’m ten years older than him, and I’ve known him since he was 9 years old”. Here, we see that the customer-entrepreneur bond has been transformed into familial terms, with an exemplar client-friend becoming “fictive kin” through the formal ties of a Greek marriage service.

Vodka Juniors provide perhaps the most consistent enactment of this radical stance, describing their customers as “friends, family,...brothers” (personal message), maintaining that their General Manager is “the people”, and refusing to sell their records. As they state: “close friends often ask why we don't sell our records and why we don't work with labels that have approached us... Well the short answer is: because we have an army of people who care”. The Kickstarter campaign for Vodka Juniors’ new album explains that “this is an effort to give back all the love we’ve received over the years by creating our best effort to date”.

Their community of friends is involved in the band’s creative entrepreneurship in a wide variety of ways and integrated into many of their practices. This includes helping to fund the band’s new album, through a successful Kickstarter campaign, visiting the studio during recording, providing sleeping places on tour, creating artwork related to the band, and embodying their ties to the band through tattoos (these last two being presented in dedicated photo albums on Facebook). Of their regular summer “Pirate” tours of the Greek islands, they write: “the people and the band become one...together they unload the van, carry the stuff, jam, get wasted, dance and at the morning light they crash at the beaches” (<http://www.cballrec.com/pirate/>). Indeed, the band several times assert that the community, and especially the shared experience of live performance, is more important even than their own cultural artefacts: “this is not about the music anymore. This is so much more and if you’ve been there you’ve seen the magic” (Facebook post, 20/06/2011). Elsewhere they note that the band “just provided the soundtrack” (Facebook post, 20/06/2011).

The “family” metaphor extends beyond closeness to a customer base, to incorporate collaborators from specific arenas, as well as a wider range of counter-cultural arts and sports. Thus, STC artist Kyriakos “found a way to express his love in tattoos, entering the family”. Constantinis Hazopoulos, organized Greece’s first surf exhibition, where the Sake Tattoo Crew had created customized artwork on surfboards produced by Cohete (Greece’s only domestic producer). Again, the family theme was clear: “My whole idea was that we want to have a “more family” party.”

Emotional Capital

If the band, though, rejects the concept of customers, what is it that they receive in return for all their hard (expensive) work? What is the motivation and the “reward” for marginal counter-cultural creative entrepreneurship? Here, there was a very high degree of consistency across the case study organizations, with repeated use of the Greek verb “γουσταρω” (goustaro). Crowd sourcing a strong translation for this resulted in a variety of suggestions, all of which taken together give some sense of the word, for which a direct English translation is not available. Proposed translations (with thanks to my Facebook community) include “I’m into it”, “I dig it”, “I fancy it”, and “I feel it”. Essentially, participants engage in their creative and cultural pursuits because of the emotional satisfaction and “buzz” it gives them. Slut’s Nikos told me this is why he got into skating, and why he and his brother started their shop: “There wasn’t a vision. We didn’t exactly know what we were doing. We were *into* skating, like lots of people. We were kind of engaged with it”. Nikos derides wider notions of a skate culture, or “board generation”, arguing that skaters “do it because they *feel it*, like when someone plays the guitar, or cooks”. Slut’s Instagram and Facebook pages contain, as well as product images, a wide selection of videos and photos of the Slut team, their friends and customers, engaging in – *feeling* – a range of extreme sports. STC’s Kyriakos explains that Sake recruited him by suggesting “why don’t you come and do the piercings at the parlour, and I’ll teach you tattoo, so that we can both *get into it together*”¹. The *goustaro* feeling is also presented as a motivation for new projects, and particularly those which involve collaboration, highlighting again the relational nature of the emotion. Cohete surfboard’s founding entrepreneur, talking about the surf exhibition, states that:

“through the collaboration that’s going on with Dask and Sake, it gives a special *feeling* to the situation. And *we’re into that*. People can see that there are collaborations that take place, to everyone’s best advantage. I give very much respect to the guys from Sake because *they’re into* what they’re doing, and they express that on the boards”

STC explain that the “different paths” of their ten tattoo artists all originate “from the love for street art and tattooing”, and individual artists describe their discovery of “the world of

¹ <http://www.artlook.gr/index.php/life/looked-inspire/103-%CE%BA%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%83-tattoo-artist.html> My translation

art” as stemming from a range of cultural passions. (<http://www.saketattoo.com/about-us/>). STC artist Orge, writing about an art book project, tells us that “As soon as the project launched, the support, love and encouragement from people online and offline was incredible”²

The relational practice, then, of counter-cultural creative entrepreneurship appears to be first and foremost an expression of feeling. This is presented as motivation, as reward, as outcome of the process, in much the same way that mainstream entrepreneurship might present financial and commercial success. The intensity of sharing feeling can also be extremely pronounced, particularly that generated during interactive performances between artists and “family”. This “emotional bloodbath” (VJs) is almost always a communal experience, generated relationally in practice, in performance, with others, where they “bleed our guts out, scream, dance and become one soul; just raw energy” (<http://www.cballrec.com/tour/>). In their most well-known quote, Vodka Juniors explain the collective nature of their performances, and the emotions this evokes in them:

“then comes a time you’re playing live and as you scream the words of that song there is a boy or a girl right in front of you that screams the same words as if it was his song. And then you realize you’re not alone... Nothing can ever beat that feeling”.

The intensity of the emotions generated through Vodka Juniors’ performances is also expressed through some very evocative metaphors, which draw on images of war, madness, and piracy. Shows are described as “the mother of all battles”, and warnings issued that “there will be madness... there will be horror ... and we will show no mercy people, no mercy” (Facebook post, 13/04/2011). Their Kickstarter campaign similarly promises that “as soon as the album is out all hell will be unleashed; we will be out on the loose spreading the madness once again”.

Emotional capital has been associated in the literature with the private environment, rather than the public, and is typically created, converted and shared within the home and family. Vodka Juniors not only make extensive use of the family metaphor, but also write of their show venues as their *home*: “Dear Warriors, they say “home is where the heart is” and we left a piece of our heart in each of the twenty six places we passed this year”

² <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/solstice-mandala-book-project>

(<http://www.cballrec.com/tour2011/>). Elsewhere, they state that Romania is “a new place to call home”, and explicitly associate their choice to play 7 small shows there with their stance on the music industry, and the emotional “rewards” of intimate performances: “we don’t sell our stuff, we don’t want to get known, we don’t care about the media, the labels or the music scene and we prefer playing the smallest towns with the smallest bars where people are still passionate and full of love and where the walls are shaking from the raw energy” (<http://www.cballrec.com.vampire>). This statement is especially instructive in showing a conscious link between what might be called selective marginality – a decision to stay beyond the mainstream, to locate and perform at the margins– a repudiation of mainstream norms, and celebration of the emotional charge that this (co-)creates.

Cultural Capital

Cycles of relationally-driven cultural production were evident, as inspiration and action moved between artists and “family” in creative cycles: “inspiration, mate, comes first of all from the people around you, from the path that you live” (Dask, STC). Vodka Juniors post frequently on Facebook about the experience of seeing a fan tattoo photo, and the effect this has on them: “Just found this on the net... This is all the motivation and inspiration needed for the next twelve months”; “Left the studio late last night to go to rest... saw this photo uploaded..... practiced at home until morning light”. Sub-cultural artists are inspired and motivated by their community, create artworks which they perform with their community, who in turn embody their own emotional response to the shared performance in artistic responses, like tattoos, providing further inspiration to the artists. The most intimate and personal forms of cultural co-production can be seen in the tattoo world, where the “customer” is also the canvas, as well as bringing the original inspiration for the image. Kickstarter and Indigogo also offer opportunities for “rewards” to take the form of unique and individualized experiences and artifacts, including limited edition or unique artworks.

There is also a very, very high degree of collaboration with others, including artists from related sub-cultural fields, “suppliers”, and what might be considered competitors in more mainstream fields. Vodka Juniors produced a limited range of skateboards, with graphics created by a tattoo artist. The 7th Athens Tattoo Convention (founded and organized by one of the Sake Tattoo Crew) held a skateboard line competition. The surf exhibition, already described above, saw STC creating custom artwork on surfboards, and the opening of Slut’s

newest board shop similarly saw a celebratory competition in the form of limited edition STC hand painted skateboard decks. STC sponsors local punk shows, and in turn their own Tattoo Parties are sponsored by sports drinks producers, and clothing firms, like Vans. STC describe themselves now as an “Art hub”, after “multiple art projects with companies like Monster Energy, Vodafone, Vans Off The Wall, Sullen, LovInk, Rayban, BIC, Marlboro”. Vans Ink Art, for example, involved “a new kind of exposition during the 19th Milan Tattoo Convention”, where “10 world famous artists” (including SAKE), tattooed designs, in a live show, onto Vans shoes. The resultant shoes were then used in an international tour (<http://www.positive-magazine.com/art/vans-ink-art-milan/>). Indeed, STC’s blog includes videos of extreme sports, interviews with musicians, and music clips, as well as items relating to tattooing. One of the most innovative aspects of such collaborations is their ability to combine artistic and cultural capital in the co-creation of new forms of artifacts and performances, as the Vans Ink Art example shows.

Also evident is a clear and sustained commitment to performing cultural craft to the very highest level, a deep and ongoing adherence to an ethic of aesthetic excellence. For Slut’s Nikos this is expressed in integrity and honesty in service, in pursuing “a target which is more honest .. we don’t con someone who comes here for a snowboard... we tell him the truth”. He notes, too, the commercial benefits of this approach, as customers learn to trust the Slut entrepreneurs, through their own experiences, and the wider community perspective: “they’re not wankers”. This in turn generates not only repeat business, but also helped protect the shops’ sales substantially during the first two years of the Greek financial crisis.

The commitment to excellence and integrity can also be seen when Vodka Juniors report, for example, that “relentless recording sessions are currently in progress, striving for nothing but our very best”. STC artist Orge created an art project around the drawing of 184 mandalas (one for each day of a solstice), and sought Indigogo funding to produce a very high-specification book as an output. The Indigogo campaign text is notable for its emphasis on aesthetic quality – “to honour the project I will be creating a book with the best specification available”.

Symbolic Capital

This passion for developing and enacting cultural capital to the highest possible level is celebrated through the shared generation of feeling, of emotional capital, as has been discussed above. It is also legitimated through various forms of recognition, often international in nature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is never the accumulation of economic capital which is presented as of importance (nor, indeed, mentioned much). Rather, participation in international events, the scale of the enterprises, and the winning of awards are valued as expressions of legitimating symbolic capital. Slut's Nikos notes that "we always go to international exhibitions...we're invited along very often". STC's web page opens with the acknowledgement that since its founding in 2005, it has grown "into one of the biggest Tattoo Crews in Europe with 10 Artists covering all tattoo styles". SAKE himself is recognized as someone who "stands strong in the global tattoo community" <http://www.saketattoo.com/about-us/>. At the 8th Athens Tattoo Convention, we are told that "Sake Tattoo Crew was there with a massive presence, grabbing 8 Awards and Orge winning the Best of Show for 2014" (<http://www.saketattoo.com/blog/>). In an online interview, STC artist Kyriakos says he thinks after ten years involvement, he's achieving his goals, because he was the first person in Europe to develop the watercolour style, because he organizes the very successful Athens Tattoo Convention, because he works for the biggest tattoo parlour in Greece, and because everyone whose work he admired when he first started out, in Greece and internationally, have become his friends³ Note how Kyriakos' definition of success incorporates artistic innovation and aesthetic achievement, as well as the creation of large scale collaborative projects, and the social and symbolic capital that he finds within the tattoo community. There is, notably, and once again, no mention of economic capital, nor the financial rewards of success.

Economic Capital

Scant reference is made within the dataset to economic capital, and where it is alluded to, its role is derided or downplayed. Vodka Juniors refuse to accept money for their music, in an outright rejection of the "norms" of the mainstream music industry. Their aim with the Kickstarter funding for their new album was to raise half the finances from their community of friends (the remainder coming from the band's own savings, from their "day jobs"), so as

³ [http://www.artlook.gr/index.php/life/looked-inspire/103-](http://www.artlook.gr/index.php/life/looked-inspire/103-%CE%BA%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%83-tattoo-artist.html)

[%CE%BA%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%83-tattoo-artist.html](http://www.artlook.gr/index.php/life/looked-inspire/103-%CE%BA%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%83-tattoo-artist.html) . My translation from the original Greek.

to engage them still more fully in the process. Although specific Kickstarter rewards were indeed tied into the donation of specific sums of money, the band then routinely opened up reward experiences and artifacts to “family” who lacked the financial resources to participate, but wanted to be involved in the project. Again, the tie between economic capital, and a “return” to “customers” was deliberately flouted. As a (minor) economic donor (and friend), I received a T shirt, and a special poster with my name included in their list of donors. As an impoverished, but guitar-playing, student, my son was warmly invited to spend a day in the recording studio with the band.

Slut’s Nikos, as we have already seen, routinely chose to sell customers cheaper boards than they originally asked for, preferring to build social capital (in the form of trusting relationships) and symbolic capital (widespread recognition of Slut’s honesty and integrity) than garner immediate economic returns. The Voulgaris brothers’ small chain of board shops enjoyed substantial financial success, at the peak of skate boarding’s fashion cycle, and prior to the economic crisis, although Nikos maintains “you know, anyone who thinks they’re going to get rich – forget it.; we have three shops, and we’re not rich”. The brothers invested their retained earnings in the business, on repaying loans, and on purchasing new commercial property. Yet, in hindsight, Nikos regrets these “mainstream” economic capital practices:

“I’d advise, anyone who asks, tell them that whatever money they make, they spend it straight away... We made purchases, we took action, and I might prefer now to have turned the money into a boat”.

Overall, then, very little mention was made in the dataset of economic capital, and where it was invoked, participants rejected the “mainstream” perspective on economic capital as the core objective of the venture, as the main means of exchange with “customers”, and as a source of future growth for the enterprise. And, yet, as Pret et. al. point out, mainstream entrepreneurship literature has long suggested that “economic capital is perhaps the most critical asset for small firms, as the availability of and access to financial resources can directly influence a firm’s chances for survival and success (2014, 6; see also Brinckmann, Salomo, & Gemuenden, 2011; Winborg & Landström, 2001). How can we explain this mismatch between data and (orthodox) theory?

Bourdieu points out “the socially constructed and hence arbitrary and artificial character of investment in the economic game” (2005, p. 10). Reviewing the literature on forms of capital in entrepreneurship, Pret et al (2014, 6) “suggest that entrepreneurship, as a discipline, has perhaps also been guilty of subscribing in an unexamined way to the paramount importance of economic stakes”. Our study of craft entrepreneurs found economic capital to be by far the least significant of Bourdieu’s four forms, whether considered as a motivating force for founding, a resource to be converted into other capital forms, or a desired and pursued outcome. We note, too, Jayawarna et al’s related finding that entrepreneurs with a strongly material bent tend to be “the stereotyped, gendered view of the masculine entrepreneurial hero” (2013, 47). The present study provides still more evidence “that it is therefore time to question, if not entirely abandon, assumptions about the primacy of economic capital for the majority of entrepreneurs and of its role in core daily processes” (Pret et al, 2014, 29). To subscribe to this over-economic view of entrepreneurship is to tacitly buy in to neo-classical social constructions as to the nature of organizational worlds. It is to allow the heroic individualized profit-seeking entrepreneurial archetype a dominance which seems increasingly untenable, on empirical grounds. It is also to close off potentially far more interesting avenues of entrepreneurship research which give prominence to the role of social capital – admittedly very well studied in the past two decades – cultural capital and symbolic capital.