ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE EDGE MARGINAL STRATEGIES, RESOURCES & CAPITALS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Recommended Citation

Drakopoulou Dodd, Sarah (2016) "ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE EDGE MARGINAL STRATEGIES, RESOURCES & CAPITALS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 36 : Iss. 6 , Article 7.
Available at: https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol36/iss6/7

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE EDGE MARGINAL STRATEGIES, RESOURCES & CAPITALS

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Principal Topics

Marginal entrepreneurs often hybridize creatively from mainstream fields, 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 such marginal entrepreneurship is built. Marginality, an in-between position of powerlessness, is deployed as a resource permitting a special form of highly creative entrepreneurship, enacting the in-between as a space of freedom, of play.

Methods/Key Propositions

This study explores three case studies of marginal creative entrepreneurs, from a 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). A mixture of qualitative research methods was used to gather rich longitudinal data, including semi-structured interviews, accessing participants’ websites, videos, blogs, and social media. An analytic frame drawn from Bourdieusian capital theory was deployed to interrogate the resultant dataset.

Results/Implications

A family metaphor was consistently used to describe various forms of social capital, most typically to depict collaborative creative relationships with engaged others whom market discourse would term customers, suppliers, competitors, or co-workers. The relational practice of marginal creative entrepreneurship is understood first and foremost as an expression of feeling, with repeated use of the Greek verb “γουσταρω” (goustaro). 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 is extremely pronounced, particularly that generated during interactive performances between artists and “family”. Sub-cultural artists are inspired and motivated by their “family”, create artworks which they perform with their community, who in turn embody their own emotional response to the shared performance in creative artefacts, like tattoos, providing further inspiration to the artists. There is a very, very high degree of collaboration with others, including artists from related sub-cultural fields, “suppliers”, and “competitors”. Participants were centred towards their own marginal worlds, beyond the mainstream (which they largely ignored), and were almost entirely engaged with the creative excellence, emotion and community this generated. The market model was replaced by an intimate, affective, family model. Cultural capital was developed and deployed in collaborative cycles, and a key objective was the pursuit of aesthetic excellence. Economic capital was almost entirely absent from the dataset, challenging a market-driven, economic capital–focused reading of entrepreneurship.

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