



Entrepreneurship & Regional Development

An International Journal

ISSN: 0898-5626 (Print) 1464-5114 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/tepn20

City of 'social saints': the role of place in driving impact entrepreneurship in Turin, Italy

Mary Kathleen Burke, Alisa Sydow, Daniel Torchia & Laura Corazza

To cite this article: Mary Kathleen Burke, Alisa Sydow, Daniel Torchia & Laura Corazza (15 Sep 2025): City of 'social saints': the role of place in driving impact entrepreneurship in Turin, Italy, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, DOI: [10.1080/08985626.2025.2560072](https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2025.2560072)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2025.2560072>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 15 Sep 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

City of ‘social saints’: the role of place in driving impact entrepreneurship in Turin, Italy

Mary Kathleen Burke^{a,b}, Alisa Sydow^c, Daniel Torchia^{d,e} and Laura Corazza^e

^aOpen Learning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA; ^bHouse of Innovation and Mistra Center for Sustainable Markets, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden; ^cEntrepreneurship, ESCP Business School, London, UK; ^dBusiness Administration and Management, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy; ^eBusiness Administration and Management, University of Turin, Turin, Italy

ABSTRACT

This paper theorizes impact entrepreneurship (IE) in relation to place by examining dynamics at the individual, community, and organizational levels. While existing IE literature emphasizes entrepreneurship aimed at addressing grand challenges, it often adopts an aggregate view that overlooks how locally embedded entrepreneurs access and mobilize social and economic resources. We introduce a novel, multidimensional framework to show how sense of place, community embeddedness and IE interrelate to shape approaches to current social/environmental challenges. Adopting a qualitative approach, this paper investigates how different actors in Turin, Italy, contribute to IE through building on a legacy of social sector institutions. We find that individuals identifying with a place-based vocation of social impact find communities with a shared volition to work together and across organizations. We contribute to understanding how individuals’ senses of place can be leveraged into wider community efforts to support IE in the region. The paper advances the IE concept to account for the individual perspectives influencing local organizing practices and visions for IE rooted in place.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 September 2024
Accepted 8 September 2025

KEYWORDS

Impact entrepreneurship; sense of place; community embeddedness; legacy institutions; vocation; sustainable development

1. Introduction

‘What a dignified, severe city, wonderful clarity, autumn colours, an exquisite sense of well-being that is common to all things’. – F. Nietzsche on Turin, Italy

Impact entrepreneurship (IE) has advanced the contextualization of entrepreneurship theory in recent years. Denoting entrepreneurship which tackles pressing social and environmental problems or grand challenges, IE hinges on collective entrepreneurial pursuits (George et al. 2016; Markman et al. 2019). Specifically, the IE perspective *‘refers to the development of solutions to grand challenges, in a financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable fashion’* (Markman et al. 2019, 371). Such solutions involve coordinated alliances between policymakers, investors, academics and consultants to cope with emergent challenges (Shrivastava 1995). The concept does well to challenge overly economic depictions of entrepreneurship, but has some way to go in explaining how stakeholder communities form, and the role of place in shaping their motivations for driving collective impact.¹

One reason for this limitation is that IE studies have oversimplified how communities interrelate with societal impact (Bacq, Hertel, and Lumpkin 2022). IE has not fully uncovered the local historical, cultural, social, environmental and economic contexts triggering collective responses, thus

CONTACT Mary Kathleen Burke  mkfb89@mit.edu  Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

separating the concept from established theories of community embeddedness in entrepreneurship (Lumpkin and Bacq 2022). The notion of embeddedness demonstrates how actors draw on their environment, exposing the synergies and tensions between individual experiences and contextual conditions (Korsgaard et al. 2022). The IE literature focuses on aggregate-level outcomes, under-appreciating the generative connections between locally embedded actors. Hence, we accept the tenet of *e pluribus unum* (Markman et al. 2019) without grasping how individual efforts converge. These issues reveal an unanswered question: *how does place shape the emergence of IE, and how does it influence the way individual agency coalesces into collective value creation?*

To appreciate the multidimensional nature of IE, we revisit the view of place as a collective form of agency (Gieryn 2000; Massey 1994; Tuan 1975). Looking at human agency is justified given the notion that individuals contribute to collective goals, thus exerting influence over the future socio-ecological system (Ostrom 2009). Extant literature emphasizes the ways place works to mould entrepreneurship with societal needs (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016). We argue for a fresh perspective which highlights the individual place attachments shaping local revitalization efforts (Burke, Conley, and Jack 2025; Cartel, Kibler, and Dacin 2022; Slawinski et al. 2021). Employing a qualitative approach, we chose to investigate IE in Turin, Italy. We chose this context, a recognized centre of social impact, for its long-held commitment to philanthropy (Maahsen-Milan, Orestano, and Magnaghi 2012), poverty reduction (Lancione 2014), and recent pledge to decarbonization² amidst a diversification away from heavy industries (Whitford and Enrietti 2005). Turin's IE has deep institutional legacies. In 1563, the philanthropic foundation of a bank, Compagnia di San Paolo, was formed to drive cultural and social – not just purely economic – development throughout the northwest of Italy (Bersanetti, Candela, and Mulassano 2021). Foundation CRT, formed by the shareholders of the bank CRT, also located in Turin, is among the largest charity organizations in Italy.³ We investigate local IE institutions alongside the city's legacy institutions (Greve and Rao 2012), looking specifically at the perspective of individual actors who possess a vocation of social impact.

The study contributes to the literature on place, entrepreneurial agency, and IE in several ways. First, we introduce a multidimensional framework that integrates our understanding of individuals' senses of place with efforts to scale IE through communities and organizations. Second, we find that through their community embeddedness (H. M. Haugh 2022; Müller and Korsgaard 2018), actors can translate concerns for place into multi-sector alliances aimed at achieving collective goals (Doh, Tashman, and Benischke 2019; Markman et al. 2016, 2019). Drawing inspiration from Turin, we show how actors with place-based values of social welfare, equality, and care contribute to IE by activating historical legacies of the third sector and shaping shared missions to foster social solidarity and sustainability. We argue that IE represents a unique form of entrepreneurial agency, encompassing individual senses of place and collective visions for revitalizing place (Kibler et al. 2015; Kimmitt et al. 2023; Slitine, Chabaud, and Richez-Battesti 2024). Finally, our findings deepen understanding of how locally embedded entrepreneurs draw on place-based identity and civic legacy to shape entrepreneurial ecosystems geared towards social impact.

2. The aggregate view of impact entrepreneurship (IE)

IE is a form of entrepreneurship seeking to ameliorate socioenvironmental problems: its *raison d'être* is to tackle grand challenges. By emphasizing impact over new venture creation, IE supports alternative pathways to bridge the chasm between commercial and non-commercial outputs (Markman et al. 2019, 372). The pathways to value creation involve leveraging the variation between social, spatial, institutional and business conditions to identify opportunities (Mair and Seelos 2021). What differentiates theoretical discussions about IE from social and sustainable entrepreneurship debates is the anchoring of IE to wider grand challenges frameworks. As an umbrella concept, IE places the experience of locally embedded entrepreneurs in conjunction with collective social and environmental problems (Lucas and Fuller 2017; Markman et al. 2019). The literature emphasizes the

active role of institutional entrepreneurs driving change in large, established organizations to anticipate market shifts and maintain legitimacy (Battilana, Leca, and Boxenbaum 2009; Garud and Karnøe 2003; Lounsbury 2008). For instance, commercial bankers have responded to the rise of microfinance entrepreneurs by entering the business of poverty alleviation (Battilana and Dorado 2010; Kent and Dacin 2013). IE contexts appreciate the array of actors, including: 'individuals, entrepreneurs, enterprises, nonprofits, public agencies (governments), and civil society entities (NGOs) whose engagement aims to alleviate market, social, or environmental failures that cause grand challenges' (Markman et al. 2019, 377).

Most existing papers loosely define IE as a combination of social and sustainable entrepreneurship – typically focused on ventures addressing grand challenges through forming broad, multi-sector alliances (Markman et al. 2019). Unlike social entrepreneurship, which often emphasizes mission-driven businesses to remedy social problems (Dees 1998), or community entrepreneurship, which centres on localized, collective ownership models (Peredo and Chrisman 2006), IE sees doing business as the means of achieving social and environmental policy objectives. IE foregrounds the collective, institutional-level aspects as necessary to derive positive social and environmental impacts. IE explicitly promotes multi-stakeholder engagement and coalition-building (Saravathy and Ramesh 2019), recognizing that organizational collectives ought to reflect shared values across government, philanthropy and business supporters. What distinguishes IE is its reliance on a broad range of institutional actors for survival and impact. This partnership-based orientation shapes how entrepreneurs define and pursue institutional-level change (Doh, Tashman, and Benischke 2019). Given its emphasis on coalition-building, IE warrants distinct conceptual treatment.

However, this holistic framing of IE brings conceptual limitations. First, including all sectors, actors and resources creates fuzziness around the individual-level rationale behind IE. The aggregate view reveals little about the interplay between different levels: a) between the local entrepreneurs and globally oriented efforts, b) between individual sense of place and the community context, and c) between the past, present and future organizational challenges. We contemplate how IE works through a multidimensional lens, drawing on theories of place and embedded entrepreneurship. Place provides a forcing function to disaggregate the individual, community and organizational levels of IE and how they converge towards common goals. This paper develops IE as a framework that captures the complexity of entrepreneurial motivations and organizing practices grounded in place, shaped by civic or moral traditions, and aimed at transforming communities through entrepreneurial initiatives. By anchoring IE in empirical, place-based dynamics, this work offers a richer theoretical foundation for understanding the contextual nuances that shape local interpretations and supports for addressing grand challenges.

While place has been a cited reason for doing business (McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015), we tend to overlook the situated experiences of doing business in and for a particular place (Cartel, Kibler, and Dacin 2022). This gap is also surprising because place-based approaches can facilitate problem solving (Lang, Fink, and Kibler 2014) and opportunity identification (Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015). Scholars have emphasized how enterprises engaging with 'messy problems of place' can achieve egalitarian aims, as well as purely economic ones that support 'social cohesion, environmental restoration and economic growth' (Guthey et al. 2014; 258–62). Meanwhile, detaching entrepreneurship from place can have detrimental consequences (Guthey et al. 2014). Knowing how actors perceive place, through local interpretations, narratives, and hopes, can highlight important social and environmental challenges (Cresswell, 2014; Gieryn 2000). For instance, experiencing natural disaster can evoke emotional responses (Burley, Jenkins, and Azcona 2006); exposure to climate change or social inequality can inspire local images of entrepreneurship (Gartner et al. 2025).

Feelings towards place change based on the 'evolving, even emergent complex of natural (ecological), cultural, social, political, and economic factors' (Guthey et al. 2014, 257), influencing embeddedness and entrepreneurship (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016; Burke, Conley, and Jack 2025). Theorizing the place-IE interface can help illustrate actors' sensitivity to local conditions, values and

resources. Specifically, we identify a need to integrate individual motivations to solve local challenges with a collective, place-based entrepreneurial purpose (Bacq, Hertel, and Lumpkin 2022; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015). Currently, aggregate views on IE obfuscate the ways entrepreneurial actors activate and find support for place-making and place revitalization efforts (Brenton and Slawinski 2023; Cappellano et al. 2023). It also limits understanding of how satisfied actors feel with their efforts. This gap leaves an unanswered question regarding how IE happens ‘on the ground’, through offering an agentic force for impact (Gieryn 2000).

2.1. Lessons from place-based theories

Entrepreneurs can find meaning in what place represents (Ryan et al. 2023). Indeed, scholars have shown that enterprises and entrepreneurs are expressions of places and communities (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016; H. M. Haugh 2022). Meanings of place can endure over time, holding a lineage of historical legacies and cultural values and norms, which can in turn legitimize entrepreneurship (Crawford, Coraiola, and Dacin 2022; Wadhwani et al. 2018). Even when place ideals diverge from the material reality, they can inspire entrepreneurial visions (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016). Yet, existing research offers limited insight into how place-based conditions and entrepreneurial motives co-evolve over time.

Exemplar cases show how entrepreneurial agency can be derived from place (McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015). Entrepreneurs with strong senses of place choose to pursue sustainable enterprise activities (Shrivastava and Kennelly 2013). Rural entrepreneurs tend to exhibit strong place attachments and are more likely to break down institutional barriers via non-conforming business practices, such as rule breaking (Lang, Fink, and Kibler 2014). Social entrepreneurs also behave differently depending on their instrumental versus emotional attachment to place (Kibler et al. 2015). Also, social entrepreneurs evaluate opportunities to create social wealth through either new ventures and existing organizations, such as by weighing choices between working towards local versus systemic social goals (Zahra et al. 2009). Community-based enterprises seek to embody the exchanges unfolding via social networks, interpersonal relationships, cultural values and norms (Peredo and Chrisman 2006). Economic sociologists have gone further to demonstrate how local actors notice when street-level markets change, lamenting when the place appears ‘not as it used to be’ (Turco 2023). Depending on the industry, place can be a blessing, a curse, or a destiny. Place accentuates the opportunities and hindrances for local entrepreneurs (Sjölander-Lindqvist, Skoglund, and Laven 2019), exposing pathways to capitalize on place (Pugh and Andersson 2024; Skoglund and Sjölander-Lindqvist 2020). Unfortunately, the question of why certain place attachments pull actors into IE activities, and how it triggers new collectives into forming, remains unanswered.

While entrepreneurs’ abilities to address place-specific challenges also depends on how place influences their access to social and financial capital (Johnstone and Lionais 2004; Peredo and Chrisman 2006), entrepreneurs are constantly negotiating with place. These factors shape narratives and identities, helping to legitimize local enterprising activities deemed promising for overcoming local limitations (Kimmitt et al. 2023; Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015; Muñoz and Kimmitt 2019). The IE concept underappreciates the need to build supportive communities (Cappellano et al. 2023; Sforzi and Colombo 2020; Skoglund and Sjölander-Lindqvist 2020) who connect through place (Brenton and Slawinski 2023; Loor, Moss, and Han 2023). To sharpen understanding of IE, we need to expose the ways place can catalyse changes both within individuals, and across markets, communities and regions.

2.2. Embedding IE in place and community

Building on place-based entrepreneurship, in which actors shape regions ‘based on a feeling of responsibility vis-à-vis the region’ (Bürcher 2017, 694), we emphasize IE as a responsibility to both place and community. IE studies have acknowledged that societal impact emerges

from local-level entrepreneurial practices and collaboration (Lumpkin and Bacq 2019; Sarasvathy and Ramesh 2019). The aim is to encourage actors to engage in business activities which align with common goals (Jones et al. 2019). Unfortunately, the notions of place and community remain obscure, creating confusion around the on-the-ground practices of local stakeholder groups and the grander ambitions to deal with social and environmental problems.

Relately, scholars have advocated for the embeddedness perspective, which in entrepreneurship generally emphasizes the importance of an 'intimate knowledge of and concern for the place' (Müller and Korsgaard 2018, 574) (See Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015; Müller and Korsgaard 2018; Muñoz and Kimmitt 2019). Place embeddedness means that actors are attached to the land in such a way that can 'help to construct the places in which entrepreneurship is embedded' (Redhead and Bika 2022, 225). Scholars have pointed out the consequences of embeddedness, including the risk that actors become isolated from entrepreneurial opportunities (Alshareef 2022; Harima 2022; Yamamura, Lassalle, and Shaw 2022). However, we rarely look at how embeddedness can trigger shifts in entrepreneurial aims (Wigren-Kristoferson et al. 2022). Why do certain actors join collective efforts to solve grand challenges, and how do embeddedness and entrepreneurship change under this influence? Only a few have identified the place-based values informing how actors pursue and manage collective goals (Doh, Tashman, and Benischke 2019; Korsgaard, Müller, and Welter 2021; Markman et al. 2019; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015). Entrepreneurial ecosystems (EEs) scholars have addressed similar issues, particularly the interactions between community actors and the underlying cultural values around social impact (Roundy and Lyons 2022; Roundy, Brockman, and Bradshaw 2017; Thompson, Purdy, and Ventresca 2018). However, there remains a lack of research examining how individual senses of place contribute to EE trajectories (Malecki 2018).

In sections that follow, we contemplate how IE reflects a multidimensional sensitivity to place spanning individuals, communities and organizations.

Table 1 presents the cumulative work on IE, which is currently fragmented. It insufficiently links the interplay between IE, place and community embeddedness. We see value in elaborating the interplay between actors' senses of place, the material and emotional experiences of the locality, their embeddedness in the community, and IE, the collectives forming across social, public, private and entrepreneurial institutions. We set out to understand how place conditions the individual and collective agency to improve place through IE. Answering this question involves looking at a) how individuals with unique sets of values and senses of place perceive history, social norms, moral and ethical codes, b) how communities form through embeddedness in communities of practice, industry events, action research, citizen science research, policy experiments, podcasts, social impact courses, and interactions with current social, ecological or economic conditions, and c) how existing supports for IE, including social sector, legacy institutions, government programmes to support NGOs, non-profits and social enterprises, impact incubators, etc., influence local visions for IE in place. Through this confluence, IE can provide clarity by parsing out the range of place-based justifications for action (i.e. emotional, communal and economic).

Building on Table 1, Figure 1 illustrates the interconnections between individuals, communities, and organizations, which are currently missing from the IE literature. We seek to reconcile this gap through understanding how the mutual influences of sense of place, community embeddedness, and IE shape the emergence of IE and its ability to deliver collective value.

In sections to follow, we describe the methods and approach before presenting the findings. In the discussion, we apply the theoretical framework to reveal the IE shaping Turin's pathway to solving the city region's social challenges.

Table 1. Fragmented dimensions of impact entrepreneurship (IE).

Level	Dimension		
	Sense of PLACE (material, emotional experiences)	COMMUNITY embeddedness (social, ecological, economic conditions)	IMPACT ENTREPRENEURSHIP (IE) (social, public, private, legacy sectors)
<i>Individual</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>individual motivation to engage with local challenges</i> 	Individuals have a sense of place, based on the experiences of being attached to and rooted in place (Fine 2010; Gieryn 2000; Tuan 1974) Individual senses of place create social meanings and practices, which shape local actions (Cartel, Kibler, and Dacin 2022) Entrepreneurs form emotional and instrumental attachments to place (Kibler et al. 2015) Individuals are emotionally attached to place through markets (Turco 2023)	Communities of place are individuals bound by location. Communities can define the desired impacts of entrepreneurship (Bacq, Hertel, and Lumpkin 2022)	Embedded entrepreneurship is impacted by individuals' moral values and community orientations (Nordstrom, McKeever and Anderson, Warren, and Bensemann 2019; H. M. Haugh 2022; Ryan et al. 2023) Individuals engaging in impact entrepreneurship exhibit humility (Roundy and Lyons 2022) Place influences the self-efficacy of entrepreneurs (Pushkarskaya et al. 2021)
<i>Community</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>community formation around collective experiences and challenges</i> 	Communities hold unique ecological values (Whiteman and Cooper 2000) Place situates the social relations of the mode of production (Harvey 1990) Place encompasses the territory, networks and social structures (Hess 2004)	Communities are cohesive agents that produce entrepreneurial activity (Roundy, Brockman, and Bradshaw 2017) Community embeddedness influences societal impacts created from entrepreneurship (Harima 2022; Lumpkin and Bacq 2022; Wigren-Kristoferson et al. 2022).	Collaboration can help achieve common goals (Jones et al. 2019; Lumpkin and Bacq 2019; Sarasvathy and Ramesh 2019) Entrepreneurship is a community-level phenomenon (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016; Nordstrom, McKeever, and Anderson 2020)
<i>Organizational</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>multi-sector solutions to grand challenges</i> 	Place is constructed through heterogeneous relationships at multiple scales and is produced by practices (Gherardi 2023) Place is an 'evolving, even emergent complex of natural (ecological), cultural, social, political, and economic factors' (Guthey et al. 2014, 257) Places involve multi-scalar interactions of people with locations (Massey 1994), which are connected to the past (Massey and Jess 1995)	Partnerships can create new ways of organizing to regenerate place and community (Brenton and Slawinski 2023) Organizations can respond to place-based needs by supporting entrepreneurship (Malecki 2018) Local organizations can support entrepreneurship (Crawford, Coraiola, and Dacin 2022; Wadhvani et al. 2018)	Impact enterprises leverage resources from multiple sectors (Markman et al. 2019) Entrepreneurship can involve new practices which alter places (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016; Bacq, Hertel, and Lumpkin 2022; H. M. Haugh 2022) Enterprises can choose to prioritize aligning their business practices with local goals (Lang, Fink, and Kibler 2014; Shrivastava and Kennelly 2013)

3. Methodology

3.1. The context

We selected the empirical context of Turin, Italy, an exemplar location to study the place-IE interface. Within this setting, we aimed to investigate the relationship between embedded entrepreneurship and place, focusing on the individual and collective agency to spur value creation (McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015). The setting was helpful to examine how different actors feel towards place and how they negotiate with conditions on the ground, such as through deriving value from established organizations in the region or by designing new partnerships for impact. We set out to investigate

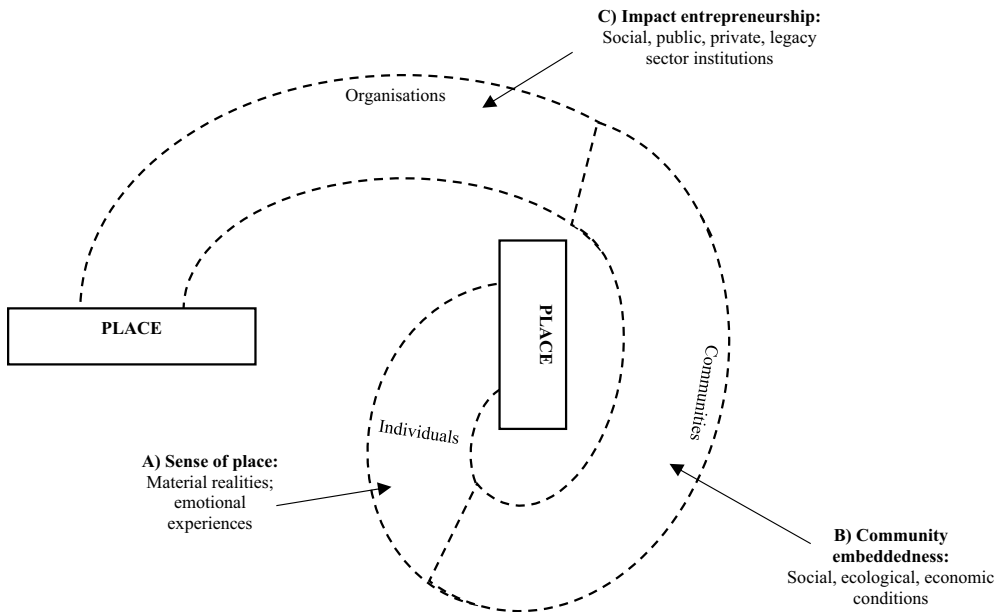


Figure 1. Connecting the arcs of IE in place.

the prevalence of ‘shared *cooperative* norms and informal routines that are mutually defined and adjusted by the actors’ (Colombelli, Paolucci, and Ughetto 2019, 508).

This particular context was suitable because of the city’s historical and renewed commitment to social impact. Indeed, northern Italian regions demonstrate a relatively strong context of community organization and civic engagement, dating back to medieval guilds (Putnam 1993). In Turin, the social ‘vocation’ is considered one of the oldest in Europe (Maahsen-Milan, Orestano, and Magnaghi 2012, 393), stemming from a need to protect itself and its inhabitants amid transalpine imperialist threats and consolidated power under the Savoy dynasty. Scholars also highlight the historical role of Turin’s social saints, 19th-century religious founders of morally grounded community enterprises, which served unmet social needs without strong conditionality (Lancione 2014). More recently, the city has faced economic pressure to diversify away from the automotive sector, as Fiat automaker has lost its status (Whitford and Enrietti 2005). The city’s legacy of large companies continues to accentuate struggles with labour relations, unemployment, and social inequalities (Reuters 2024). However, there are limited efforts to link inherited inequalities with current efforts to drive positive social and environmental impacts.

In response to challenges, scholars and practitioners have noted Turin’s effort to build an impact-driven ecosystem of stakeholders. Notably, the City of Turin has been running a multi-sector partnership to support innovative enterprises positioned to solve social issues related to education, health, inclusion, etc. (Turin Social Impact 2022). Turin has been gaining recognition at the Italian and European levels as a centre for innovative start-ups, of which many have a social aim (Italian Chamber of Commerce 2023). The Turin ecosystem sits behind only Rome, Milan and Naples in terms of innovative start-ups. Scholars have theorized how the ecosystem has adapted its governance to prioritize relational (rather than hierarchical) styles of organizing (Colombelli, Paolucci, and Ughetto 2019). Since 1999, I3P, a world leading university incubator of the Polytechnical University of Turin in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, the City and Province of Turin has been an important factor in the ecosystem (Colombelli, Paolucci, and Ughetto 2019). In addition to philanthropic organizations now sponsoring social impact, organizations such as Piazza dei Mestieri ‘Crafts Square’ (Corazza and Cisi 2017) and Case dei Quartieri ‘Houses of the District’ (Corazza 2018) have

been tackling issues such as youth unemployment through vocational training and bringing people together through cultural events. In terms of environmental sustainability, there is broad evidence of government support for achieving climate positive outcomes.⁴ We wanted to comprehend why more and more local community organizations are adopting financial governance models that emphasize sustainability and social connection to grasp the look and feel of IE in this place (Corazza 2018). Noting both the strengths and weaknesses of the place, we contemplated the ambition of the city to become a hub for impact investing and entrepreneurship (Turin Social Impact 2022). Our curiosity about what social impact means in Turin follows a scholarly tradition to emphasize the meanings of place which manifest in practices (Gherardi 2023).

3.2. Methods adopted

To address the research question of how actors engage in IE initiatives to tackle social and environmental goals, we adopted a qualitative approach. Participants were purposefully sampled (Gartner and Birley 2002) to include a diverse range of entrepreneurial actors with deep knowledge of Turin's social challenges. The fourth author guided the purposeful sampling process based on who could contribute to our theoretical interest (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2017). The first author carried out both participatory and non-participatory observations during a seven-month stay in the empirical setting, specifically through attending community events and engaging in departmental activities at specifically at the University of Turin's Department of Management (Table 2).

We studied 30 impact entrepreneurs and practitioners based in the Piedmont region. Informants represented at least one of approximately 200 organizations included in the non-profit organization, Turin Social Impact, which maps the ecosystem of active organizations addressing social impact through public and private alliances. We captured variation in terms of role and sector, as well as the relation to the city/region (Table 3). An overview of the characteristics is shown in Table 3.

The initial round of interviews lasted three months (from June to August 2022) and continued between May and September 2023, during which we scanned the ecosystem for organizations which were heavily engaged in the social economy. Primary data consist of 30 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted over a 14-month period, both in person and online, with durations between 35 and 65 minutes. The interview schema guided discussions, starting with scoping questions about

Table 2. Data structure.

Type	#	Hours	Dates	Actors
Interviews	30	22	July 2022 – Sep 2023	Practitioners, impact entrepreneurs, institutional entrepreneurs, researchers, policymakers
Community Events	10	17	July 2022 – Sep 2023	
Podcasts	2	3	Aug – Sep 2023	
Analytical reports: <i>Metropolitan Plan for the Social Economy of Turin 2030;</i> <i>Torino 2030 - Sustainable and Resilient: Climate Resilience Plan;</i> <i>Turin 2022 European Green Capital Award Application</i>	3	1	June – Sep 2024	
Books: <i>Images of Change: A project documenting changes of Turin</i> Davico et al. (2016)	1	6	Sep 2023	
Observations	First author	7 mos.	July 2022; May – Nov 2023	
LinkedIn posts	First author	12 mos.	Jan 2024 – Jan 2025	

Table 3. Informants.

Informant	Role	Place relation	Background/experience	Sector	Code
1	Social innovator	From Rome, moved to Turin for career	Former corporate executive, now impact entrepreneur	Third	M1
2	Academic entrepreneur	From Cuneo, town nearby Turin	Project leader driving university social impact projects across Milan and Turin	Academic	M2
3	Social impact educator	From Turin, experience in Milan and Zurich	Founder of engineering education institution focused on social impact and ESG	Academic	M3
4	Municipal policymaker	From Turin, involved with local universities	PhD researcher now focused on municipal sustainability policy initiatives (i.e. citizen science) in Turin	Government	M4
5	Innovation researcher	From Marche, central Italy, moved to Turin for career	Professor, academic entrepreneur at Polytechnical University	Academic	M5
6	Non-profit manager	From Turin	Leader at non-profit aimed at public and private alliances	Third	M6
7	Student leader	From Rome, moved to Turin for university	Student leader driving university social impact projects across Milan and Turin	Academic	S1
8	Non-profit manager	From Turin	Director of practical education programmes to upskill and empower vulnerable high school students	Third	M7
9	Entrepreneurship researcher	From Turin, working in UK	Researcher with expertise in female entrepreneurship and regional entrepreneurship in Italy	Academic	M8
10	Municipal government official	From Turin	Government policymaker engaged in city projects to collaborate with other EU cities	Public	M9
11	NGO founder	From Turin	Former philanthropy executive (Caritas Italy), now impact entrepreneur	Third	M10
12	Philanthropic foundation director	From Turin	Director of multipurpose hub aimed at engaging innovative communities in technological and cultural sectors	Third	M11
13	NGO founder	From Iran, moved to Turin for university	Academic entrepreneur committed to local and global water education	Third	M12
14	Family business entrepreneur	From Turin	Family business co-owner working on supply chain resilience and sustainable, artisanal chocolate production	Private	M13
15	Foundation manager	From Turin, affiliated with local universities	Manager of foundation for research and international private sector partnerships	Third	M14
16	Incubator manager	From Turin	Manager of university incubator and technology transfer processes	Third	M15
17	Research institute director	From Turin	Established academic running grants and projects about economic development	Government	M16
18	Startup studio founder	From Turin, family originally from Iran	Serial impact entrepreneur and venture capitalist, focused on leveraging digital technologies	Third	M17
19	Local startup platform manager	From Turin, affiliated with local universities	Communications manager for interactive map of Turin's entrepreneurial ecosystem	Third	M18
22	Non-profit	From Turin	Local leader helping create a garden to connect people in difficulty with local university and K-12 partners	Third	M19
23	Museum founder	From Turin	Cultural sector entrepreneur focused on place-making through historical fantasy	Third	M20
24	Festival director	From Spain, moved to Turin for career	Director of international environmental film festival at Mole Antonelliana	Third	M21
25	Foundation leader	From Turin	Leader of foundation's youth and adult vocational training programmes fostering workforce learning and social inclusion	Third	M22
26	Non-profit manager	From Turin	Leader at non-profit aimed at public and private alliances	Third	M23

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued).

Informant	Role	Place relation	Background/experience	Sector	Code
27	Non-profit manager	From Turin	Programme manager for practical education to upskill and empower vulnerable high school students	Third	M24
28	Entrepreneurship lecturer	From Turin	Professor and incubator programme manager, student-entrepreneurship mentor	Academic	M25
29	Real estate entrepreneur	From Turin, family originally from Sicily	Private sector entrepreneur involved in matching non-local students with housing in Turin	Private	M26
30	Local teacher, retired	From Veneto, moved to Turin for family	Community member involved in local programmes to bring together elderly and youth populations	Third	M28

the individual ties to place, and building towards more nuanced questions about what the place means with respect to their engagement in entrepreneurial initiatives or public and private alliances. We conducted background research into each of the organizations prior to site visits or virtual interviews, aiming to understand the mission of the organization in the wider ecosystem of stakeholders.

The interviews aimed to draw out meanings attributed to place and social impact, providing room to discuss the individual emotions towards entrepreneurial activities and place-specific challenges. Where respondents agreed, the first author recorded and transcribed the interviews, providing respondents with the full transcripts to be checked. Data was then anonymized and collated to begin the initial coding process. [Table 4](#) shows a list of relevant organizations which were included in our study.

The first author documented insights from events and interactions across academia, public, non-profit and industry sectors. As an author group, we continued tracking pertinent information from local newsletters and LinkedIn pages to gather additional resources for comparison. We triangulated interview transcripts with evidence from field notes from speaking engagements, events and text related to the topic of impact entrepreneurship in the municipality (City of Turin [2022](#), [2023](#); [2024](#)) ([Table 5](#)).

Through being immersed into the context (Williams and Whiteman [2021](#)), we aimed to enhance understanding of the relationships between local organizations and the regional conditions (Van Maanen [1979](#)). Context was the intended unit of analysis (see also Johannisson and Nilsson [1989](#); Kloosterman [2000](#); Polanyi [1968](#)).

3.3. Coding and analysis

The first round of manual coding involved organizing the data and gaining familiarity with the individual narratives (Basit [2003](#)). We took an inductive approach, keeping ourselves open-minded and sensitive to the context, rather than following aprioristic codes (Miles and Huberman [1994](#), 58). We discussed the themes that were emerging from the data, especially those related to the historical v. contemporary perspectives on place, and the images individuals had for entrepreneurship. In the observations, we noticed a wide variety of experiences against some core, resounding images of place, with informants describing a general awareness for local, ethical values, socioeconomic challenges, and past legacies. By comparing these categorizations against the literature, we sought to disentangle the place-based experiences and practices corresponding to impactful forms of entrepreneurship (i.e. new enterprises, entrepreneurial support organizations, partnerships), as well as how actors described their experience of being embedded in the social impact ecosystem. Multiple rounds of analysis generated descriptive codes, which were then discussed before sorting them into analytical categories (Wolcott [1990](#)).

Table 4. Organizations involved in IE.

Organization	Founded	Sector	Description	Historical legacies
Polytechnical University of Turin	1859	Academia	International research sector	<i>Philanthropic legacy, third sector initiatives</i>
Sandretto re Rebaudengo Foundation	1995	Third	National social sector	<i>Industrial legacy, engineering and innovation hub</i>
University of Turin incubator	1404	Academia	International research sector	
Social Fare	2013	Third	National social sector	<i>Social welfare legacy, human capital development</i>
Social Innovation Teams	2011	Academia	Academic sector (campus-level engagement programme)	<i>Social sector focus across multi-sector networks</i>
Cottino Social Impact campus	2018	Third	Regional engineering education sector	<i>Sustainability focus, citizen science and urban regeneration</i>
Torino City Lab	2018	Government	Municipal policy sector (with international collaborations)	<i>Enterprise creation, innovative start-ups with a social aim</i>
Spring ONLUS	2020	Third	Academic sector (department-level innovation programme)	
Torino Social Impact	2017	Third	Regional non-profit sector for innovation and partnerships	
Piazza dei Mestieri	2004	Third	City-level social programme sector	
S-nodi (Ecosystem nodes)	2017	Third	National social sector	
Fondazione CRT	1991	Third	National social sector	
Guido Gobino	1964	Private	Regional artisanal business sector	
LINKS Foundation	2004	Third	National social sector	
Institute of Economic and Social Research (IRES)	1958	Research	National research sector	
Mamazen Startup Studio	2018	Private (benefit company)	City-level venture capital sector	
Torino Social Business City	2023	Government	City-level entrepreneurship sector (with international networks)	
Consulta per le persone in difficoltà (Counsel for people in difficulty)	1991	Third	City-level social programme sector	
MUFANT Museum lab of fantasy and science fiction	2013	Private (museum)	City-level cultural sector	
CinemAmbiente, Italian Environmental Film Festival	1998	Third	City-level cultural sector	
ENGIM Artigianelli (National Entity of Giuseppe Murialdo)	1873	Third	National social sector	
OGR Turin	1885; 2017 (reopened)	Third	National innovation sector	

Table 5. IE events.

Organization	Event topic	Date
Foundation Sandretto re Rebaudengo	Capacity building workshop: climate change ‘We demand a million more years’	30/06/22
University incubator	Eco-Innovation and Sustainability: The role of start-ups	01/07/22
Social Fare	Social impact investor day and networking	14/07/22
Houses of the District	Local community event	05/25/23
Turin Social Business City	Community event to inaugurate the city’s social impact mission	11/06/23
Counsel for People in Difficulty	Walking meeting about the local non-profit	21/07/23
Ecosystem Nodes	Speaker series focused on green technologies	14/09/23
Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030	Gathering of the 100 cities committed to net zero emissions in Turin	20/09/23
OGR Startup awards	Entrepreneurial community event	28/09/23
University	Kick-off event to launch New European Bauhaus Living Corridor	07/11/23

Our approach is justified in that it encapsulates a multiplex of embedded experiences, at the individual, community and organizational levels, substantiating our conceptual framework which encompasses multiple aspects of IE (i.e. material, emotional, social, ecological, economic, historical) (Table 1). Scholars have advocated for approaches which interrogate embeddedness across multiple dimensions, including the relationship between agent and structure (Jack and Anderson 2002), the interplay between the situational context and the entrepreneur’s role, the links between local entrepreneurs and local communities (Wigren-Kristofersson et al., 2022) and idealized images of entrepreneurship (Gartner et al. 2025). The facets of embeddedness examined, individual, community, organizational and placial, led us to the concept of impact entrepreneurship, which acknowledges the complex social and spatial interactions inherent in addressing grand challenges. IE relates to the notion that a responsibility to care for the place can provide a generative, agentic impetus for entrepreneurial action (Cartel, Kibler, and Dacin 2022; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015).

The initial themes we saw emerging from the data included *place-based values*, *current realities*, and *historical legacies*. Along the three initial levels, we continued to analyse the data in relation to the literature on place-based entrepreneurship and embeddedness. The constant comparative approach (Silverman 2021) enabled us to absorb the existing literature depicting ‘place’ and ‘social

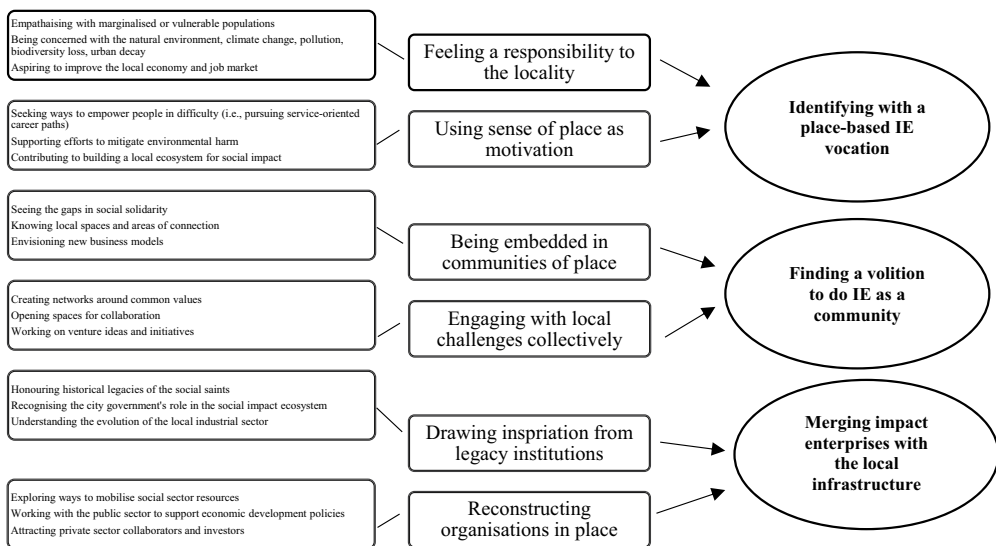


Figure 2. Coding structure.

impact', helping to reveal the story behind the data (Steyaert and Bouwen 2019). The second order codes generated insight into how situated interactions work (Anderson, Dodd, and Jack 2010), making it possible to connect the perceptions of individuals and their (often thick) descriptions of the context (Geertz 1973). Figure 2 depicts our final coding structure, including the analytical dimensions.

Our findings deliberately stretch the boundaries of IE beyond new venture creation to emphasize entrepreneurial approaches to activate new communities via third sector and non-profit organizations. The place-based motivations of different actors to engage in IE activities are visible in our findings, offering key insights about IE in relation to place and entrepreneurial agency (Korsgaard, Müller, and Welter 2021). Our findings show that place specific qualities condition the individual and collective agency to build an IE ecosystem.

4. Findings

The findings relate to how actors perceive their involvement in social impact activities as part of a long regional heritage, taking on the city's identity as part of their own. While actors acknowledged that

Table 6. Selected evidence.

<i>Identifying with a place-based IE vocation</i>	
Second-order themes	Selected evidence of place-based values
Feeling a responsibility to the locality	<i>'Turin is cited as an example of a social economy ecosystem in Italy ... it is so difficult to know all of the organisations, but we are trying to do it' (informant 23).</i>
Using sense of place as motivation	<i>'Most of the entrepreneurs I talk to tend to have a corporate philanthropy approach: save some money at the end of the year, do some charity. That kind of product needs to be rebooted at the centre of your budget and core business' (informant 3). 'People in Turin are open to innovation ... it's always been this way' (informant 16).</i>
<i>Finding a volition to do IE as a community</i>	
Second-order themes	Selected evidence of current realities
Being embedded in communities of place	<i>'Sustainability can only be systemic – embracing social, environmental, and economic dimensions – or it is not sustainability at all... we are all on the same boat. We have different tools, but we should have one goal: the progress of society, the sustainability of the planet' (informant 1). 'We did a call for startups who want to test something for citizens in the district ... we talked to people who know the situation in Turin, know places, people, and public entities who are responsible for that topic. Then we organised a meeting with the company and the potential stakeholders to see who was interested' (informant 4). 'We have professionals, students, entrepreneurs, professors and we can create a team that is composed of all these different people. But it's all based on the needs of the startup' (informant 2).</i>
Engaging with local challenges collectively	<i>'When I gathered around the table a technological partner, a financial partner, a nonprofit partner, a grant maker, social entrepreneurs ... it was like Babel's tower. There was no common language. That was the point on which the model had to prove itself; 'These are capacity building projects. We build capacity while tackling issues and testing hypotheses... Sometimes because we're asked to, sometimes because we decide to be the risk-taker' (informant 1).</i>
<i>Merging impact enterprises with the local infrastructure</i>	
Second-order themes	Selected evidence of historical legacies
Drawing inspiration from legacy institutions	<i>'We had such great companies here in Piedmont ... but now I notice that we care much more about sustainability and innovation ... to make a real change' (informant 16). 'We develop the local entrepreneurship because in Piazza dei Mestieri we have a lot of business units ... We look for the future of young people by promoting their talents and investing in them' (informant 8).</i>
Reconstructing organizations in place	<i>'We try and focus with key programs on small and medium corporations... to develop competence to measure impact... Our challenge is to merge economics and social vision to show a new way of doing business' (informant 3). 'We can push for new models – for example, mission-aligned funds, a model of systemic finance locally to support social entrepreneurship, and a new way to evaluate social impact as an alternative to financial returns' (informant 1).</i>

current challenges were different from those of their grandparents, they yearned for similar approaches. In the following sections, we analyse how actors leverage their own agency along three dynamic dimensions – identifying with a place-based IE vocation, finding a volition to do IE as a community and merging IE with the local infrastructure – which form a collective ethic to benefit the place (Table 6).

4.1. Identifying with a place-based IE vocation

Individuals expressed a strong resonance with the city of Turin, declaring that *'Turin is one of the best places in the world to do business and finance while pursuing social goals, not only for companies but for institutions, charities, foundations and the third sector'* (informant 23). We saw individuals in universities, museums and family businesses echoing the notion that caring for people in need was important (field notes, 2023). The problem was that there was a lack of coherence amongst individuals, with *'a rich sub-stratum of actions but at the same time not so rich interaction'* (Informant 3).

This history raised debates over how to work together and across sectors to create 'a viable ecosystem for social impact':

What motivated me was not just to migrate from corporate to nonprofit, but to ask: is a new master model possible? (informant 1)

Identifying with a vocation to positively impact place was visible when actors discussed belonging to a local culture which empathized with marginalized or vulnerable populations and held concerns for topics such as, climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss and urban decay (field notes, 2023). Valuing community welfare and the natural environment was common to actors, opening up circles for *'exchanging knowledge and bringing people on board'* (informant 1). Actors knew the place colloquially, retaining *'informal knowledge from multiple perspectives'* (informant 1).

Actors recognized the need to access resources from philanthropic foundations and venture philanthropists:

A new scenario was made possible by the philanthropic foundations who provide lots of resources to the so-called third sector and non-profit sector in Torino, Piedmont and in the northwest of Italy. (informant 1)

In this regard, the establishment of Social Fare in 2013, an incubator supporting IE, was a proof-of-concept for actors with an impact-oriented vocation. Actors eager to experiment with IE in Turin were invited in to collaborate to test new ideas:

The attempt is – try now, design now and experiment where we understand the action is viable, doable now in the community. (informant 1);

Sometimes if the test is not interesting to the public, we can say: 'Not for Torino' because we couldn't find a place, people, or it's on hold (informant 4).

The calling to launch Social Fare reflected a widespread will to remedy a fragmented social impact sector. There was a notion of reshuffling resources and activities to ensure people were talking to each other. With this in place, other actors found reasons to be optimistic that their preoccupations over social challenges were valid. These issues eventually prompted a response from private sector actors:

The financial side started to change and pay attention ... money can change perspectives and can support building new perspectives. (informant 1);

Most of the entrepreneurs I talk to tend to have a corporate philanthropy approach: save some money at the end of the year, do some charity. That kind of product needs to be rebooted at the centre of your budget and core business (informant 3).

The sense of resource availability was motivating for actors who want to see social impact at the core of private and financial activity. Actors realized that a cross-pollination between

public and private sector investors could lead to more support for entrepreneurship. The theory of change was that *'innovation would come by a new convergence between the two'* (informant 1). Third sector organizations would provide the bridge for individuals to reach constituents in public, financial and academic sectors. Individuals were mapping out plans in real time to prioritize impact:

We are trying to do something concrete. Of course we can write policies, but we are trying to do something really tangible with the projects and opening the dialogue with the local people of the territory. We decided to involve the stakeholders to write the local action plan for the social economy. It's not only the role of public administration. (informant 23)

While the individual agency to drive IE was emerging, in the form of on-the-ground practices connect differently across sectors, it also harkened back the historical attention to people in difficulty. This created a vocation to serve others and promote policies and businesses that mitigate socioenvironmental harm (field notes, 2023). It was a call to action.

4.2. Finding a volition to do IE as a community

At this level, we heard points of inflection and urgency from actors wanting to empower communities. Actors recognized gaps in social services amongst people in the same territorial limits. Social spaces were established to remedy social exclusion (i.e. Houses of the District), provide training (i.e. Piazza dei Mestieri, ENGIM) and update key sectors like engineering (i.e. Cottino Social Impact campus). Teaching and learning programmes incorporated community empowerment aims (i.e. combining training with pathways for housing, employment and empowerment):

What we continue to do is provide technical activities for young people to give a sense of importance to the work. Work is an opportunity to develop the whole person ... expressed also in the ethical code – the value of work for the person. (informant 22)

Here, the vocational calling to work on IE coincided with a volition to do something together. On the premises of a local university, researchers built their own community garden with support from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and the New European Bauhaus (Torchia et al. 2022), which has fostered social interaction between students and a nearby community organization focussed on helping people with disabilities (field notes, 2023).

Despite these examples, the City of Turin has taken greater responsibility, suggesting that existing community organizations were falling short of addressing social and economic issues. One example was the City's policy action plan to develop a social economy ecosystem, combining social and environmental ambitions. This initiative substantiated plans to test new economic models:

The most important thing is that the organisation has to generate social impact, based on three principles: intentionality, decisionality to work with those actors excluded by markets, and measurability to apply evaluations of projects. (informant 23)

Within this programme, individual entrepreneurs felt personally driven to align their business goals with the broader social and environmental objectives of the City, seeing their ventures as part of a larger collective volition to revitalize the region. We then saw support being deployed from the municipal government, third sector organizations, investor networks and higher education institutions. While government policies acted as an enabling factor, technology and cultural centres like OGR provided a space for innovation to emerge based on regional talent and opportunities. Informants noted that these centres contributed to bridging the gap between existing and new ventures, by *'combining innovation with business and finance ... guided by a logic not only of profit, and creating a bridge between innovative ideas, territory and capital'* (informant 11).

Such *'a new economic model'* (informant 1) would require community will. A local non-profit contributed by connecting over 300 organizations into an entity known as Turin Social Impact, *'aiming to make Turin the main European hub for impact investing and entrepreneurship'* (informant

23). This entity created a collective of actors who were revitalizing the city, such as by greening the city through urban infrastructure, transportation, energy, land and water use. This was intricately tied to the drive to launch impactful start-ups (field notes, 2023).

However, not all sectors were equally aligned in their commitment to social impact, or were potentially detrimental to the common good. The private sector, for example, showed some reluctance to fully embrace the social impact community. To remedy this issue, leaders established an organization to help businesses ramp up the social side of ESG into their sustainability models:

In the for-profit organisations, there is a challenge, and this is our mission. We would like to bring forward the cultural elements, learning elements and pragmatic elements. (informant 3)

While there was reason to believe that the collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors in Turin would create an ecosystem for social impact, this change would have to captivate the attention of the next generation. As one informant from the University of Turin noted:

'We want students to know more about social innovation and sustainability – because our start-ups need students too'. (informant 18)

Thus, community coherence across sectors was not a given, despite collective sighs about the region's future economic and social vitality. One supportive aspect was messaging, as we noticed a shared vocabulary of associating Turin with social impact (field notes, 2023). This image held the potential to project Turin to other cities and countries:

We are happy when we can show our work. For instance, we worked with a social impact entrepreneurship organisation in Lebanon to network with organisations in Turin. We work a lot with communities of practice (for example on the circular economy) to find the needs of organisations and to create occasions to network with people with similar objectives and needs, to promote exchanges with those organisations, to create new projects, and to create occasions to get to know each other. (informant 23)

To that end, we learned that local actors were seeking to widen the applications of their work:

We would like to have projects in other parts of Italy ... not just in Piedmont and Lombardy ... but also in other countries;

There are a lot of networks between different cities in the field. As a city, you try to connect with similar cities. So, we usually try to connect with the, let's say, medium big cities such as, Barcelona or Paris or Amsterdam or Rotterdam. (informant 4)

From this vantage point, actors saw the city as a portal for spreading a place identity which supports social impact through reaching new audiences.

Another function of community actors was to be 'antennas' in the locality – working within neighbourhood centres, foundations, third-sector organizations to translate the needs of citizens into new economic models (informant 10). By engaging across sectors, individuals can connect with the idea that the recipe for entrepreneurship can change. Indeed, it was about '*cooking something different together*' (informant 1).

4.3. Merging impact enterprises with the local infrastructure

While the public sector was one architect of community, there was another element at play dating back to Turin's philanthropic legacies. The 'social saints', recognized by the Catholic Church as social changemakers and visionaries, established schools, hospitals and institutions for the incarcerated in the 19th century. One respondent stated, '*Turin is a kind of a unique model, where you find a very strong heritage of social attention. . . This sort of grew upon a basis of the social saints*' (informant 3). The vivid motif of the 'social saints' offered a moral touchstone for the social collectives of today (i.e. Turin Social Impact, Social Fare, OGR, S-nodi, LINKS Foundation), especially the obligation of organizations to offer opportunities for social, technological, and cultural wealth creation.

Despite issues of fragmentation, collaboration around social justice and poverty alleviation has been a longtime fixture of the place. *'Piedmont has a history of cooperative approaches'* (informant 22), which has been passed down to citizens in efforts to remedy social inequality. Indeed, many cooperative efforts prioritized work as a potential means of social mobility, personal development and collective welfare. At the organizational level, these historical values are prominent in legacy institutions such as Compagnia di San Paolo and Foundation CRT. For example, these organizations frame their missions not just as business opportunities, but as a means to uphold long-standing social principles of solidarity and community well-being through offering vocational and educational support (field notes, 2023).

Special qualities of Turin, such as these social saints, have been honoured in the third sector foundations of the city, which are increasingly involved in venture philanthropy and entrepreneurial financing through public and private alliances (field notes, 2022). One informant described the historical role of these social pioneers:

The social saints of Turin provided a place for artisanal production because they decided that orphaned young people should have a chance to have work and learn crafts. This was the idea of young artisans. The stimulus for this was poverty in a different form, where work was seen as an educational opportunity during the 1850s. (informant 22)

While actors were conjuring up images of the past, what remains salient is the impetus for place revitalizing efforts and institutional change. The region has built upon the legacy of the social saints to expand the third sector and mobilize these resources:

It is quite a rich region in terms of philanthropic initiatives and of course available resources. (informant 3)

The social saints' image encompasses the change that ensued in the region, *'In Piedmont it has always been really important to make a real change'* (informant 2). There is cultural *'support for those who want to propose a new way of doing business, attentive to the needs of society'* (informant 2). We see here that the collective history builds a narrative which values social sector organizations:

The representation of the social sector in the territory is super important. . .the debates of social impact are very old and have a history. (informant 23)

In practice, impact enterprises and initiatives were enabled by values that appreciate closeness across organizations and actors. The notion of proximity has gained popularity, as seen in one initiative known as *'Torino Proxima'*, noting the inseparability of people, place and IE:

The word proxima has been said to mean 'I am close to you', but it also entails that this work can be done quickly. . . implemented in an experimental mode. (informant 1)

This particular initiative, led by Social Fare, was about building close ties to actualise a swift vision for change. The moral sentiment that inequality ought to be remedied through socioeconomic opportunity, at the collective level of the city, was also attributed to Turin's experience with industrialization in the early 20th century through the 1970s. The legacy of companies like Fiat, Ferrero and Lavazza has influenced the region's entrepreneurial spirit and prowess in industrial engineering, providing a source of economic pride and a foundation for addressing social challenges that accompanied increased manufacturing and urbanization:

Turin is a place where you had one of the first Italian corporations, Fiat – for a long time really ran and drove capitalism in Italy. Turin is a kind of a unique model, where you find a very strong heritage of social attention, which Turin and this region of Piedmont can bring to the table, to the bigger audience. (Informant 3)

The industrial sector which put Turin on the map has also exacerbated vulnerabilities as automotive production has fled to other regions. Industrial organizations have thus fuelled a desire for bringing economic benefits back to the region. Organizations like OGR, located in an old railway repair station, contain traces of legacy industries, while pushing the territorial agenda from employment creation towards leadership and innovation. The city has committed to net carbon neutrality by 2030, and in

2022, the city was a finalist in the European Green Capital Award (field notes, 2023). Turin aspires to be the *'place to be when it comes to investing for impact, social entrepreneurship and innovation'* (podcast 3), a transition from its previous identity as the 'capital of cars' to a model for sustainable and inclusive development.

From the ground level of Turin's ecosystem, it was clear that the individual and collective vision for entrepreneurship were blending, spawning a common goal of reaching new heights. Turin Social Impact has gone further to deter organizations working in isolation. Today, organizations are asked to *'sign a memorandum of understanding to share experiences, attract investments and solve emerging social problems through a sustainable business model'* (informant 23; Turin 2030 Action Plan). The mosaic of actors has created a cohesive whole, described by Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus as *'a city that is seriously engaged in solving the city's problems'* (event 4).

In the sections that follow, we discuss how individuals channel their senses of place through community and organizational IE efforts.

5. Discussion

Our analysis yielded three main findings. First, we show that impact entrepreneurship (IE) emerges from an individual-level vocation to care for place. Second, this vocational calling shapes the nature of community embeddedness (H. M. Haugh 2022; Müller and Korsgaard 2018), as individuals identify with, and connect through, entrepreneurial opportunities grounded in shared attachments and ethics. Third, we demonstrate how organizations have agglomerated around a collective vision to address local challenges through intentional efforts at multi-sector coordination.

In answering the research question, this paper sought to clarify how the concept of IE can reveal individual agency to create collective value in place (Ostrom 2009). We offered a fresh perspective on how individual senses of place can provide a community-level volition to push for ambitious IE

Table 7. Applying the conceptual framework for place-based IE.

Level	Dimension		
	Sense of PLACE (material, emotional experiences)	COMMUNITY embeddedness (social, ecological, economic conditions)	IMPACT ENTREPRENEURSHIP (social, public, private, legacy sector)
Individual	Actors' place-based values of social solidarity motivate them to value the social and environmental (not just purely economic) aspects of entrepreneurship.	Individuals with a sense of place internalize ethical standards and mission of community, the vocation of impact entrepreneurs to address local problems.	Examples: Counsel for People in Difficulty, MUFANT, CinemAmbiente, Guido Gobino, Social Innovation Teams, university incubators Focus: providing social services, specialized products and experiences that have a positive impact on individuals
Community	Actors connect with entrepreneurial visions for a more sustainable and equitable city and region.	Communities of actors transform into place-makers, being antennas in the region to understand current realities and identify opportunities to pool resources and share spaces for collaboration.	Examples: Piazza dei Mestieri, Houses of the District, ENGIM, Cottino Social Impact campus, City of Turin Focus: upskilling with a focus on economic opportunity and social impact in different sectors (i.e. artisanal, engineering, government)
Organizational	Cross-sector partnerships aim to build upon the third sector's commitment to addressing social problems.	Organizations merge into an ecosystem, a symbolic and historically layered assemblage for experimenting with a new economic model based on collective entrepreneurial values.	Examples: Turin Social Impact, Social Fare, OGR, S-nodi, LINKS Foundation Focus: building an ecosystem of resources through connecting actors and organizations across sectors and spaces

efforts at the organizational and city level, thus adding granularity to previously aggregate views on IE (George et al. 2016). While an IE ethic alone may not generate new organizational practices (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016; H. M. Haugh 2022; Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015), we argue that place is essential in anchoring and enabling these efforts. We thus extend existing notions of communities as agents of regeneration (Brenton and Slawinski 2023; Cavalcanti Junqueira, Discua Cruz, and Gratton 2023; Lumpkin and Bacq 2019), by emphasizing the reciprocal role of place in motivating community formation and entrepreneurial action. Applying the framework outlined in Table 1, we expose the interplay between individual sense of place, community embeddedness and IE exemplified in different organizations (Table 7). Community embeddedness is activated through strong emotional and symbolic connections to place – such as memories of dominant firms, industrial legacies, and cultural figures – which create a vocational call to action. In turn, the shared ethic gravitates actors in a mutual embedding process (Wigren-Kristoferson et al., 2022), enabling new opportunities and possibilities for IE.

This paper addresses conceptual limitations of IE by analysing how it merges multiple dimensions of embeddedness – namely, how the individual senses of place harmonize with the interests of local communities and organizations. Thus far, we have been overly focused on what happens to place (H. M. Haugh 2022; Ryan et al. 2023) and in place (Brenton and Slawinski 2023; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015; Nordstrom, McKeever, and Anderson 2020), rather than because of place. In IE, place imbues actors with agency, calling them to engage with social and environmental challenges and/or opportunities, and to merge impact enterprises with the existing local infrastructure. In Turin, this merging of IE in place expanded into a coherent ecosystem (Roundy and Lyons 2022; Thompson, Purdy, and Ventresca 2018) (see Table 6). This paper thus contributes to conceptualizing IE as a dynamic, place-embedded phenomenon that links place-based identities and memories with forward-looking entrepreneurial action. In doing so, we account for the emotional, symbolic-historical, industrial and social resources needed to build an ecosystem for impact (Roundy, Brockman, and Bradshaw 2017; Stam and Welter 2021).

In our study, place emerges not simply as a contextual backdrop for IE, but as an active, relational infrastructure through which meaning and practice are co-created (Cresswell 2004). This extends the notion of community as the ‘nexus’ for social impact in entrepreneurship (Bacq, Hertel, and Lumpkin 2022) to show how communities become triggered because of their relation to place. This process stretched the boundaries of community, supported by the City and organizations like Turin Social Impact, exposing the possible avenues of experimentation with new ideas within and beyond the region (i.e. at the Italian or EU scale). Place provided entrepreneurial actors with new opportunities to honour history and regenerate place. Local images of impact entrepreneurs (i.e. the ‘social saints’) can be reinterpreted as moral and organizational catalysts for impact (Crawford, Coraiola, and Dacin 2022). What this meant was that individuals identified with past entrepreneurial ambitions for impact, reflecting a deeper calling and shared responsibility to place. We demand further attention to how actors’ senses of place shape the wider IE ecosystem, as well as influence available entrepreneurial resources (Garud and Karnøe 2003; Korsgaard, Müller, and Welter 2021). For example, in Turin we considered actors building on formal legacy institutions such as foundations to augment financial and social capital, honouring long-standing narratives of community development. While we cannot know whether they are satisfied with their efforts and how they feel about place as a consequence, the IE emerging in this case demonstrates how place-based values endure, but also evolve, through intergenerational commitments to making the place better (Cartel, Kibler, and Dacin 2022). These links stretch across levels (Table 7), evidencing the layered quality of IE as an embedded, interactive practice.

The implications for defining IE are two-fold. First, drawing on the geography literature, we underscore place as a social and symbolic resource under ongoing (re)construction (Gieryn 2000). Just as ‘places are where community persists’ (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016, 508), place connects communities of individuals with a vocation of place and a volition towards impact. Second, IE actors cannot be boxed neatly into existing typologies of social or sustainable

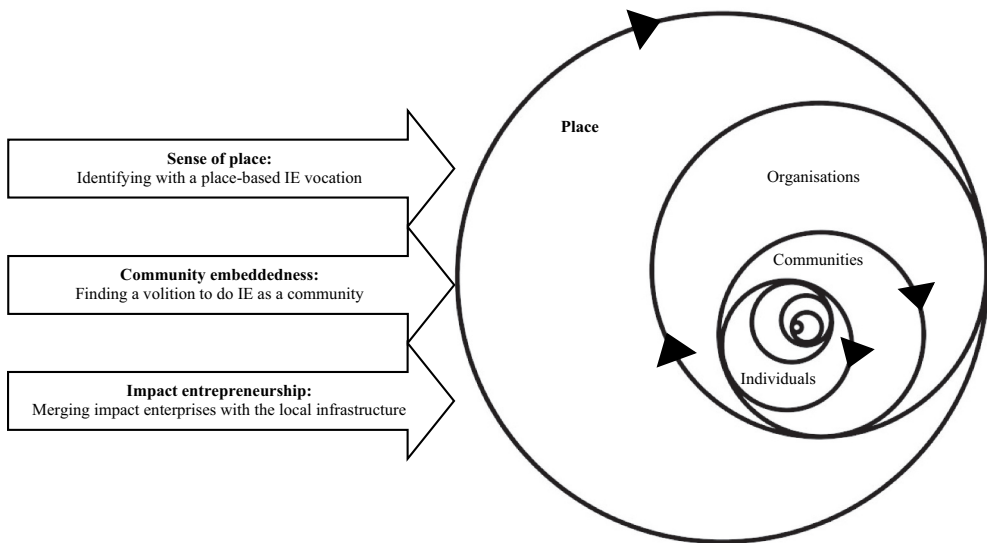


Figure 3. IE dynamics: merging place, community and IE in Turin.

entrepreneurs which differ in relation to local knowledge, opportunities and systems (Zahra et al., 2009); they are actors with challenge-specific, coalition building aims. Their sense of place is intrinsic to their sense of purpose. These findings are important for understanding how the ethics of place can rationalize relationships of mutuality to form and drive enterprising activity (Kibler, Kautonen, and Fink 2014; Kimmitt et al. 2023; McKeever, Jack, and Anderson 2015; Slitine, Chabaud, and Richez-Battesti 2024). They also justify resource allocation to entrepreneurial support beyond traditional venture capital silos (i.e. NGOs, non-profits and social enterprises, industry events, action research, citizen science research, policy experiments, impact incubators and networks, communities of practice, podcasts, social impact courses, to name a few). In capturing this experience, we saw IE being expressed as situated, socialized meanings and actions rooted in the culture (Fine 2010). Specifically, there was a collective affinity for change, which encouraged actors to heed a higher calling to serve place and community. Interestingly, the vocation seemed to coincide with trust that impact-related efforts would yield returns. These meanings and actions represent early crucibles of an emerging IE ecosystem.

Figure 3 illustrates how place, community embeddedness, and IE interact to connect individuals, communities, and organizations with the agency to solve problems. Modelled after the Fibonacci sequence – symbolizing continuous, proportionate growth – the spirals represent ongoing, mutual contributions of individuals, communities, and organizations in constructing IE in place. IE unifies entrepreneurial actors, resources, and practices to generate solutions to local challenges. The figure applies the framework from Table 1/Figure 1 to show how the dimensions of IE converge.

In Turin, we observed how individual senses of place and community embeddedness shaped patterns of thought and action aimed at creating social value. The emerging IE reflects both the personal experience of knowing and understanding a place – particularly its social impact legacies – and a vocational calling to build communities of place (Bacq et al., 2022). The IE sphere in Turin is a multilayered complex of individuals organizing to benefit the place, contributing to the city's evolution into an emergent, accessible, and evolving 'social impact hub'.

Community-rooted actors share a collective volition to drive IE. While historical legacies of social impact provide a foundation, communities must still create new pathways that serve the present needs of the place – justifying the dedication of actors to initiatives that address grand challenges. Turin's IE trajectory also shows that while sectors or firms may hold disproportionate influence over

the ecosystem (Audretsch and Fiedler 2023; Greve and Rao 2012), their continued relevance depends on aligning with the work and aspirations of individual actors.

6. Concluding remarks

Policymakers are increasingly interested in how IE can catalyse positive social and environmental impacts and stimulate regional development. This study shows that actors in Turin conceptualize IE not only as a means to address societal challenges, but as calling to regenerate place. Our findings suggest that actors relate to place through deep emotional, historical and ethical identifications, and that these identifications shape the formation of new alliances and organizational practices (Müller and Korsgaard 2018). Rather than viewing IE as a product of aggregated efforts ('e pluribus unum'), our findings illustrate how new economic models are forged through shared concern and care for place. Importantly, this form of entrepreneurship stresses how actors respond to this vocation at the community and organizational levels, extending what we know about the community-place interface in entrepreneurship. Turin's case exemplifies how new pathways can be carved out when local actors commit to building on history without being beholden to it. While the symbolic legacy of the 'social saints' remains a moral touchstone, new actors and organizations are needed to carry this vision forward – advancing inclusive models of community development to tackle complex challenges (Markman et al. 2019).

Through appreciating place, we have uncovered a deeper root for ongoing community and organizational activity – the vocational calling to pursue social impact. We call for future studies to interrogate alternative vocational pathways which originate in place, giving way to unique manifestations of embedded entrepreneurship (Burke, Conley, and Jack 2025; Redhead and Bika 2022). Longitudinal studies could emulate Thompson, Purdy, and Ventresca (2018) to investigate the congruence between the social impact sector and the wider ecosystem evolution (Colombelli, Paolucci, and Ughetto 2019; Spigel and Vinodrai, 2021). We also call for more work on the limits of individual agency in mobilizing IE in different places. Why do some actors succeed in enrolling broader communities in IE efforts while others do not? Turin's case reveals how social impact legacies can be deeply embedded in individuals' calling to build on an existing infrastructure of the third sector and supercharged by challenge-based policy prioritization. However, the transferability of such models remains uncertain. As this study shows, the convergence of place, community and IE requires both a cultural disposition and an evolving set of institutions to support it (Audretsch and Fiedler 2023; Greve and Rao 2012; Wadhvani et al. 2018).

At the individual level, we emphasize how impact-driven entrepreneurs as uniquely called to work on place-specific issues. This vocation extends understanding for how IE functions across multiple levels and dimensions. Despite the alignment of individual vocations with entrepreneurial communities and infrastructure, the influence of place on IE direction and legitimacy are subject to change. In some cases, legacy institutions could limit the emergence of alternative forms of entrepreneurship or overlook grassroots solutions. The inclusiveness of IE depends not only on good intentions but on the capacity to adapt and democratize ecosystem supports across stakeholders. Moreover, actors engaging in IE may not pursue venture creation but may demand other place-specific supports, goods and services outside the private sector to overcome obstacles (Kimmitt et al. 2023).

Turin's emerging IE ecosystem shows that beliefs about place can have enduring value and generative capabilities. Actors draw upon this value to move entrepreneurship in a particular direction, deepen collective purpose, and reimagine the regional trajectory. This case offers insight for other cities aiming to foster IE for place regeneration: cultural resonance, community embeddedness, and historical awareness for what needs to change. The study contributes to theory building on IE by positioning place not merely as context, but as the reason for engaging in IE and activating communities around explicitly social aims. Understanding the interplay of sense of place, embeddedness and IE enables scholars and practitioners to see how IE emerges because of place.

This study reveals that IE in Turin emerged in response to grand challenges such as social inequality and climate change, driven by a collective calling to honour the historical, ethical, and emotional values of place and community. These findings carry important implications for practising entrepreneurs, policymakers, and entrepreneurship support organizations aiming to stimulate IE. First, policy frameworks for regional development should consider how cultural and historical narratives – symbolized by figures such as the ‘social saints’ – shape entrepreneurial agency. Rather than imposing generic models of social impact tied to global issues, policymakers ought to recognize the distinct identities of local communities and organizations. By doing so, they can design initiatives that build on the unique character of the region: funding efforts that connect historical legacies with future-facing enterprise models, or supporting platforms that bring together actors around shared ethical orientations towards place. Second, aspiring entrepreneurs should seek to leverage their relationship to place to gain support from multiple stakeholders, especially those aligned with their specific business idea or grand challenge. Impact entrepreneurs need not conform to conventional startup founder profiles; they can instead work within organizations to accumulate resources across sectors. The case of Turin highlights the importance of meeting spaces (i.e. OGR Hub, Social Fare, and Piazza dei Mestieri) as sites for dialogue around social impact, reflection on past triumphs and tragedies, and recalibration of visions to achieve desired outcomes. Through such convening, practising entrepreneurs can explore ways to elevate their vocational motives tied to place. Amplifying these motivations can take the form of storytelling initiatives, values-based incubators, and cross-sectoral leadership development workshops. At the municipal or regional level, these sentiments and narratives should be echoed in participatory experimentation and formal action. For instance, by spawning initiatives such as the European Green Capital and Social Business City competitions, Turin has begun to brand itself as a city unified by community, culture, and an ethic of place. As the case of Turin shows, it is the convergence of historical awareness, community embeddedness, and shared responsibility that enables new economic and social models to emerge. In this context, place serves as both the language and catalyst of impact entrepreneurship.

Notes

1. Impacts refer to ‘any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society’ (Burdge and Vanclay 1996, 59).
2. A good example of this is the Municipal Resolution N. 29 of the City of Turin, declaring a commitment to net carbon neutrality by 2030 (www.comune.torino.it).
3. Italian foundations of this kind are actively integrating UN SDGs into their standard operating procedures, and Compagnia di San Paolo has narrowed its areas of expertise into the three categories of people, culture and planet, which focus more on capacities, communities and well-being as opposed to the more granulated categories that existed before: art, culture and heritage; philanthropy and territory; cultural innovation; social policies; research and health (Bersanetti, Candela, and Mulassano 2021). Foundation CRT now sponsors its own social impact campus, aiming to prepare well-rounded graduates of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.
4. Turin is one of the 100 climate neutral and smart cities by 2030, one of nine in Italy. Hence, the city is being rebranded as ‘Torino 2030 - Sustainable and Resilient’, aiming to be participatory, dynamic, liveable and just (City of Turin 2023). In 2017, Turin received 18 million euros in national level funding to catalyse urban regeneration in suburban areas. Scholars have recognized the Municipality of Turin for its City Lab, a policy instrument and platform supporting public and private engagement with innovative approaches to environmental and community sustainability (Cuomo, Lambiase, and Castagna 2021).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the journal editors and anonymous reviewers for their guidance throughout the paper development process. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the University of Turin, Department of

Management and Economics for the grant n. [46/2023], n. 415 which enabled our data collection. We would also like to thank the Mistra Centre for Sustainable Markets and the House of Innovation at the Stockholm School of Economics for supporting this research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Alshareef, S. 2022. "Does Location Matter? Unpacking the Dynamic Relationship Between the Spatial Context and Embeddedness in Women's Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (3–4): 294–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2047798>.
- Alvesson, M., and K. Sköldböck. 2017. *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Anderson, A. R., S. D. Dodd, and S. Jack. 2010. "Network Practices and Entrepreneurial Growth." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 26 (2): 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2010.01.005>.
- Anderson, A. R., and J. Gaddefors. 2016. "Entrepreneurship as a Community Phenomenon; Reconnecting Meanings and Place." *International Journal of Entrepreneurship & Small Business* 28 (4): 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2016.077576>.
- Anderson, A. R., L. Warren, and J. Bensemann. 2019. "Identity, Enactment, and Entrepreneurship Engagement in a Declining Place." *Journal of Small Business Management* 57 (4): 1559–1577. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12406>.
- Audretsch, D. B., and A. Fiedler. 2023. "Does the Entrepreneurial State Crowd Out Entrepreneurship?" *Small Business Economics* 60 (2): 573–589. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00604-x>.
- Bacq, S., C. Hertel, and G. T. Lumpkin. 2022. "Communities at the Nexus of Entrepreneurship and Societal Impact: A Cross-Disciplinary Literature Review." *Journal of Business Venturing* 37 (5): 106231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2022.106231>.
- Basit, T. 2003. "Manual or Electronic? The Role of Coding in Qualitative Data Analysis." *Educational Research* 45 (2): 143–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013188032000133548>.
- Battilana, J., and S. Dorado. 2010. "Building Sustainable Hybrid Organizations: The Case of Commercial Microfinance Organizations." *Academy of Management Journal* 53 (6): 1419–1440. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.57318391>.
- Battilana, J., B. Leca, and E. Boxenbaum. 2009. "2 How Actors Change Institutions: Towards a Theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship." *Academy of Management Annals* 3 (1): 65–107. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520903053598>.
- Bersanetti, F., F. Candela, and P. Mulassano. 2021. "Doing Philanthropy at the Time of the Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo." *The Foundation Review* 13 (4): 5. <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1587>.
- Brenton, J., and N. Slawinski. 2023. "Collaborating for Community Regeneration: Facilitating Partnerships in, Through, and for Place." *Journal of Business Ethics* 2022 (1): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2022.12123abstract>.
- Bürcher, S. 2017. "Regional Engagement of Locally Anchored Firms and Its Influence on Socio-Economic Development in Two Peripheral Regions Over Time." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 29 (7–8): 692–714. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1330903>.
- Burdge, R. J., and F. Vanclay. 1996. "Social Impact Assessment: A Contribution to the State-of-the-Art Series." *Impact Assessment* 14 (1): 59–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07349165.1996.9725886>.
- Burke, M. K., M. A. Conley, and S. L. Jack. 2025. "Neruda Through Copper-Coloured Glasses: The Role of Place Attachment in the Embeddedness of Chilean Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 37 (7–8): 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2025.2451364>.
- Burley, D., P. Jenkins, and B. Azcona. 2006. "Loss, Attachment, and Place: Land Loss and Community in Coastal Louisiana." In *Community and Ecology*, 21–42. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Cappellano, F., A. Rizzo, T. Makkonen, I. G. Anversa, and G. Cantafio. 2023. "Exploring Senses of Place and Belonging in the Finnish, Italian and US Craft Beer Industry: A Multiple Case Study." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 40 (1): 64–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2023.2187469>.
- Cartel, M., E. Kibler, and M. T. Dacin. 2022. "Unpacking 'Sense of Place' and 'Place-Making' in Organization Studies: A Toolkit for Place-Sensitive Research." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 58 (2): 350–363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00218863221090305>.
- Cavalcanti Junqueira, M. I., A. Discua Cruz, and P. C. Gratton. 2023. "Not by What We See: How Christian Religious Beliefs Influence Market and Community Logics in a Rural Context." *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 31 (5): 1176–1206. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-12-2022-3520>.
- City of Turin. 2022. "Application of Torino for the European Green Capital Award." <http://www.comune.torino.it/torinosostenibile/documenti/200612_EGCA_2022_singola>.

- City of Turin. 2023. Turin 2030: Sustainable and Resilient. Municipal Resolution N. 29 of the City of Turin.
- City of Turin & Turin Chamber of Commerce. 2024. *Piano metropolitano per l'economia sociale di Torino 2030*. Torino Social Impact. https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/wpcontent/uploads/2025/06/2030_piano_metropolitano_economia_sociale_torino.
- Colombelli, A., E. Paolucci, and E. Ughetto. 2019. "Hierarchical and Relational Governance and the Life Cycle of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Small Business Economics* 52 (2): 505–521. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-017-9957-4>.
- Corazza, L. 2018. "The Process of Social Accounting and Reporting at University of Torino: Main Challenges and Managerial Implications." *World Review of Entrepreneurship Management and Sustainable Development* 14 (1–2): 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.1504/WREMSD.2018.089073>.
- Corazza, L., and M. Cisi. 2017. "Stakeholder Definition in a Network Context: The Case of Piazza dei Mestieri." In *Stakeholder Engagement: Clinical Research Cases*, 31–62. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Crawford, B., D. M. Coraiola, and M. T. Dacin. 2022. "Painful Memories as Mnemonic Resources: Grand Canyon Dories and the Protection of Place." *Strategic Organization* 20 (1): 51–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127020981353>.
- Cresswell, T. 2004. *Defining Place. Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Ltd.
- Cresswell, T. 2014. *Place: An Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cuomo, F., N. Lambiase, and A. Castagna. 2021. "Living Lab on Sharing and Circular Economy: The Case of Turin." *Health Informatics Journal* 27 (1): 1460458220987278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1460458220987278>.
- Davico, L., G. Garnero, and P. Guerreschi. 2016. "Immagini del Cambiamento: Un Progetto per Documentare la Torino che Cambia." In *Atti Della XX Conferenza Nazionale ASITA*, edited by Edizioni del Capricorno, 257–264. Torino: ASITA.
- Dees, J. G. 1998. "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship." *Harvard Business Review* 76 (1): 54–67. October.
- Doh, J. P., P. Tashman, and M. H. Benischke. 2019. "Adapting to Grand Environmental Challenges Through Collective Entrepreneurship." *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 33 (4): 450–468. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0056>.
- Fine, G. A. 2010. "The Sociology of the Local: Action and Its Publics." *Sociological Theory* 28 (4): 355–376. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2010.01380.x>.
- Gartner, W. B., and S. Birley. 2002. "Introduction to the Special Issue on Qualitative Methods in Entrepreneurship Research." *Journal of Business Venturing* 17 (5): 387–395. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(01\)00077-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(01)00077-5).
- Gartner, W. B., M. Nordqvist, R. Suddaby, and J. L. Schultz. 2025. "Fiction and the Entrepreneurial Imagination." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 1–15.
- Garud, R., and P. Karnøe. 2003. "Bricolage Versus Breakthrough: Distributed and Embedded Agency in Technology Entrepreneurship." *Research Policy* 32 (2): 277–300. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333\(02\)00100-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333(02)00100-2).
- Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- George, G., J. Howard-Grenville, A. Joshi, and L. Tihanyi. 2016. "Understanding and Tackling Societal Grand Challenges through Management Research." *Academy of Management Journal* 59 (6): 1880–1895. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.4007>.
- Gherardi, S. 2023. "The Fluid Affective Space of Organizational Practices." *Qualitative Research in Organizations & Management: An International Journal* 18 (5): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-07-2022-2368>.
- Gieryn, T. F. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (1): 463–496. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.463>.
- Greve, H. R., and H. Rao. 2012. "Echoes of the Past: Organizational Foundings as Sources of an Institutional Legacy of Mutualism." *The American Journal of Sociology* 118 (3): 635–675. <https://doi.org/10.1086/667721>.
- Guthey, G. T., G. Whiteman, and M. Elmes. 2014. "Place and Sense of Place: Implications for Organizational Studies of Sustainability." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 23 (3): 254–265.
- Harima, A. 2022. "Theorizing Disembedding and Re-Embedding: Resource Mobilization in Refugee Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (3–4): 269–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2047799>.
- Harvey, D. 1990. "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination1." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80 (3): 418–434. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1990.tb00305.x>.
- Haugh, H. M. 2022. "Changing Places: The Generative Effects of Community Embeddedness in Place." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (7–8): 542–566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2071998>.
- Hess, M. 2004. "'Spatial' Relationships? Towards a Reconceptualization of Embeddedness." *Progress in Human Geography* 28 (2): 165–186. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132504ph479oa>.
- Italian Chamber of Commerce. 2023. Italian Startup Act, Pursuant to Law 221/2012.
- Jack, S. L., and A. R. Anderson. 2002. "The Effects of Embeddedness on the Entrepreneurial Process." *Journal of Business Venturing* 17 (5): 467–487. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(01\)00076-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(01)00076-3).
- Johannisson, B., and A. Nilsson. 1989. "Community Entrepreneurs: Networking for Local Development." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 1 (1): 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985628900000002>.
- Johnstone, H., and D. Lionais. 2004. "Depleted Communities and Community Business Entrepreneurship: Revaluing Space through Place." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 16 (3): 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0898562042000197117>.

- Jones, J., J. G. York, S. Vedula, M. Conger, and M. Lenox. 2019. "The Collective Construction of Green Building: Industry Transition Toward Environmentally Beneficial Practices." *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 33 (4): 425–449. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0031>.
- Kent, D., and M. T. Dacin. 2013. "Bankers at the Gate: Microfinance and the High Cost of Borrowed Logics." *Journal of Business Venturing* 28 (6): 759–773. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.03.002>.
- Kibler, E., M. Fink, R. Lang, and P. Muñoz. 2015. "Place Attachment and Social Legitimacy: Revisiting the Sustainable Entrepreneurship Journey." *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 3:24–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2015.04.001>.
- Kibler, E., T. Kautonen, and M. Fink. 2014. "Regional Social Legitimacy of Entrepreneurship: Implications for Entrepreneurial Intention and Start-Up Behaviour." *Regional Studies* 48 (6): 995–1015. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2013.851373>.
- Kimmitt, J., E. Kibler, H. Schildt, and P. Oinas. 2023. "Place in Entrepreneurial Storytelling: A Study of Cultural Entrepreneurship in a Deprived Context." *Journal of Management Studies* 61 (3): 1036–1073. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12912>.
- Kloosterman, R. 2000. "Immigrant Entrepreneurship and the Institutional Context: A Theoretical Exploration." In *Immigrant Businesses: The Economic, Political and Social Environment*, 90–106. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Korsgaard, S., S. Müller, and H. W. Tanvig. 2015. "Rural Entrepreneurship or Entrepreneurship in the Rural—Between Place and Space." *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research* 21 (1): 5–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-11-2013-0205>.
- Korsgaard, S., S. Müller, and F. Welter. 2021. "It's Right Nearby: How Entrepreneurs Use Spatial Bricolage to Overcome Resource Constraints." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 33 (1–2): 147–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2020.1855479>.
- Korsgaard, S., C. Wigren-Kristoferson, E. Brundin, K. Hellerstedt, G. A. Alsos, and J. Grande. 2022. "Entrepreneurship and Embeddedness: Process, Context and Theoretical Foundations." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (3–4): 210–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2055152>.
- Lancione, M. 2014. "Entanglements of Faith: Discourses, Practices of Care and Homeless People in an Italian City of Saints." *Urban Studies* 51 (14): 3062–3078. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013514620>.
- Lang, R., M. Fink, and E. Kibler. 2014. "Understanding Place-Based Entrepreneurship in Rural Central Europe: A Comparative Institutional Analysis." *International Small Business Journal* 32 (2): 204–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242613488614>.
- Loor, A. C. D., T. W. Moss, and S. Han. 2023. "Rural and Urban Place Renewal in Cross-Sector Partnerships." *Journal of Business Ethics* 184 (4): 793–812. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05366-4>.
- Lounsbury, M. 2008. "Institutional Rationality and Practice Variation: New Directions in the Institutional Analysis of Practice." *Accounting, Organizations & Society* 33 (4–5): 349–361. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aos.2007.04.001>.
- Lucas, D. S., and C. S. Fuller. 2017. "Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive, and Destructive—Relative to What?" *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 7:45–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2017.03.001>.
- Lumpkin, G. T., and S. Bacq. 2019. "Civic Wealth Creation: A New View of Stakeholder Engagement and Societal Impact." *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 33 (4): 383–404. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0060>.
- Lumpkin, G. T., and S. Bacq. 2022. "Family Business, Community Embeddedness, and Civic Wealth Creation." *Journal of Family Business Strategy* 13 (2): 100469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2021.100469>.
- Maahsen-Milan, A., L. Orestano, and A. Magnaghi. 2012. 'Social City Grounds' Hybrid Re-Generation in Social Innovation Processes [experiences and experimentations in Turin].
- Mair, J., and C. Seelos. 2021. "Organizations, Social Problems, and System Change: Invigorating the Third Mandate of Organizational Research." *Organization Theory* 2 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877211054858>.
- Malecki, E. J. 2018. "Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Geography Compass* 12 (3): e12359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12359>.
- Markman, G. D., M. Russo, G. T. Lumpkin, P. D. Jennings, and J. Mair. 2016. "Entrepreneurship as a Platform for Pursuing Multiple Goals: A Special Issue on Sustainability, Ethics, and Entrepreneurship." *Journal of Management Studies* 53 (5): 673–694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12214>.
- Markman, G. D., T. L. Waldron, P. T. Gianiodis, and M. I. Espina. 2019. "E Pluribus Unum: Impact Entrepreneurship as a Solution to Grand Challenges." *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 33 (4): 371–382. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2019.0130>.
- Massey, D. 1994. *Space, Place, and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, D., and P. Jess. 1995. "A Place in the World?" *Places, Cultures and Globalization*: 45–85.
- McKeever, E., S. Jack, and A. Anderson. 2015. "Embedded Entrepreneurship in the Creative Re-Construction of Place." *Journal of Business Venturing* 30 (1): 50–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.002>.
- Miles, M. B., and A. M. Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. London: Sage.
- Müller, S., and S. Korsgaard. 2018. "Resources and Bridging: The Role of Spatial Context in Rural Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 30 (1–2): 224–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1402092>.
- Muñoz, P., and J. Kimmitt. 2019. "Rural Entrepreneurship in Place: An Integrated Framework." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 31 (9–10): 842–873. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2019.1609593>.

- Nordstrom, O., E. McKeever, and A. Anderson. 2020. "Piety and Profit; the Moral Embeddedness of an Enterprising Community." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 32 (9–10): 783–804. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2020.1781935>.
- Ostrom, E. 2009. "A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems." *Science* 325 (5939): 419–422. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1172133>.
- Peredo, A. M., and T. T. Chrisman. 2006. "Toward a Theory of Community-Based Enterprise." *Academy of Management Review* 31 (2): 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.20208683>.
- Polanyi, M. 1968. "Logic and Psychology." *The American Psychologist* 23 (1): 27. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0037692>.
- Pugh, R., and I. Andersson. 2024. "Personality and Place as Resources for Regional Development: Alfred Nobel's Karlskoga." *Regional Studies* 58 (10): 1874–1885. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2023.2250813>.
- Pushkarskaya, H., M. W. P. Fortunato, N. Breazeale, and D. R. Just. 2021. "Enhancing Measures of ESE to Incorporate Aspects of Place: Personal Reputation and Place-Based Social Legitimacy." *Journal of Business Venturing* 36 (3): 106004. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2020.106004>.
- Putnam, R. D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Redhead, G., and Z. Bika. 2022. "'Adopting Place': How an Entrepreneurial Sense of Belonging Can Help Revitalise Communities." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (3–4): 222–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2049375>.
- Reuters. 2024. "As Fiat Stalls, Italy's Turin Struggles to Stave Off Decline." Accessed electronically. <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/flat-stalls-italys-turin-struggles-stave-off-decline>.
- Roundy, P. T., B. K. Brockman, and M. Bradshaw. 2017. "The Resilience of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 8:99–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2017.08.002>.
- Roundy, P. T., and T. S. Lyons. 2022. "Humility in Social Entrepreneurs and Its Implications for Social Impact Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 17:e00296. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2021.e00296>.
- Ryan, A., S. Geiger, H. Haugh, O. Branzei, B. L. Gray, T. B. Lawrence, E. McKeever, A. Anderson, S. Jack, and E. McKeever. 2023. "Emplaced Partnerships and the Ethics of Care, Recognition and Resilience." *Journal of Business Ethics* 184 (4): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05368-2>.
- Sarasvathy, S. D., and A. Ramesh. 2019. "An Effectual Model of Collective Action for Addressing Sustainability Challenges." *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 33 (4): 405–424. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0090>.
- Sforzi, J., and L. A. Colombo. 2020. "New Opportunities for Work Integration in Rural Areas: The Social Flavour of Craft Beer in Italy." *Sustainability* 12 (16): 6351. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12166351>.
- Shrivastava, P. 1995. "The Role of Corporations in Achieving Ecological Sustainability." *Academy of Management Review* 20 (4): 936–960. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258961>.
- Shrivastava, P., and J. J. Kennelly. 2013. "Sustainability and Place-Based Enterprise." *Organization & Environment* 26 (1): 83–101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026612475068>.
- Silverman, D. 2021. *Doing Qualitative Research*. 6th ed. London: SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.9781529769012>.
- Sjölander-Lindqvist, A., W. Skoglund, and D. Laven. 2019. "Craft Beer: Building Social Terroir Through Connecting People, Place and Business." *Journal of Place Management and Development* 13 (2): 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPM-01-2019-0001>.
- Skoglund, W., and A. Sjölander-Lindqvist. 2020. "Caring for Community Through Crafted Beer: Perspectives from Northern Sweden." In *Agritourism, Wine Tourism, and Craft Beer Tourism*, edited by M. G. Pezzi, A. Faggian, and N. Reid, 208–225. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Slawinski, N., B. Winsor, D. Mazutis, J. W. Schouten, and W. K. Smith. 2021. "Managing the Paradoxes of Place to Foster Regeneration." *Organization & Environment* 34 (4): 595–618. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026619837131>.
- Slitine, R., D. Chabaud, and N. Richez-Battesti. 2024. "Beyond Social Enterprise: Bringing the Territory at the Core." *Journal of Business Research* 176:114577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114577>.
- Spigel, B., and T. Vinodrai. 2021. "Meeting its Waterloo? Recycling in entrepreneurial ecosystems after anchor firm collapse." In *The Dynamics of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems*, 54–75. Routledge.
- Stam, E., and F. Welter. 2021. "Geographical Contexts of Entrepreneurship: Spaces, Places and Entrepreneurial Agency." In *The Psychology of Entrepreneurship*, edited by M. M. Gielnik, M. S. Cardon, and M. Frese, 263–281. New York: Routledge.
- Steyaert, C., and R. Bouwen. 2019. "Telling Stories of Entrepreneurship-Towards a Narrative-Contextual Epistemology for Entrepreneurial Studies." In *Entrepreneurship and SME Research*, edited by R. Donckels and A. Miettinen, 47–62. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, T. A., J. M. Purdy, and M. J. Ventresca. 2018. "How Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Take Form: Evidence from Social Impact Initiatives in Seattle." *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 12 (1): 96–116. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1285>.
- Torchia, D., J. Fresta, L. Corazza, and C. Certomà. 2022. "New European Bauhaus for a Circular Economy and Waste Management: The Lived Experience of a Community Container Garden at the University of Turin." *Sustainability* 15 (2): 914. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15020914>.
- Tuan, Y. F. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Tuan, Y. F. 1975. "Place: An experiential perspective." *Geographical Review* 151–165.
- Turco, C. J. 2023. *Harvard Square: A Love Story*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Turin Social Impact. 2022. Accessed electronically at <https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/en/who-we-are/>.
- Van Maanen, J. 1979. "Reclaiming Qualitative Methods for Organizational Research: A Preface." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24 (4): 520–526. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392358>.
- Wadhvani, R. D., R. Suddaby, M. Mordhorst, and A. Popp. 2018. "History as Organizing: Uses of the Past in Organization Studies." *Organization Studies* 39 (12): 1663–1683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618814867>.
- Whiteman, G., and W. H. Cooper. 2000. "Ecological Embeddedness." *Academy of Management Journal* 43 (6): 1265–1282. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1556349>.
- Whitford, J., and A. Enrietti. 2005. "Surviving the Fall of a King: The Regional Institutional Implications of Crisis at Fiat Auto." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29 (4): 771–795. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00621.x>.
- Wigren-Kristoferson, C., E. Brundin, K. Hellerstedt, A. Stevenson, and M. Aggestam. 2022. "Rethinking Embeddedness: A Review and Research Agenda." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (1–2): 32–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2021.2021298>.
- Williams, A., and G. Whiteman. 2021. "A Call for Deep Engagement for Impact: Addressing the Planetary Emergency." *Strategic Organization* 19 (3): 526–537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14761270211011703>.
- Wolcott, H. F. 1990. "Making a Study "More Ethnographic"." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19 (1): 44–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124190019001003>.
- Yamamura, S., P. Lassalle, and E. Shaw. 2022. "Intersecting Where? The Multi-Scalar Contextual Embeddedness of Intersectional Entrepreneurs." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 34 (9–10): 828–851. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2120086>.
- Zahra, S. A., E. Gedajlovic, D. O. Neubaum, and J. M. Shulman. 2009. "A Typology of Social Entrepreneurs: Motives, Search Processes and Ethical Challenges." *Journal of Business Venturing* 24 (5): 519–532.