



Entrepreneurial Ghosting at the Base of the Pyramid

Three Articles on the Evolution of Microentrepreneur – Multinational Enterprise
(MNE) Relationships, and the Role of Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) in
Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs)

by

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i) Declaration

I, **Afsa Makrah Mukasa**, declare that this Thesis is the result of my original research, that has been composed by myself and has not previously been submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

“Entrepreneurial Ghosting at the Base of the Pyramid:

Three Articles on the Evolution of Microentrepreneur – Multinational Enterprise (MNE) Relationships, and the Role of Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs)”

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I confirm that this research has been wholly or mostly done during my recent candidature on the Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) course. Early versions of the study and some few aspects of the data may appear in journals, conference proceedings, on the Strathclyde Pure portal, or online.

Signed: Afsa Makrah Mukasa (AFHEA)

Date: 28th September 2025

Annex to the Declaration: aspects of the research that may have been shared along the journey.

- a) Mukasa et al., 2022. Reexamining the Central Tenets of BoP Models as a Dimension of Informality. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2022, No. 1, p. 15559). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
- b) Best et al., 2024. Reflections and perspectives on accessing informal finance and social capital. *Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies*, 14(1), pp.1-19.
- c) Eze et al., 2021. Compassionate Entrepreneurship: what is new, what is different and why it matters. In *British Academy of Management Conference*.

The 3 citations above relate to: a) an earlier version of Paper 2, an article at the heart of this thesis, that was presented at the annual Academy of Management (AoM) conference held in Seattle in August 2022 under the theme “Creating A better World Together”. The same was accepted for the annual Academy of International Business (AIB) conference in Seoul, South Korea, in July 2024. b) a recently published paper within a small team setting, for which I contributed raw data and some theory alongside others, and c) a conceptual paper developed through collaborative efforts, where my contribution was to review literature and collectively write the article alongside others. Some content from these articles might overlap herein and/or appear online.

An earlier version of Paper 1 was presented at the EURAM annual conference in June 2021, organized by University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada under the theme “Reshaping Capitalism for a Better World”. Paper 2 was submitted to Entrepreneurship and Regional Development (ERD) this year under the title Entrepreneurial Ghosting. As well, an earlier version of Paper 3 was presented at Innodays conference in Casablanca, Morocco, in November 2022, as organized in conjunction with ADALIA Institute. The developed versions are targeted for suitable journals including Small Business Economics (SBE) or Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (SEJ).

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Mrs. Afsa Makrah Mukasa Matsuku (AFHEA)

iii) ABSTRACT

Although Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) claim to support growth in the ‘Global South’, their impact on development in an AI revolution remains uncertain; characterized by power imbalances, inequality, exploitation, and limited knowledge spillovers. Despite these concerns, research has not adequately explored interactions between MNEs and local SMEs, as only a handful of studies explore what transpires between formal and informal actors (see e.g. Adom et al., 2023; Shantz et al., 2013; 2018). There are especially large gaps in understanding of how microentrepreneurs, i.e. small businesses with less than 9 employees, exchange resources with MNEs. As such, researchers call for evidence on *how MNEs build cross-sector partnerships* with locals (Dembek et al., 2019).

In response, this thesis explores central models targeted for growth at the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) i.e. a proportion of our global population *that live on less than USD 3,000 per person per year* (D. Prahalad, 2019; London et al., 2020; Rosca et al., 2022), through the lens of informality (Marti & Mair, 2009; Williams et al., 2016). Entrepreneurship at the BoP is mostly driven by necessity, and largely characterized by informality i.e. *unregistered, legitimate socio-economic activity* (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Webb et al., 2013) that is legally unrecognized (IMF, 2018). **Hence the central research question:** How do interactions between local microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or hinder entrepreneurial growth in highly informal settings?

The research is organised into three core studies, using an interpretive qualitative design. The data is analyzed by induction following Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013; Grodal et al., 2021). The first paper is a review of BoP literature at the intersection of entrepreneurship and informality, from a sample that spans over 20 years; revealing inconsistencies about MNE presence and entrepreneurial growth, with little attention paid to microentrepreneurs. The second paper explores interactions between microentrepreneurs in Uganda and MNEs in sub-Saharan Africa, revealing dysfunctional relationships such as a perpetual lack of apprenticeships. Subsequently, the third is an in-depth case study of a women-led Open System Intermediaries (OSI), a non-profit that bridges formal & informal actors, showcasing its role in influencing growth; by skilling entrepreneurs and broadening local networks, e.g. via regional pitching competitions. In total, 83 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 55 respondents i.e. 9 representatives of regional MNEs, 21 of microenterprises, 13 of private sector development organisations, and 12 role models in the OSI.

Overall, these studies show that divergence between opportunity-based motives of MNEs and needs-based expectations of microentrepreneurs invites non-action or lag between action and response by MNEs; which exacerbates inequitable or non-reciprocal exchange of resources, normative content, or knowledge. Thus, compounding opportunity loss, **marked by MNE exits**. Owing to institutional inefficiencies, MNEs expand into rapidly widening informal markets, recruit graduates, and lend to SMEs in narrowing formal sectors. Thus, curtailing intended gains. Meanwhile, even the few semi-formal microentrepreneurs with MNE partnerships remain largely underserved, legally unprotected, with no equitable or substantial benefits from these relationships. In contrast, OSIs bridge such ecosystem actors by addressing some of the highlighted challenges and expanding local entrepreneurial networks across the region: to accelerate and replicate success.

This thesis makes four key theoretical contributions. First, while Prashantham et al. (2018) and Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2012; 2020) study MNEs and start-ups or SMEs in emerging markets, I shed new light on the dynamics between MNEs and informal microentrepreneurs at the BoP. Second, by building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), I spotlight withheld, delayed, meaningless, and/or non-reciprocal exchange between actors, and term this observed adverse relationship dimension as **Entrepreneurial Ghosting**. Nuances in countries with similar MNE presence (e.g. Nigeria and South Africa) yet contrasting rates of informality (over 80% and 36% respectively) and antithetically varying local entrepreneurial vibrance are also discussed. Third, contrary to London et al. (2013)'s claim that MNEs contribute towards poverty alleviation, my research finds that although these models spur innovation, owing to *weak centrality* that perpetuates locals' *lower locus of control* in dysfunctional relationships; they negate would-be growth and instigate rampant failure instead, evidenced by them citing poor cost-to-income ratios. Showcasing an OSI (Dutt et al., 2016) that aims at increasing locus of control in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs), I derive a typology of role formation towards inclusive growth.

The study recommends that market-facing OSI models be used by practitioners and policy makers to strengthen microentrepreneur-MNE relationships, or as alternatives to MNEs.

Key words: Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs), Microentrepreneurs, Multinational Enterprise (MNE) Exits, Open System Intermediaries (OSIs), Sub-Saharan, Uganda

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vii) List of Common Abbreviations

BB –	Boda boda (motorcycle taxi)
BOP –	Base of the Pyramid
BPO -	Business Process Outsourcing
BPW –	Business and Professional Women
CA -	Cake Baker
CH -	Clothes and/or Home Ware Seller
CW -	Car Wash
DK -	Duuka or Dhukas (small retail shops)
EE –	Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
IEN –	Informal Entrepreneurial Networks
JUM -	Jumia
MM –	Mobile Money Agent
MNE –	Multinational Enterprise
MV –	Market Vendor
MUK –	Makerere University Kampala
NSSF –	National Social Security Fund
OSI –	Open System Intermediary
PA -	Painter
PSFU –	Private Sector Foundation Uganda
RRBM –	Responsible Research in Business Management
RRI –	Responsible Research and Innovation
SC -	Selfcare & Salon
SOK –	SokoWatch
SOL –	Solar Now
SSA –	Sub-Saharan Africa
TMEA -	Trademark East Africa
TSI –	Trade Support Institution
UBOS –	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
URA -	Uganda Revenue Authority

1.0 CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1 to 10: is the global population growth ratio from estimates of 1 billion in 1800, that took 150 years to double by 1950, further projected to reach 10 billion by 2050 (UNFPA, 2022). These rapid growth trends are dominated by the largest continents, i.e. Asia and Africa, signaling unparalleled investment opportunities that are also marked by an anticipated spike in (urban) informality. Particularly, by 2050, after China's largest albeit declining population, India will top the charts, followed by Africa with over 2.5 billion people mostly in sub-Saharan, led by Nigeria and Ethiopia.

On one hand, a commonality in these high population growth areas is the prevalence of informality among local or indigenous entities (Mair & Marti, 2009; Webb et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2016), who are the backbone of society (GEM, 2016/2017). On the other, informality is a major characteristic of "Base of the Pyramid" (BoP) communities (Prahalad, 2002); carrying enough weight to make or break those economies (International Labor Organization/ILO, 2002 & 2016).

Babitt et al. (2015, Pg. 164) describe informality as a "*heterogeneous group of activities and employment relationships that share one common characteristic – the lack of legal recognition, regulation, or protection*" (cited from Lloyd-Evans 2008, Pg. 1885).

The BoP population refers to circa 3 or 4 billion who live below USD 3,000 annually per person (London et al., 2014), previously USD 1,500 (Prahalad & Hart, 2004).

BoP populations are mapped to 110 countries in Africa's resource-rich albeit less developed nations, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean: 56% attributed to sub-Saharan and 25% to India. It is estimated that *736 million* live in abject poverty, on less than \$2.15 a day (D. Prahalad, 2019). Moreover, the combination of a pandemic and the resultant displacements *may have for the first time since 1998, left another 500 million destitute* (World Bank, 2020; 2023).

BoP theory evolves from market penetration or absorption (Prahalad & Hart, 2002), comprising a range of topics, e.g. poverty (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Khalid & Seuring, 2019), ethics, customer habits, and recently informality (Adom et al., 2018; 2023; Webb et al., 2013; 2020; Williams et al., 2016), with an increasing gender perspective (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Rosca et al., 2019; 2022). Nonetheless, this literature is still dominated by

the widely recognized *BoP market-based models* (Prahalad & Hart 2002; Simanis & Hart, 2008); under a globalization agenda, rooted in the notion of inclusive capitalism, arguing for simultaneous pursuit of profit and social welfare through the creation of markets (London et al., 2014; 2020).

BoP market-based models are *business models developed by, or in partnership with, private sector; specifically designed to target the poorest segments of society as consumers, producers, and entrepreneurs* while preserving social and cultural norms (London & Hart, 2010, Pg. 2). Particularly in the process of internationalization, Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) enter new markets to sell products and services (Bruton et al., 2013; Gartner, 1985; Rosca et al., 2020; 2021). Where this proves profitable, e.g. in highly populous conditions, they aim to expand market share; regardless of whether or not they recognize diverse and often multidimensional variables concerning the locals (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Hill & Mudambi, 2010).

MNEs are mostly privately owned or publicly-backed entities who *operate across/beyond borders, usually as mass employers, with a footprint in several countries* (Prashantham & Kumar, 2019; Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). While they partner with others in the private sector such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); this study explores what transpires between them and the majority of private sector actors at the BoP i.e. microentrepreneurs. *Microentrepreneurs are often priorly unemployed* (although employable) actors that *averagely employ up to 9 others* (Greenbank, 2000), accounting for over 80% of employment in the sub-Sahara (GEM, 2016/2017). This signals their importance, and in turn, the relevance of their positioning in the development agenda at the BoP.

While both actors' definitions spring from resource-based metrics e.g. number of employees, entity size, capabilities, constraints, or even technological advancement; a commonality is that both play a key role in Global Value Chains (GVCs), *the process by which products move, across borders, to reach final consumers* (Bruton et al., 2013). That symbolizes their importance in the quest for socio-economic development. However, they exhibit key differences. While microentrepreneurs at the BoP engage out of necessity, mostly in "island" activities cut off from wider (inter)national engagement (Shantz et al., 2018), MNEs are opportunity driven (Prashantham et al., 2012; 2018). They also adopt different entrepreneurial processes e.g. marketing by word of mouth as opposed to costly fliers or (social) media advertising (Adom et al., 2023) and their degree of heterogeneity or homogeneity is a major distinguishing factor (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019; Rosca et al., 2019).

At inception (BoP 1.0) market-based models largely “discovered the poor” as an *opportunity and demand base* from which MNEs can gain as they deliver much-needed public goods and services (Prahalad & Hart, 2004). The models’ central proposition is premised upon *mutuality and multiplicity* i.e. that MNEs generate shared opportunity or value, using profits from delivery of goods and services to derive growth and development at the BoP. Although drawn to numerous conversations in BoP theory, some dominant patterns bubble to the surface. Key among striking arguments is about the age-old poverty alleviation puzzle (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). What more? The models ride on *formulating partnerships* (BoP 2.0) to gain local knowledge and thereby effectively navigate the market (London & Hart, 2010; London et al., 2014; 2020). Alongside such noble suggestions is an assumption that *MNE-induced formalization begets growth* (IMF, 2018).

However, MNE-led BoP theory generates wide debate. Critics cite poor MNE *practices* e.g. dumping low standard goods, and warn against *romanticizing the poor* (Karnani, 2007; 2009). Others document dangers associated with *crowding out* locals such as microentrepreneurs, e.g. in Brazil (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010), as well as numerous *anti-competitive practices* from the West (Colombo & Shafi, 2016; Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). As such, scholars seek a *creation view* of the poor as *suppliers* or *co-venturing partners* (Ansari et al., 2012; Arora & Romijn, 2012), noting that informality persists as entrepreneurs *avoid* or *cannot afford* to pay tax (Kistruck et al., 2015).

Newer research in BoP 3.0 debates increasing intellectual exchange through knowledge transfers (Hill & Mudambi, 2010) or inducing heterogeneity (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019) as important catalysts, amidst increasingly homogenous technology-based innovations (Fu et al., 2023). Even more recent BoP 4.0 studies note a *value commitment dilemma* (Borchardt et al., 2020; Brix-Asala et al., 2021) or negative growth implications when MNEs co-opt local models (Decker & Dankwah, 2023). Propping such theoretical notions against the global population growth trajectory (UNFPA, 2022) provides fertile ground for the rest of this study.

1.1 Identified Research Gap

Notable gaps exist within BoP literature. First, most studies focus on marketing-to-the-poor theories, and do not emphasize enough that most BoP communities live in otherwise resource-rich nations. Second, most literature is based on secondary data, from MNEs point of view, attributed to less informal or “non-BoP” settings; with over 37% of the reviewed sample pertaining to USA.

Having such studies mostly attributed to more developed contexts, with a few from emerging worlds, leaves a significant gap at the so-called BoP as a concept, community, or geographical setting. Moreover, even research which borrows from or lends to Eastern European and/or Asian contexts anecdotally highlights issues in achieving consensus (see e.g. Chandy et al., 2018; Rosca et al., 2019; 2022) whereby a distinction between BoP, informality, Global “South” or “North” remains increasingly unclear (also Mohanty et al., 2019; IMF, 2018; or UNFPA, 2022).

But that is not all; more striking, peculiar or contrasting trends exist. The BoP population pyramid (Prahalad & Hart, 2004) remains inverse to MNE-driven advances in technology and local growth. Yet a few studies explore advantages or dangers that small firms, e.g. tech start-ups face when they partner with large ones (see e.g. Prashantham et al., 2018; Rosca et al., 2019; 2022). Only a handful of explorations delve into the realm of *informal and formal actors* (e.g. Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Shantz et al., 2018; 2020; Webb et al., 2020). For instance, 60% of sub-Saharan informal sector is represented by women, bearing on the gender discourse (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Rosca et al., 2020); yet even less studies explore *how* MNEs *interact* or *exchange resources*, with actors in this context (see e.g. Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Granovetter, 1975). Thus, to increase appreciation by drawing a clearer link between theory and practice, more research from recognized BoP hubs is needed (see e.g. Barnerjee & Duflo, 2011; Nsereko et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2016).

Particularly, informality is dependent upon formal actors (Adom et al., 2023; Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Shantz et al., 2020) more so where irregularities in monitoring and assessing effectiveness of BoP models are further exacerbated by institutional voids (Marti & Mair, 2009; Yunus, 2017). While some suggest that MNE *partnerships* which go beyond consumer relationships by treating locals as suppliers or entrepreneurs (BoP 3.0) may be linked to lower rates of informality, e.g. in Southern Africa at 36% or Ghana at over 50% (Adom et al., 2018; Lowe et al., 2018); others note that sale-to-the-poor-at-all-cost unidirectional fortune finding (BoP1.0) may yield higher levels of informality e.g. in Central African Republic at over 79% and East Africa at 77% (IMF, 2018).

However, given oil-producing Nigeria’s high MNE presence, high poverty, or informality rate of over 80%, BoP literature paints an unfinished picture. South Africa’s low informality (under 36%) and low local entrepreneurial spirit also make the link between MNE presence and growth unclear. Hence a need to show *how MNEs formulate cross-sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019; 2020).

Therefore, this doctoral thesis reexamines the main pillars of BoP theory (London & Hart, 2010) as a dimension of informality (Adom et al., 2018; 2023; Mair & Marti, 2009; Webb et al., 2013).

The central research question is: How do interactions or alliances between local (urban) microentrepreneurs and (regional) MNEs influence (support or deter) entrepreneurial growth? To address this question, the overarching theoretical framing is to explore what transpires between (urban) local microentrepreneurs as actors who represent a majority at the BoP, and (regional) MNEs as a dominant growth strategy in the context. Thus, this study joins an evolving BoP 4.0 conversations in search of inclusive growth (see e.g. Bhawe & Zahra, 2019; Borchardt et al. 2020; 2021; Rosca et al., 2022) by revisiting propositions that *entry of MNEs supports growth by inducing formalization* (IMF, 2018), towards poverty alleviation. In doing so, the research pays particular attention to a theoretical abyss at the intersection of identified topics.

Figure 1 below illustrates this study’s positioning within the existing knowledge landscape.

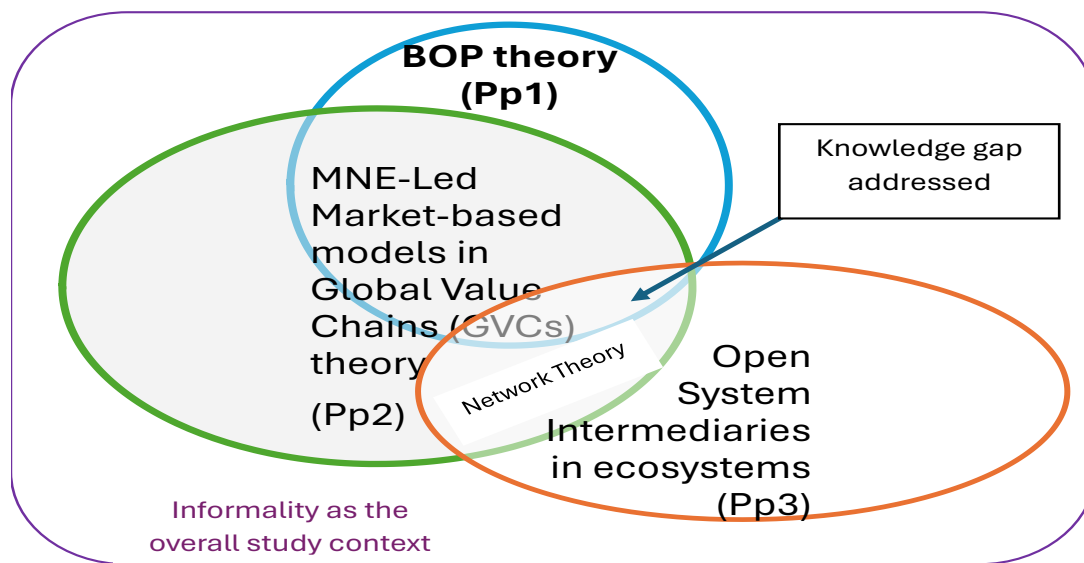


Figure 1: Study Positioning

Ultimately, the highlighted knowledge gap is a precursor to (the then) impending empirical research in a perhaps increasingly explored although certainly under-spotlighted informal context. The exploration is informed by *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich, 1983; Aldrich et al., 1986 in Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) which expounds upon *how aspiring entrepreneurs exchange resources*.

1.1.1 Research Chronology & Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised of 3 Research Papers. The purpose of this section is to briefly introduce these articles, illustrate the connection between them, and note their contribution. Lastly, to show how the research is hinged together into a collective compilation forming the overall Thesis.

Paper 1 Guides the Theoretical Framework of the Study

In Chapter 2, Paper 1 is a review of literature on entrepreneurship in informal spaces at the BoP. Data spanning over 20 years from 2002 to 2023 was sourced from the core Web of Science (WoS) database, resulting in 296 records. The articles were reviewed by abstract, and a selection made based on relevance to topic, and grouped into 5 themes. Attributes of entrepreneurship in informal settings (Bosma & Kelly, 2019; GEM, 2016/2017; Kistruck et al., 2015; Mair & Marti, 2009; Shantz et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2016), pro-poor or frugal innovations (Nsereko et al., 2022), evolution of entrepreneurship alongside globalization (London et al., 2014; Prahalad & Hart, 2002; Simanis & Hart, 2008), role of microenterprise and MNEs (e.g. Rosca et al., 2019; 2022; Tobias et al., 2016), and lastly, entrepreneurship during crisis (e.g. Shepherd & Williams, 2016).

This paper draws out the importance of relationships between MNEs and microentrepreneurs by a) highlighting the status of knowledge on the topic, b) enabling one to identify knowledge gaps, thereby informing the research question, c) guiding the study's overarching theoretical framing, and lastly, d) calibrating the research scope before delving into the actual exploration. Adding to the highlighted research gap, i.e. *to showcase how MNEs formulate cross-sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019), findings show that sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over 56% of the BoP population, yet it is represented by less than 10% of existing studies on the topic (see section 1.1). This solicits additional curiosity and further justifies the rest of the study.

Paper 2 Spotlights a new Relationship Dimension in Entrepreneurial Networks

In Chapter 3, Paper 2 documents the first empirical study. Data from 21 urban microentrepreneurs in Uganda and 9 representatives of regional MNEs was analyzed using an *interpretive, inductive approach* (Gioia et al., 2013; Grodal et al., 2021). Actors along the agricultural value chain, within

technology-driven organizations, are of interest since those sectors are key drivers of this economy. The choice to engage regional MNEs is to try and compare like with like, rather than seek out much larger MNEs that operate in far-off places e.g. Amazon, which prioritizes other markets and dominates operations elsewhere. However, social media platforms such as Meta, X or TikTok automatically interject as part of nearly all multilateral conversations. Unique to this deep dive is the rapidly growing informal population (UNFPA, 2022) alongside a “not meddling” stance by MNEs - an observed contextual gap narrated in the background section (see Pg 26 - 27). Recognizing this, additional input was sought from other ecosystem actors to increase rigor, i.e. 13 representatives of key private sector development organizations (see section 1.5 for details).

Paper 2 addresses the central question by specifically building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) to spotlight an adverse relationship dimension between MNEs and local actors in the informal sector, thereby adding another layer on top of existing theory on networks. The relationship is characterised by inaction of MNEs or lag between action and response, MNEs availing meaningless exchange, or under-delivery in non-reciprocal interactions. This leads to loss of opportunity especially on the local side. I term this as **Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)**.

By so doing, the study extends Prashantham et al. (2018; 2020) who explore nuances between MNEs and start-ups in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely documented. Showing this relationship and its resultant effects, which deter growth, pits it as a determinant of success or failure. Recognizing its common attributes and scenarios through which they manifest elaborates upon conceptual generalizability. Subsequently, another exploration of how the adverse relationship is currently addressed within the context was necessitated.

Paper 3 Frames a Typology of Role Formation by Open System Intermediaries

Paper 3 engages an in-depth case study and data from 12 members of an *Open System Intermediary (OSI)* (Dutt et al., 2016), i.e. an organization that employs voluntary efforts and a non-profit strategy (see Chapter 4). The OSI bridges informal and formal actors, thereby harnessing the practicality of entrepreneurs and technicality of professionals to support local growth. While the investigation of Dutt et al. (2016) was at macro level, based upon country level analysis of World Bank data, I go deeper into a micro level subnational organizational study, where OSI role(s) are

used as the yardstick. Using the data - some of which dates back 10 years ago, and horizontally building upon *entrepreneurial networks*, a typology of role formation is derived. The typology is framed by classifying roles played by OSI members; explaining the rationale and mechanisms through which they emerge, and order or sequence in which they occur. Towards inclusive growth.

Connection Between the 3 Papers

Paper 1 draws out the importance of relationships between MNEs and microentrepreneurs towards entrepreneurial growth at the BoP, while Paper 2 and 3 show how they form or exist in practice. A common thread in all 3 papers is *Entrepreneurial Networks* theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), which lends measurement criteria that were applied to explain empirical observations. This body of knowledge, as expounded upon in Paper 1, documents *how aspiring entrepreneurs exchange resources* to create opportunity. When applied in Paper 2 to interpret magnitude of responses from microentrepreneurs, representatives of MNEs, and reactions from the 13 umbrella organizations, the findings flag an adverse relationship dimension. In response, by similarly applying *entrepreneurial networks theory* to various roles which OSI members play, Paper 3 demonstrates how the adverse dynamic is addressed in this context; thereby forming the basis for a proposed typology of role formation to bridge MNE-microentrepreneur relationships.

To sum up, while the starting point of this study sets out to build upon BoP theory by reexamining its main propositions (see Paper 1, Chapter 2), including that MNEs can be profitable by focusing their interest on locals (Prahalad & Hart, 2004), the research does not categorically state whether this is true or not. Instead, by laying interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs bare and showcasing what transpires as they *exchange resources* (or not), the research winds up elaborating upon studies that explore entrepreneur relationships; as individuals (Granovetter, 1973; 1985), networks (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), both (Latour, 2007), or ecosystems (Huang & Knight, 2017).

The findings flag a gap between BoP theory and the BoP as a context. Contrary to London & Hart (2010) or London et al. (2014), MNEs do NOT automatically or necessarily build relationships that promote growth; much less during an apparent AI revolution. Granted, the little or lack of evidence may arise partially due to institutional voids (Adom et al, 2023; Mair & Marti, 2009). All the same, this suggests that other actors or factors may more effectively yield poverty alleviation.

1.1.2 Overall Research Contribution

First, originality of this multidisciplinary study lies in theoretical development. The central research question is addressed by vertically building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) to showcase *how entrepreneurs exchange resources* in settings marred by *institutional voids* (Mair & Marti, 2009). Alongside high informal entrepreneurial vibrance e.g. in Uganda (see GEM, 2016), divergence between microentrepreneurs' needs-based expectations and MNEs' opportunity-based *motives* (Jayawarna et al., 2013) posits an adverse relationship dimension that is perhaps rife, but never before defined. I term it **Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)**. Giving a name to the arbitrary adds a new layer on how entrepreneurs exchange resources (or not), by revealing a vital concept for succinct reference in conversations about the BoP agenda.

Ghosting is a common term in today's dating world that refers to abrupt non-communication or disappearance of one party where the other was not expecting that to happen. Broadly, it occurs due to divergent objectives and/or intentions, leaving expectations of one party unmet by another.

Entrepreneurial Ghosting refers to the occurrence, state, or stage of missing, withheld, unactioned, and/or unprioritized exchange, whether visible or hidden, owed to one or more entrepreneurs. The dynamic or position is characterized by divergence in needs-based and opportunity-based motives and/or expectations, which breeds non-action, lag between action and response, or meaningless exchange: of resources, goods or services, normative content, or knowledge. If the ghosting position is not regularized, that forces unfair loss of opportunity on the most affected actor or party. Thereby fueling continuous disproportion.

EG is characterized by **AI-driven MNE Exits** e.g. a years-long Facebook outage in Uganda and Tanzania or the sale of Barclays and Standard Chartered banks' retail segment to regional entities. (Intentional) **Inaction** e.g. a perpetual lack of health cover, standard housing contributions, or apprenticeships - for semiformal actors that they partner with. **Meaningless exchange** e.g. when Coca-Cola donated empty jerricans to Ugandans during the Covid-19 lockdown, causing a public media frenzy. **Under-delivery** by sharing complex financial statements that are neither easily interpreted nor appreciated by locals, yet too quick to align with culture & languages in genius advertisements. Or providing book-keeping and savings training, but no tailored entrepreneurship

education on creating wealth by harnessing natural resources. Or failure to finance local content. Coupled with **Lag** when such training or financing trickles in way after MNEs command extensive market share. Such **Dysfunction** breeds loss of opportunity for locals, and by proxy, MNE losses.

Second, the study extends Prashantham et al. (2012; 2018)'s knowledge on interactions between MNEs and start-ups in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely documented. Revisiting the contextual study basis, MNEs "not meddling" (see Background section), symbolizes **EG**; as pronounced by a regional *funding gap* (AFFAWA, 2021; 2023) alongside extortion by severely underpricing raw materials e.g. in Congo. Attributes of **EG** shift *creative destruction* (Baumol, 1996) towards depraved venturing territory. Thus, we ought to distinguish *exploiting opportunity* from abuse of institutional voids. The latter is detrimental, more so where a duty of care to curb immiseration remains. Findings from this study supplement Adom et al. (2023) or Decker & Dankwah (2023) who note negative financial implications as MNEs co-opt BoP models.

Third, practical implications center around conceptual relevance. The **EG** phenomenon avails novel - perhaps even rudimentary - measurement criteria for growth models. Deeper appreciation could potentially or partially explain nuances in countries with similar MNE presence e.g. Nigeria and South Africa, varying informality rates of over 80% and 36% respectively (IMF, 2018) and antithetically contrasting entrepreneurial vibrance or growth (GEM, 2016/2017). Not to mention, identified characteristics of **EG** post it as a deterrent to growth even elsewhere e.g. in Europe.

Contradicting Prahalad & Hart (2004) and London et al. (2014), I argue that as **EG** persists amidst trending nihilism during an apparent AI revolution, with MNEs acting irresponsibly while rising populations are concentrated in BoP hubs (UNFPA, 2022); such models not only fail to meet the would-be path of poverty alleviation but breed more immiseration instead. Contrary to IMF (2018), owing to a longstanding philosophical deficit whereby MNEs a) continue to operate in (narrowing) formal sectors, b) block meaningful exchange, and now, c) exit the BoP as (urban) informality surges - possibly far outpaces induced formalization (or growth); the trend likely harbors detriment that may instigate broader negative effects globally. By infusing 3 sub-streams of literature i.e. entrepreneurship, international business, and informality, I complement key studies in Asia e.g. Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2008; 2020), Brazil e.g. Chelekis & Mudambi (2010), USA e.g. Vandaie & Zaheer (2014) in Hollywood, and as replicated in Europe, Colombo & Shafi (2016).

Subsequently, culminating the research by demonstrating the role of Open System Intermediaries (**OSIs**) (Dutt et al., 2016) in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs) showcases how entrepreneurs exchange resources *to create opportunity* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986 in Huang & Knight, 2017) at the BoP. Building horizontally across **OSI** models, a derived typology of role formation aims to increase microentrepreneurs' *locus of control* by appreciating nuances of local entrepreneurship, before engaging sponsors or connectors in incubators, and replicating success. Last but not least, exploring a gender-led OSI with inclusivity as a key emotive component contributes contextual articulation (see also e.g. Aly et al., 2021), thereby adding to a growing ecosystems body of knowledge (Stam, 2018; Spigel, 2017) from a BoP perspective.

Although the 3 papers are distinct, they address the research question(s) in sequence. Findings show that as MNEs navigate global markets while ghosting locals over time, they also breed losses (at the BoP), making their dominance in informal contexts rather mismatched and counterintuitive in theory. That aids important conversations about effects of globalization on societal growth. Unlike marketing, poverty alleviation is neither homogenous, nor essentially about formalization (a means perhaps). Rather, it requires delivery of meaningful and equitable exchange to locals. Challenging MNE-led status quo by spotlighting an adverse **EG** relationship pits the models as a determinant of success or *failure* (Shepherd et al., 2019) regarding inclusive growth.

Overall, findings from this study add granularity to the field of entrepreneurship. As emulated by **OSI** models e.g. the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) or Motsepe Foundation (MOF) in Nigeria and South Africa respectively, role formation by mentors and actors that a growing local base can identify with or visualize themselves as, supports heterogenous innovation which is vital for IENs. Joining calls to tone down “profit-first *jargon*”, I offer that since different models such as taxpayer-funded airlines also derive significant growth; **OSIs** seemingly match this context better.

Holistically, the study posits management and policy implications underpinned by the 7 ethical principles of Responsible Research in Business Management (RRBM), a framework that supports expeditions which engage and seek to benefit wider society (RRBM position paper 2017; 2020). Thereby adding a *responsible* policy perspective (Nambissan & Ball, 2020; Nziku & Henry, 2020). Upon certification and in adherence with fair data principles, an embedded ecosystem approach to data collection enables a return to source, to share these outcomes and close the study loop.

1.2 Background to this Research

My personal journey as a researcher inadvertently began over 10 years ago through participatory roles and lived experiences, as we (with 2 colleagues) founded a Trade Support Institution (TSI) that bridges start-ups and small businesses with professionals; primarily to facilitate linkages between informal and formal actors. While engaging in this work, interest to embark upon a wider inquisition into how best entrepreneurship can be utilized as a stepping-stone for regional growth developed. As such, this study carries a notable element of engaged scholarship.

Figure 2 below depicts our global population growing from 8 to 10 billion, with the bulk increase taking shape in recognized BoP hubs; dominated by India and sub-Saharan Africa (UNFPA, 2022). Back in 1950, sub-Saharan Africa had about 186 million inhabitants, while Europe, for instance, had over 530 million. Currently, the former are over 1.3 billion and increasing, while the latter stand at 700 million, in decline. That population trajectory takes center stage in this conversation.

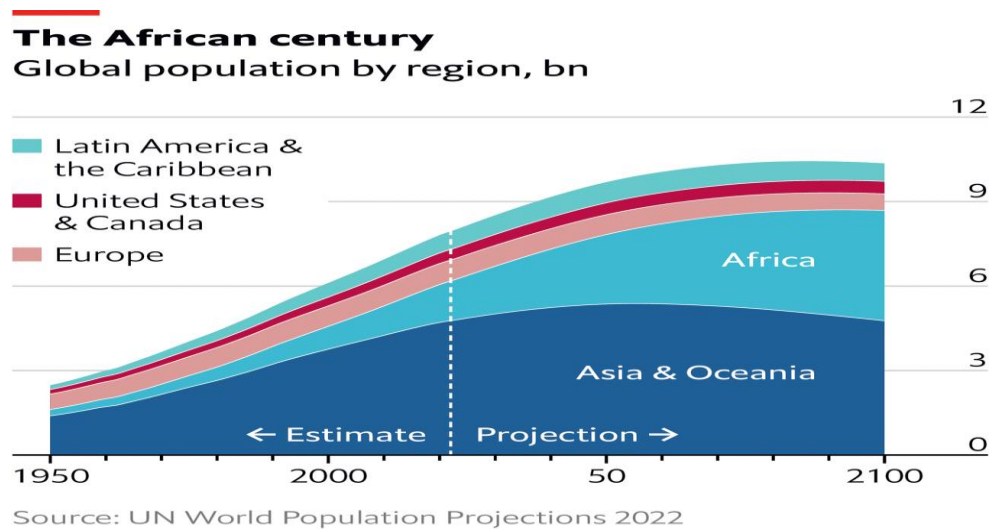


Figure 2: Population Growth Estimates and Projections (UNFPA, 2022)

Globally, 61.2% of the working population, i.e. about 2 billion people over the age of fifteen, are employed informally (International Labor Organization / ILO, 2009). Of these, over 68% represent Asia Pacific's total informal work force – notably contributed by China and India. Additionally, about 80% of Africa's total workforce operates within the informal sector.

As shown in Figure 3 below, around 77% of all non-agricultural activity in the sub-Saharan region takes place in the informal sector, with a higher prevalence in countries like Nigeria, Benin, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Central African Republic (CAR). Here, the sector accounts for over 80% of the economy (IMF, 2018). On the reverse side, this margin is lowest in Southern Africa and Ghana, whose informality rates stand at 36% and 50% (or 60%) respectively.

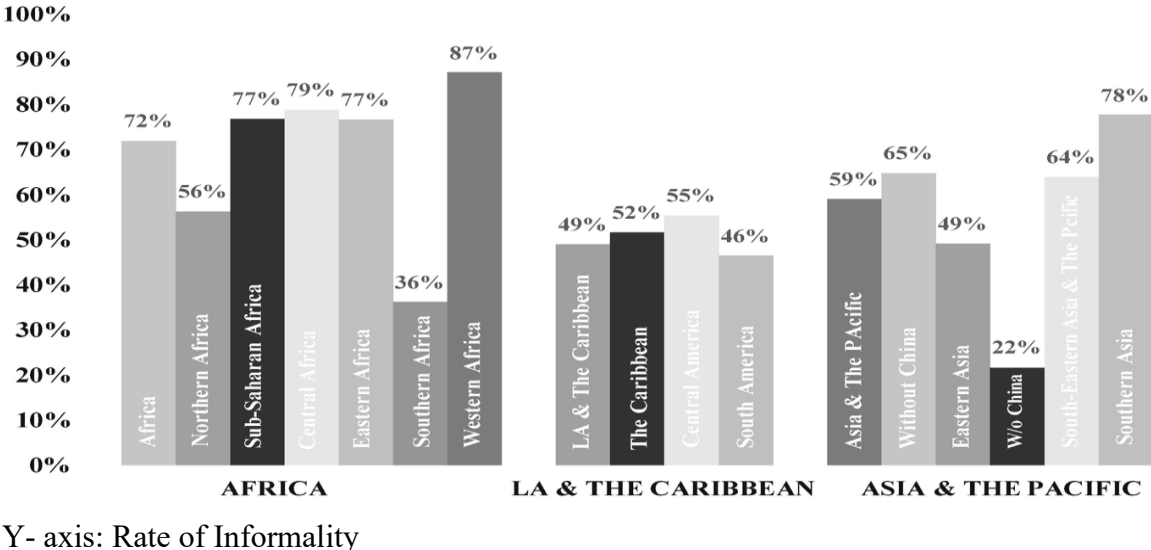
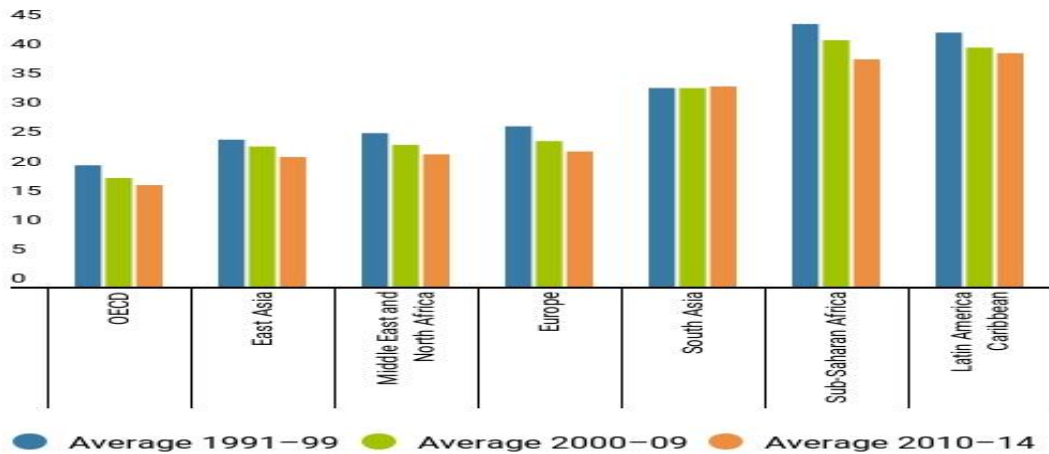


Figure 3: Globalization and the Informal Economy (IMF, 2018)

From the above outline: while MNEs certainly enrich some, say between 1% and 20% of our population, and may have also lifted entire nations out of poverty during the 1950s, albeit more imaginably so in developed or emerging settings (Prahalad & Hart, 2004); their activity, including at the BoP, is still largely lodged in narrowing formal sectors. Thereby leaving out the majority of that rising population which is immersed in informality.

Further, as illustrated in Figure 4 below, contribution of the informal sector to regional growth as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is averagely 38% (IMF, 2018) for sub-Saharan Africa, making it the second largest globally (by rate, not in absolute terms), only rivaled by Latin America and the Caribbean at about 40%. Moreover, the definition of informality excludes agricultural activity - implying an even higher index. That signals high relevance of informality.



Sources: IMF staff calculations.

Note: OECD countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States.



Y- axis: Contribution to GDP

Figure 4: GDP Contribution of the Informal Economy (IMF, 2018)

Nelson Mandela believed in and also criticized the power of globalization to combat or squash poverty and injustice. His monumental fight against inequality between local and foreign actors as told in *Long Walk to Freedom* or the *Make Poverty History* campaign speech delivered at Trafalgar square symbolizes a spectrum of noble social-economic causes (Mandela, 1990; 2005; 2008). That notwithstanding, we continue to witness a buildup of arbitrary events in his beloved homeland and beyond that suggest BoP theory e.g. market-based demand and supply models led by private sector, embed critical assumptions that may or may not be representative of nuanced BoP contexts. Consequently, inequitable MNE profiteering rages-on alongside immiseration.

Fast forward to July 2021: a chain of events unfolded from protracted judicial proceedings during which former president Jacob Zuma, also former Robben Island prisoner, wound up in jail again. Anger and frustration brewed, leading to an unprecedented uprising since the Mandela-led fight for freedom in the 70s and 80s: namely the Jacob Zuma protests. As witnesses reported via live broadcasts from Durban in Kwazulu Natal, Johannesburg in Gauteng province and Alexandria in Eastern Cape during the second lockdown of July 2021, the situation plunged into chaos, looting

and vandalism (SABC News, 2021). By the 14th and 16th July, 72 and upwards of 117 people died in the stampede respectively. By the next week on 24th July, that death toll had risen to 337. In a span of just 2 weeks, upwards of 350 lives were lost, along with hundreds of millions of rand.

Those untimely events occurred at a kind of crossroads where exogenous shock from a pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020) met mounting pressure from age-old problems (Desai, 2018). The resultant death toll was only rivaled by Covid19 mortality rates on a global scale at the time; with a subsequent snowballing effect that mirrored what transpired during the George Floyd moment (Dave et al., 2020), or the “Me too” and/or “Black Lives Matter” movements in the US that caused a chain link across the world (Brush et al., 2019). Deep resonance in the cited debacles draws from a collective departure from their unique or interconnected social-economic genesis (Zhang et al., 2023) which precipitates or snowballs into unrest.

MNE-induced formalization supposedly breeds growth (IMF, 2018; Prahalad & Hart, 2004), yet the Jacob Zuma uprising was executed by an indigenous mass including entrepreneurs born out of necessity (De Soto, 1989; 2000; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016). While other factors may have played a role, locals felt that MNEs reacted hitherto by “not meddling”, thereby remaining unsupportive in time of need. Even more critical is that South Africa is one of the most MNE dense yet least informal nations; making such events or contextual gaps all the more paradoxical.

Although it was priorly true (Risjord, 2014; 2022) that MNEs had the discretion to act (or not) outside their core strategic realm, for instance through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), that tune too seems to be fading (Khalid & Seuring, 2019). Instead, good-old high C-Suite pay remains on full display, amidst unresolved technological and financial gaps (Dankwah & Decker, 2023). What more? As former mainstays make loud exit, MNEs appear to either extort or leave the BoP.

These scenarios mirror an *impasse*, or a *conflict*, if not a *revolution* (Kuhn, 1965; 1996 in 2021). Therefore, to appreciate locals’ reactions and/or societal expectation, science must prevail.

The status quo invites timely reevaluation of growth models that are currently deployed at the BoP. Case in point? A mission that attracts attention with the notion that MNEs *induce growth through formalization*, which supports taxation (IMF, 2015; 2023); even as more of their peculiar practices go unchecked and unabated (Khanna, 2018). Table 1 below captures the research scope.

Table 1: Overall Study Scope

Study Element	Study Scope	Particulars of the Study
Research topic	Explores the central tenets of Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) theory as a dimension of informality. Revisits underlying assumptions that MNE presence induces formalization thereby promoting growth in communities.	BoP market-based models form a blueprint against which majority of decisions are made by government & global functionalistic organizations.
Specific focus of this investigation	How do interactions or alliances between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs in highly informal settings support or deter (influence) entrepreneurship?	Microentrepreneurs largely exist in informal sector while MNEs are formal: denotes significance due to a wide gap posited by digital divide.
Anchor streams of literature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informality 2. Base of the Pyramid theory 3. Entrepreneurial Networks theory 4. Ecosystems 5. Open System Intermediaries 	Marti & Mair, 2009; Banarjee & Duflo, 2011; Williams et al., 2016; Borchardt et al., 2020; London et al., 2020, Prashantham et al., 2018, Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Dutt et al., 2016
Geographical/spatial context	Existing literature largely based on studies from emerging markets. So, this empirical study is based on primary data collected via interviews & “historical” data from Uganda.	Findings are discussed by making light anecdotal comparisons that draw parallels to secondary data from South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya & Ghana
BoP theoretical assumptions as revisited:	That via mass employment & re-arranging market conditions e.g. by raising salaries, or lowering prices of goods and services, profits trickle down in the host community.	Challenge the status quo: aim to highlight the extent to which/ or how the proposed models fit the context. Designed by, with, and for whom?
Methods and period of study	Semi-structured interviews in 2020/2021. Substantiated with secondary “historical” data of an Open System Intermediary (OSI) spanning a period from 2013 to 2019. That is 7 years participatory engagement, 2 years data collection, and 3 years writing up = Over 10 years of data	To achieve rigor (Grodal et al., 2021) analysis follows open-ended theory development in an inductive approach (Gioia et al., 2013). Rawness of data is preserved by quoting responses and relaying data from a local standpoint.
Temporal context	Interviews conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, resultant lockdowns, and presidential election year in Uganda. Interactions between actors are observed by how each behaves and/or is impacted.	Lockdown magnifies and broadcasts dynamics of interest between actors under examination, reduces influence of external factors. Less inaccuracies posits higher validity of findings.
Overall aims and objectives	This is an effort to delve into social research and address issues left unattended by capitalism: towards inclusive growth	Context is everything. Noting identified gaps in literature and practice, this study challenges theory.
What informs the research? Study outcomes Originality/ Novelty	The study builds upon <i>Entrepreneurial Networks</i> theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) to spotlight an adverse relationship i.e. Entrepreneurial Ghosting; thereby extending Prashantham et al. (2018) to sub-Saharan Africa where such relationships are barely explored. It supplements Decker & Dankwah (2023) and aligns with Borchardt et al. (2020) who propose mandatory non-profit targets for MNEs in BoP 4.0. Lastly, it builds upon Dutt et al. (2016) to showcase an Open System Intermediary (OSI) that bridges the gap between informal and formal actors.	By spotlighting a new relationship dimension, this study responds to the identified gap by Dembek et al. (2019) i.e., to showcase how MNEs build cross-sector partnerships. The findings add a new layer on top of <i>Entrepreneurial Networks</i> theory from an informal BoP perspective. Deriving a typology of role formation from market-facing intermediaries (Dutt et al., 2016; Pels et al., 2022) supplements BoP 4.0 propositions (Rosca et al., 2021; 2022).

1.2.1 Research Problem

We know that informality (Adom et al., 2023; Mair & Marti, 2009; Webb et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2016) is prevalent in BoP communities (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), carrying enough weight to make or break those economies (ILO, 2009/2010; IMF, 2018/2019). As well, that India and sub-Saharan Africa dominate current population growth projections amidst declining rates elsewhere (UNFPA, 2022). While their national and regional wealth respectively, may vary, the two are similarly characterized by informality: whereby entrepreneurship is mostly posited by necessity rather than opportunity (De Soto, 1989; 2000; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016).

What we do not know is how globalization via MNE-led models influences growth (Dembek et al., 2019); particularly in informal contexts. Yet as entrepreneurship potentially addresses poverty (Bruton et al., 2013; Gartner 1985), global actors still seek to widen the tax base by encouraging more entry of formal entities (IMF, 2018) at the BoP (London et al., 2020); without necessarily appreciating *how entrepreneurs interact or exchange resources* as a bite-size piece of the puzzle (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Baumol, 1996; Huang & Knight, 2017; Prashantham et al., 2018; 2020).

Part of the problem lies in academia. The rise of obscure stakeholder theories during the 1980s (see Simanis, 2014), depicts a flawed hierarchy which places locals last on a secondary list. Ranking them after investors, customers, staff, and government authorities: usually in that order. However, such beliefs, if not aligned with truth, or if only sustained within given eras, undermine the vitality of scientific research to society. As old theories fail to explain our reality (see prelude on South Africa), *a paradigm shift* takes center stage. This creates an impasse that invites reexamination, recalibration, and light: wherein *new theories are born* (Kuhn, 1965; 2021).

Researchers and policy makers question whether informality is an opportunity or a legitimate but illegal last resort (Babitt et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2013). Is informality inefficient or can it be harnessed for significant positive returns? Is it a mainstay or transient i.e., does it decrease as development increases? Given both its significance to (un)employment and contribution to GDP growth (GEM, 2016), studies from Nigeria, Ghana or South Africa try to address such questions. However, migration trends and constant uprising suggest that reducing informality may not necessarily or even automatically induce growth (Adom et al., 2023; Desai, 2018; Mandela, 2008).

In the recent past for instance, research in the Asian context concluded that migration, occupational mobility, and growth in manufacturing sectors provided mass employment, e.g. in the Bangladesh garment sector, as major routes of escape out of poverty (Rosenzweig, 2000). Through socially directed mechanisms, India's *green revolution* helped to raise real wages of the poorest more than threefold over a period of three decades. And although India still reportedly represents 25% of the BoP population, it rivals France and the United Kingdom to become the 5th largest global economy with a GDP of USD 2.94 trillion (Myers, 2020), transforming into one of the world's leading economies. Some lucky escapes such as Taiwan and Singapore - before recent political instability, provide much hope too. Such studies could have had a bearing on past growth.

To date though, staggering unemployment rates, protracted racial tensions, rising deaths, and harsh political climate marked by police brutality raise debate (Brush et al., 2021; Dave et al., 2020). The wave of protests that spread across almost the entire West in the wake of a Covid-19 health crisis, as offshoots from USA, further corroborates those observations. And although the World Health Organisation sounded early warnings to avert moral failure in the then-impending equal distribution of vaccines, perhaps in a bid to absolve itself from any more unmet responsibility since onset of that crisis (BBC News, January 19th, 2021); amid Brexit and anti-immigration current from USA as major global landmarks, ongoing Russia and Ukraine or age-old Israel and Palestine conflicts pause challenges, marked by protracted energy crises with far reaching effects.

So, given a rather grim outlook and possibly wider BoP community than previously envisaged (IMF/World Bank, 2015; 2023), would Rosenzweig (2000)'s narrative hold? If so, amidst fragmentation, aging populations, and ancient infrastructure: where would all the migrants go? Potentially Rwanda? Regardless, inclusivity is a worthwhile alternative (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

Yet regarding informality and socio-economic growth when huge bouts of wealth and technology are both controlled by fewer folk, sub-Saharan Africa depicts mixed information. Uganda: highly informal (over 70%), moderate to low MNE presence, and high entrepreneurial vibrance amongst locals (IMF, 2018; GEM, 2016/ 2017). South Africa: largest stock exchange by listing or market capitalization, least informal (36%), high MNE presence, yet lower local entrepreneurial vibrance. Nigeria: largest oil exporter, highly informal (80%), high MNE presence and entrepreneurial vibrance, and high poverty rates. This makes no sense. The maze requires better appreciation.

1.2.2 Research Context

It is now about 25 years since MNE-led market-based models were proposed as a conduit for development at the BoP (C.K. Prahalad & Hart, 2002) to substitute International Aid which was deemed to have failed at the time (D. Prahalad, 2019; London et al., 2014; 2020); following plunder by the West that predates those events. These models are adopted by IMF (2018), with claims that MNEs beget growth as *transparency from formalization enables effective regulation* via taxation.

However, questions arise. First, the requirements for flow of capital are still dictated and controlled by the less than 20% in “resource ownership” positions, for the true owners who often do not meet set thresholds. Second, “profits-first” suppositions present a flawed hierarchy that places local ownership as secondary; yet the said profits are generated by investments such as mining resources in locals’ backyards. Separately, while it is well evidenced in academia and practice that MNEs target hosts as consumers, examining their treatment as suppliers and partners raises even more questions (Brix-Asala et al., 2021; Davidson, 2009; Karnani, 2007 a & b; Arora & Romijn, 2012).

But that’s not all. Along the way, and to draw emphasis pre and post Covid19, the models appear to split into 2 parts. One where MNEs enjoy core for profit business (or the occasional loss), and another where *development jargon* is left with un-accountable Non-Governmental Organisations and International Development Agencies *as the rightfully designated entities charged with the responsibility to secure the growth agenda of the impoverished* (Simanis, 2014). Be that as it may, there is no incentive - fiscal or otherwise - for MNEs to change, let alone regulate themselves; even as they continue to imitate some type of de-facto governments. As a result, skepticism and concern build. Recent studies, mostly from emerging and developed contexts, propose increasing *value commitment* via definitive non-profit constructs (Borchardt et al., 2021; Rosca et al., 2022). However, such arguments are yet to sway the field towards substantial change.

You see, just 25 years ago, both global population and wealth distribution may have overshadowed the relevance of informality e.g. China was largely poor. However, a lot has changed since, with grave theoretical implications. In fact, BoP markets are boosted by employment, 80% of that still availed by SMEs, while Corporate Social Responsibility (Khalid & Seuring, 2019) is yet to deliver desired results. Hence the need to reestablish whether such models serve their purpose or not.

1.2.3 Study Context

This study sits within and is focussed on the sub-Saharan region, which constitutes 49 out of the 54 African states found in East, Central, West and Southern Africa. The sub-Saharan population, a significant portion of which lives at the Base of the Pyramid (BoP), has rapidly grown over the years; from 186 million in 1950, to 823 million in 2008, and over 1.107 billion (IEA et al., 2019). It is now reportedly over 1.3 billion and further projected to hit 2 billion by 2050 (UNFPA, 2022).

To recap, *the BoP population refers to 3 or 4 billion people who live on less than USD 3,000 per person per year* (London et al., 2014), or previously USD 1,500 (Prahalad & Hammond, 2002). 56% are attributed to sub-Saharan Africa and 25% to India. While this data invokes curiosity to determine whether in fact, *all* sub-Saharan inhabitants live at the BoP, I am reminded that this segment is still rapidly growing. Thus, establishing exactness becomes secondary and is cast aside.

Needless to say, due to (neo)colonial history and fragmentation, exploring the African continent from Cape to Cairo is a daunting task. Given proximity, the northern region in the Sahara Desert is characteristically different from the rest of the continent: laden with both Middle Eastern and European influences in a mix of Arabic, English and French culture. Sub-Sahara is similarly heavily influenced, although mainly by European interference. The nations are rife with resources, rich identities, colourful languages, diverse cultures, and varying beliefs. However, a range of factors e.g. market size and institutional environments derive varying levels of informality in each. To explore relatively similar objects, choices had to be made; Northern Africa was excluded.

Most sub-Saharan countries accumulate resources through mineral development, transportation, manufacturing, services, and power generation which are abundant but relatively underdeveloped. Or through taxation - yet agriculture and tourism as the two main earning sectors are often exempt. As such, while the former headline regional development at the macro level, growth is boosted by small scale industries in the latter who mostly exist informally (see also Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). SMEs account for about 90% of activity and provide employment to over 80% of the population. To help overcome growth constraints, they form clusters which are linked to industrialization (Bosma & Kelley, 2019; Hussain, 2011). Nonetheless, BoP research is dominated by propagators hailing from “middle” or “upper” echelons of society who mostly uphold MNEs’ point of view.

1.2.4 Research Setting

The empirical research takes place in Uganda, a resource-rich nation too: with gold, oil, copper, bitumen, and so on. Albeit a “small economy” relative to others in the region, it has a fast-growing population standing at 46 million (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Over 80% of this population relies on agriculture; about 90% of which is for subsistence. The majority are youth or younger, facing high unemployment, while over 42% of the non-agricultural labor force are self-employed. These characteristics are a precursor to *necessity entrepreneurship*; as influenced by factors e.g. patriarchy and succession, collectivism, marketing by word of mouth, clusters, or *island* activity (Adom et al., 2023), depicting operations that are cut off from wider (inter)national engagement.

Another key characteristic of Uganda stems from a geographical area commonly referred to as the *cattle corridor*. This area covers more than one third of the entire country, stretching from the Western districts of Ntungamo and Isingiro at the bottom border, cutting diagonally across through Sembabule, Mubende, Kiboga, widening upwards to Nakaseke district, and stretching all the way from Apac to Soroti, Lira, Amuriah and Katakwi districts, towards Nakapiripirit, Moroto and Abim and upwards to the top left corner to cover Kabong district; in the region right above Lake Victoria as seen on the map. This vast space is largely inhabited by pastoralists who depend on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihood.

Nearly all cattle corridor inhabitants are affected by the *funding gap* of USD 42 billion in Africa, of which *15.6 billion pertains to the agricultural sector alone* (AFFAWA/ AFDB, 2021). While some progress is recorded through government initiatives, Uganda accumulates resources through taxation on agricultural commodities and tourism or power generation & mineral development – which are mostly exempt or underdeveloped (World Economic Forum, 2021). Further, the area is impacted by global warming, with increased incidents of floods and drought. As a result, more immigration to urban centers occurs, as inhabitants search for opportunities to secure a better future.

Those factors granularly explain how deep rooted, broad, and widely entrenched the informal sector is, even before factoring in the forecasted population trajectory of 2050 (UNFPA, 2022); further to which an anticipated surge of urban informal activity is signaled. For this reason, I specifically explore interactions between *urban* microentrepreneurs and *regional* MNEs.

1.3 Study Aims and Objectives

This study aims at gaining an increased appreciation of how best to catalyze inclusive growth: especially because this matter has been left unattended or unresolved by capitalism for a long time. As investors flock to Africa in a trend that is intended to *induce growth through formalisation* (IMF, 2018), instead, persistent technological and financial divides continue to derive inequalities across the region (see Dankwah & Decker, 2023). Due to less MNE presence and high informality of over 77% in Eastern Africa (IMF, 2018), such gaps may be expected in Uganda. Yet surprisingly, the situation is as critical in Nigeria, Kenya or South Africa which host more MNEs.

On the sidelines, over the past 20 years or so, a simultaneous evolution continues to take shape: the rise of flat hierarchies encourages informal activities within more formal environments e.g. in Ghana (Shantz et al., 2018). So, just as formalization may have gained ground in the past, its relevance could slowly but steadily wane. But even as new studies call for more heterogenous models (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019), web-based applications induce homogeneity (Fu et al., 2023), furthered by Artificial Intelligence through (decentralized) Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) to reduce reliance on middlemen (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020; Huang et al., 2023). Such contrasting trends and constructs signal an unclear state of events that requires understanding, readiness, monitoring, and solid positioning of local innovations in order to catalyze growth.

However, because the topic of societal growth is still often approached from an objective economic standpoint, heavily influenced by key macro trends (UN, 2000; IMF, 2018; World Bank, 2023), readers could still miss out on nuanced individual experiences that are lurking at subnational level. Primarily, because informality is such a unique descriptor of what were once considered peripheral societies and is now a commonality across fastest-growing populations (UNFPA, 2022), carrying significant contribution to the global economy: it is increasingly essential to focus and reframe our understanding about the nature of entrepreneurship transpiring in this space (GEM, 2016; 2023).

Lastly, to fend off looming threats of leaving those without adequate technological or financial infrastructure behind (see Khanna, 2018; Dankwah & Decker, 2023), there is an even more emboldened need to ascertain the region's future growth opportunities. As such, this study ponders how actors seeking to reap or rip from the BoP, either do or can ensure value commitment to locals: in an elusive promise commonly portrayed using the term "shared prosperity".

1.3.1 Research Questions

As shown in Table 2 below, the central research question: How do interactions or alliances between microentrepreneurs and MNEs influence entrepreneurial growth? was derived from a combination of an observed practice gap as narrated in the background section of this introduction and a highlighted research gap that emerged from reviewing literature (see Chapter 2 for details).

Table 2: Questions Aims and Objectives

Paper Title	Central Research Question	Sub-Questions	Design and Methods
<p>Literature Review</p> <p>Reviewing Base of the Pyramid (BoP) theory as a dimension of informality</p>	<p>What is the relevance of BoP theory in informal settings?</p> <p><i>Aims to build theoretical framework by reviewing existing knowledge</i></p>	<p>What are the roles of Microentrepreneurs and MNEs?</p> <p>How have they evolved overtime in relation to one another as well as within the context?</p>	<p>Thematic review of literature.</p> <p>Highlighted Gap: To elaborate how MNEs build cross sector partnerships (Dembek et al., 2019; 2020)</p>
<p>Empirical study</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Ghosting</p> <p>Re-evaluates the central tenets of BoP models: as a dimension of informality.</p> <p>We leverage lockdown to showcase the relationship</p>	<p>How do interactions or alliances between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurial growth?</p> <p><i>Aims to spotlight entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa</i></p> <p><i>Contribution</i></p> <p><i>Gap as a determinant of economic growth and descriptor of informality</i></p>	<p>What is the nature of interactions that exist between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs, if any?</p> <p>How do the ties (and/or) gaps advance or deter entrepreneurial growth in local communities?</p>	<p>Multistage and Multimethod research design: Interviews conducted with 21 Microentrepreneurs, 9 representatives from 3 MNEs, and 13 representatives of various key actors within the ecosystem</p> <p>Open-ended theory (Gioia et al., 2013)</p> <p>Inductive analysis</p>
<p>Empirical study</p> <p>Demonstrates an Open System Intermediary (OSI) (Dutt et al., 2016)</p> <p><i>Showcase roles which are formed by a bridging model that leverages informality via networking by bringing together businesses and professionals</i></p>	<p>How do OSIs support growth in highly informal entrepreneurial ecosystems?</p> <p><i>Aims to promote inclusive growth by tending to matters left unresolved by capitalism</i></p> <p><i>Originality: frames a typology of role formation</i></p>	<p>What roles do OSIs play?</p> <p>Of what importance are the roles?</p> <p>How significant is social capital in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems?</p> <p>What is the relevance of this role formation?</p>	<p>Case study of a Trade Support Institution (OSI)</p> <p>Data spanning over 7 yrs from 2013 to 2019, and Interviews of 12 members of the OSI</p> <p>Open-ended theory (Gioia et al., 2013)</p> <p>Inductive analysis</p> <p>Frames a Typology of Role Formation</p>

To commence, following best practice, the central research question is broken down into bite size sub-questions, thereby inviting a step-by-step process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021). In the first place, there is need to establish the role that these two private sector actor groups assume towards each other and generally within the community settings. Thereafter, to showcase how those roles either support or deter local entrepreneurship.

Themes from the review of literature along with data obtained from preliminary pilot studies were used to inform a mix of open and closed ended questions which formulate semi structured survey instruments. Relevant sub-questions seek to establish: *What* is the nature of interactions or alliances, if any, between these actors? *How* does exchange or tit-for-tat between them play out? *What* is the common thread of events, and/or at what intervals do they occur?

The questions were addressed by deploying a multimethod and multiphase research approach. Largely, empirical data was gathered during the pandemic and lockdowns of 2020/2021, interpreted and analyzed following an inductive approach (Gioia, 2012; Gioia et al., 2013), thereby revealing a relationship dimension or theoretical concept i.e. Entrepreneurial Ghosting which is a direct result or byproduct of a philosophical deficit that underpins MNE practices at the BoP and elsewhere beyond. Various challenges were cited e.g. lack of protection or poor governance, which point to institutional inefficiencies (Mair & Marti, 2009). See Chapter 3 for details.

Subsequently, the last part of the study ponders what other actors or factors contribute to more robust or supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems (Stam & Spigel, 2016). That was executed by delving into an in-depth case study of an Open System Intermediary (OSIs) (Dutt et al., 2016) to demonstrate an organization that brings together the practicality of businesses which mostly operate informally, with the technicality of professionals in the formal sector.

The follow up question transformed into: *How* do OSIs influence entrepreneurial growth in highly informal ecosystems? At this stage, sub-questions included: *What* role(s) do OSIs, or members thereof play? *How* do the roles, if any, form? and *What* is their relevance with respect to local entrepreneurship? (See Chapter 4 for details). The narrative explores the might of social capital and technology in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs). Overall, the procedures followed collectively formulate the research objectives to address the identified research gap(s).

1.3.2 Rationale and Justification

This introduction and background sound off an implicit impasse that necessitates our reassessment of the relevance of MNE-led models towards growth (Bruton et al., 2013; London et al., 2014; 2020; Prashantham et al., 2018) in informal settings (Mair & Marti, 2009; Williams et al., 2016). Due to plunder since way back, the past 3 industrial revolutions went by too fast for this region; a marker that locals can no longer afford to be passive observers of history. From handicraft and agricultural economies during the coal mining age in 1760, the steam engine which changed transportation and ultimately led to electricity generation and mechanized manufacturing in large scale industries in 1840, on to oil and gas, further to nuclear production through the 1940s, to the rise of the internet in a digital age (Adom et al., 2018; Hussain, 2011).

Yet with artificial intelligence and the fourth industrial revolution (Fu et al., 2023), a coinciding *apparent pattern of recurrent and prolonged crises threatens to undo the steps which have so far been taken towards growth* in the sub-Saharan Africa informal domain (World Bank, 2021; 2023).

To address this perceived or impending slug and perhaps detangle some longstanding complexities (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), the perspective by which this conversation is informed was broadened. Because the handful of published “mainstream” studies on this topic from the region are attributed to countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa; a case is made by lightly entering anecdotes from that secondary data, to further substantiate observations from Uganda.

The choice to lightly pit a less-developed nation against wealthier ones in the region is intentional, based on parallel constructs in these countries’ “genetic” make-up. While Uganda is smaller both by land mass and market size, South Africa sits on the 2nd or 3rd largest acreage on the continent. As well, while most sub-Saharan countries are largely indigenous with higher informality rates than Southern Africa, which boasts of a rainbow nation as a melting pot of multiculturalism; due to variances in their national wealth, size, institutional environment or growth strategies, the share of this regional USD 42 billion financing deficit differs for each country (AFFAWA/ ADB, 2018). Yet similar to what occurred in South Africa during lockdown but on a smaller scale, Ugandan traders protested in an ordeal that unwantedly ended 30 to 50 lives back in 2021. Kenya and Nigeria grapple with similar events too (SABC, 2024). Clearly, this dynamic is where everything aligns.

So what? Given a flawed quantitative economic history, the little or lack of measurement in BoP models' rate of success posts an unclear link on how underlying theoretical assumptions benefit wider society (Hill and Mudambi, 2010): with little or no assessment metrics, which may or may not apply to otherwise non-linear informal spaces. Yet investors seem to carry on with Profit and Loss business-as-usual, without improvising any requisite changes, checks or balances. Much less, without the necessary regulation in sight. In such challenging times as prevalent today, where many do not agree on a collective truth, such a predicament pauses risk to societal wellbeing.

Looking back: from oil exporters in Sudan and Nigeria, tourist havens in Angola, Mauritius, and Rwanda, right down to South Africa (SA) which was the worst hit by the pandemic, no nation was spared by the recession (World Economic Forum, 2022). Unlike lockdowns of 3 to 6 months in 2020 and again 0 to 3 months in 2021 in many nations, SA's total lockdown of exactly 476 days since March 2020 and counting as of 15th July 2021 denoted people *starving, unvaccinated, and living in dire straits* in close proximity to those who had abundant resources (SABC News, 2021). At "best", although riddled with poor health mechanisms, agricultural economies such as Uganda, Malawi, Benin, & Cote d'Ivoire experienced less-steep contractions. They were - rather markedly, *helped by poor road networks* to rural areas that worked in their favour to curb the spread of Covid.

Alongside such narratives which tend to emphasize that the region is incapable of continent-wide service delivery, a 3.7% recession was confirmed in 2020/2021; wiping away prior painstakingly gained growth (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, it is estimated that more than 49 million people slipped back into extreme poverty by the end of 2020: 23 million from sub-Saharan and 16 million from South-East Asia. Further, expected declines in GDP remained commensurate with earlier forecasts of 2019/2020. Due to the magnitude of this exogenous shock, living standards were likely set back by 10 years. Simultaneously, that the trend may, *for the first time since 1998, leave half a billion people destitute* (World Bank, 2020; 2023).

Looking ahead: while the population trajectory indicates that over 30% of global population will be African in the next 20 to 25 years, and that simultaneously, growth rates in parts of Europe, China, and United States will decline (UNFPA, 2022); the link between such futuristic trends and past or projected socio-economic development is far less certain. How will challenges of an anticipated spike in *urban* informality be addressed pre- or post-facto? That remains unanswered.

In an increasingly fragmented world that simultaneously seeks equality, diversity, or inclusion (IMF, 2015; 2023); much remains conflated. As technological advancements continue to headline growth prospects, for BoP communities, the anticipated range of possibilities seemingly only exist on a limited basis, if at all (Holgersson & Granstrand, 2020; Khanna, 2018). We witnessed how stoppages in education sectors further compounded soaring technological gaps during lockdown; denoting a level of futility in BoP theory as mostly arrived at from standpoints outside the context (see also Karnani, 2007; 2009). So, moving forward, how does Artificial Intelligence co-exist with rising informality amidst a rife digital and financial divide? Leaving sub-Saharan Africa riddled with more barriers, and barely partaking in investment opportunities, is unacceptable.

Yet the paucity of empirical studies from resource-rich sub-Sahara makes it nearly impossible to confirm if or how, owing to exclusion, any benefits or gains are missed.

From certain standpoints, staying away from data-gathering technology giants may be a blessing in disguise (Khanna, 2018). In fact, without much tampering, rapid population growth could organically catalyze regional development. Regardless, either of those predicaments implies that the philosophical reasoning followed to infer meaning and make decisions in this region, especially following those one-size-fits-all narratives, is not only lacking, but increasingly so (RRBM, 2021). That raises the level of responsibility on academia to reevaluate and reassess (in)effectiveness of BoP models, and/or propose better solutions, which necessitates explorations such as this.

Last but certainly not least, because most informal activity is domiciled in the agricultural value chain, over 60% represented by women (GEM, 2016/2017; IMF, 2018/2019; WEF, 2021), understanding inherent dynamics becomes even more important. 42% of Uganda's non-agricultural labor force that is un- or self-employed as necessity entrepreneurs are mostly women, a demographic that is set to also increase by 2050 (UNFPA). Given such gender relevance, we go back in history at the turn of the 21st century (when the MNE-led BoP market models were coined). A separate but equally provocative study examined whether women networks are relevant to entrepreneurship (McManus, 2001) and returned inconclusive results.

While that exploration was premised in the West, it opened up the topic to much wider scrutiny (see e.g. Brush et al., 2019; Duflo, 2012; Neumeyer et al., 2019), to which this study also adds.

1.4 Research Methodology

The purpose of this section is to showcase how the study was conducted. Guided by the highlighted knowledge gap i.e. *to empirically evidence how MNEs formulate cross-sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019; 2020), the researcher ponders upon the most adequate techniques to employ.

Right from the start, before embarking upon the research, the vision was to address this study from a local standpoint by including collective views and perceptions of practitioners at the BoP. As a preliminary check to ensure that the most suitable methodology was applied, I prepared a proposal based on the intended topic and research methods, which I entered it into a global competition: the inaugural “RRBM Dare to Care” research prize. The proposal emerged one of only 8 winners around the world (see Thesis Appendix Pg. 258/259). This process helped me to revamp the study design; thereby boosting confidence and reaffirming my commitment to the research objectives.

1.4.1 Research Philosophy

Philosophy is about establishing the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. Description of all phenomena starts with people’s experiences and their attempts to understand and/or articulate things (Burrell & Morgan, 2016) as we try to take actions that are aimed at solving societal problems. Since the Enlightenment Movement of the 17th and 18th century saw empiricist philosophers David Hume, John Locke and George Berkeley advance human development, followed by John Mill and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (Dorfler, 2018), this discipline remains central to the notion of research and study design (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021).

While failure to think through philosophical issues is not necessarily fatal, it can seriously affect the quality of management research, and derail achievement of study objectives in some cases (Risjord, 2022). Accordingly, to assess which philosophy is more appropriate for the proposed research, so that the target audience can appreciate this conversation, critical realism is vital (Dorfler & Ackermann, 2012). Using the AREA framework (Stilgoe et al., 2013) researchers can anticipate key changes taking place in our world - which I do with regards to population growth, reflect upon existing literature, and thereafter engage in explorations to back corrective action. Therein lie philosophical considerations and their implications.

Table 3: Dimensions of Philosophy

	Positivism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism
Ontology	Object	Subject	In the middle
Axiology	Value-free	Value-laden	In the middle
Epistemology	Observable Phenomena	Subjective Meanings and Social phenomena	In the middle

As shown in Table 3 above, the first steps into any research journey are often shaped by a researcher’s walk of life and disposition at a given time (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021). Therefore, ontologically, no assumptions are made about what is and/or what is not real. Although the choice to engage in this study was triggered by global events visa v what the local community care about and/or are curious to unfold - as it emerged during fact-finding sessions; in equal measure, the choice of topic is influenced by my walk of life and/or current viewpoint.

Scientific or humanistic schools of thought differ, each with opposing epistemological views. In objective ontology, a certain level of accuracy is embedded in scientific interpretation and/or assigned values e.g. when investigating causality by using process flows and neat categorizations. As well, deduction has a place in communities of practice (Pyrko et al., 2019), e.g. in household or business income and wealth comparisons, which may be both numerate and socially dependent.

The above notwithstanding, pertinent questions and answers lie in reality, not as it appears to researchers, but as collectively or subjectively perceived by society (Dorfler & Ackermann, 2012). Two elements stand out at the moment. One - it is apparent that societal perception is increasingly permeated by nihilism; a view that life has no objective purpose, intrinsic value, or even meaning. Two - as exponential growth in volume of knowledge influences how we consume or utilize information e.g. via generative AI models or intriguing constructs like Chat GPT; it becomes increasingly challenging to define, pinpoint, or quantify what constitutes “collective perception” let alone objective “truth”. Yet traditional values, beliefs, and intuition may influence our choices, e.g. in gaming, and more so along the research journey (see Shpakova et al., 2017). These factors threaten to shatter, or maybe even promise to cement, historical philosophical assumptions.

1.4.1.1 Dominant Philosophy in Entrepreneurship

Philosophical assumptions are an integral part of our insatiable need to understand the world. Scientists believe that those assumptions vary between researchers and unique elements that differentiate one study object from another, while practitioners in the field of management encourage fluid constructs that match the dynamism of both our nuanced society and environment (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In many instances, such actors become part of broader networks which form communities of practice (Pyrko et al., 2019).

Science versus the absolute truth: variances and/or (dis)connections between data and theory have been hotly debated by philosophers for centuries. Dominant studies in the past, e.g. field experiments, embedded quantitative reasoning or inference by deduction which informs singular propositions, although findings may differ in nuanced contexts. Inherent philosophy during those times took on a mostly objectivist ontology, inherited from positivist research in social sciences such as sociology, psychology, economics, and applied sciences in engineering and statistics.

As Adam Smith (1723 – 1790) edged on capitalism while Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) propelled communism, both expanded economics, mentioning entrepreneurs merely as organizers or managers of production or trade. It was later noted that although necessary, embedding all economic activity under production causes problems in definitions of entrepreneurship as a field. In the words of Frenchman JB in 1800: *the entrepreneur shifts economic resources out of an area of lower productivity into higher and greater yield.*

Particularly, Karl Marx and Schumpeter believed that massive revolutions would diminish capitalism and give rise to socialism. Despite the status quo wherein ethereal capitalism dominates, this idea is still echoed by entrepreneurs such as Vusi, one of the influential figures in South Africa under the age of 40 (Thembekeyo, 2018). In the meantime, at the opposite end of this spectrum, technological advancement rooted in capitalism creates massive wealth for those in opportunity-led environments, whilst feeding on socially constructed vehicles, with the BoP as a majority in a wave of big data and e-commerce firms such as Facebook, Google, Amazon, or even Uber. The current state of events may contravene earlier theories, and by inference, those philosophies upon which they were constructed.

The theory of social change noted bureaucratization and power (Weber, 1864 – 1920; in 2013), which suggested that entrepreneurs exploit opportunity rather than cause change, while instead, Karl Popper (1902 – 1994) rejected inductivist dogma and Marxist theory by subscribing to anti-deterministic theories of meta-physics. Then along came Thomas Kuhn (1922 – 1996) who emphasized that *normal science* follows *paradigms* (or eras) in tandem, and only changes when a *paradigm shift* takes center stage.

Following Popper's (1984) critique of Kuhn (1965) which notes that *science is provisional*, Kuhn went ahead on falsification; proposing that *what exists are proposals that are yet-to-be disproved*. To this end, Baumol (1996) noted a missing link between entrepreneurship and the nature of an entrepreneur. *Understanding entrepreneurship without studying the entrepreneur is like reading Shakespeare without Hamlet*. Just like Schumpeter, Baumol viewed entrepreneurship as a recombination of resources that can be innovative (see also Gartner, 1985), going beyond that, to suggest that it may also be **unproductive**; or worse, even **destructive**.

Findings in this study underline the above-mentioned viewpoint.

Anyway, by that time, meta-theoretical assumptions in economic foundations of entrepreneurship had not been explicitly analyzed as dominated by functionalist inquiry, until models such as McDonalds (Drucker, 1909 - 2005) emphasized transformation. Relatedly, Ogbor (2000) view entrepreneurship as predominantly reliant on theories of social control, yet Grant and Perren (2002) believe it is largely based on and dominated by functionalist enquiry. Regardless, it is now common knowledge that extremely functionalist assumptions do little to help, and a great deal to restrict, the study of entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, two opposing perspectives emerged along the way: unification versus pluralism. Unificationists viewed the field as fragmented, which prevented it from becoming a true scientific discipline. They advocated for having it under one strong philosophy, paradigm, and methodology. As pluralism and integration increasingly appear to hold, some argue that both enrich the field (Colquitt et al., 2000; Khanna, 2018; Tsui, 2019). I tend to lean towards the latter. However, due to a perceived lack of methodological rigor and/or attention to detail, there was a generally low adoption of inductivist research in the past (Gartner & Birley, 2002; Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007).

The current debate: more recently, an online click reverberates advertisements and content which could be (un)wanted, (mis)leading, (mis)matched or even (in)appropriate for any given recipient (Khanna, 2018). What do social media platforms or old-age journalism have to do with portraying the truth? Other than clicks or views, they do not appear to have a firm proxy for truth.

Given the chronology of events in Business (and) Management research, it appears that in the past, foundations of entrepreneurship applied *value-free ideals* or axioms that constituted “mainstream” approaches: in value-laden social sciences (Tsui, 2019). Following such rather static approaches, axiological datasets may be collected using technologies such as satellite imagery, from which economic growth theories could be derived. Additionally, as a result of an inherent looping effect in academia whereby we weave on top of existing knowledge (Risjord, 2014; 2022), our studies may no longer represent the reality of the objects or subjects that we intend to examine.

Moreover, as (mis)judgement and (mis)interpretation continue to provoke conflation in a nihilistic world, priorly unresolved questions confront researchers. Should explanations of the social world be deduced from observable facts as the empiricist or positivist would do? Should they be grounded in people’s self-understandings as interpretivists would suggest, or are they based on whatever enables us to change the state of affairs, reflecting both instrumentalist and deductivist approaches? Perhaps the answer lies in cementing philosophies that not only help to explain what exists but also align with knowledge evolution, shared cultural beliefs (Tsui, 2016), or even intuition (Dorfler & Stierand, 2016) as key elements of epistemology. Who knows?

Since entrepreneurship is multi-disciplinary, it appears that underlying philosophies to explain it would exist in fluidity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As such, more researchers divert from adopting methods that aim to characterize proper science or thought as often utilized in natural sciences. Such observations reaffirm that to conduct any credible research, questions and designs employed are shaped towards, although not exactly by, ontology i.e. reality in a broad sense. Rather by epistemological assumptions i.e. perception, as applied in the dynamic methods that better match our topics of inquiry. Beyond that, more recent studies encourage conceptual contextualization (Hill & Mudambi, 2010; Stam & Spigel, 2016; Wurth et al., 2022) in paradigms that consider vast nuances of wherever study objects are immersed (Shepherd et al., 2019 *What are we Explaining*). Accordingly, this study employs a responsible strategy as explained below.

1.4.2 Research Strategy – Responsible Research in Business Management

In a quest for robust methods, this study engages Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). Responsible research emphasizes ethics in different ways; it may be centered on sustainability, or the consideration of ecosystem dynamics early on in the study, or understanding the need for safety, or level of openness of engagements, through to publishing in open-source journals (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020; Khanna, 2018). Related to RRI, to support a more practical approach, the processes and procedures herein heavily rely on Responsible Research in Business Management frameworks (RRBM, 2017; 2022; Tsui, 2019; 2021).

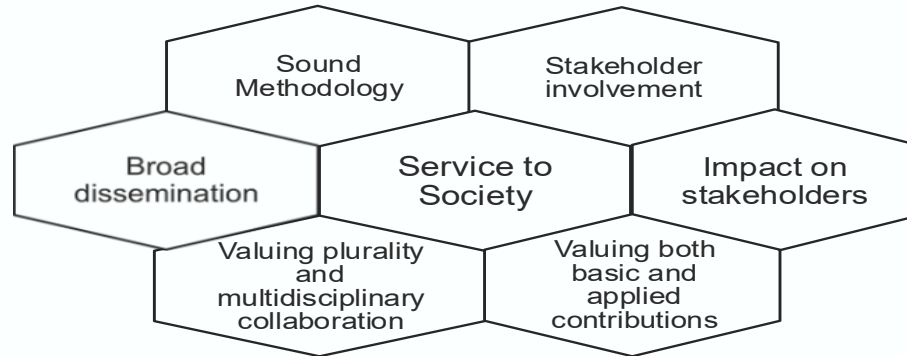


Figure 5: 7 Principles of Responsible Research (RRBM Framework)

As indicated in Figure 5 above, RRBM strategy is founded upon seven ethical pillars which may be deployed objectively or subjectively (Douglas, 2009; Risjord, 2014; 2022). The principles and values of RRBM are centered around carrying out research for the greater good: towards bettering society. This methodology dwells on *value-laden* social research as an adequate and/or suitable data collection method. Incorporating the people we study by including their (objects’) thoughts and experiences as inputs and undertaking the necessary activities *with* and *for* them.

This strategy recognizes cultural norms, traditions, as well as respondents’ belief systems and environments; as factors that may contribute to perception and intuition of both the researcher and research objects (Tsui, 2019; 2021; RRBM position papers 2017; 2022).

To choose between a value-laden or value-free approach, one must appreciate - at least in part, the theoretical and contextual landscape. It is recognized that the entrepreneurship field is multifaceted and largely still in the process of being appreciated (Shepherd et al., 2019). Yet although significant, informality is convoluted (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Williams et al., 2016); especially given increasing heterogeneity (Bhawe & Zahra, 2018) in a society driven by homogenous models (Khanna, 2018). For holistic observation in solution-seeking research, that calls for presence on the ground, in order to ably string and/or weave stories back into their fullest pictures. As well, given pervasive nihilism that is trending in some parts of society and taking the history of capitalism into account; this study calls for a firm philosophical positioning.

Accordingly, the inherent research philosophy is guided by Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013). Evidenced in an era where events were certainly inconclusive as regards science, he showed us all what humanity is capable of by rejecting apartheid during a period when that **truth** was ignored, unwanted or unseen. I lean on similar arguments to rigorously challenge the MNE-led status quo; by summoning an approach which embeds activist undertones. Those past events imply that to achieve concordant objectivity, axiological skill is vital (Douglas, 2009; Risjord, 2014; 2022).

The above notwithstanding, due to the very nature of its multifaceted social constructs, studying entrepreneurship in informal and/or BoP communities can best be honored by incorporating a subjectivist approach. As earlier mentioned, although the issue of quality was not explicitly sounded, it underlined the debate about employing subjectivism. As such, although qualitative studies are relevant, they previously remained under-represented (Grodal et al., 2021). In fact, years ago, such misinterpretations wound up almost erasing the field of entrepreneurship.

It was of course possible that interpretivist studies were of intrinsically poor quality, although the exact definition and indicators of standards, or more succinctly, rigor, are still matters of debate. Some scholars note that quality can only be addressed by viewing it as intrinsic to the research design, internal to underlying philosophy and orientation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Equally, other critics suggest that researchers may have undertaken robust interpretivist research but failed to describe the process in sufficient detail. In my view, the biggest mistakes that we make include a) generalizing or standardizing ideas, when we know for a fact that they do not apply elsewhere e.g. MNEs forcing homogeneity upon societies, and b) refuting or blocking evidenced truths.

Thus, we increasingly call for varied research designs to capture more nuanced spaces and times; with some adopting phenomenology or a kind of magical realism to emphasize the ordinary, while others argue that unlike natural phenomena, social elements are more often created by individuals. In a bid to appreciate unique contextual elements in entrepreneurship; bricolage, effectuation, and other models have been subjectively explored (see Dembek et al., 2019; 2020). To understand how it can be supportive or productive actor-network theory (Latour et al., 2005) is increasingly applied in institutional approaches involving field experiments or case studies, although most explorations happen elsewhere other than the BoP. Nevertheless, objectivist philosophy appears to lose much of the complexity and dynamism inherent within wider interpretations of entrepreneurship.

Lastly, although theoretical models may appear to evolve in relativity, some patterns suggest that they maintain core similarities, rooted in our world order. And while this sort of detail underpins underlying neocolonial instruments in research (Decker & Dankwah, 2023), core systemic variables that surround or make up those elements or attributes could change (or not). Nonetheless, new ideologies from a growing AI-based front boost more dynamic methodologies e.g. Open AI's Chat GPT, or Deep Seek. And as these emerge, the only thing that remains certain is that the potential of our collective creativity will continue to be stretched. Meanwhile, it remains to be seen how social research is, or will be, reshaped in future (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020).

To summarize, any benefit from this exploration bares on triangulation and complementarity in its development stages, as expansion and contraction of theoretical and practical undertakings occurs. Fundamentally, we need to retrace substantive elements and constructs from undiluted historical foundations and lineages, in much the same way as one would go about ancestry. If researchers ignore the root cause of societal problems, we risk curing symptoms at best (Busetto et al., 2020). As a matter of fact, one can rest assured that the stories we miss or omit have either never been told, were historically altered, or lost in translation entirely.

In closing for this section, it is important to understand that in a scenario where epistemological values of the audience, such as you - the reader or reviewer, differ from those of the researcher; there may be no way to settle this debate (see also Dorfler & Stierand, 2016).

The above notwithstanding, discussions about the inherent philosophical viewpoints are welcome.

1.5 Research Methods

To recap, market-based BoP theory (Prahalad 2001; UN, 1999) was birthed after a seminal report from the United Nations, as one of the global functionalistic organizations that were formed after World War II, with a promise to propel development forward. Following suit, this inquisition is instigated by the current state of our global economy as depicted by annual reports from the same or similar organizations (see IMF/World Bank, 2015; 2023; UNPF, 2022); with little evidence as regards the poverty alleviation promise. And while a paradox therein justifies such a study, the nature of data in such reports usually invites functionalistic philosophy. In fact, at the study onset, either exploratory phased or explanatory sequential methods appeared suitable (Creswell, 2012). However, those choices were revised and narrowed down in due course.

To achieve rigor (Grodal et al., 2021), an open-ended theory development process was deployed, following inductive methods of interpretation (Gioia et al., 2013). This final decision on which methods to engage was arrived at based upon the elements below.

First, the nature of a research question derives the choice of methods to deploy. The puzzle at hand, empirically exploring *how* MNEs build cross sector partnerships with locals (Dembek et al., 2019), does not set out to test assumptions. Rather, to elaborate upon *how* interactions or alliances form. While qualitative studies explore *why* or *how* a phenomenon occurs, or describe the nature of an individual's experience, quantitative techniques address causality, generalize-ability, or magnitude of effects (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021 Pg. 3).

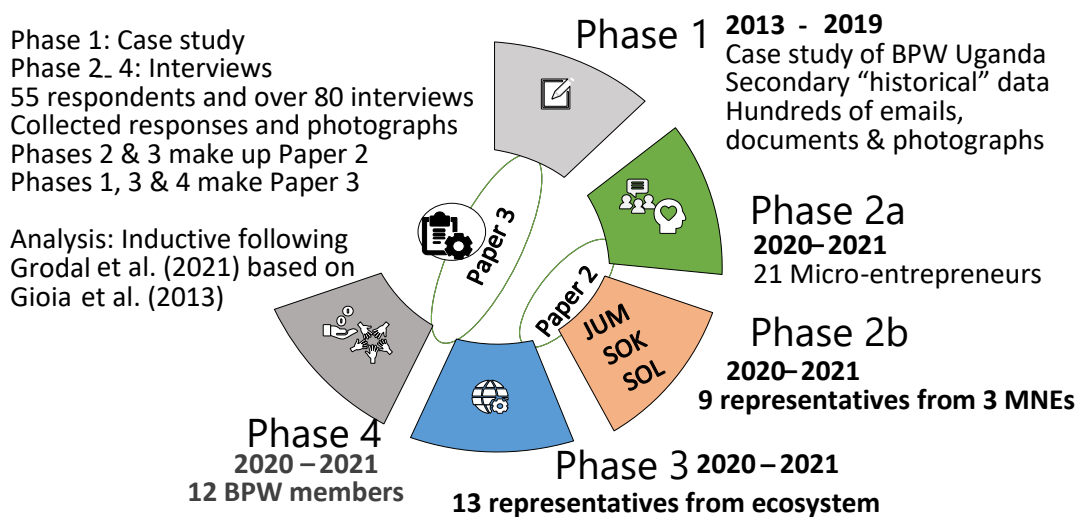
Second, the choice of methods is guided by scientific inference (Risjord, 2022), which in turn is subject to level of uniformity or linearity in the objects under scrutiny. In social sciences, such elements depend on economic and regulatory environments, both of which are murkier in informal settings. A major characteristic here is the complexity created by absence of priorly synthesized information: making tasks e.g. a) designing tools, b) gathering data/responses, c) transcription from various languages while considering diverse cultural norms fall on researchers' backs. This invites more risk in interpretation. Therefore, triangulation was incorporated (Busetto et al., 2020).

Lastly, an identifier of methods is the researcher's decision to showcase this exploration from a local standpoint in order to represent the less-heard-from. Hence, taking a qualitative approach.

1.5.1 Research Design

Due to rich societal culture, coupled with relative scarcity of spotlighted contextual literature such as Adom et al. (2023) or Decker & Dankwah (2023), and as noted by numerous studies which call for more empirical studies (see Dembek et al., 2019), primary data was collected. To commence, representatives of the two actor groups, i.e. microentrepreneurs and MNEs, were engaged during pilot studies. Having noticed wide discrepancies in the preliminary responses, a choice was made to widen the source by including other participants for additional checks and balances.

As illustrated in Figure 6 below, a multi-method and multi-phased study ensued.



6

Figure 6: Multi-phase and Multi-method Research Design

Phase 1 (2013 – 2019) goes back in time to the archives of an engagement by the researcher, in an active role as founding member of a gender-led network which aims at bridging the gap between informal and formal ecosystem actors. The voluntary and non-profit nature of the organization fits the description of an Open System Intermediary (OSI). Information gathered from this network’s business model was ideally considered as secondary “historical” data. Time stamped photographic, email and other documentary evidence showcase bridging activities via an international place-based, locally embedded network (see Chapter 4/ Paper 3 Appendix).

Phase 2a and b (2020 – 2021) took place from April 2020. Primary data was collected by interviewing local entrepreneurs. To commence the process, over 10 pilot studies were randomly conducted through informal discussions to help formulate the right questions. Thereafter, two semi-structured questionnaires were designed: one for micro-entrepreneurs and the other for representatives of MNEs. Using the first version of this survey, 21 interviews were conducted with microentrepreneurs. Using the second, responses were sought from 3 respondents from each of 3 regional MNEs: an equal number aimed at reducing bias.

Phase 3 (2020 – 2021) aims to reduce bias in Phase 1 and 2 above and builds a key point in the research technique. To solicit well-rounded knowledge, responses were not limited to the two private sector actors under study. From July to September 2020, more insights, experiences, opinions, and observations were sought from 13 private sector organizations as key actors within this entrepreneurial ecosystem (Stam, 2015; Spigel, 2017). They play a critical role in supporting entrepreneurship at the local, national, educational, and international levels. Interviews were held with one expert representative from each of the chosen organizations.

Lastly, **Phase 4 (2020 - 2021)** involved interviewing 12 members of the OSI/network to try and address gaps as highlighted in the literature review and the first two datasets (Phase 1a and b). The data also reduces bias from the case study in Phase 1 above.

Collectively, over 80 interviews were conducted with 55 respondents. They were comprised of 21 microentrepreneurs, 9 representatives from 3 regional MNEs code named JUM, SOK, and SOL and 13 representatives of key private sector development organizations. These include Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), National Social Security Fund (NSSF), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Trademark East Africa (TMEA), Banks, Telecommunication companies, Makerere University and International Trade Center (ITC). Lastly, 12 members of the Open System Intermediary (OSI) were interviewed, with those responses further substantiated by a case study of the very organization.

Each phase of data collection is significantly independent, yet they are all interdependent in relation to the research topic, aiming to address the central research question (or not: which may also reveal new information).

1.5.2 Research Ethics and Balance of Power Considerations

Ethical standards are a vital component of research (Busetto et al., 2020), more so because the study period coincided with two major events. On top of a Covid-19 outbreak and global lockdowns of 2020/2021, it was also presidential election year in Uganda. Therefore, a crisis-management oriented strategy was essential as incorporated in the Risk Management Plan (RMP). Because of mandates to minimize face-to-face interaction, among other enhanced safety protocols, certain data collection techniques like focus groups were eliminated. Yet given access limitations while engaging online, some face-to-face interviews were necessitated; only made possible during temporary opening of passage and upon official authorization from Ministry of Health. In which case, wearing protective gear e.g. face masks and hand gloves was mandatory.

Respondents are part of the theory development process. Given a fragile context as noted above, above and beyond technical procedures of conducting research, empathy and compassion are paramount. Poverty myths, language barriers, and societal values may clash with perceived objectives. Thus, it is important to explain the topic to all intending participants while remaining open to new ideas during the process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021). Owing to certain risks, a fundamental right to privacy, and heightened sensitivity, some participants may not agree to recorded interviews. That demanded readiness, flexibility and acceptance on my part. Moreover, microentrepreneurs' data is often personal. As such, anonymity is guaranteed. Given online or over-the-phone modes of data collection, consent was obtained by recorded or verbal agreement. Physical forms were signed by a few respondents (Thesis Appendix Pg. 275 - 283). Overall, the exercise is independent and unpaid save for extenuating circumstances e.g. during transcription of data. Accordingly, participation is voluntary, and any question(s) may be left unanswered.

Given lived experiences in informal settings, researcher vulnerability (Busetto et al., 2020) arose. To manage that and also strengthen study outcomes, some supplementary reflexivity is expressed to give meaning to the entire research experience (see Reflections in Chapter 5), as opposed to glossing over events. Lastly, upon scrutiny of ethical standards as a requirement of the research, approval was sought and thereafter granted by the designated University Ethics Committee in 2020 (see Thesis Appendix Pg. 252). By the same token, upon certification, fair data principles that align with RRI and RRBM principles apply (see Khanna, 2018; RRBM, 2017; 2022).

1.6 Research Plan, Sample Selection, and Data Collection

Before designing surveys, selecting samples, or collecting data, the central question was revisited: How do interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurship?

Research Design. Some studies e.g. in South America explore global value chains by interviewing farmers who have supplier contracts with MNEs (see e.g. Bruton et al., 2013), depicting a sample of actors who may feed off each other. However, due to lockdown and heightened political conditions at the time of this study, such a research design was not possible. To understand how dynamics between the chosen actor groups support or deter entrepreneurial growth, the research design considers microentrepreneurs who may or may not be related to the regional MNEs. Relatedly, research designs such as focus groups were eliminated to avoid the spread of Covid.

Survey Instruments. To aid the study framework, there was need to gauge content that could adequately address the research question. To design the final survey instruments, I carried out pilot studies (Busetto et al., 2020) with random participants similar to the intended sample. Knowledge obtained from those preliminary engagements was combined with key concepts from the review of literature to inform two distinct survey instruments for data collection: one targeting microentrepreneurs, the other for representatives of MNEs (see Thesis Appendix Pg. 261 & 269). The semi structured surveys were composed of about 20 to 25 itemized questions which were formulated from the central research question and sub-questions. As highlighted earlier in the aims and objectives, they were both contextual and theory generated (see earlier in section 1.3).

Sample Selection. To begin with, respondents included 21 *urban* local microentrepreneurs and 9 representatives from 3 regional MNEs. However, due to wide discrepancies in initial responses, 13 representatives of private sector development organizations were approached. The choice to engage regional MNEs is to try and compare like with like, rather than seek to study MNEs that are far larger and operate in far off places, e.g. Amazon which, broadly, has not expanded into this region and dominates markets elsewhere. However, social media platforms such as Meta, X or TikTok automatically interject as part of nearly all conversations about multilateralism. Lastly, an in-depth case study of Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) was engaged and 12 members of the entity also interviewed. Overall, actors along the agricultural value chain and technology-driven organizations are of particular interest since both sectors are key drivers of this economy.

Considerations of the sample size, or type of respondents to involve, and how those choices might affect study results were made. A challenge in distinguishing between semi-formal and informal actors emerged. As well, microentrepreneurs usually take on more than one trade at a time, with implications on labelling. Therefore, trade-offs had to be made (Busetto et al., 2020). Instead of the most relevant and optimal choices, the most regular, available, or common actors were sought. Further, some industries are male or female oriented. However, given contextual relevance; the fact that women account for a large portion of activity still begs recognition. Subsequently, although random selections were made at first, with a focus on actors rather than gender per se, gender relevance was considered while selecting the OSI that is demonstrated.

Regional MNEs JUM, SOK and SOL were selected based on their visibility in the local market. JUM is an e-commerce platform that sales goods, including from market vendors (MV). They are known for providing employment to boda-bodas (BB), i.e. motorcycle taxis, who make deliveries from place to place. Think of Amazon or eBay elsewhere. SOK stocks dhukhas or duukas, i.e. local retail shops. They monitor prices and restock timely; thereby saving retailers time and money. SOL distributes solar products especially to underserved areas. They are known for extending credit, for instance, to slum dwellers whose housing does not meet the requirements for on grid connections. The final sample was realistically based on availability and willingness to participate.

Data Collection. During the survey design, it was earlier anticipated that each interview would constitute about 20 to 25 questions across all respondent groups. But as the study developed, new information emerged that formulated or snowballed into more questions and diverse responses. Therefore, the structure of survey instruments changed. In addition, to ensure rich data, some knowledgeable or passionate respondents were placed in the drivers' seat to steer the conversation and give expert views on the topic with less interruptions; thereby shifting away from semi-structured survey instruments and arriving slightly at a grounded theoretical approach. This decision was taken in order not to discount seemingly small elements as non-contributory, because they are often vital to the entrepreneurial functions and/or fabric of society.

Data Interpretation and Analysis. Since it is essential to not only familiarize and understand informality, but to place actors within it front and center of BoP conversations, I incorporate a degree of normativity and ethnocentricity (Merton, 1973) by applying an *interpretivist* lens to how

respondents perceive things, whilst maintaining rawness of data. Due to perceived complexity in theoretical definitions by some respondents, care was taken not to overlook the heterogeneous nature of entrepreneurial activities, by letting them lead the discussion. Allowing others to lead encourages one to let go of pre-conceived notions and ideas - either as inherent to one's own beliefs and experiences or as held in existing literature. This balance of power instigates broader responses that enrich the multidisciplinary dimensions of the study.

Lastly, while interviews are often broad, their adequacy is determined via repeated inquiry, as the responses expand and/or contract while the study progresses. The loop continues until saturation, i.e. when no new data emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

1.6.1 Formation of Paper 2 and 3 from the Research Design

As indicated in Figure 7 below, two papers formed during the different phases of data collection.

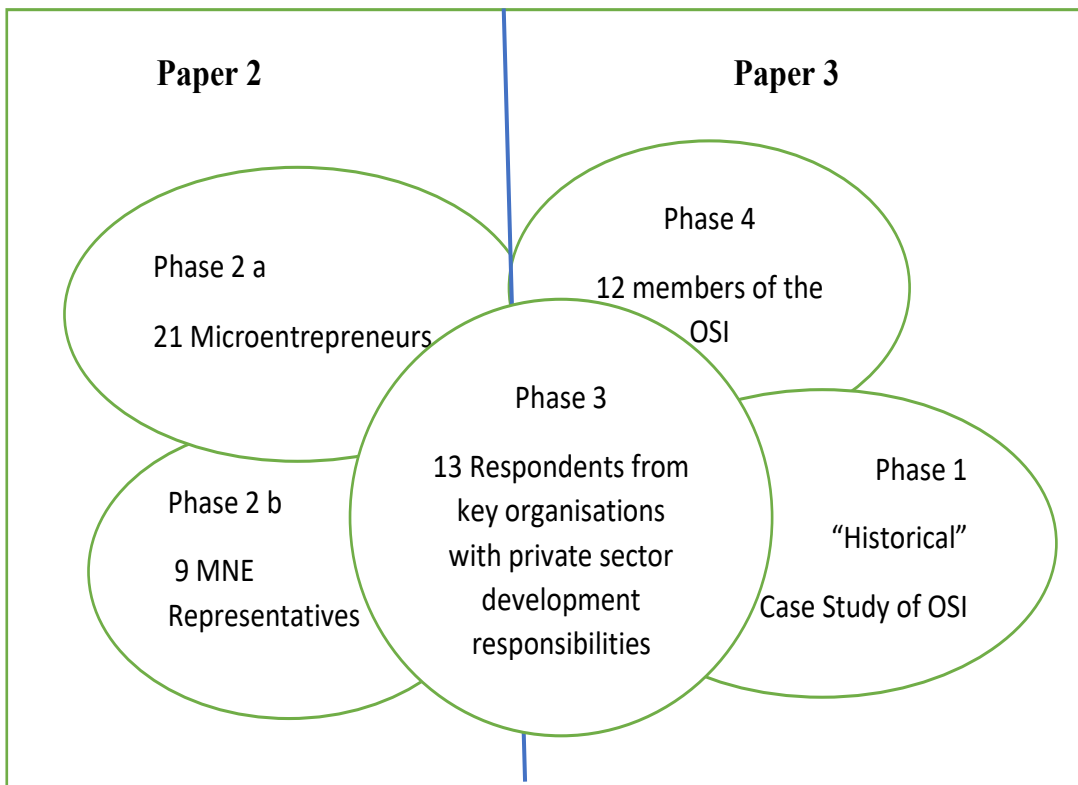


Figure 7: Formation of Empirical Study from the Research Design

As shown above, first, data collected during *Phases 2 and 3* in 2020-2021 was used in Paper 2. Then data from *Phase 3 and 4* in 2020-2021 supplemented OSI records as obtained during *Phase 1*, that are dated anywhere between 2013-2019. Together, those were used to inform Paper 3. Although the empirical study formed from different respondent groups, both papers intersect, informed by responses that were obtained from the 13 key private sector organizations (Phase 3). This enabled a more holistic understanding of interactions between the actor groups, and their roles.

1.6.1.1 Conceptualizing the research leading into Paper 2

Figure 8 below illustrates key theoretical and contextual nuances embedded in this market environment and/or social terrain, which were considered during conceptualization of Paper 2; They are triggered by relevance to the research topic and/or identified knowledge gap. The short arrows at each side of the figure depict efforts to reduce negative effects of those cited aspects as growth and/or development occur.

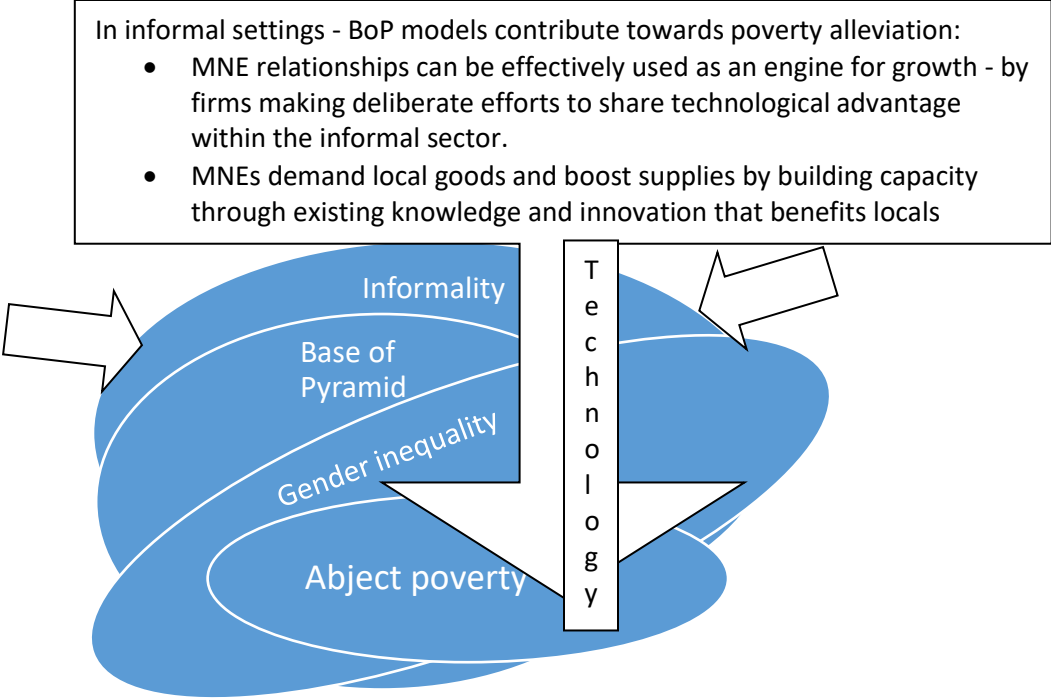


Figure 8: Conceptualizing the Role of MNEs in highly Informal contexts

Since interviews were conducted during lockdown and amid presidential elections, both realities organically characterize most responses. A stark observation vividly came to light; both local entrepreneurs and MNEs reduced prices on key commodities and services. For instance, the price of eggs (a classic marker of market fluctuations) reduced by more than half because cross border trade to South Sudan and Kenya was impossible; while MNEs halted interest payable on credit products, mobile money fees, and data charges to allow for internet access; to ease communication while people remained in isolation.

However, surprisingly, astronomical gains were realized by nearly all e-commerce/technology giants led by telecommunication companies. Again, more so in developed or emerging contexts. Yet although similarly encompassing, an opposite predicament seemingly befell most local actors. In fact, by the second visit in December 2020, one respondent had closed - owing to high costs of treatment in private clinics. The events were hugely characterized by losses and closures.

The above-mentioned observation is not reminiscent of *BoP 1.0 and 2.0* model propositions of *mutuality*, much less reciprocity (see Simanis & Hart, 2008; London & Hart, 2010).

The entire experience cements observations that while adverse market conditions may generally cause detriment, they are often more catastrophic for smaller entities and individuals. And while such predicament may be dictated by scarcity, it is also enflamed by a lack of distinction between personal and business resources, as is often the case for microentrepreneurs. As a result, in similar fashion to what occurred in South Africa in 2021, although significantly less chaotic, Ugandan traders took to the streets to demonstrate against appalling socio-economic conditions and wound up in a showdown with state forces. Consequently, more lives were lost.

1.6.1.2 Introducing Paper 2 – Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Paper 2 documents the first empirical undertaking in the thesis (see Chapter 3). The study sets out to address the highlighted research gap; i.e. *to evidence how MNEs form cross-sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019) by revisiting suppositions that as MNEs encourage a multiplier effect through innovation, competition, and market realignments; thereby promoting mutual benefit with locals, which contributes towards poverty alleviation (London et al., 2014; 2020).

Hence the central research question: How do interactions and/or alliances between (urban) microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurial growth in informal settings?

Based upon entrepreneur networks theory (Aldrich, 1983 and Aldrich et al., 1986 in Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), specific metrics are considered: *frequency* of interactions, *proximity* which is based upon MNE *presence*, and the very granular *nature* of these interactions as determined by *locus of control*, which in turn are based on market conditions, each actor's positioning, their (customary) beliefs, motives, and expectations. In a vital step of the theorization process, interactions are plotted according to when or how they occur. By adapting the ADO framework (Paul & Benito, 2018) to simulate the evolution of such interactions, an antecedent emerges: market-based BoP models embed a fundamental philosophical deficit at the entry point of MNEs that persists and negatively affects the relationship building process.

As observed, given lower *locus of control*, only a few locals have a non-consumer relationship with (an) MNE(s), characterized by *weak centrality*: even if they represent the majority of actors. As well, the stance of MNEs “not meddling” as referenced in the background section (see 1.2) draws interest not only as to what transpires, but what is missing - if anything. Accordingly, the focus is to elaborate nuances within those scanty interactions. This analysis process reveals an adverse relationship dimension, which I termed Entrepreneurial Ghosting (**EG**).

Ghosting takes place and is contained within a relationship – it does not happen where none exists.

As empirically derived, **EG** occurs due to divergent needs-based and opportunity-based motives between individuals or groups of entrepreneurs, or even between entrepreneurs and other ecosystem actors. The dynamic breeds disproportion that is further exacerbated by institutional inefficiencies. Impending exchange may exist in the form of *communication*, *goods and services*, or *normative content* such as values and beliefs (see Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Non-action or under-delivery by the ghost (ghoster) where “quid pro quo” is expected or promised to a ghosted one (ghostee) is also a key factor.

If the ghosting position or dynamic is not regularized, this may perpetuate forced loss of opportunity on all parties – or unfairly on the actor who is most heavily affected.

These findings show, first, that MNEs spur entrepreneurial activity via multiplicity. Yet in turn, they are dependent upon microenterprise providing the most employment (over 80%) to a largely informal market base. Moreover, in the few instances where a (non-consumer) relationship exists, they encourage female participation; thereby increasing reach into local communities. This kind of engagement bolsters agricultural and technology value chains as key drivers of such economies. The cited events, e.g. lockdown, not only heightened data collection and procedural sensitivity; they also reduced influence from external factors and magnified actors' interactions as the main object of inquiry. This emboldened the boundaries of examination, often a challenge in research.

That notwithstanding, as **EG** persists, it creates "one-hit wonders" who struggle or wind up failing. That systemic or systematic round-about way of working for informal actors, rather than with them, is problematic: it invites immiseration. Such opportunity loss negates intended gains and curbs growth; leading to landmark MNE exits.

By spotlighting the **EG relationship** dimension, this study extends Prashantham et al. (2018)'s work on MNE practices in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely explored. The research also supplements Adom et al. (2023)'s studies on entrepreneurship in informal spaces as well as Decker and Dankwah (2023) who highlight negative consequences from a financial perspective, when MNEs Co-opt local models at the BoP. Using scenarios through which **EG** manifests and noting its common attributes expounds upon conceptual generalizability.

Lastly, these findings evidence Borchardt et al. (2020)'s *value commitment dilemma* in BoP 4.0; with negative implications on suitability of age-old MNE-led BoP 1.0 – 3.0 model propositions. The essence of such models *targeted towards the poorest* members of society (London & Hart, 2010, Pg. 2) presumes to support these "poorest" but does not explicitly claim that to be their primary aim. Thus, to minimize ambiguity and weed-out abstraction (Chatterjee, 2016), this conversation walks away from singular narratives and aligns with Arora & Romijn (2012) or Chelekis & Mudambi (2010); by noting hidden or missing (non)interaction which negates entrepreneurial growth at the BoP. Demonstrating *how* the relationship develops, and evolves, and the (positive and/or negative) effects thereof, pits it as a determinant of success or failure for growth in the region and beyond (Crosina & Pratt, 2019; Shepherd & Williams, 2016).

1.6.1.3 Development and Justification for Paper 3

Before delving into the thesis, it is not only important to explain why the study took the 3-paper route, but also to clarify the reasoning behind my choice of topic for the last paper (Paper 3).

As earlier noted, this study was conducted during a period of crisis. That alone solicited a solution-driven attitude. In addition, a noted precursor in the review of literature (Paper 1), is that women represent over 60% of informal activity in sub-Saharan Africa (GEM 2016/2017), mostly along the agricultural value chain. Further, the region is faced with a *financing gap of USD 42 billion* (AFFAWA/ AfDB, 2021), of which *USD 15.6 billion* is attributed to agricultural sector.

On the theoretical side, anecdotal studies propose that bottlenecks such as financial hardships or failure, could be a source of motivation and may even spur innovation (Ramani et al., 2019; Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006; Branzei & Abdelnour, 2010). However, while it is true that entrepreneurs are resilient, such assertions were not evidenced during the study period. In fact, any gains perceived to arise from failure were not notable, if at all. Instead, what was observed is a combination of political and health upheavals that instigated suffering and/or catastrophic loss.

So, given a) findings that BoP theory assumptions do not always hold in informal market conditions, b) poverty on individual and wide-scale basis albeit in resource-rich nations, and c) the fact that chances and/or options to recompose resources and try again are slim to none; it became necessary to ponder what other models may be considered to remedy the situation.

The search for other possible solutions invoked additional interviews. Thus, an extended data collection process ensued for about 3 to 4 months to match earlier durations and fit the window of open passage (when lockdown was lifted). Various local mechanisms were identified, e.g. Emyoga (Parish models), the National Agriculture Advisory Services Program (NAADS), Village Savings and Loans Accounts (VSLAs), Savings and Credit Cooperatives and Operative Organization or Society (SACCOS), and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC). However, at the time, these alternatives were also adversely affected by events.

As such, Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) (see Dutt et al., 2016) were considered.

Figure 9 below illustrates an earlier mind map for Paper 3, which is symbolic of a move away from overreliance on MNE-led models. The thin arrows indicate double-pronged action by other actors and elements within the ecosystem to reduce adverse contextual characteristics, with emphasis on gender relevance as an important element.

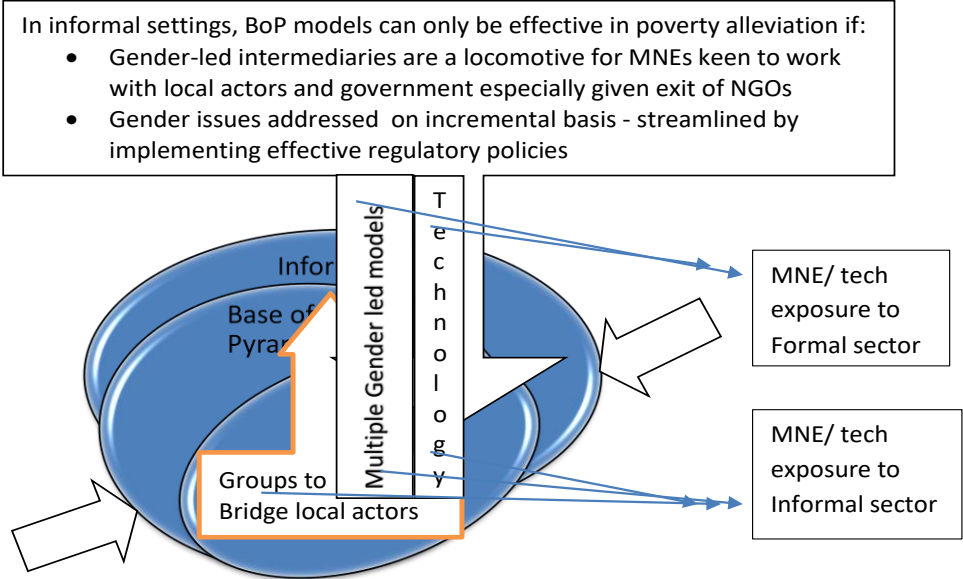


Figure 9: Conceptualizing the Role of Intermediaries at the BoP

1.6.1.4 Introducing Paper 3 – The Relevance of Role Formation

In the last leg of this study, Paper 3 elaborates upon how the gap observed in Paper 2 is currently addressed within the region. The study ponders what role, if any, Open System Intermediaries play as an alternative (OSIs) (Dutt et al., 2016) to bridge the huge gap between informal and formal ecosystem actors (Stam & Spigel, 2016; Wurth et al., 2022).

The follow-on research question in the last part of the exploration transforms into: How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence entrepreneurship in highly informal contexts?

To demonstrate how OSIs yield agency, this narrative explores Business and Professional Women (BPW), a non-profit gender-led network (hence OSI), with a history of practice since 1919. The purpose of this organization is to bridge between informal and formal ecosystem actors. The OSI has a horizontal hierarchy, as members voluntarily support causes that represent local issues. They address these issues via advocacy within government institutions or by forging international partnerships. This organizations' "historical" data was supplemented with responses from the 13 representatives of private sector organizations and interviews of 12 BPW members.

Building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Huang & Knight, 2017), a typology of role formation by OSIs in Informal *Entrepreneurial Networks* (IENs) is derived. The proposed model is framed by classifying activities of OSI members, explaining the rationale through which their roles emerge, and noting the order or sequence in which they occur. While the investigation of Dutt et al. (2016), upon which this study builds, was more or less at the macro level and based on country analysis using World Bank data, this research goes deeper into a micro level subnational analysis where the OSI role(s) is used as the yardstick (see Chapter 4).

The research demonstrates *how* OSIs, whether voluntarily or otherwise, support ecosystem actors to create, strengthen, and sustain entrepreneur relationships, as producers and beneficiaries of the resultant synergies; towards crystallizing applicable frameworks that may better match the context. The narrative reveals that where informality is a vital denominator, OSIs encourage *freedom of engagement* (Shantz et al., 2020; Sen, 1999) which in turn nurtures and buttresses *responsible ecosystems* (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020; Khanna, 2018). Also, that microentrepreneurs' low capacity to network (Greenbank, 2000 in Williams et al., 2016) is fueled by institutional inefficiencies (Marti & Mair, 2009), especially when practitioners do not create more dynamic safe spaces to prioritize local needs and/or reform, over tax collection (Kistruck et al., 2015).

Overall, following qualitative research designs, data collection, analysis, and theory building occur intermittently or sequentially. As respondents led conversations, and a light grounded theory organically evolved to augment semi-structured interviews; the research developed varyingly across the groups. And as responses snowballed into new questions, the structure of data collection instruments varyingly transformed according to the different roles played by each actor; thereby revealing commonalities and peculiarities within the data.

Highlights and emerging works from Papers 1, 2 and 3:

An early version of Paper 1 was presented at the European Academy of Management (EURAM) 2021 Conference which was organized by the University of Montreal in Canada. Paper 2 was presented at the Academy of Management (AoM) 2022 Conference, held in Seattle USA under the theme “Creating a Better World Together”. A revised version was accepted for the AIB conference in July 2024 in Seoul, South Korea. Additionally, the earlier version of Paper 3 was presented at the Innodays 2022 Conference, which was held in Casablanca, Morocco.

The review of literature spanning a period of over 20 years reveals that the body of knowledge is mostly based on secondary data, with a maligned gender perspective (Rosca et al., 2022). Even so, the study differs from recent ones, e.g. Dembek et al. (2019; 2020) or Borchardt et al. (2021) by conceptualizing a technological pyramid on top of the pre-existing population pyramid, to explore the link between entrepreneurship and (informal) societal growth, where gender is a key descriptor (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Duflo, 2012; Webb et al., 2020). Thereby revealing an incomplete picture.

All in all, while the starting point of the study revisits the central tenets of BoP theory, including that businesses can profit by focusing on local host communities (London & Hart, 2004); the exploration does not categorically state whether this is true or not. Instead, as microentrepreneur - MNE interactions are laid bare, what ends up happening elaborates upon, and thereby sharpens, studies on entrepreneur relations, whether as individuals (Granovetter, 1973; 1985), networks (Aldrich et al., 1983; Huang & Knight, 2017), or both (Latour, 2007).

1.7 Thesis Overview

To clearly walk the reader through this thesis: the research gap is highlighted in section 1.1 at the beginning of this introduction, along with the connection between the 3 papers, as well as the overall contribution of the research to knowledge. The identified research problem stems from theoretical gaps as stated in the definition, and contextual gaps as explained in the background section (see 1.2). This foundation forms the basis upon which the research and study context were selected. Thereafter, major pillars and foundations of the study i.e. the central research question, derived sub questions, aims and objectives, and justification for the research are expounded upon in section 1.3. Section 1.4 documents the research backbone, i.e. methodology.

The methods, as a thread which holds the whole study together, are comprised of philosophical considerations, a research strategy, and study design; from which Papers 2 and 3 were developed as summarized in sections 1.5 and 1.6 above, before concluding the introduction.

Next, Chapter 2.0 below contains a review of existing scholarly articles on the topic (see Paper 1). Reviews allow researchers to gauge and assess what is already known about a chosen topic, which helps to avoid repetition as a research gap is identified to inform the rest of the exploration. As well, reviews give readers a glimpse into the research and explain how the studies are arrived at.

Data collection, interpretation, analysis, and itemized outcomes from the empirical study are documented in Chapters 3.0 and 4.0 (see Paper 2 & 3 respectively). Each paper is anchored in a different theory, although a commonality across both is that they build upon *networks theory* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Both studies also engage a qualitative inductive approach and context of informality, informed by phase 3 of data collection (Grodal et al., 2021, Gioia et al, 2013). However, given the different theoretical lens, each study generated itemized findings, discussions, and recommendations, which developed varyingly from the data (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Overall study findings are documented in Chapter 5.0, showing how this exploration addresses the main research question, while making inference as to how empirical findings compare or contrast with existing knowledge (see sections 5.1 and 5.2) along with the overall study recommendation. While based on role-formation, it is not without shortfalls or drawbacks, which are both discussed earlier in Chapter 4. The overall research contribution is noted in section 5.4.

Lastly, reflections upon the measures which were undertaken towards increasing accuracy during the research journey are explained. Triangulation was employed by engaging different respondent groups, deploying a multi-method approach that combines interviews with a case study, arrived at by using different sampling techniques, and revisiting different theories. Other elements of this rigorous study framework, e.g. writing style challenges, power sharing with respondents, or other study choices, are also reflected upon before closing. References are listed in Chapter 6.0, and finally, relevant exhibits and appendices are attached in Chapter 7.0.

Drawing this chapter to a close, Table 4 below gives an overview of the thesis.

Table 4: Thesis Structure

Chapter No.	Chapter Title	Paper Title
Chapter 1	Introduction	
Chapter 2	Paper 1: Review of Literature Conceptual Paper Thematic Review	<i>Entrepreneurship in Informal Contexts at the Base of the Pyramid: A Review and Research Agenda</i>
Chapter 3	Paper 2: Entrepreneurial Ghosting Methodology (Exploring) Empirical study substantiated with primary data collected from urban Microentrepreneurs regional MNEs, and key private-sector organizations	<i>Entrepreneurial Ghosting:</i> <i>An open-ended qualitative theoretical development approach into the evolution of Microentrepreneur – Multinational Enterprise (MNE) relationships</i>
Chapter 4	Paper 3: The Relevance of Role Formation Methodology (Showcasing) Empirical study Primary data obtained by conducting interviews substantiated with secondary “historical” data from OSI case study, and the key private sector organizations within the ecosystem.	<i>How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence entrepreneurial growth in highly informal ecosystems?</i> <i>The relevance of Role Formation</i> Highlights characteristics, practices, and processes of OSIs
Chapter 5	Overall Findings and Discussion	

2.0 CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF LITERATURE (PAPER 1)

Brief Overview and Highlights of the Paper

This paper is the first in a series of 3. The research begins with a broad search for literature on entrepreneurship in informal contexts at the Base of the Pyramid (BoP). Using specific key terms and narrowing down the results by document type, taking only reviews and journal articles; the study winds up with 296 records which are sorted and thematically reviewed. The purpose of this review is to gauge how much knowledge exists on the topic thus far. At the time of writing the first draft in 2019, there was an apparent reduction in BoP populations from 4 to about 3.4 billion. However, upon refreshing the selection, recent data indicates that the situation has changed since. It is now apparent that the trends are indicative of a negative trajectory, which evokes concern.

To check the adequacy level of records included in this review, 3 master review articles namely Dembek et al. (2019), Borchadt et al. (2019) and Kolk et al. (2018) were positioned as anchor literature and their bibliometrics compared to the list of selected articles. Particularly, the recent review of 276 articles (Dembek et al., 2019) resonated, as they followed a similar route of search terms; with the exception that this article focuses on the informality context. As well, my research includes an emerging BoP4.0 theme which the 2019 article does not. The other two reviews also compare, although they differ due to being conceptual, with each having specific dimensions by which existing literature is grouped and analyzed. This assessment gives the researcher more confidence in the fair representation of the selected sample for this review. The paper is a precursor to empirical research as further documented here in the Thesis.

An early version of this article was accepted for presentation at the European Academy of Management (EURAM) Annual Conference in 2021. The conference was held under the theme “Reshaping Capitalism for a Sustainable World”. I acknowledge the contribution of supervisors led by Professor Sreevas Sahasranamam as indicated in the Appendix section (see Pg. 248).

Below is Paper 1 in its entirety.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INFORMAL SPACES AT THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID

A Review and Research Agenda

Abstract

This article reviews literature on Entrepreneurship at the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) with regard to informality. Literature spanning a period of over 20 years from 2002 to 2023 was selected from the Web of Science portal, resulting in 296 records. Another selection was made from the resultant sample, based on relevance to the chosen topic and leaning towards empirical studies. Data was categorized under five themes i.e. a) Attributes of Entrepreneurship in Informal Settings, b) Pro-poor or Frugal Innovations. The notable dominance of Global Value Chains literature informed the third theme i.e., c) Evolution of Entrepreneurship at the BoP alongside Globalization, leading to d) the Role of Microenterprise and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs). Due to ongoing adverse events, e.g. the pandemic, e) Entrepreneurship during Crisis, was also included.

Existing knowledge predominantly suggests a positive trend between MNE presence and growth, even as critics highlight the concentration of MNEs at the top, with an inverse trend against Prahalad (2002)'s population pyramid. In relation to such observations, this review uniquely highlights antithetical trends between MNE presence and informal entrepreneurship, e.g. between Nigeria and South Africa, which are equally MNE dense. Moreover, while local entrepreneurs' roles are proposed to evolve from largely non-existent to consideration as suppliers and partners, a shift in MNE roles from sell-to-the-poor at all cost and unidirectional fortune finding in BoP 1.0 to fortune enabling strategies that include non-profit strategies in BoP 4.0, is critical towards value commitment. Challenges in measurability alongside abstraction hinder appreciation and/or achievement of consensus in BoP theory. Subsequently, a need to empirically evidence how MNEs build cross-sector partnerships with local actors is spotlighted (Dembek et al., 2021).

Key words: Base of the Pyramid (BoP), Informality, Literature Review, Microenterprise, Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), sub-Saharan Africa, Technology

1.0 Introduction and Background to the Study

“I have said before that trade justice is a meaningful way by which developed countries can show commitment to bringing an end to global poverty.”

Nelson Mandela, 2005

Entrepreneurship is regarded as a solution to poverty (Adom et al., 2023; Nsereko et al., 2022) particularly in highly informal contexts (Marti & Mair, 2009; Williams et al., 2016; Yunus, 2017).

On one hand, there is a high prevalence of informality across the globe (GEM, 2016; IMF, 2018), especially amongst local or indigenous businesses as the backbone of our global society, carrying enough weight to make or break some of those economies (ILO, 2002 & 2016). The International Labour Organization indicates that over 61.2% of the working global population i.e. about 2 billion people over the age of fifteen, are employed informally (ILO, 2009), with significant contribution to growth world-wide, averaging 40% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 38% in sub-Saharan Africa, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (IMF, 2018). Over 68% of those 2 billion people represent Asia Pacific’s total informal work force, contributed by China and India. Particularly, over 80% of Africa’s total work force operates informally.

Babitt et al. (2015, Pg. 164) describe informality as a “heterogeneous group of activities and employment relationships that share one common characteristic – the lack of legal recognition, regulation or protection” (cited from Lloyd-Evans 2008, Pg. 1885).

On the other hand, informality is prevalent in Base of the Pyramid (BoP) communities: i.e. *those who live on less than USD 1,500 per person per year* previously (Prahalad & Hart, 2004), or *USD 3,000 more recently* (London et al., 2014; 2020). Even though the overall BoP population gradually reduced from 4 billion in 2002 to 3.4 billion in 2019, not only have the trends reversed upwards, but also by contrast, only 8.7% of the rich controlled 85% of the global economy in 2017 compared to 20% back in 2002 (D. Prahalad, 2019). That signals a persistently widening poverty gap instead (see Figure 13 in Appendix, Pg. 107).

Such a promising yet disproportionate state of affairs calls for an open conversation about how best to leverage informality for growth (also see Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

Back in 2005, the great president Nelson Mandela took to Trafalgar Square for the *Make Poverty History* rally, another of his many monumental acts after ending apartheid in South Africa. The attention he gave to poverty alleviation with emphasis on addressing trade injustices symbolizes its criticality (Mandela, 1990; 2005; 2008). Yet he never lived to again see the world deeply at its peril: only this time with a far wider reach, way beyond his beloved resource-rich homeland.

Due to an untimely turn of events brought on by the mix of a global pandemic and pre-existing challenges such as political instability, the global economy is riddled with increasing rate of inflation, high interest rates, housing shortages, etc.; which are poverty indicators (IMF, 2023), as cited during protests (BBC, 2024; SABC, July 2021). Moreover, poverty rates are envisaged to rise, and much more likely to spread into new territory (World Bank, 2021; 2023).

What would Mandela say in this day? More importantly, what would he urge us to do about it? Those observations set the stage for the rest of the discussion below.

This article reviews existing BoP literature (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Nsereko et al., 2022), seeking insights into the significantly researched but relatively under-spotlighted dimension of informality (Chen, 2001; Mair & Marti, 2009; Webb et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2016). To appreciate the status of this topic, hundreds of articles from the Web of Science spanning a period of over 20 years from 2002 to 2023 are sorted, resulting in a selection of 296 studies. The sample was reviewed by abstract, and a selection of articles chosen, based on relevance to the topic. The researcher is interested in understanding the role that entrepreneurship plays in mainstream communities that were once considered as being at the peripheral of society, and to document the status of knowledge on the nuanced opportunities and challenges in the informal BoP context.

The review highlights five main themes: starting with attributes of entrepreneurship in informal settings (Adom et al., 2023; Marti & Mair, 2009; Yunus, 2017; Williams et al., 2016) and pro-poor innovations (Ramani et al., 2009; Borchardt et al., 2021) as the study interest. Given the dominance of MNE-led theory and related to globalization, the study is led into notes on the evolution of entrepreneurship at the BoP (Bruton et al., 2013; Hill & Mudambi, 2010; Prashantham et al., 2018). This leads into the role of microenterprise as a standard unit of measurement of entrepreneurship at the BoP, and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Karnani, 2007;

Arora & Romijn, 2012; Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2008; 2020; Rosca et al., 2019; 2022). Lastly, entrepreneurship during crisis as characteristic of the study period, and as a growing domain, was also included (Branzei & Abdelnour, 2010; Williams & Shepherd, 2016; 2019).

Four overarching trends bubble to the surface from the thematic review. A high presence of MNEs in developed or emerging technologically advanced places is generally linked to economic growth (Bruton et al., 2013; Hart, 2017; Simanis, 2014; Tobias et al., 2016). Yet contrastingly, an opposite trend between MNEs and Prahalad's population pyramid depicts a persistent digital and financial divide (Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Pankomera & van Greunen, 2019; Thinguri et al., 2014). While some address poverty (e.g. Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), there is over-reliance on claiming mutuality, proportionality, and multiplicity (London & Hart, 2010; London et al., 2014; 2020). In the fewer cases where MNE linkages with locals are observed (Prashantham et al., 2018), and those locals are considered as suppliers or business partners, some propose that this yields lower rates of informality (Adom et al., 2018; Lowe et al., 2018). However, due to abstraction and challenges in measurability, evidence of those propositions is still lacking (Borchardt et al., 2020; Dembek et al., 2019; Kolk et al., 2013; 2018): thereby warranting more empirical explorations.

By reviewing BoP literature that spans over 20 years while focusing on the under-spotlighted dimension of informality (Mair & Marti, 2009; Nsereko et al., 2022; Williams et al, 2016), this article exposes antithetical trends between informality, MNE presence, and growth; thereby contributing towards theoretical and contextual articulation (Chatterjee, 2016). As reflected by the sample, MNEs dominate existing literature regarding e.g. customer service or market absorption, to map or connect poverty to purchase (Simanis, 2014; London et al., 2014; 2020; 2022), as opposed to treating those at the BoP as suppliers (Karnani, 2007; Arora & Romijn, 2012; Tasavori et al., 2015; Brix-Asala et al., 2021). Anyway, most studies are based on secondary data, pertaining to US, UK, Germany, and Netherlands: which are not recognized BoP hubs. For contextual suitability, appreciating the plight of locals is critical (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

Ultimately, this study is a precursor to empirical research from the highly informal hub of sub-Saharan Africa, aimed at widening the current knowledge base. The identified knowledge gap is *to empirically showcase how MNEs build cross sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019).

The review builds upon Dembek et al. (2019) who categorize studies from BoP 1.0 to BoP 3.0, by focusing on the increasingly explored but certainly under spotlighted informality context, adding emerging BoP 4.0 discourse (see Bhawe & Zahra, 2019; Borchadt et al., 2020; Rosca et al., 2020).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2.0 below outlines methods that were engaged to identify relevant literature, detailing article selection, synthesis, and analysis processes. Themes arising from review are documented in the next section (3.0), with emphasis on understanding the nature of entrepreneurship transpiring in informal contexts. Thereafter, section 4.0 summarizes trends or patterns that bubble to the surface from this content. Results from the review exercise are noted in section 5.0 along with suggestions of new or additional topics for future research. Lastly, references are listed, followed by appendices.

2.0 Methodology and Selection Process

To commence, several quick initial searches were conducted from the Web of Science (WoS) portal before settling on a final string. At the top of the database's first page, Core Collection is chosen from the drop-down choices. Then search, by topic, using the string "Base of the Pyramid" OR "Bottom of the Pyramid" (both as phrases), AND (Entrepreneur*) AND (Informal*).

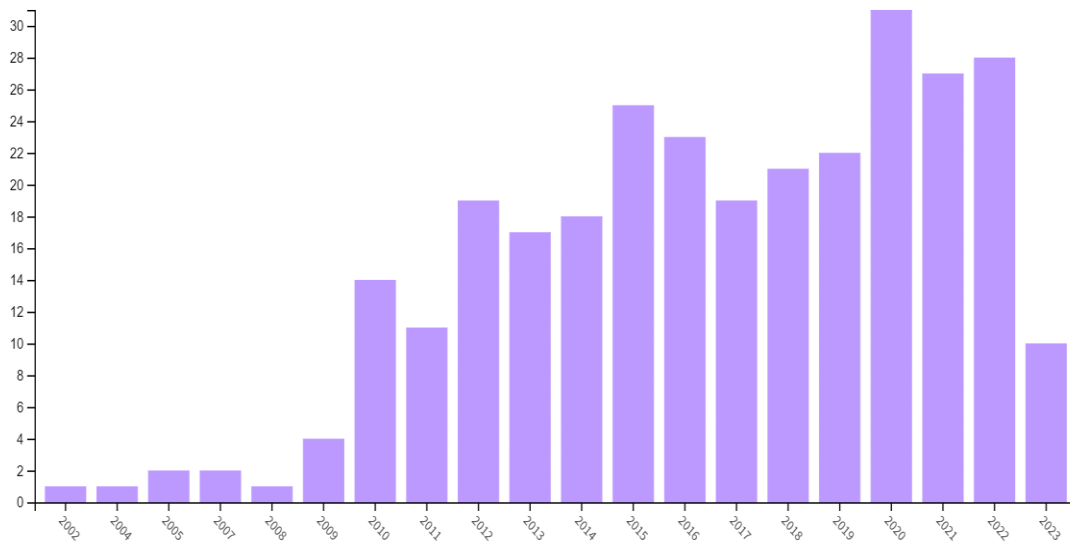
The star on those two terms helps to capture all records where these words appear in various constructive forms. Since the study is not focused on granulating the informal economy as a theory but more about entrepreneurship in the informal context, terms like "grey economy" were left out. Moreover, in line with the study field, the term informal* includes articles that document pro-poor, subsistence, low-income, and fugal innovations, which are key elements of interest.

The resultant 569 records published in "highly recognized" journals were refined by Business (252) and Management (172) as systematically held under Web of Science Categories, resulting in 336 returns. Those were further refined by document type to include published articles (278) and reviews (18); thereby winding up with 296 articles. This excluded book chapters (37), conference proceedings (20), editorial material (18), a few more books (4), a book review, and early access articles (6). The 296 resultant articles were firstly analyzed as below, then reviewed by abstract in excel afterwards, and sorted by relevance to the topic as well as dominance.

2.1 Preliminary Analysis and Observations

To appreciate the status of knowledge on the chosen topic and perhaps gain insight on its future trajectory, the 296 resultant articles were first analyzed within the database. Below is a brief snapshot of when and where the bulk of articles were published, i.e. the most common journals. To understand dominant contexts, countries which the studies pertain to are also noted. Lastly, main authors, their topics of interest, and common sub-streams by citation words are identified.

Year of Publication: The bar chart/ Graph 1 below shows the number of articles published annually since 2000. There is growing interest in BoP research, having picked up speed in 2010: with a recent reduction during the past two years (more pronounced in 2021 than 2022). This slump could be due to the abrupt interruption by the Covid19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown, which globally affected research output and significantly impacted the education sector. Or it may be due to concentration on Covid19 research during that time.



Graph 1: Existing Literature by Year of Publication

By Journal of Publication: Table 5 below indicates the journals where most of the research is published. Journal of Business Research (JBR), Journal of Business Ethics (JBE), Technovation, Business and Society, Business Strategy and the Environment dominate the list with 17, 16, 12,

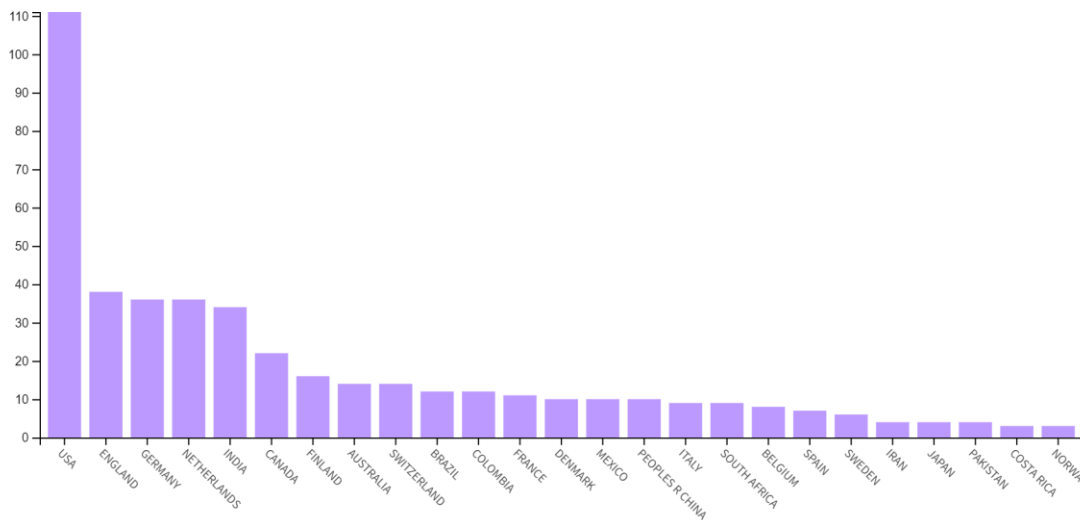
10 and 8 publications respectively. Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Journal of Business venturing and Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice have 5, 4 and 2 articles respectively, while two Academy of Management journals, i.e. Academy of Management Journal (AMJ) and Academy of Management Perspectives (AMP), feature about 2 articles each. The range of journals symbolizes a strong multi-disciplinary aspect within existing knowledge: bringing more enriching literature into the field of entrepreneurship.

Table 5: Most Representative Journals of Publication

Publication Title/ Journal	Number of Articles
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	17
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	16
TECHNOVATION	12
BUSINESS SOCIETY	10
BUSINESS STRATEGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT	8
JOURNAL OF SERVICES MARKETING	7
JOURNAL OF MACROMARKETING	6
STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID	6
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS REVIEW	5
STRATEGIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP JOURNAL	5
BUSINESS HORIZONS	4
ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE	4
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS VENTURING	4
INTERNATIONAL MARKETING REVIEW	4
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES	4
JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP	3
JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EMERGING ECONOMIES	3
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP	3
TECHNOLOGICAL FORECASTING AND SOCIAL CHANGE	3
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES	2
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2

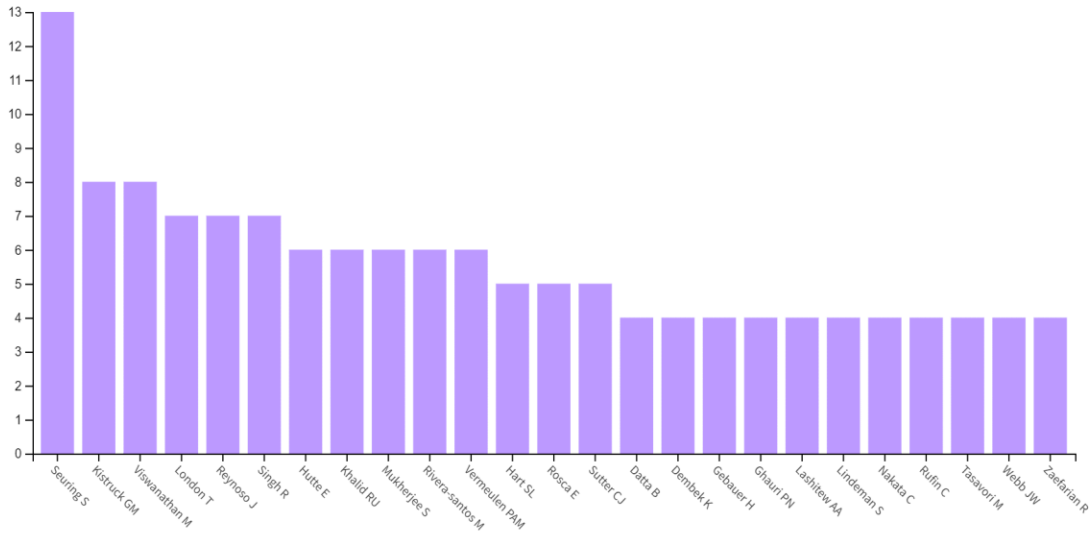
By Country of Research: Graph 2 below illustrates that 37.5% of the sample, i.e., over 110 of the records, pertain to USA as a leader in this research stream: representing a huge chunk and a wide margin. It is followed by England representing 12.8%, with Germany and Netherlands closely behind, each equally represented by 12.2% of the articles. India follows with 34 articles representing 11%. Next are Canada, Finland, Australia, Switzerland, Brazil, Colombia, and France. China is further down with only 10 articles, and South Africa with 9.

With the exception of India (5th place) which is home to over 25% of the BoP Population, Brazil (10th) the leading country in informal activity contribution to GDP at close to 50% (IMF, 2018; 2019), Colombia (11th), Mexico (14th) and South Africa (17th), most BoP research pertains to countries that are neither known to hold significant BoP populations, nor regarded as highly informal. This symbolizes a kind of paradox. Africa is home to 56% of the BoP population yet only about 9 articles pertain to South Africa as the most research on the continent, while Uganda for instance, is not represented. Of course, there could be more or less articles upon further cross-examination, however the overall indication from these preliminaries provides a firm basis and justification for further investigation: particularly in the under-spotlighted sub-Saharan context.



Graph 2: Records Arranged by Country of Research

By Most common Authors: Graph 3 below highlights the most common Authors in this dataset. Seuring S dominates with 13 articles – mostly researching Sustainability within Supply Chains models and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Kistruck and Viswanathan follow with 8 articles each. Kistruck studies informal entrepreneurs highlighting factors such as taxation policy and institutional voids in collaboration with Webb and others. London as one of the most renowned authors on BoP market-based models follows along with Reynoso (7 articles each). Others with more articles are Rosca E, Dembek K, Tasavori, and Borchardt M. Ndubisi, represented here with 5, 4, 4 and 3 articles respectively, and by association, Webb, Bruton and more.



Graph 3: Records Arranged by Most Common Authors

2.1.1 Dominant Citation Topics

Figure 10 below shows the most commonly cited topics or areas of knowledge in the 296 articles. The dataset is peculiarly dominated by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with over 34% of the articles listing it as a key citation word. CSR is followed by Entrepreneurship (ENT) as a key citation word with about 22% representation, Customer Satisfaction (CS) with 15%, and Knowledge Management (KM) with 10%. Other key citation words combined account for just over 10% of the articles, with most cited by 3 or less articles. The highlights correspond with Seuring S., the most cited author (see Graph 2.3), who mostly explores sustainability and CSR.

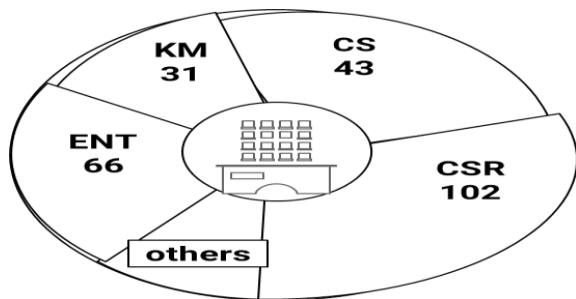


Figure 10: Dominant Citation Topics within the Literature

2.1.2 Data Sorting & Categorization

Following the “helicopter view” above, it would appear suitable to zero-in on the 66 articles tagged under entrepreneurship. However, given paucity of relevant empirical studies, and that most itemizations are not absolute, the search was widened to include other categories. So, manual considerations were made to categorize articles based on commonalities (Grodal et al., 2021). Accordingly, the articles were sorted using excel. First, upon reviewing abstracts and citation words, coded for selection was based on relevance to the topic. Thereafter, they were grouped into themes as explained below (see also Figure 14 in Appendix, Pg. 107).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. First, literature on entrepreneurial identity, challenges faced by entrepreneurs, resource-based theories in demand and supply, or managing decisions when exploiting opportunity is relevant. So, I included it. Second, however, most articles in the sample explore customer habits and market absorption as evidenced by publications in marketing journals. But since demand from the BoP is evident on the ground and abundant in theory, that is not vital for the review. Thus, I excluded most. Third, most studies are based on secondary data, but I sought key empirical works with contextual relevance, which are relatively few. That is partly the reasoning behind employing a wider review method and perusing many abstracts in excel. Lastly, to appreciate more of the knowledge out there, 3 recently published reviews which conceptualize existing knowledge are drawn upon for comparison, to assess adequacy of the selected content.

Upon selection, in-text reviews were made, mainly in introduction and findings, to categorize the studies under themes, based on their similarities. Over 70 articles were fully read. Silos of articles under the same theme may embed varying methods, theoretical lens, or context. Where clusters of articles explore the same topic, or are by the same authors, the effort leans towards newer research. Most studies document business ethics and sustainability, CSR, and/or marketing as indicated in the Journal of Business Ethics or Marketing publishing databases. So, from this initial analysis, a visible pattern forms, highlighting MNEs among key actors who dominate existing BoP literature. This is peculiar from the get-go, as one would expect microentrepreneurs to dominate such discussions. Evidently, there is growing discussion on Pro-poor innovation; however, the status is yet to capture deeper nuances. Such pattern recognition instigates a focus on key conversations of interest, which enabled me to draw a mind map through which the topic is examined.

3.0 Emerging Themes from this Review

Cross examination of selected articles broadly highlights 5 dominant and relevant themes namely: a) Attributes of Entrepreneurship in informal contexts and b) Pro-poor /Frugal Innovation as a core context descriptor. Dominance of market-based literature guides the next choice c) the Evolution of Entrepreneurship at the BoP alongside Globalization, which leads this discussion further on into d) Role of Microentrepreneurs and MNEs, with emphasis on technology. Lastly, based on what was transpiring at this time during the study, i.e. the pandemic, it was deemed necessary to include e) Entrepreneurship during Crisis. As documented here below, those multidisciplinary dimensions were coupled with a timely integrative approach to complement the research.

3.1 Attributes of Entrepreneurship in Informal Settings

Entrepreneurship as a discipline has rapidly evolved over the past 30 years, more so since 2010: with diverse theories generating heated debate questioning its suitability as a solution to poverty (see e.g. Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). Earlier studies introduce entrepreneurs by showing how their identity differs from non-entrepreneurs (Gartner, 1985). Others distinguish between entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship (Bruton et al., 2013) by mostly examining them within social frameworks e.g. groups or teams (de Bruin & Teasdale, 2019), with a move away from primarily looking at team characteristics lately (Zahra & Dess, 2001 response to Shane & Venkantaraman, 2000). Instead, recent meta-frameworks delineate the opportunity creation process: from initiation to engagement and performance, adopting tools and approaches which aid more effective decision-making and minimize failure (Shepherd et al., 2019).

Since Baumol's (1990; 1996) landmark research on *creative destruction*, constructing a complete picture of informality increasingly rivals the poverty puzzle. Causes of informality are recognized under 3 literature streams. The modernization theorists note underdevelopment as its genesis, neo-Marxist or structural economists suggest too little regulation by government, and more recently neoliberal theorists, who decry too much regulation (Huang et al., 2020). Closely intertwined with labour laws, between modernization and neoliberal theories, informality is sometimes determined by government policy in less regulated sectors and trades, barred from free economic participation, or declared illegal e.g., the Kerala story that was banned in India. This is about Hindu and Muslim culture that was labelled as inciting violence (Roy, 2009 a & b; Sahasranamam & Ball, 2018).

De Soto's (1989) works examined survivalist micro-entrepreneurs' motivation to start a venture and found that the choice to remain informal is mainly influenced by lack of disposable income, high costs of complex registration and licensing processes, high probability to pay tax, and lack of legal representation (Adom et al., 2023; Kistruck et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2016). As such, over 10 years ago, the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) concluded that such activities should no longer be considered as "structural anomalies" in regional development (Hussain, 2011).

Newer studies cite informality as a result of and/or contributing factor to, weak governance and institutional voids (Mair & Marti, 2009; Yunus, 2017). The urban informal sector arises out of necessity often from unemployment, which is not a lack of capacity, but lack of opportunities in constrained markets. Yet resource scarcity leads to unsustainability, which is symbolized by high rates of demise in the first 2 to 3 years from when a venture is founded (Bosma & Kelly, 2019).

As some focus on recognizing critical elements within our economic and social environment e.g. institutional voids, others examine the fundamental drivers of entrepreneurship such as individual characteristics of entrepreneurs in opportunity-based environments versus necessity-based ones in resource-rich but less developed settings (Adom et al., 2023; De Soto 1989; 2000; Munoz, 2010; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016). Others focus on the basis for their intrinsic or extrinsic motivations, e.g. life course (Jayawarna et al., 2013) citing needs, power, status, rewards, and also recently including self-efficacy (Nsereko et al., 2022). Shepherd et al. (2021) examines slum dwellers at the BoP: and find that health for them and their household and education fees for dependents are motivators for venturing decisions. Also, a collectivistic and fatalistic culture where actors employ family members or react without urgency to unemployment, and work in isolated clusters or "islands" are noted (Adom et al., 2023).

To seize opportunity through the lens of entrepreneurship, researchers explore pre-existing conducive environments as antecedents of innovation. The most cited factors or elements centre around high flexibility and better work-life balance, coupled with ease of entry, ease of doing business, and reduced bureaucracy. In Asia, some women report that the informal sector allows them more freedom to achieve a work-life balance (Chen, 2001; Babbitt et al., 2015), while in Uganda they own one in every 3 (micro) businesses (Nsereko et al., 2022; World Economic Forum/ WEF, 2021). Others document how actors navigate challenges e.g. poor response mechanisms,

lack of legal recognition and/or representation and a general exclusion from most financial access (Mair & Marti, 2009; Yunus, 2017), not to mention negative perceptions or positioning (Greenbank, 2000), and fear of exposure to tax regimes (Kistruck et al., 2015).

In more recent developments, a heavily market-leaning study by Pels et al. (2022) asserts that informal sellers in formal markets face challenges which are left unmet by regulatory frameworks: due to which there is an opportunity cost when informal actors block would-be exchange activities from experienced or developed actors in the formal sector. This study is based on the three pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive: arguing that only one of these conditions is met: normative. They propose a cultural cognitive reading of institutions, noting that the gap is an access challenge and therefore a market problem. Importantly, they *suggest a market facing intermediary between formal and informal sectors*, which they visualize as two distinct institutional categories. Such views earlier underlined decisions to internally restructure India's pharmaceuticals industry; thereby propelling growth (Adbi et al., 2019).

From an organizational perspective, interest is drawn to elements pertaining to key actors in the ecosystem (Stam, 2015), where the informal sector provides more ground for local development (Shantz et al., 2018; Webb et al., 2020). In one such field experiment conducted in Ghana, cooperatives which operate under flat models are examined against those with vertical hierarchical structures (Shantz et al., 2020). They find that groups with more formal and vertical hierarchy experience more conflict than those where members take on shared responsibility under flat, or more informal, and often voluntary-led social models.

Another important consideration is gender (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2001) whereby entrepreneurs are often "*doubly disadvantaged*" (Murzacheva et al., 2019) even in legal and institutional frameworks (Yunus, 2017; Mair & Marti, 2009). For instance, while they represent over 60% of activity in sub-Saharan Africa (GEM, 2016/2017), the funding gap for women in agricultural value chains is a staggering USD 15.6 billion (AFFAWA/ AfDB, 2021). Nonetheless, across all levels of development, women are 20% more likely to have necessity-based rather than opportunity-based motives as they establish a start-up (De Soto, 1989; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016; Yunus, 2017) - even where no significant differences in education levels exist (WEF, 2016).

Articles in this silo shade light on characteristics of entrepreneurs who operate in informal spaces or their formal counterparts, noting antecedents to innovation (see e.g. Jayawarna et al., 2013), challenges and/or opportunities, or dimensions that breed informality and in turn persist because of it, with attributes that lean towards pro-poor innovation as the next theme.

3.2 Pro-poor or Frugal Innovation at the BoP

World over, an estimated 1 billion people live in *abject* poverty (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), mapped to 110 developing countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. 56% are attributed to sub-Saharan Africa and 25% to India (IMF, 2018; 2020). *Poverty* was defined as “*material deprivation*” that occurs when income is too low to cover basic necessities i.e. food, clothing and shelter (United Nations, 1999). As the sub-Saharan population drastically increased from 186 M in 1950 to 823 M in 2008 and further to 1.107 B in 2019 (IEA et al., 2019); overall poverty levels rose globally in the early 2000s, further increasing following a recession due to the US housing market crash in 2008, but reduced by 736 million from 4 to about 3.4 billion by 2019. However, due to the recent Covid 19 pandemic and other global adversities, there is deterioration from progress garnered earlier, with about *half a billion* receding back into poverty (IMF, 2023).

C. K. Prahalad is credited with birthing the widely recognized “Base of the Pyramid” (BoP) concept as a substitute for donations and foreign aid models of the past, deemed to have failed in the battle to eradicate poverty (Prahalad, 2001; Prahalad & Hammond, 2002). The report notes that lack of education leads to poor decision-making, thereby giving rise to an intrinsic inability to take advantage of new opportunities in environments characterized by repetitive calamity. As well, prevalence of ill health and lack of proper medical care posit inability to work effectively which breeds low life expectancy. Vulnerability, violence, voicelessness and exclusion are also factors.

To build knowledge on Pro-poor innovations, empirical research is interested in articulating the BoP *project* to ground theory in the context (Chatterjee, 2016). An older study in Kenya highlights how Sanergy, a provider of low-cost sanitation services to slumdweller (Esper et al., 2013 in London et al., 2014), aims to reduce deaths associated with diseases that are borne out of poor sanitation conditions, currently estimated at 1.7 million deaths worldwide. Sanergy is a regional MNE with a pro-poor component, thus referred to as a “BoP enterprise”.

Similarly, Ramani et al. (2009) draw from sanitization studies in India. Their findings are interpreted into three entrepreneur behaviors, i.e. collective, narrative, and compliant: with implications towards *self-regulation* as a substitute for *driven* small outfits.

In more sub-Saharan studies, an empirical qualitative study in Ghana shows that actors in varied arrangements, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), often tackle poverty without appreciating the context, thereby achieving less than desirable results (Alvarez & Barney, 2013 cited in Adom et al., 2023). They observe that because most entrepreneurial activities here are inherited or pre-destined, that characteristic alone leaves local's propensity to innovate limited. As well, a recent study in Uganda applies structural equation modelling to data from 243 community-based organization (CBO) owner managers as social entrepreneurs, to examine the mediating role of personal initiative in the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and social entrepreneurial venture creation through the lens of institutional theory. Their findings evidence that personal initiative partially mediates the relationship, with resource availability and institutional effectiveness counting towards the outcomes (Nsereko et al., 2022).

Naatu et al. (2022) investigate micro-franchising in Rwanda and find that with mission-driven shared identification where collectivist culture is established, franchisees are most likely to remain with the franchiser even during times of crisis. Hassan et al. (2022) also examines pro-poor adoption of service in the subsistence marketplace by comparing two data sets (urban versus rural). They find that factors affecting how consumers adopt services differ in nuanced contexts. As well, Tobias et al. (2016) examines coffee farmers in Rwanda, making key observations with regards to self-efficacy and resilience, noting effects on entrepreneurs in resource constrained environments.

Elsewhere, Borchardt et al. (2016; 2022) examined 30 MSEs in the fashion industry through the lens of BoP theory and find that as frugal innovations are made by reinterpreting fashion trends and reconfiguring resources; where inputs are received from larger players, the business is profitable for both MNEs and microenterprise. Borchardt et al. (2021) also examine how frugal innovations are leveraged in Brazil through the lens of dynamic capabilities. They highlight both barriers and successful practices which are used to maintain middle and low-income customers through innovations: such as physically updating the colonial location where businesses operate, or by joining social media marketing in order for entrepreneurs to increase visibility.

Another study in Indonesia investigates how digital entrepreneurs innovate in an unregulated market by engaging 16 experienced respondents including CEOs and managers at user, market, and regulatory levels (Prasetyo, 2022). They elucidate interactions between regulation and informality by observing reactions of entrepreneurs (see also Kistruck et al., 2015).

To sum up, Pro-poor innovations mostly represent farming and/or agriculture in local markets, health and sanitation, education, household goods and appliances, and renewable energy sectors. That notwithstanding, earlier reductions in the BoP population were attributed to globalization, as attributed to market-based or MNE-led supply chain models (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Thus, the review is guided towards that dominant theory.

3.3 Evolution of Entrepreneurship at the BoP alongside Globalization

In this silo of studies, entrepreneurship is regarded as an important concept that perhaps edges closer towards alleviating poverty (Bruton et al., 2013) *via globalization*: which is defined as the *process by which nations integrate through trade, investment, capital flow, labor migration and technology* (Kolk et al., 2018), explored mainly through the lens of stakeholder theory.

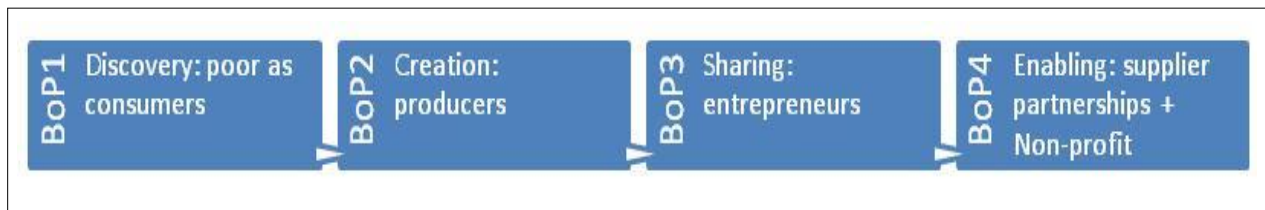
Studies on globalization as an avenue for growth mostly pertain to India, China, Brazil, and Mexico (Borchardt et al., 2020; Bruton et al., 2013; Subramanian et al., 2016), embedding a notable global value chains perspective. Most BoP literature is dominated by market-based MNE-led BoP theory (Bruton et al., 2013; London et al., 2014; 2020; 2022). BoP *market-based* approaches comprise of *business models developed by or in partnership with the private sector*; designed to *target the poorest segments of society as consumers, producers, and entrepreneurs* while preserving the social and cultural norms of host communities (London & Hart, 2010, Pg.2). MNEs are defined as *private businesses that operate across borders: having a footprint in several countries* (Prashantham & Kumar, 2019; Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). These models denounce international aid as a conduit for growth arguing that despite developed nations' aid to poor countries failed to deliver (Prahalad, 2001). Others agree on this (e.g. Banarjee & Duflo, 2011).

The central proposition of MNE-led BoP models is premised on *mutuality and multiplicity* whereby MNEs profit by selling goods and services for economic growth (Bruton et al., 2013).

Dembek et al. (2019) published a review of 276 articles on BoP theory, categorizing the studies from BOP 1.0 to 3.0. Out of these, only 22 are empirical: suggesting that the majority of existing knowledge is based on secondary data, symbolizing a need for more primary data in BoP research.

From proposing a sell-to-the-poor model (London & Hart, 2004; Prahalad & Hart, 2002) through fortune finding or discovery in BoP1.0, MNEs view poor communities as customers and play a major role in anchoring and deliberately seeding clusters of firms which propel economies from pre-emerging to emerging (Simanis & Hart, 2008). MNEs expand into markets as vital large employers, taxpayers, public service funders, and technology providers (Prashantham et al., 2018), and studies highlight 3 entrepreneurship processes; spillovers and catching up, brokering by intermediaries, and bottom-up approaches that arise. Informal knowledge is passed on by local communities and competition with local players results in readjustments e.g. in products pricing, standards, wages, employee mobility and knowledge transfers (Hill & Mudambi, 2010).

However, by applying stake holder theory, critics propose a shift to fortune creation i.e. viewing locals as last mile distributors or logistical providers in BoP 2.0 (Karnani, 2007; London & Anupindi, 2009; Tasavori et al., 2015), while others advance the lens of NGOs (Webb et al, 2010). Beyond this, BoP 3.0 is rooted in fortune sharing mechanisms that propose treating the poor as suppliers by supporting small scale farmers as co-venturing partners and building cross-sector partnerships (London & Hart, 2010), connecting poverty to purchase in informal markets (London et al., 2014; Tobias et al., 2016), and later as stewards (Hart, 2017). However, others argue that given a wide footprint, innovations that leverage MNEs capacity as inducers of *heterogeneity* through spillover effects are of particular interest (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019). Figure 11 below illustrates the evolution of MNE-led BoP literature.



Prahalad, 2001 - 2008 (fortune); Karnani, 2007 a & b (mirage); London & Hart, 2010; Borchardt et al., 2020

Figure 11: Evolution of BoP Theory from Discovery View to Cusp of Enabling Fortune

A recent review of interdisciplinary BoP theory synthesizes MNE behavior into value-commitment and profit-focused dimensions. Findings show that the two are negatively correlated overtime (Borchardt et al., 2020). The newly formed and evolving BoP 4.0 model proposes enabling fortune through both *for-profit and non-profit dimensions* by recognition of invisible resources, acknowledging the value of scientific knowledge, and fine-tuning it to address social and environmental issues: by inducing heterogeneity (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019) and *including non-profit strategies in the vision and mission of MNEs* (see also Rosca et al., 2019; 2022). Others investigate the relevance of Artificial Intelligence for entrepreneurship (Huang et al., 2023; Fu et al., 2023), questioning opportunity sharing in the gig economy in the recent Uber case (Kenner, 2018).

Some of the numerously debated underlying assumptions are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Underlying Assumptions of BoP models (Hill & Mudambi, 2010)

Mechanisms by which MNEs spur growth	Poverty alleviation by MNEs Documented units of analysis	Evolution of microentrepreneurs roles and their positioning over time
Employment: Engaging locals e.g., by providing jobs Knowledge spillovers: New ways of doing things Market realignments: Competitive pricing and quality improvements (Hill & Mudambi, 2010)	Mutuality: common interests measured by reciprocity	As consumers - sell at all cost discovery view of opportunity
	Multiplicity: Spurring activity through replicability of success stories within the host market	As suppliers: MNEs buy local produce as raw materials or exports e.g., agricultural products: opportunity creation
	Proportionality: comparative equitable contribution and/or distribution of activity, spoils, losses, or profits	As entrepreneurs: for instance, distributors or transport & logistics opportunity sharing
	Equitability: Shared prosperity level of win-win and acknowledgement of each actor's or other's importance	As business partners: allowing purchase of shares or through non-profit strategies enabling fortune

Other breakthroughs and landmark studies that examine entrepreneur interactions appear to have been muted in the past. Key among them are theories of embeddedness that delve into what transpires between entrepreneurs as individuals, shining a light on important dynamics such as the six degrees of separation (Granovetter, 1973; 1985). A few explore entrepreneurial networks as individuals or groups (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Aldrich & Kim, 2007; Huang & Knight, 2017),

more recently a cross between actor-and-network (ANT) (Latour, 2007), or a recently developing silo on entrepreneurial ecosystems (Stam & Spigel, 2016; Stam, 2018; Wurth et al., 2022).

Evidently, the bulk of articles on BoP theory are represented by marketing in Global Value Chains (GVCs) models, which still largely view the BoP as consumers. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also dominates past studies, inviting critique on ethics and raising questions on demand-based propositions (see e.g. Khalid & Seuring, 2019). Such discourse posits relevance for the quest to explore the link between informality, local entrepreneurship or innovation, and globalization.

3.4 The Role of Microenterprise and MNEs

Researchers collected and analyzed macro-economic data of 550 East African companies in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. Their annual data collected from over 255 countries demarcates the “Global South” as made up of 205 countries: 20 emerging, 49 least developed and 136 other developing nations. Its total GDP increased four-fold from USD 7.6 to 30 trillion from 2000 to 2016 and above total global economy growth by two-fold representing a rise from 28% to 40.6% of global income. Conversely, the GDP of 33 countries which make up the Global North reduced from 71.3% to 58.4% in those 16 years (Mohanty et al., 2019).

Additionally, Global South savings grew by 24% from 1.9 to 9.7 trillion USD, while North grew by 9.1% standing at USD 9.1 trillion in 2016. The report indicates that through intraregional trade with technology intensive global value chains “South–South” collaboration continues to gain traction led by Kenya and Ethiopia who drive this growth. Further, that international trade led East and South-East Asia to growth at 2% higher rates than elsewhere, with reduced reliance on “South–North” alliances (International Trade Center/ ITC, 2019). Although constituted less countries, North has grown at a slower rate of 1.3% compared to South at 2%.

Only a handful of studies expound upon microentrepreneurs, yet they represent a standard unit of BoP actors who operate informally (see Adom et al, 2023). In sub-Saharan Africa, they are mostly priorly unemployed (not unemployable) individuals, or small businesses with between 1 to 9 employees. That signals their importance in socio-economic growth (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; GEM, 2016). Both MNEs and microentrepreneurs are significant actors in Global Value Chains; the process by which products reach final consumers (Kolk et al., 2018).

In an emerging markets perspective, an empirical study of 134 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Asia explores implications of local supply chains through inclusion and local participation dimensions of marginalized actors. They find that barriers in MNE-led supply chains arise from absence of global standards and certification enforcement, liability of newness, institutional inefficiencies, poor infrastructure and little or lack of knowledge about local contexts which creates challenges in knowledge diffusion (Rosca et al., 2019). Conversely, SMSE-led supply chains may be in form of linkages with the indigenous community or through MNEs as providers of wider scale effects such as employment and wages, export markets for farmers, technological resources, research and development, and capital – by banks and venture capitalists.

A quantitative empirical study in India applies technology acceptance models (TAM) to evaluate the use of technology in digital marketing adoption by 72 female entrepreneurs, as determined by personal innovativeness and perceived expertise; from initiation and acceptance to adoption and implementation (Bhagat et al., 2019). They observe that the trait of innovativeness is positively correlated with eagerness and ability to adapt new ways of doing business - opposite to the polarizing effects of poverty on the African continent.

Also, using a technological model developed to enable exchange of goods in the Peruvian agricultural sector using smart contracts and block chain, scholars find that 68% of the agricultural population distrusts the sale of their products over the internet (Cortez-Zaga et al., 2019). Although costly, block chain technologies help to eliminate some market inefficiencies, as increasingly popular in finance, health, renewable energy, and agricultural sectors.

However, more researchers note a lack of clear metrics in determining “mutual value” or ascertaining contribution to poverty alleviation amid MNEs’ underutilized capacity to demand local goods or high propensity to over-exploit resources (Davidson, 2009; Hill & Mudambi, 2010). Exploitation occurs when MNEs peddle non-essential products like skin lightening lotions, over-deliver on alcohol, or when there is resource wastage (Karnani, 2007 a & b). Others observe that negative effects outweigh positives when local capacity is frozen or destroyed by entry of foreign firms which crowd out local outfits (Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). In response, Brix-Asala et al. (2021) proposes supporting supplier development to ensure market stability and inclusive growth. Still, more questions arise as to how well BoP propositions are particularly met.

To address some of those questions from an emerging markets perspective, a 5-year empirical study, “*Dancing with Gorillas*”, explores 15 indigenous technology companies and their alliances with MNEs in Bangalore, India. They analyze questionnaire responses from 100 of the business managers and executives in the firms (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020; 2008). Based on their findings, they warn of dangers that arise due to small firms not being fully aware of their natural advantages with regard to tacit and intrinsic market knowledge, a key resource desired by all entrants in the local domain. They argue that actors may often have *misaligned goals* and also note that inclusion of BoP actors can help overcome liability of newness and boost profits. Yet working through nonprofits or others may create conflict (see also Arora & Romijn, 2012).

By providing co-working spaces, necessary equipment, and structured programs, innovation hubs inspire (technology) savvy entrepreneurs to design new products and services. That encourages creativity, productivity, and competition (Prashantham et al., 2018; Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020). Although some hubs are rife with intellectual property infringement incidents, others provide scholarships and startup capital to enhance participants’ technical capacity while others go as far as allowing developers to create applications built on top of their software. E.g. Microsoft created BizSpark over a decade ago (2010) and just within 2 years, over 10,000 developers had signed up as users. The best 100 innovations received additional support and later bore accelerators in Bangalore, Beijing, and Tel Aviv (Prashantham & Kumar, 2019).

Looking even further afield, another seminal quantitative study of 150 small independent studios in the motion picture industry of USA spotlights benefits or dangers of alliances between small firms and their larger counterparts. “*Surviving Bearhugs*” covers a period of 10 years from 1990 to 2000, examining revenue growth as dependent upon internal firm capabilities and external alliances with large movie production players. They find that *small firms which engage in higher alliances with large studios actually realize lower growth benefits from their internal capabilities* (Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). As well, in “*Swimming with the Sharks*”, Colombo & Shafi (2016) replicate a US study in Europe to quantitatively examine how small firms can protect themselves in the competitive world of attracting investors. They highlight that technology-based start-ups have a higher chance of attracting even more financing from venture capitalists for trials and testing: only after they manage to get initial funding. This fact is paradoxical. Ideally, actors that have some financial resources are better placed to access even more finance.

3.4.1 Definition of measurement criteria

BoP theory *lacks adequate measurement metrics* to ascertain mutual value, such as between MNEs and locals (Arora & Romijn, 2012; Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010) yet given economics foundations within global value chains, most discussions in the sample elaborate demand side perspectives.

A recent overview of 97 top journal articles, Kolk et al. (2018) explores commercial or mainstream versus social or responsible globalization. 43 of these articles examine the impact of globalization and trade on poverty while others look at firm-specific decisions. 33 out of those 43 represent mainstream globalization while by contrast only 11 i.e., 25% represent responsible globalization, i.e. actors who include poverty alleviation in their strategy. One paper falls in both categories. By observing elements like foreign direct investment trends, they find that Global Value Chains which integrate producers from low-income countries have significant positive impacts. Such findings are interesting. Therefore, others who advance entrepreneur interactions are revisited.

Table 7 below summarizes the *characteristics of social networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) which expounds upon exchange between clusters or groups of entrepreneurs.

Table 7: Characteristics of Social Networks (summary of Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986)

Units of analysis

Determinants of entrepreneur existence	Type of grouping (set)	Content for exchange	Descriptors	Dimensions or facilitators of formation	Determinant of weakness (or strength)	Functions of entrepreneurs with central roles
Chance	Role set	Communication	Depth	Density (or number)	Level of occurrence	Communication channels between distant persons
Necessity	Action set	Goods and services	Breadth	Reachability (or spacing)	Frequency	Brokerage services with third parties
Purpose	Network	Normative i.e. met expectations	Locus	Centrality (or/ and relativity)	Reciprocity	Role models

The source literature extends Granovetter (1973; 1985), who investigated 9 cases of *reachability* between individuals to reveal *degrees of separation*, with metrics and relational dynamics that

elaborate upon magnitude of interactions. *Density* relates to number of actors in a given space, be it geographically or say via online platforms (followers). *Reciprocity* is about quid pro quo. *Reachability* is determined by concentration or spacing between actors. *Centrality* is derived from the positioning or *locus* of actors, which is in turn determined by the rank of importance of actors and/or their products or services as perceived by others, or even as envisioned by themselves. *Locus of control* is about who holds power in the exchange based on actor strength, decision-making capacity, influence, quality and/or speed of delivery. It is determined by *depth* and/or *breadth* of reach or by resources and other such considerations.

Once magnitude is established, directionality in evolution of interactions, if at all, can be explored or ascertained by adapting other metrics e.g. the ADO framework (Paul & Benito, 2018).

3.5 Entrepreneurship During Crisis

As a reorganization of leading economies takes shape, a world reeling from negative effects of the global pandemic is increasingly characterized by geoeconomic fragmentation, amidst a tumultuous political environment (Aiyar et al., 2023; IMF, 2015; 2023). Due to persistent uncertainty in this era of Artificial Intelligence, prior stoppages in education during lockdowns further compound lapses which exacerbate poverty. Over 49 million people slipped back into extreme poverty: 23 million from SSA and 16 million from South Asia. *Simultaneously the trend may, for the first time since 1998, leave half a billion people destitute* (World Bank, 2021). Contrary to global development initiatives in vision 2030 (UN, 2015), masses are likely to be “left behind”.

Entrepreneurship during crisis gained traction in the past, mostly in the social space, even amidst low levels of appreciation by policy makers at a macro level (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011). Entrepreneurs remain key in managing crises through various mechanisms such as bricolage by utilizing available resources “as is” (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Sakar, 2018) or effectuation (Read & Sarasvathy, 2005) by factoring in expected losses, even when benefits may not be predicted ex-ante. Both concepts are necessary for survival and growth.

In the context of informality, Brnzei & Abdelnour (2010) expounds upon entrepreneurial activity in communities which are affected by terrorism, explaining that over the crisis life span, conditions of outbreak, escalation and subsiding often create psychological incentives for resilience.

By controlling for ex-ante factors in “*Another Day Another Dollar*”, they note that resilience yields better returns during highly volatile situations. However, others argue that this may not always be the case. The pursuit of entrepreneurship can be psychologically damaging, and high failure rates make people worse-off (Shepherd et al., 2019). Such lessons denote the criticality of self-driven or self-reliant communities (Nsereko et al., 2022) within productive and more robust ecosystems (Stam, 2018).

“*Spontaneous Venturing*” narrates how individuals decided between fleeing for life and staying to protect their homes during the Australia Black Saturday bushfires of 2009, highlighting social entrepreneurship responses that enabled many to receive, and give, help when it was most needed (Shepherd & Williams, 2019). As well, Williams & Shepherd (2016) explores how by building sustenance or resilience in the aftermath of earthquakes in Haiti, affected communities either manage or fail to transcend crises. Others study entrepreneurs’ passion for fashion in a war-torn context, highlighting a tendency for entrepreneurs to flourish within adversity (Madichie, 2020).

As the Haiti community suffered the heaviest earthquake in January 2010, after which a cholera outbreak followed in October of that same year, they were displaced and left in shock. Overtime, the telecommunication sector played a huge role in mapping and tracking displaced populations to enable organized aid reach those who needed help (Chandy et al., 2017). *Contact tracing* was executed using the 3 Vs approach: validation, visualization, verification. This study indicates the importance of not only big data collected by MNEs, but the use of technology to solve problems.

Rounding up this silo, most studies highlight entrepreneurs’ roles in post-disaster recovery whereby social entrepreneur groups or individuals often get the facts of what transpires and act faster, followed by nongovernmental organizations or private sector, before government reacts later owing to challenges e.g., resource scarcity or bureaucracy (Chamlee –Wright & Storr, 2011).

To sum up this thematic review: while some view *globalization as an engine for growth or an important tool to leverage economic and social benefits of trade and converge differences among countries* (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006; Bruton et al., 2013; Colombo & Shafi, 2016; Dimov, 2004; Gartner, 1985; Rosca et al., 2022), others call it a myth, pushed or used by a group of theorists who represent global corporate organizations for divergent motives that are not in alignment with

the BoP promise (Wade, 2004). Or a threat that encourages unfair practices, and a curse when they crowd out indigenous entrepreneurs (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Prashantham & Kumar, 2019). It is evident that a rise in technology start-ups in recent times depicts some microentrepreneur–MNE interactions, although much is yet to be seen (Prashantham et al, 2018; WEF, 2016) especially at the “*Bottom of the Data Pyramid*” (Arora, 2016), where the telecommunications industry enjoys record-high uptake of mobile money services, e.g. in Kenya, representing phenomenal growth (Pankomera & van Greunen, 2019; Thinguri et al., 2014).

4.0 Key Observations – Dominant Trends and Patterns

The purpose of this section is to critique existing literature by highlighting commonalities and disparities within the dataset. Four major trends bubble to the surface as further discussed below. a) an inverse relationship between MNEs and economic growth which leads into a discussion on technology and the digital divide, b) the challenges of measurability and consensus in BoP theory, c) a huge gap between BoP as a theory and the BoP context, citing gaps between informal and formal actors, and lastly d) nuanced indicators of the global developmental outlook.

4.1 Inverse relationship between BOP population and MNEs/ technology

A significant amount of research in the dominant Global Value Chains (GVC) theme suggests a positive trend between MNEs (and technology) and economic growth i.e., that with high MNE presence, there is also high economic growth and vice versa (see Bruton et al., 2013 and others). Yet based upon the review, clearly, there is an inverse trend between MNEs (and technology) and global growth or the population distribution in and of itself. MNEs are concentrated at the top tier of the population pyramid where ultra-wealthy technology companies or those who own/manage them reside (Huang et al, 2023; Fu et al., 2023; Prashantam et al., 2018).

Figure 12 below conceptualizes a technology pyramid shaped upside down, onto the existing BoP definition as based upon Prahalad’s population pyramid. As illustrated, outer arrows signify fewer or lack of ties while the middle arrow and two inner ones show more significant “South-South” and a few “North-South” relationships (Mohanty et al., 2019) from developed, emerging or

regional markets and local businesses: stopping before the base line. This shows opposite trends or links between MNEs and local communities at the base; otherwise symbolized by straight arrows from all tiers which depict scanty connections.

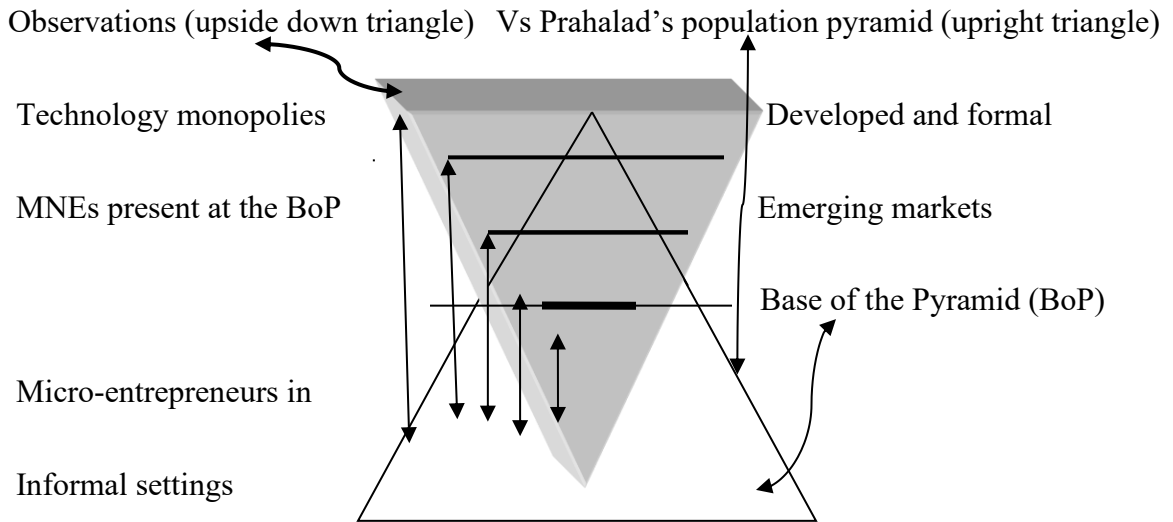


Figure 12: Overview of MNE - Microentrepreneur Interactions at the BoP
(Conceptualized from the Review)

More so, a significant gap is evidenced at the point of the inverted pyramid which does *not* touch the base of the upright pyramid: symbolizing inadequate reach at the BoP, or in some cases, the complete lack of access to MNE resources such as technology.

The above raises pertinent questions. Given that India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Pakistan - all large BoP hubs - are projected to headline rapid population growth for 25 to 50 years (UNFPA, 2022), yet most innovations by entrepreneurs here continue to exist informally, what sort of effect will (formal) MNE-led models have on overall societal growth? To gain clarity and ably plan forward, for instance with regards to the AI revolution, more explorations in such contexts are necessitated. Additional knowledge diversity would deepen our appreciation of this topic - and perhaps inch us closer towards achieving granularity in measuring the suitability of BoP models.

4.2 Challenges of Measurability and Consensus in BoP theory

A significant level of ambiguity is apparent within literature. The 110-country BoP population (IMF, 2019) is structurally different from a 205-country “Global South” (Mohanty et al., 2019), connoting disparities and inconsistencies. Australia and New Zealand are categorized in the North economically, affirming that the term is not birthed from geography, yet China prefers to maintain its “Global South” title. Abstraction is also inherent within influences from neoclassical or neocolonial predicaments as interwoven and/or traceable in history. On that basis, old economic models that focus on profits and demand-led strategy, against which such theory is formulated, and the composition of “South”, “North”, or other such terms warrant revisions and realignment.

While the trajectory of globalization remains abstract if not downright detrimental, achieving validity, reliability and consensus in academic research remains an uphill task. Even when MNE immersion is illustrated in the garments and fabrics industry, with increased collaborations in West Africa, e.g. Ghana (Adom et al., 2018; Lowe et al., 2018), in huge contrast, South Africa’s mining industry is riddled with constant uprisings from labor unions (Desai, 2018; Mandela, 1990). Even then, more contradictory empirical observations are made elsewhere by local entrepreneurs (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Rosca et al., 2021).

4.3 Huge Gap between BoP as a Theory and BoP as a Context

Our understanding of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship varies widely based on actor or context (Gartner, 1985). We know that opportunistic or resource-abundant environments create different entrepreneurs from survivalist and void-ridden ones (albeit with resources): the former and latter mostly placed in formal & informal contexts respectively (Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016; Shantz et al., 2018; 2020; Webb et al., 2020). But dynamic studies on technology-based ties in commercial and social innovation (e.g. Prashantham et al., 2018) or those which pay some attention to plugging institutional voids (Mair & Marti, 2011) are scanty. More so in the sub-Saharan context. Further, the few studies on entrepreneurs in informal settings often revisit an escalating digital divide in some way, which is further exacerbated by a maligned gender perspective (GEM, 2016).

Table 8 below is an extract of sub-Sahara’s regional data, where South Africa and Nigeria are both top MNE hosts, with the highest GDP contributions. But they differ in level of informality.

Table 8: Global Value Chains, Informality, Poverty, and Entrepreneurial Growth

Country	Average Rate of Informality High to Low (IMF, 2018)	MNE or another Multilateral Presence	Level of Development / Contribution of Informal sector to GDP	Poverty rate (%) under \$ 2.15 /3.65 (data not of same year)	Local Entrepreneurial Vibrance or Growth (GEM, 2016; IMF, 2018)
Nigeria	87% Western Africa	Very High	High / 58.2%	30.9 / 63.5	High
Congo	79% Central Africa	Moderate to High (High multilateral presence e.g. UN)	Low / 40.2%	78.9 / 92.1	Moderately Low or Extremely Low. This is peculiar considering high national wealth
Uganda	77% Eastern Africa	Moderate	Low / 34.5%	42.1 / 71.8	Moderate to High (highest by GEM)
Ghana	50 - 65%	Very High	High / 35.8%	25.2 / 48.8	High (Shantz et al.)
South Africa	36% Southern Africa	Very High	High / 29%	20.5 / 40.0	Moderate to Low? (Desai, 2018)

Some studies propose that MNE presence breeds multiplicity which leads to growth, claiming mutual and proportionate benefits, with reciprocity in communities (Bruton et al., 2013; London & Hart, 2004; 2010). This literature fuels the idea of “shared prosperity”. Others suggest that where locals are viewed as suppliers or business partners, strong MNE interactions may lower informality rates, e.g. in Southern Africa at 36% and Ghana at 50% to 65% (Adom et al., 2018; 2023; Lowe et al., 2018). And that conversely, MNE practices that are driven by a sale-to-the-poor-at-all-cost unidirectional fortune finding, may posit higher levels of informality e.g. in Central African Republic (CAR) or Eastern Africa at over 79% or 77% respectively (IMF, 2018).

However, high informality rates alongside high entrepreneurial vibrance in MNE dense Nigeria pitted against lowest informality rates and low entrepreneurial vibrance in Southern Africa, a nation with just as many MNEs, defy these observations and their underlying assumptions. Thereby pausing unanswered questions that warrant further inquisition. The findings strengthen earlier inferences made by those who refute such models (see e.g. Arora & Romijn, 2012). Pankomera & van Greunen (2019) and Thinguri et al. (2014) note that technological infrastructure and a huge local data base create markets for global giants amidst a lack of equitable profit sharing in this *connecting poverty to purchase* agenda (London et al, 2014; 2020). Therefore, how they induce growth remains unevidenced (Arora, 2016; Dembek et al., 2020; Brix-Asala et al., 2021).

A dearth of evidence shows that local entrepreneurs play an increasingly vital role as domestic partners by sharing content, and that knowledge sharing is happening through dialogue in a slight, sluggish change towards MNE immersion (Adom et al., 2018; London & Hart, 2010). But others also show that locals serve a mostly dormant consumer role, still restricted downstream. This contravenes proposed supplier *partnerships* in BoP2.0 and BoP3.0 (see Karnani, 2007 a &b).

Table 9 below summarizes propositions and questions within BoP market-based literature.

Table 9: The Proposed Definitive Principals of BoP market-based Models

BOP Propositions (MNEs view locals as)	Consumers	Suppliers	Entrepreneurs	Development and preservation of culture
True or False	✓ all	✓ some?	❖ Few ❖ micro?	Mutuality? Multiplicity? Proportionality? Equitability?

At best, only a handful of locals are represented upstream for instance at the top of agricultural value chains or energy sector, with increased innovation in a largely unsatisfactory scenario. Meanwhile, by employing anti-competitive traditions, MNEs still hoard information, overcharge for quality goods, price right for poor standard goods, or under-compensate disadvantaged suppliers as they repatriate profits elsewhere (Arora & Romijn, 2012). All this amidst overemphasis by government as unwilling co-conspirators; maximizing revenue through corporate tax, meager royalties, and/or social security collections (Kistruck et al., 2015).

To address this paradox, recent studies emphasize the need for supplier development at the BoP (Brix-Asala et al., 2021). Substantive to that, a recent landmark ruling reached in the UK ordered Uber to abide by strict labor laws that recognize drivers as company staff (Kenner, 2018). That notwithstanding, indigenous businesses may not afford necessary technological inputs required to cope with the trajectory of Artificial Intelligence in the fourth industrial revolution (Fu et al., 2023).

4.4 Positive developmental outlook albeit neo-imperialism and inequality

Regardless of conflation, and even if categorizations such as “BoP populations” or “Global South” do not change by name, their composition certainly evolves. “Northerners” e.g. China insist on maintaining the “South” title to attract more trade with “Southern” counterparts (Fu et al., 2023). To add, India, which accounts for 25% of the BoP population (in the “South”) has surpassed France and the United Kingdom (in the “North”) to become the 5th largest global economy with a GDP of USD 2.94 trillion (Myers, 2020). More lucky escapes such as Taiwan and Singapore (“South”), before recent political instability, provide much hope. This creates more complexities for readers and practitioners, as we try to keep up with rather old-fashioned and/or ill-fitting classifications.

However, such shifts in order and composition of leading economies notwithstanding, a number of countries in the “South” bloc still represent some of the poorest (albeit at times fastest growing) on the globe (World Bank, 2021; 2023). And although “South - North” trade agreements still play a huge role, say in delivering technology and machinery for manufacturing, loose historical ties persist, owing to overwhelming neo-imperialist bottlenecks (Wade, 2004) which may encourage further fragmentation (IMF, 2015; 2023).

As such, newer BoP 4.0 literature proposes immersion of MNEs within host communities by including non-profit goals (Borchardt et al., 2020), earlier regarded taboo by proponents of MNEs (see e.g. Simanis, 2014). In the proposed BoP 4.0 construct, increased value-commitment makes business rewarding on both sides of the isle, since benefits to the community positively impact incomes and count as increased profit for MNEs (Borchardt et al., 2020). Such studies note the kind of social protection that locals need from policy makers or government institutions.

5.0 Summary of the Review Exercise

For clarity, this review differs from the 3 anchor articles that were used for adequacy checks, i.e., a) Dembek et al., 2019, b) Borchardt et al., 2020, c) Kolk et al., 2018, as noted in the introduction section of this article (also see Bibliometrics in Table 10 in Appendix, Pg. 108). Dembek’s review of 276 articles obtained from EBSCO host is somewhat similar, although this study differentiates itself by searching the core Web of Science collection and engaging or cross referencing a critical developing BoP4.0 component as sounded by Borchardt et al. (2020). Thus, placing itself at the

intersection of a & b. While Borchardt, Kolk, and others (b and c) synthesize data from existing articles into two or three main categories respectively, their conceptualizations differ from those made herein. As well, this study focusses on informality including pro-poor or frugal innovations.

5.1 Summary of Existing Body of Knowledge on the Topic

Findings from this review paint an unclear picture as further granulated below.

What was sought: The review sought to understand the status of knowledge relating to three areas i.e. entrepreneurship, societal growth, in BoP/ informal contexts from earlier/existing studies.

What was found: Most articles in the sample selection orient from a) a Supply Chains perspective, guiding MNEs on how to navigate BoP markets, mostly quantitatively, b) Business Ethics wherein practice versus regulatory institutional framework gaps are noted, with a mix of quantitative and newer qualitative studies, and c) Entrepreneurship within Institutional theory, or d) with a Crisis angle – both of which are predominantly explored within the Social Entrepreneurship (SE) realm. There is also a growing trend on health, agricultural farm monitoring, and food safety, with three other related literature streams: ICT innovations and clusters mostly in emerging economies and western contexts, community development, e.g. “big data for good” (see Chandy et al, 2018), “technology for the poor” in Island and Asian contexts, and transnational entrepreneurship.

BoP literature that addresses entrepreneurship in informal settings includes challenges and opportunities faced by local actors, the practices or trends that lead to it, outcomes of such activity, and the trajectory is not scarce per se. It is just less visible, not included in “mainstream” silos, and often missing from “high impact” journals. But even where some agree that MNEs are well placed as growth catalysts, others find that they engage unfair practices by crowding out indigenous local entrepreneurs and thereby inhibit growth and development (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010), with newer studies exploring sustainability in social enterprises (Shepherd & Paztelt, 2011).

For instance, earlier research in the Asian context concluded that migration, occupational mobility, and growth of manufacturing sectors employing many people e.g. the Bangladesh garment sector, are major routes of escape out of poverty (Rosenzweig, 2000). Through socially directed mechanisms, the “green revolution” in India helped to raise real wages of the poorest more than

threefold over a period of three decades. But as evidenced by current immigration sagas, dominant BoP market-based models have not succeeded in reducing low-income countries' dependence over the years. On the contrary, and largely exacerbated by the pandemic, the aftermath of which is still ongoing; it is possible that given recent developments, an underreported BoP population may also be growing in the West (IMF/ World Bank, 2015; 2023). In that case, would Rosenzweig's narrative on immigration hold? If so, where would the "additionally impoverished" migrants go? Rwanda? Regardless, inclusive growth remains a worthy alternative (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

As predominant structural challenges of poverty largely remain unresolved (D. Prahalad, 2019), we are stuck in a vicious cycle of seeking tangible solutions, right back in a similar position where international aid, also having failed to deliver, was denounced by Prahalad & Hart (2002). To add, instead of MNE-led models supporting growth, they could in some ways, contribute to the reverse instead (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Hill & Mudambi, 2011). The general consensus from many who are pushing for inclusion is that sharing in gains more equitably is a win-win for all parties (see Agrawal et al., 2018; Borchardt et al., 2020; Brix-Asala et al., 2021; Rosca et al., 2019; 2021).

5.2 What was missing: proposed directions for future research

Because existing research mostly originates from quantitative studies in economics, it explicates entrepreneurship and innovation in existentially male-dominated industries, within formal workplaces, documented by predominantly male philosophers. Yet unlike economics, informality is much more nuanced and even highly gendered in key contexts like the Global "South".

The BoP conversation harbors unique divergencies which signal deficits in academia and practice. There is only a dearth of empirical research; with about 40 out of the 296 articles based on empirical design. Oddly, most BoP theory does not delve enough into SMEs or microenterprise as a standard unit of measurement for (necessity) entrepreneurship in BoP or even informal contexts. On one hand, most of the few empirical studies which address Pro-poor innovations are neither about relationships between entrepreneurs nor about informal and other actors. On the other, the handful that delve into this realm and document what transpires between start-ups and MNEs e.g. Borchardt et al. (2016; 2022), Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2020), Rosca et al. (2021) are from developed or emerging markets; not the "largest BoP hub" or highly informal developing world.

More than 37% of the sample pertains to USA, represented by over 110 records. In huge step, followed by Europe and Canada. Granted, a significant portion pertain to Eastern Europe and Asia, while the largest BoP communities are in Africa, India, South-East Asia, and South America.

The bulk of existing knowledge being mostly attributed to developed and/or emerging markets raises several negative implications. Because a handful of institutions in “leading” economies, not truly representative of the BoP plight dominate theory; existing literature suggests a positive trend between MNE presence and economic growth (see e.g. Bruton et al., 2013; Prahalad & Hart, 2002), even where an opposite trend between local growth and MNEs (technological and financial) resources appears to persist. Particularly, studies on the link between MNEs and informal actors are scarce, not well-spotlighted or perhaps both (Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Adom et al., 2023).

Further, a few contextual studies focus on *plugging institutional voids* (e.g. Marti & Mair, 2009), while the bulk of research is about *connecting poverty to purchase* (London et al., 2014; 2020): implying that subjectivism is lacking. E.g. even where women dominate at the micro level, few studies examine gender-centric models as indicatively represented by 12% of the articles in this sample, barely delving into the relationship between them and other actors.

As such, some, if not most (BoP) research is unmatched or somewhat even irrelevant to the context: representing significant futility.

Moreover, while informality and Pro-poor innovations intersect as expected, those studies mostly embed a demand-based view, represented by a high volume of marketing journals that cite customer service techniques or CSR (see Table 2.1 in earlier section). Because most studies evolve from objectivist MNE-led ontology or formal epistemology - whichever the case may be, applying them to nuanced settings is difficult. There ought to be more knowledge inclusion/ diversity.

A good starting point is for researchers to emphasize more, that most BoP hubs are resource-rich and seek to harness that for locals’ benefit. While some authors address the need to upgrade scientific knowledge, only a handful explore effectiveness of rudimentary applications in relation to IOT, mobile money, or other relevant digital technologies. Other interesting but less explored or unexplored elaborations of MSMEs delivering services on behalf of MNEs like agency banking that rolled out in 2011 and 2017 in Kenya and Uganda respectively, could reveal new knowledge.

Furthermore, because most data were compiled before the 2019 pandemic, more revelations await post-facto: given dynamic shifts in global affairs since then. In addition, a rise in social media channels such as TikTok supports recognition of emerging “free style platform-based business concepts”; warranting more studies on new trends (see e.g. Fu et al., 2023). Although priorly unfathomable, lockdown not only caused uproar in crisis management, but also shed more light on abstraction in MNE-led models, as they made exorbitant gains while local business struggled to stay afloat. In fact, studies on BoP theory dropped in 2023, perhaps owing to concentration elsewhere or maybe due to this highlighted gap between theory and context.

Insights from those recent developments signal technology as a common denominator and game changer, cutting across contexts. Yet since 2000, when the World Bank report upon which market-based BoP models are based was published (Prahalad, 2001), lack of technological infrastructure or advantage is widely recognized, although not categorically considered or pronounced as an abject poverty descriptor at policy level. As technological dependency continues to headline development (Mohanty et al., 2019), revisions to sustainable development goals (SDGs) promise to squash poverty by 2030 (UN, 2015). However, given global fragmentation (World Bank, 2023) and impending population growth trends (UNFPA, 2022), such aspirations seem more unlikely.

On that basis, this study argues that in an environment where less than 100 families, fronted by approximately 42 individuals to be exact (D. Prahalad, 2019), own or control wealth that is equivalent to that of 3.6 Billion people at the BoP; nothing else stands out more than technological and financial/funding **disparities** among determinants of poverty or the gap thereof. That calls for succinct revisions in the definition of poverty.

5.3 Study Limitations

The most common limitation arises from sources of data and choice of word strings that are used during the search for articles: according to which a resultant sample is returned. Searches are based on titles or topics, key words, or research areas. While these usually indicate the correct sample space, they may not hold or return some or all the relevant articles. Also, abstraction such as “Global South” being different from “BoP population” as discussed in the findings often holds or influences neoclassical or neocolonial undertones which are understood differently by various

audiences and/or scholars. This may have impact on resultant sample types, content, and/or size. Thus, it may also alter outcomes e.g. regarding the identified research gap. As well, content on the same or similar topics embed connotations that might be unclearly labelled, only to wind up meaning divergent things or presenting varying sets of data as “the truth”. Since this risk is more likely to occur at study onset or during initial stages of the review, that may increase the likelihood of flawed study results, and therefore in the field.

To manage such challenges, it is vital to consider appropriate data sources and selection methods at the study onset before choosing a set path. Before settling on Web of Science, I conducted various searches in several other databases, using different strings. I also did so repeatedly at different time intervals along the journey. At first, broad combinations of short keys or strings generated wide collections. After perusing results for adequacy, care was taken to decide the final sources and choice of search terms for optimum returns, before identifying common themes.

Finally, to confirm that the resultant sample is representative, additional adequacy checks were performed by comparing bibliometrics in an analysis of 3 related articles, taken as anchor literature (see Table 10 in the Appendix, Pg. 108). Lastly, to reduce bias which may arise from over-reliance upon one source, I focus on highly relevant records, which are expounded upon in more depth than those that are neither fully about the topic nor context of interest.

5.4 Conclusion

Overall, the current knowledge outline reveals an incomplete picture.

Predominantly, one knowledge gap stands out. A position or assumption that businesses generate mutual value by focusing their attention on BOP communities (Prahalad & Hammond, 2002). Much has changed since 2002 when such market-based models were proposed. E.g. the population of Uganda nearly doubled from over 24 to 46 million recently (UBOS, 2024), yet there is still ambiguity when MNEs encourage consumerism regardless of whether, that benefits locals or not.

Leaving matters unattended and *letting each party focus on their interests* (Simanis, 2014) favors those with more intellectual rights, technological, and financial resources while placing informal actors at a terrible disadvantage (Karnani, 2007 a & b).

As such, there is need to elaborate *how MNEs form cross-sector partnerships with key actors* at the BoP (Dembek et al., 2019). In any case, while the private sector is considerably well researched (from an economics perspective), the relationships between entrepreneurs within it as key actors themselves are not well addressed. Thus, as the dawn of Artificial Intelligence continues to unfold (Fu et al, 2023; Huang et al., 2023); likely outcomes for the majority are grim or unknown at best. Yet through such developments, radical change that supports new innovation can be a motivating factor to turn economies around. All in all, with such an obfuscated state of affairs, *context* is everything (Hill & Mudambi, 2010; Shepherd, 2019; Stam; 2015; 2017).

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7.0 Appendix

The excel file of the 296 articles is held on the Strathclyde Sharepoint Database link below

[Base or Bot and Ent and Inf Last Scoop](#)

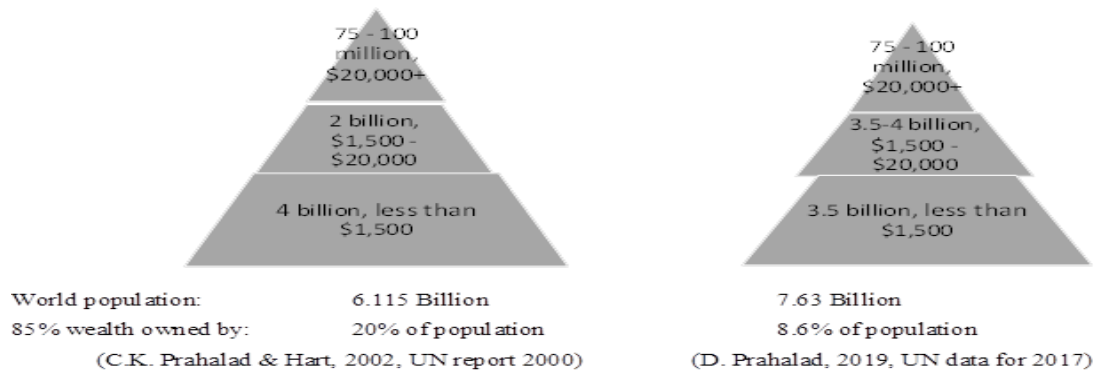


Figure 13: The Population Pyramid - Changes from the year 2000 to 2017

World Economic Pyramid Based on Purchasing Power Parity

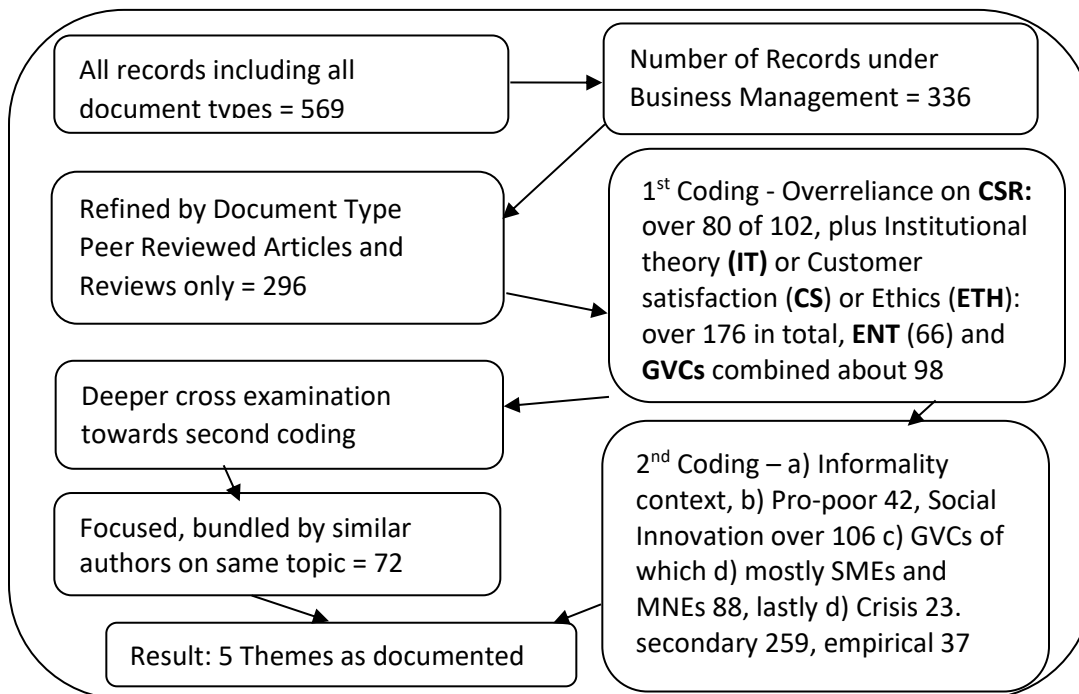
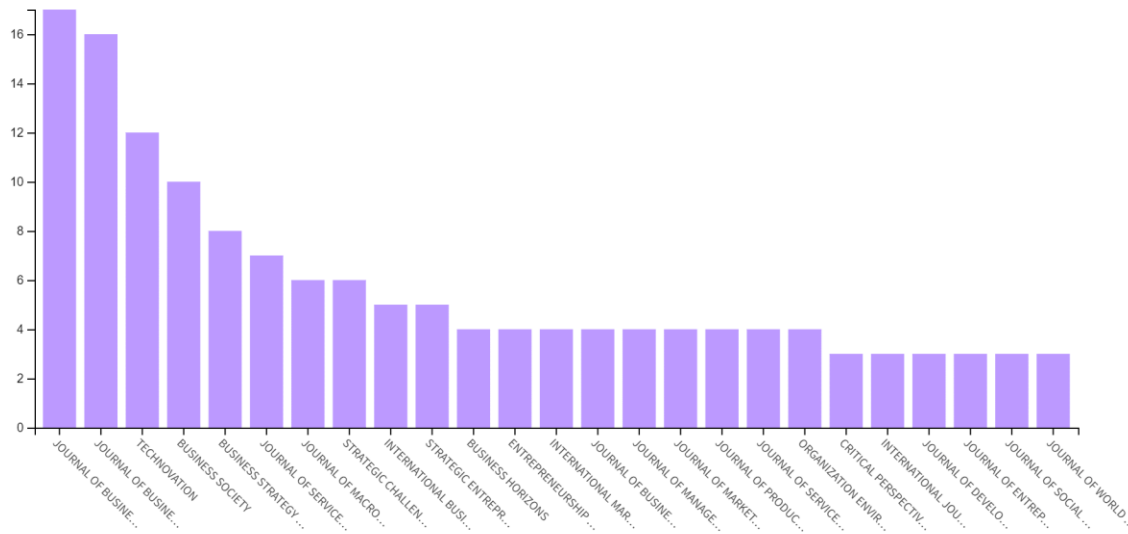


Figure 14: Article Selection (Adapted from Xiao & Watson, 2019)



Graph 4: Records Arranged by Journal Publication (supplements Table 5)

Tables

Table 10: Bibliometrics of 3 Master Review Articles - Used for Adequacy Checks

Dembek et al., 2019 Base of the Pyramid (BoP)	Botchardt et al., 2019 BoP & GVCs Intra-disciplinary	Kolk et al., 2018 International Business, GVCs, Poverty
276 journal articles EBSCO host 22 empirical studies	79 journal articles Web of Science and Scopus	97 top journal articles
Themes	Themes	Themes
BoP1 (2002) Sell to the poor BoP2 (2008) Business co-venturing BoP3 (2010) The poor as entrepreneurs	BoP1 fortune discovery BoP2 fortune creation BoP3 fortune sharing BoP4 fortune enabling	Definition of Poverty (population) Material deprivation. Lack of Education. Ill health. Vulnerability. Voicelessness Definition of Poverty (nations) weak or absent institutions
Multinationals dominate the discussion Ethics	Definition of Poverty (nations) Resource scarcity, large informal sector, weak or absent institutions The discussion includes all actors along the value chain equally Ethics	International business Global Value Chains. Multinationals and big business actors dominate the discussion Ethics

Dimensions vs Empirical studies	Conceptual Framework	Conceptual Framework
<p>BoP1 Inclusive capitalism, large firm only. Claims Mutual Value however leaves it open to each party's vision, goals and negotiation. Disadvantages the locals. Claims poverty alleviation</p> <p>BoP2 Suppliers. Research and development of small firms. How can this be realized?</p> <p>BoP3 Local embeddedness bottom-up approach. Sustainable growth cross-sector partnerships</p>	<p>From BoP1 to BoP3</p> <p>Incorporating a non-profit dimension BoP4</p> <p>For poverty alleviation Increase in value-commitment Decrease in profit-making dimension</p> <p>Micro and SMEs role as domestic partners for MNEs transitioning from downstream to upstream activities. MNEs role from selling to the poor to total embeddedness and accountability</p>	<p>International business effects</p> <p>Mainstream globalization i.e., no poverty alleviation vs responsible globalization i.e., with poverty alleviation goal</p> <p>Core business activities, without poverty alleviation vs with poverty alleviation goal</p>
Relevant references	Relevant references	Relevant references
<p>Ansari et.al, 2012 Arora & Romjin 2012 Calton Davidson 2009 Dembek et al., 2018 Follman Gold, Hahn et al Hart Hahn R Halme et al., Karnani 2007 Kistruck, Sutter et al., 2013 Kolk et al., 2014 London et al., 2014 Newmann Pitta et al Pralhad & Hammond, 2002 Simanis & Hart, 2008 VanSandt & Sud</p>	<p>Ansari et.al, 2012 Arora & Romjin 2012 Calton Charterjee 2016 +Dembek (et al.,) 2018 Follman Gold, Hahn et al Hahn R Halme et al., Hammond et al., Hart Karnani 2007 Kolk et al, 2014 London Pitta et al Pralhad & Hart, 2002 Rosca & Bendul Kolk et al., 2018</p>	<p>Banerjee & Duflo, 2011 Clark et al., 2017 ethics Cramer et al., 2017 Uga Lund-Thompsen, 2016 a&b industrial clusters Venkantesh et al, 2013 digital divide Ansari et.al, 2012 Calton Hahn R Halme et al., Kolk et al 2014, 2016, 2017 London et al., 2014 Kistruck, Sutter et al., 2013 a&b Newmann VanSandt & Sud Charterjee 2016 GVCs</p>

3.0 CHAPTER THREE - ENTREPRENEURIAL GHOSTING (PAPER 2)

Brief Overview and Highlights of Paper 2

The second paper in the thesis responds to a highlighted research gap as noted in the first piece. Given the population growth trajectory, this stage of the study seeks to answer the question: *How do interactions or alliances between microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter (influence) entrepreneurial growth in informal settings?* Focus is on urban microentrepreneurs and regional MNEs, allowing for a fair comparison from a proximity standpoint. Due to prevailing conditions at the time, headlined by the pandemic and resultant lock-down which mandated travel bans, certain sampling methods e.g. focus groups were not possible. As such, respondents' samples were selected according to what was ethically possible, or who was accessible and available; with most data collected using online modes of communication. As well, earlier considerations were made to explore coffee export supply chains from farmers even with less presence of MNEs in villages. However, one would certainly have a hard time observing such actors in any given period in such territories, let alone with travel bans and connectivity issues amidst a digital divide combined.

The paper was presented at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AoM) conference held in Seattle in August 2022 under the theme "Creating a Better World Together". Thereafter, the article was substantially improved upon, including through some commentary and input from an informal mentor, Professor Dean Shepherd. It was then accepted for presentation at the AIB 2024 conference held in Seoul- South Korea, in July 2024. Feedback from the review process of both AoM and AIB was acted upon in the updated version herein, which is aimed for Journal of Business Venturing, Small Business Economics, or other such outlet. Upon publishing, respondents and organizations may draw possible future deliberations from the study.

I acknowledge the contribution of supervisors led by Professor Sreevas Sahasranamam through the set roles as detailed in the Appendix section (see Pg. 248).

Below is Paper 2 in its entirety.

ENTREPRENEURIAL GHOSTING

An Open-ended Approach to the Evolution of Microentrepreneur – Multinational Enterprises (MNE) Relationships in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs)

ABSTRACT

*In response to Dembek et al. (2019; 2020), this empirical study explores what transpires between urban Microentrepreneurs and regional MNEs in an informal setting. Engaging an ecosystem approach, interviews were conducted with 21 Microentrepreneurs, 9 representatives from 3 regional MNEs, and 13 respondents from key organizations that are charged with private sector development responsibilities. Following an inductive analysis process (Gioia et al., 2013; Grodal et al., 2021), a longstanding philosophical deficit at MNE entry hinged upon flawed assumptions that incomes trickle-down from a dominant but gradually narrowing formal sector comes forth as an antecedent. Activity winds up concentrating there, leaving out the majority of actors in the informal sector. Building upon Entrepreneurial Networks theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) on density, reachability, reciprocity, locus of control etc., a relationship dimension symbolizing lost opportunity as represented by an abyss of missing activity is spotlighted; termed by the researcher as **Entrepreneurial Ghosting**. Characteristics of the dynamic perpetuate continuous disproportion within nuanced market conditions, creating “one-hit wonders”, and causing peculiar MNE exits. Leaving semi-formal actors on the brink of abject poverty, even before factoring in projected population growth (UNFPA, 2022). The adverse relationship dimension is a deterrent to growth.*

Key Words: Entrepreneurial Ghosting, Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs), Microentrepreneurs, Multinational Enterprises, Responsible Research, Technology Value Chains, sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda

1.0: Introduction

An evolving body of knowledge exemplifies what transpires between entrepreneurs as individuals, firms, or networks (Granovetter, 1975; Gartner, 1985; Latour, 2007). Most of this literature explores Small, Medium, and Multinational Enterprises in emerging markets (Bruton et al., 2013; Prashantham et al., 2018; 2020; Rosca et al., 2019; 2022), with a few studies noting the distinction between opportunity and necessity-based/ survivalist entrepreneurship (De Soto, 1989; Chatterjee et al., 2022; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016), or interdependence between formal and informal actors (Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Shantz et al., 2018; 2020; Webb et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2016). Even less studies elaborate how such aspiring actors *exchange resources* to create opportunity (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Huang & Knight, 2017) within institutional voids (Mair & Marti, 2009) as a determinant of success or failure (Crosina & Pratt, 2019; Williams & Shepherd, 2016; 2022).

On one hand, as global population is projected to grow from 8 to 10 billion by 2050, led by Asia and Africa (UNFPA, 2022), a high level of informality prevails, representing over 70% of non-agricultural employment (Chen, 2001; GEM, 2019; Williams et al., 2016), and roughly 80% of all economic activity in sub-Saharan Africa (IMF, 2018). Notably, the sector contributes averagely 38% of regional GDP growth (see Figure 2 and 3 in the Thesis Background section).

The definition of informality adopted herein is *a heterogeneous group of activities and employment relationships that commonly lack legal recognition, regulation, or protection* (Babitt et al., 2015, Pg. 164: cited from Lloyd-Evans 2008, Pg. 1885).

On the other, as informal activity rises further, under the globalization agenda, Base of the Pyramid (BoP) market-based theory still provides a blueprint for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) to expand into new markets (Prahalad & Hart, 2004; London et al., 2014).

MNE-led market-based BoP models are *specifically designed to target the poorest segments of society as consumers, producers, and entrepreneurs* while *preserving the social and cultural fabric of the society* (London & Hart, 2010, Pg. 2). They are poised to accelerate growth at the BoP and contribute to growth through poverty alleviation.

MNEs are mostly privately owned or publicly-backed entities who *operate across/beyond borders, usually as mass employers, with a footprint in several countries* (Prashantham & Kumar, 2019; Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014). While they partner with others in the private sector such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); this study explores what transpires between them and the majority of private sector actors at the BoP i.e. microentrepreneurs. *Microentrepreneurs are often priorly unemployed* (although employable) actors that *averagely employ up to 9 others* (Greenbank, 2000), accounting for over 80% of employment in the sub-Saharan (GEM, 2016/2017). This signals importance and relevance of their position in the development agenda at the BoP.

To understand the link between globalization, entrepreneurship, and growth: scholars explore the BoP as consumers, suppliers, or co-creators in value chains (Bruton et al., 2013; Prahalad & Hart, 2004; London & Hart, 2010; London et al., 2020). Some critics propose inducing heterogeneity (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019) while others note contextual (Adom et al., 2023; Arora & Romijn, 2012; Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Karnani, 2007; 2009) and/or theoretical gaps (Dembek et al., 2019) especially as homogenous platform-based enterprises increase (Fu et al., 2023): citing the effects of MNE-led models on inclusion (Rosca et al., 2019; 2022; Borchardt et al., 2020; 2021; 2022). However, less studies are attributed to sub-Saharan as the largest BoP hub, yet there is need to evidence *how MNEs form cross sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019; 2020).

Therefore, this study re-examines the central propositions of BoP models as a dimension of informality. To seize advantage as Africa's population catches up to that of Asia (UNFPA, 2022) multilateral organizations call for resolute mechanisms that encourage increased entry of formal entities such as MNEs at the BoP (IMF, 2018) to widen the tax base (Kistruck et al., 2015), without understanding *how actors exchange resources* to create opportunity (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

Hence the central question: How do interactions or alliances between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurial growth? To address this question, the study embeds a rigorous qualitative approach (Gioia et al., 2013; Grodal et al., 2021; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Primary data was collected by conducting interviews with 21 Microentrepreneurs, 9 representatives from 3 regional MNEs, and 13 representatives of key private sector development organizations. The exploration highlights scanty ties i.e. that only a few microentrepreneurs have a (non-consumer) relationship with MNEs. But that's not all.

Building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), the study revisits a proposition that MNEs focus attention on local communities, breed multiplicity and mutual benefit, and contribute towards poverty alleviation. Thus, to understand how inherent interactions evolve, I adapt the ADO framework (Paul & Benito, 2018) and map what transpires. Of particular interest is to elaborate what is missing if anything. As such, a philosophical deficit at MNE entry comes to the fore as an antecedent; revealing a relational dimension that is perhaps rife, but never before articulated, termed herein by the researcher as **Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)**.

Ghosting is a common term used in today's dating world to refer to an abrupt disappearance and/or non-communication of one party while the other was not expecting that. The dynamic is contained within a relationship – it does not happen where none exists ex-ante.

Entrepreneurial Ghosting is an occurrence, stage, or state of withheld, unactioned and/or unprioritized *exchange* owed to one or more entrepreneurs. It is characterized by divergent motives and/or expectations that cause either non-action and/or lag between action and meaningful exchange, and a lack of reciprocity between actors: causing opportunity loss. Impending exchange may exist in the form of *communication, goods, and services, or normative content*: Thereby fueling continuous disproportion that further derails growth.

From empirical data, the **EG** relationship is symbolized by landmark AI-driven MNE exits alongside “profits-first” extractive over-exploitation. Scanty interactions embed divergent needs-based expectations of microentrepreneurs against opportunity-based motives of MNEs, and/or between them and other actors. Institutional inefficiencies (Marti & Mair, 2009) also boost this dynamic where non-action by the ghost (ghoster) when “quid pro quo” is expected or promised to a ghosted one (ghostee) is a factor. If the Ghosting position is not regularized, that may perpetuate forced loss of opportunity on the unfairly or most negatively affected actor or entrepreneur.

This pervasive **EG** relationship dimension may provide a way, even if only rudimentary, of measuring entrepreneurial activity. It may explain, at least in part, nuances in countries with similar MNE presence such as Nigeria and South Africa that have varying rates of informality and antithetically contrasting entrepreneurial vibrance or growth. As rapid population growth catalyzes urban migration (UNFPA, 2022), that rate of growth could outpace slow, long-since MNE-induced

reductions in informality. Thus, the age-old assertion of automatic indirect trickle-down effects from a dominant but narrowing formal sector becomes even more flawed, thereby inviting even more immiseration. This implies that MNEs will most likely *not* deliver poverty alleviation.

This study extends Prashantham et al. (2012; 2018) and Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2008; 2020) who explore nuances between MNEs and start-ups in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely documented. It also aligns with or complements Colombo & Shafi (2016), Vandie & Zaheer (2014) & Arora & Romijn (2012) with management and policy implications. Findings evidence that while MNEs expand the private sector, create mass employment, and are large funders of public budgets, an observed philosophical deficit posits a pathology wherein locals are not prioritized. As such, a *value commitment dilemma* (Borchardt et al., 2020) that warrants a call for non-profit strategies in the mission and vision of MNEs (see also Rosca et al., 2022).

The article is organized as follows. Section 2.0 below contains a summary review of literature, placing the study topic in its rightful position within the field of entrepreneurship. Thereafter, research methods and analysis procedures are documented (see section 3.0). Findings and discussion are noted in section 4.0, while a summary detailing contributions and limitations is contained in section 5.0. References are listed last, followed by the Appendix.

2.0 Theoretical Grounding

Understanding the trajectory of entrepreneurship demands appreciation of complex variables (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). This study explores what transpires in the private sector between two groups of entrepreneurs, particularly leaning towards the generally less explored dark side (see Shepherd, 2019). The researcher's interest is neither exclusively on how linkages or constraints form between individuals (Granovetter, 1973; 1985), nor how actors exist within networks (Latour, 2007) but at a crossroads of the two – i.e., between individual and firm level. Thus, to map that niche position of inquiry, the following themes were considered.

2.1 Attributes of Entrepreneurship in Informal Contexts

Since Baumol's (1990; 1996) landmark research on *creative destruction*, constructing a complete picture of informality increasingly rivals the criticality of poverty. Three main literature streams

recognize causes of informality. Modernization theorists highlight underdevelopment, neo-Marxist or structural economics suggests too little regulation by government, and more recently neoliberal theories decry too much regulation (Huang et al., 2020). Closely intertwined with labor laws between modernization and neoliberal theories, informality is often determined by government policy where some sectors and trades are less regulated, barred from free economic participation, or declared illegal e.g. the Kerala story about Hindus and Muslims was banned in India, perceived to incite violence (Roy, 2009 a & b; Sahasranamam & Ball, 2018).

Following in the footsteps of De Soto (1989) which examined survivalist micro-entrepreneurs' motivation to start a venture, researchers have observed that the choice to remain informal is influenced by factors including lack of disposable income, high costs of complex registration and licensing processes, and market environment or conditions. The occupational identity of informal entrepreneurs (Gartner 1985) shows that *urban* informal sector arises out of necessity due to lack of employment opportunities; not from lack of capability, but rather, borne out of resource scarcity (Shantz et al., 2018). And although not legal, informality is legitimate (Webb et al., 2013; 2020).

Characteristics of informal entrepreneurs include lack of traditional marketing culture, “island” or “cluster” activity, collectivism, and fatalism (Adom et al. 2012; 2023). Relatedly, entrepreneurial action may be determined by life course (Jayawarna et al., 2013) or for slum dwellers, the need to cover health and education costs (Shepherd et al., 2021). As such, over 15 years ago, the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) concluded that informality is no longer considered as a “structural anomaly” in regional development (Hussain, 2011).

On the organizational front, a field experiment conducted in Ghana finds that cooperatives with vertical or formal hierarchy experience more conflict than flat models where members take on shared responsibility (Shantz et al., 2020). As well, a recent quantitative study of 3 cities i.e., Zhaoqing, Shantou & Meizhou highlights that urban growth mostly results from government or public spending, labor, fixed and financial capital. They note that growth from entrepreneurship is negligible (Huang & Chen, 2021), as historically symbolized by high rates of demise in the first 2 to 3 years of venture founding (Bosma & Kelly, 2019). Other challenges and opportunities of informality stem from historical perspectives (see Table 17 in Appendix, Pg. 160).

The role of gender in informal contexts cannot be overstated. Since Brush (1992) first described characteristics of female entrepreneurs, studies on female entrepreneurship remain mostly nascent or pregestational. Scholars remark how far women have come, noting that empowerment levels the playing field with some *now reaching the top and holding high office in Europe and the US* (Carter et al., (Eds), 2007), yet elsewhere, they are *doubly disadvantaged* (Murzacheva et al, 2019). In Asia, informality allows actors more freedom to achieve work-life balance (Babbitt et al., 2015), while in Uganda, in every 3 micro businesses is owned by women; with significant relevance to income and/or gender (in)equality (Karakire, 2015; Kiggundu, 2002; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

Overall, flexibility, ease of entry into markets, and low capital requirements are some opportunities that actors who operate informally seize (Chatterjee et al., 2022; World Economic Forum, 2021). Moreover, consequences and contributing factors to weak governance such as poor response mechanisms (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Williams et al, 2016), stark institutional inefficiencies (Mair & Marti, 2009), high probability to pay tax, (Kistruck et al., 2015), and low capacity to network (Greenbank, 2000) encourage informality, and also persist because of it.

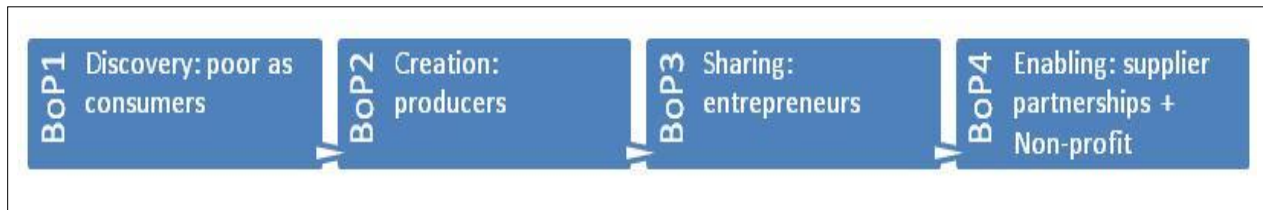
2.2 Evolution of Entrepreneurship at the BoP alongside Globalization

C. K. Prahalad (2001) is credited with birthing the BoP market-based concept after a seminal report highlighted descriptors of abject poverty (United Nations, 1999/ 2000), as substitutes for donations and foreign aid which dominated the past. As a springboard or result, researchers, practitioners, and leaders (Mandela, 2005; 2008) believe(d) in, but also critique(d) the power of globalization to combat poverty. Studies on *globalization* as an engine for growth in India, China, Brazil, and Mexico cite *MNEs* as large employers, taxpayers, public services funders, or technology providers (Bruton et al., 2013; London et al., 2020; Prashantham et al., 2018) while some equally focus on local entrepreneurship (Borchardt et al., 2020; Rosca et al., 2020; 2022; Subramanian et al., 2016).

The actors exhibit key differences; MNEs are opportunity driven (Prashantham et al., 2012; 2018), yet entrepreneurs at the BoP mostly engage out of necessity in “island” activity, often cut off from wider (inter)national actors (Shantz et al., 2018). They also adopt different entrepreneurial processes e.g. marketing by word of mouth as opposed to fliers or (social) media advertising (Adom et al., 2023). Their degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019; Rosca

et al., 2019) is also a major descriptor. While their definitions spring from resource-based metrics e.g. number of employees, entity size, capabilities, constraints, or even technological advancement; a commonality is that both play a key role in Global Value Chains (GVCs), *the process by which products move, across borders, to reach final consumers* (Bruton et al., 2013).

As illustrated in Figure 15 below, MNE-led models started off viewing the poor as opportunity “*discovery*”. As they evolve, heated debate arises, with critics proposing *creation* of wealth for the poor as producers (Karnani, 2007, London & Hart, 2010), and *sharing* fortune with locals (Dembek et al., 2019). Newer studies propose *enabling* opportunity by including non-profit strategies in the vision and mission of MNEs (Borchardt et al, 2020), or *inducing heterogeneity* (Rosca et al., 2022), even as a rise in *homogenized web-based platforms* ensues (Fu et al., 2023).



Prahalad, 2001 - 2008 (fortune); Karnani, 2007 a & b (mirage); London & Hart, 2010; Borchardt et al., 2020

Figure 15: Evolution of Market-based BoP Theory since 2000

Although MNEs are owned by a small proportion of the population, controlling the majority of resources (Bruton et al., 2013; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Williams et al., 2016), they have an underutilized capacity to demand local goods and high propensity to over-exploit/ crowd out locals (Davidson, 2009; Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010; Karnani, 2007; Prashantham & Kumar, 2019). Most recently, Decker & Dankwah (2023) explore Microentrepreneurs and MNEs and find that even with uptake of mobile money and international transfers’ phenomenal growth (Pankomera & van Greunen, 2019; Thinguri et al., 2014), the former are negatively affected on financing grounds when the latter co-opt BoP models. Disruptive market mechanisms negatively affect local growth.

As shown in Table 11 below, questions arise as to how market-based propositions and assumptions are met, more so as a determinant of success or failure (Shepherd, 2019; Shepherd et al., 2021).

Table 11: Underlying Assumptions of Market-based BoP models

Mechanisms by which MNEs spur growth	Poverty alleviation by MNEs Documented units of analysis (Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010) (London & Hart, 2010)	Evolution of microentrepreneurs roles and their positioning over time (See Figure 2.2 above)
Employment: Engaging locals e.g., by providing jobs	Mutuality: common interests measured by reciprocity	As consumers - sell at all costs; discovery view of opportunity
Knowledge spillovers: New ways of doing things	Multiplicity: Spurring activity through replicability of success stories within the host market	As suppliers: MNEs buy local produce as raw materials or exports e.g., agricultural products: opportunity creation
	Proportionality: comparative equitable contribution and/or distribution of activity, spoils, losses, or profits	As entrepreneurs: for instance, distributors or transport & logistics opportunity sharing
Market realignments: Competitive pricing and quality improvements (Hill & Mudambi, 2010)	Equitability: Shared prosperity, win-win and acknowledgement of each actor's or other's importance	As business partners: allowing purchase of shares or through non-profit strategies enabling fortune

2.3 Definition of measurement criteria

BoP theory lacks adequate *measurement metrics* to ascertain mutual value (Arora & Romijn, 2012; Chelekis & Mudambi, 2010). As such, to address the central question, studies on entrepreneur interactions are revisited. Table 12 below is a summary of *characteristics of social networks*, which expounds upon the nature of exchange (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), between entrepreneur clusters or groups (see also Huang & Knight, 2017). The source literature extends Granovetter (1973; 1985) who investigated 9 cases of *reachability* between individuals and delved into *degrees of separation*, with metrics and relational dynamics that elaborate upon magnitude of interactions.

Density relates to number of actors within a given space, be it geographically or say via online platforms (followers). *Reciprocity* is about quid pro quo. *Reachability* is determined by concentration or spacing between actors. *Centrality* is derived from the positioning or *locus* of actors, which is in turn determined by the rank of importance of actors and/or their products or services as perceived by others, or even as envisioned by themselves. *Locus of control* is about who holds power in the exchange. It is based on actor strength, decision-making capacity, influence, quality and/or speed of delivery; and determined by *depth* and/or *breadth* of reach or by

resources and other such considerations. Once magnitude is established, the next step is to determine directionality in evolution of interactions, if at all, by adapting the ADO framework (Paul & Benito, 2018).

Table 12: Characteristics of Social Networks (summary of Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986)

Units of analysis

Determinants of entrepreneur existence	Type of grouping (set)	Content for exchange	Descriptors	Dimensions or facilitators of formation	Determinant of weakness (or strength)	Functions of entrepreneurs with central roles
Chance	Role set	Communication	Depth	Density (or number)	Level of occurrence	Communication channels between distant persons
Necessity	Action set	Goods and services	Breadth	Reachability (or spacing)	Frequency	Brokerage services with third parties
Purpose	Network	Normative i.e. met expectations	Locus	Centrality (or/ and relativity)	Reciprocity	Role models

Further, most research at organizational level (e.g. Shantz et al., 2020) examines employees or clients, while most BoP theory explores South Asia, Eastern Europe, or even more developed contexts. An overview of 97 top journal articles (Kolk et al., 2018) groups such literature into commercial versus social or responsible globalization. Of the 43 articles which examine the impact of global trade on poverty (others are firm-specific): 33 (over 75%) cover the former, while only 11 (25%) represent the latter. They offer that mechanisms which integrate producers from low-income countries have positive impact. Macro-economic data of 550 East African companies shows that “South–South” collaboration gains traction, driving intraregional growth and reduced reliance on “South–North” alliances. Technology intensive value chains are led by Kenya and Ethiopia (Mohanty et al., 2019). Overall, less than 10% of “mainstream” literature pertains to sub-Saharan Africa, yet the region reportedly accounts for 56% of the global BoP population.

Lastly, much has changed since 2002 when BoP market-based models were coined, e.g. Uganda’s population doubled from just over 24 to 46 million (UBOS, 2024), yet there is still ambiguity when MNEs encourage consumerism regardless of locals’ predicament, proposing to instead *let each party focus on their interests* (Simanis, 2014). Such trends place those with little or no control over their own wealth at a harmful disadvantage (Karnani, 2009). Hence, the call to *empirically showcase how MNEs form cross sector partnerships* (Dembek et al., 2019).

3.0 Research Methods

This exploration does not aim to test assumptions, but rather to showcase *how* interactions between actors develop or exist; thereby inviting a qualitative approach (Grodal et al., 2021).

3.1 Research setting

The study takes place in Uganda. 42% of its non-agricultural labor force is self-employed, while over 80% of the population rely on agriculture; about 90% of these engage at subsistence level. Another of its key characteristics stems from a geographical area referred to as the *cattle corridor*. This area covers more than one third of the country, stretching from Western districts of Ntungamo and Isingiro at the bottom border, cutting diagonally across through Sembabule, Mubende, Kiboga, widening upwards to Nakaseke district, and extending from Apac to Soroti, Lira, Amuriah and Katakwi districts, towards Nakapiripirit, Moroto and Abim or upwards to the top left corner to cover Kabong district; in the region right above Lake Victoria as seen on the map. It is largely inhabited by pastoralists who depend on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihood. Most cattle corridor inhabitants are affected by a regional USD 42 billion financing gap, 15.6 billion of which pertains to the agricultural sector alone (AFFAWA/ AFDB, 2021).

Most Sub-Saharan governments accumulate resources through taxes on agricultural commodities and tourism - many of which are exempt, or power generation, mineral development, and such – which are underdeveloped; with variances between countries (World Economic Forum, 2021). Uganda's current net trade deficit stands at USD 250 Million (Ministry of Finance/ MoF, 2021) as a net importer; and while progress is recorded through various government initiatives, the cattle corridor is increasingly negatively impacted by global warming. Overtime, this has encouraged more in-migration to urban centers, as people search for opportunities to secure a better future. That explains how deep rooted and widely entrenched the informal sector is, before factoring in a population trajectory that warns of increased urbanization (UNFPA, 2022). It is for this reason which cements a high prevalence of (urban) informality, that the study focuses on locals.

As highlighted in Fig 16 below, this study follows an empirical multiphase design that begins with interviewing microentrepreneurs and MNE representatives in Phases 1a and b respectively. Input was also sought from representatives of 13 private sector development organizations in Phase 2.

3.2 Research Design

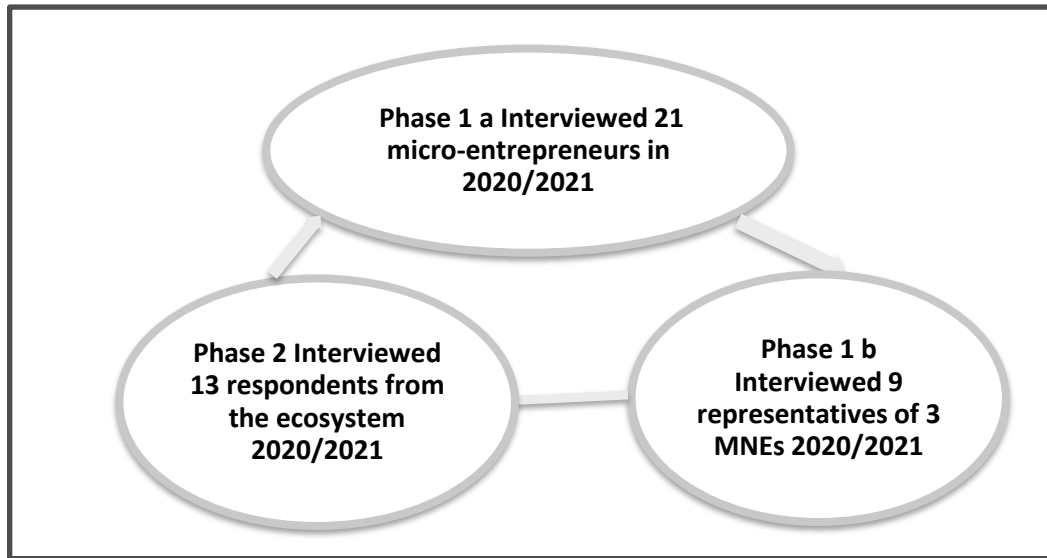


Figure 16: Multi-phase and Multi-method Research Design

Given rich societal culture and relative scarcity of contextual literature (Mair & Marti, 2009), the topic is explored from a local standpoint. The above notwithstanding, and as the pandemic ensued, social media platforms naturally interject as part of all market activity. Each phase is significantly independent, yet interdependent in relation to the study topic.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection (instruments and medium)

To help formulate the right questions, over 10 pilot studies were randomly conducted through informal discussions. Thereafter, semi-structured survey instruments with a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions were designed (Busetto et al., 2020). Given wide variances in the data, 2 distinct versions were created: one for microentrepreneurs, and the other for MNE representatives in phase 1a and 1b respectively; made up of about 15 to 20 questions at the start, although these varyingly and/or dissimilarly changed as the study progressed. Due consideration of the sample size, type, and selection methods was made especially given the pandemic period. Entrepreneurs often take on more than one activity therefore choices had to be made when labeling them. Also, a challenge in distinguishing between informal and semi-formal actors emerged. Thus, random selections were suitable, based on proximity and availability of common entrepreneurs.

As shown in **Tables 13** below, 21 microentrepreneurs were interviewed using the first survey version (type 1). The study period started during the first wave of lockdown, i.e. May to July 2020, and continued towards the end of that year. Because lockdowns coincided with the study, gathering focus groups was not possible. Also, while actors in agricultural and technology value chains were of interest since the two sectors are key drivers of this economy, respondents were chosen given proximity, availability, and willingness to participate. Although some activities are male or female oriented, focus was on actors rather than gender per se. Implications of those choices, and procedures followed, are acknowledged as underpinned by the 7 ethical principles of responsible research (RRBM position paper 2017; 2020); focusing on societal benefit.

Table 13: Interview Phase 1a Using Questionnaire type 1 - Microentrepreneurs

Code	Nature of Business	Industry statistics on gender representation (UBOS, 2019)	Sector-wide Comparative Composition	Sample size 21
MV	Market vendors	80% female	35%	4 female 1 male
CH	Clothes & home ware	50% female	20%	2 female 2 male
BB	Boda-boda	99% male	14%	2 male
MM	Mobile money kiosk	50% female	10%	2 female 2 men (1 also car wash)
CW	Carwash/Kiosk	99% male	8%	2 male
PA	Painters	99% male	8%	1 male
SCP	Selfcare & salon	72% female	5%	2 female (1 also clothes)
CA	Cake baker/musician	95% female	2%	1 female

Table 14 lists 9 representatives from 3 regional MNEs who were interviewed using the second survey version (type 2). *Regional* MNEs were chosen to study nuances in closely aligned cultural settings and thereby obtain rich and meaningful data, rather than focusing on MNEs that dominate in far-off contexts. JUM is an e-commerce platform that enables market vendors to fulfil orders for crafts, food, and other produce. It employs boda bodas (motorcycles for transportation in Africa and Asia) to deliver goods and/or services door to door. Think of Amazon in Africa. SOK monitor and restock retailers in dhukhas or duukas i.e., small retail shops, using branded vans to deliver a wide assortment of products and bulk purchases. Users benefit from reduced prices and shorter turn-around times. SOL distributes solar energy-saving gadgets. The last interview window in 2021 was kept to around 3 to 4 months to match comparative periods.

Table 14: Interviews Phase 1b Using Questionnaire type 2 - MNE Representatives

Code	MNE	Industry / Sector	Key Partners	Sample size 9
JUM	Jumia	Ecommerce	UNDP	2 female and 1 male
SOK	Sokowatch	Ecommerce	Unilever	1 female and 2 male
SOL	Solar Now	Solar Energy	International Funders	3 male

Interviews Phase 2: 13 representatives, each representing an organization, were also interviewed. They include governing bodies Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), National Social Security Staff (NSSF) and Private Sector Foundation (PSFU). International agents such as Trademark East Africa (TMEA), ACCA Uganda, International Trade Center (ITC), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and UN Women. Lastly, large MNEs e.g. Stanbic Bank, and major telecommunications providers MTN and Airtel (also popular in Asia). Participants included 4 CEOs, 2 Heads of Finance, 2 Public Relations Managers, a Marketing Manager, Training Manager and Third-Party Contract Manager. Discussions were also held with a Makerere University IT Incubation Hub.

In total, 43 respondents were engaged in over 70 interviews. The number of interviews is higher because some participants were approached more than once, to verify or clarify some data. The average interview lasted over 25 minutes, although itemized durations varied between 10 minutes to 2 hours. Microentrepreneurs and representatives of umbrella organizations contributed most of the shorter or longer discussions, respectively. In line with health and safety rules, most interviews were conducted online, over Zoom or WhatsApp media, although these were somewhat limited by low accessibility or poor connectivity. So, follow-up calls were conducted, mostly by phone, with a few physical face-to-face meetings; in which case mandatory measures, e.g. wearing face masks and using hand sanitizer, were taken. While the process began with set versions of semi-structured surveys, those changed to fit or suit different organizational roles, especially during Phase 2. **Additional data sources:** Photographs were taken in order to capture specific moments as respondents narrated their ordeal. These allow the reader to relate with data more intimately, thereby placing them in a better position to draw their own conclusions (see Photos in the Appendix, Pg. 157 and 158). Lastly, relevance was captured by recording notes during interviews and as events were broadcast in live media broadcasts/reports.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study follows an inductive approach based upon established procedures for open-ended theory building. As common in qualitative studies of this nature, data collection, analysis, and theory building may occur concurrently or sequentially as the study progresses (Gioia et al., 2013).

During pilot studies, although some questions garnered similar opinions, opposing and distinctive views frequently emerged from the groups. This revelation is not much of a surprise: it is why two or more survey instruments were structured in the first place. Owing to different languages, data was transcribed first. Transcription requires dwelling on peculiarities and norms to preserve facts and reduce bias within boundaries of reflexivity. As data was transferred to an excel spreadsheet for open coding (Gioia et al., 2013), attention was paid to “rawness” to preserve meaning and originality in responses in an interpretivist lens. Thereby maintaining a degree of normativity and ethnocentricity (Merton, 1964; 1973).

Following the process of achieving rigor through categorization (Grodal et al., 2021), coding started by reading through responses to each question and establishing commonalities. Since nuanced input on one or several varying aspects and responses were not compatible, coding was done separately for Phase 1a first, and thereafter Phase 1b: thereby initiating two distinct data sets (see Figures 21 and 22 in Appendix Pg. 155, 156). Responses from representatives of the 13 organizations in Phase 2 were spread between the groups to aid triangulation. They either match, supplement, compliment, or contrast the data from phase 1a and 1b.

First order codes were generated by recognizing data patterns from repetitive words or themes. Given that open-ended questions derive broad responses, it is important to refrain from overflowing outside boundaries of interpretation. The researcher is guided by revisiting the main research question and sub-questions. Hence, due care is taken at each step. Precision is also ensured by going back to literature to reaffirm the study scope. Themes on selflessness, societal wellbeing, profitability, institutional voids, digital divide, training, contracts, social media usage, technology platforms frequently surfaced from raw data. Thereby forming initial categories or labels. These 1st order codes are expounded upon in the findings (see Table 15).

Figure 17 below represents the resultant data structure.

1st Order Codes

2nd Order Codes Theory



Figure 17: Resultant Data Structure from Inductive Analysis
(Adapted from Gioia et al., 2013)

Second order codes are arrived at by iteration and reiteration (Busetto et al., 2020) as *categories are refined* (Grodal et al., 2021). Huge contrasts in responses indicate a need for further clarification through probing. As new questions form, they prompt the next interview. They are paused to either the same or different respondent in either group. While an equal number of respondents reduces bias, discrepancies snowball varyingly and/or (dis)similarly for all groups. Other themes emerge, which even though significant, are outside the boundaries; not closely or narrowly adding to the inquiry. Those were eliminated (Gioia et al., 2013). Thus, forming sharp categories. A pattern of motivation, expectations, conditions, opportunity, and response emerged. Table 15 below expounds upon the derived 2nd order constructs: towards theory generation.

Table 15: Definition of 2nd Order Codes from Microentrepreneur - MNE data

Description of 2 nd Order Categories Towards Theory Generation	Theory
A determinant or antecedent of a decision to engage in entrepreneurial activity. It may relate to level of income, availability of resources, severity of the situation i.e. scarcity, necessity, and opportunity. (Gartner, 1985; Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016), and/or life course (Jayawarna et al., 2013)	Motivation
Hierarchy of needs considers physiological aspects as basic necessities e.g. housing/shelter, food, water, air, sleep, clothing, and reproduction (Maslow, 1954). Another level is e.g. safety, love, belonging, esteem, self-actualization. Hierarchy of objectives considers the organizational vision, mission, goals, and the specific objectives as the reasons why MNEs may enter markets to engage in entrepreneurial activity	Expectations Individual Organizational
Elements in the environment e.g. institutional inefficiencies, poor resource management at national level, resource scarcity at individual or communal level, subsistence farming (Adom et al, 2023; Webb et al, 2020; Marti & Mair, 2009). Formalization strategies as encouraged by global policy (IMF, 2018) to widen the tax base, resulting in frequent crack downs on Microentrepreneurs, yet they provide over 70 % of all non-agricultural employment.	Conditions
Opportunity is favorable resource combination (Baumol, 1996) for financial, or material, or more recently non-financial gain and/or advancement. Material gain from the BoP, by widening market share, generating profit, and creating wealth for investors and/or shareholders as cited from <i>“The fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid”</i> (Prahalad & Hart, 2002; London & Hart, 2010). Increasing productivity through supplier contracts, by recognizing needs of the poor as opposed to viewing them as a market-base as cited from <i>“The mirage at the Bottom of the Pyramid”</i> (Karnani, 2007; 2009).	Opportunity Discovery view Creation view
How entrepreneurs react to incidents or fill in gaps say during war or crises. Or actions that entrepreneurs take as opportunity arises or during catastrophe, towards fulfilling the needs of the community (e.g., Shepherd & Williams, 2016; Chandy et al., 2018; Branzei & Abdelnour, 2010)	Response

Upon further examination, the data varied by magnitude and/or direction. Thus, necessitating more detailed analysis in sequence. To follow patterns of how or when interactions develop and/or progress, measurement criteria were adopted from Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) as noted in the literature review here in this paper (also see Chapter 2 of the thesis).

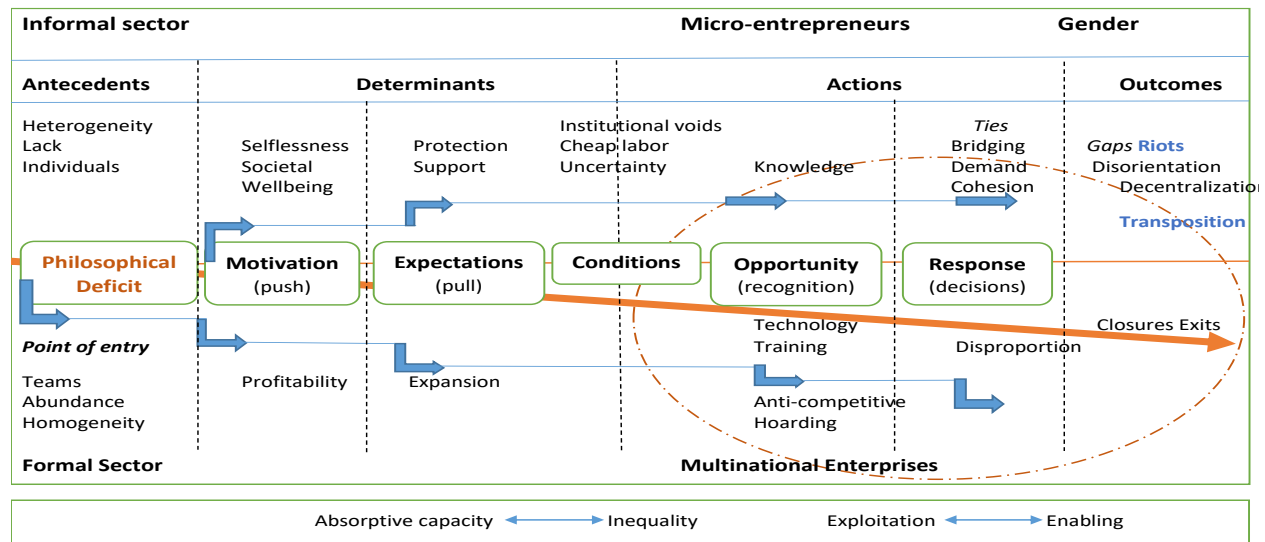
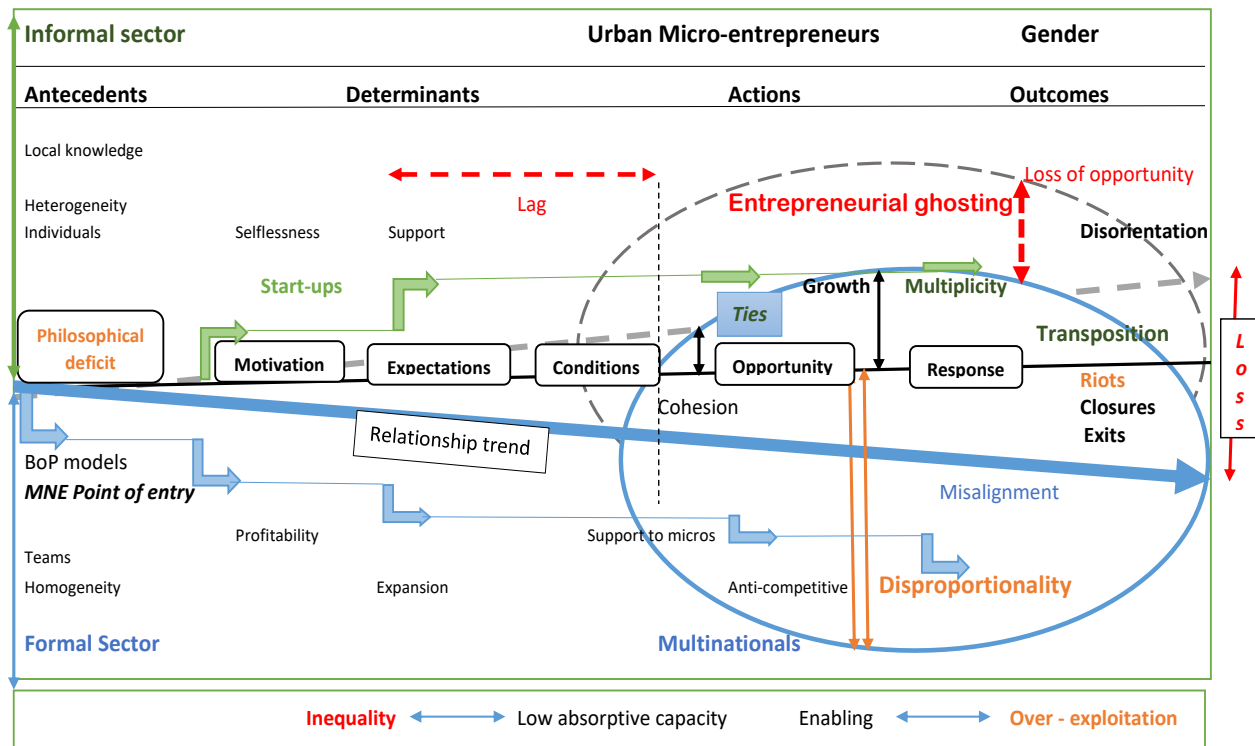


Figure 18: Plotting - Originated by Researcher to Illustrate Magnitude and Directionality

As shown in Figure 18 above, the researcher initiated something different in the final leg of the procedure. Microentrepreneurs' data was plotted against that of MNE representatives on opposite sides of a horizontal line graph. The ADO framework was adapted to group plotted data points into antecedents, determinants, actions, and outcomes (Paul & Benito, 2018). Orienting narrowly towards relationship-framing phenomena common to both groups as horizontally calibrated in the middle of the plotted area. An element of decision making by each party is acknowledged as a determinant of the formation: noting a blank/deficit at onset. To *stabilize the categories* (Grodal et al., 2021), gain clarity and derive meaning; respondents were left to guide this conversation in a light grounded theory approach. Depth of their experiences bears on the quality of data obtained, helps to establish variations, appreciate locals' standpoint, and thereby enriching the knowledge building process. To contain the research at this stage, aims and objectives are revisited, without limiting or taking away from how the data flows. The loop continues until saturation, i.e. when no new data emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

Finally, a resultant circle of activity emerges. Particular attention is paid to peculiarities or missing activity as depicted by a dotted shadowy circle. Thus, narrowing down to theory generation.

4.0 Entrepreneurial Ghosting in Microentrepreneur – MNE Interactions



Key

Shape	Description
End-to-end black line in the middle	Delineates informal from formal sector (upwards slant depicts ongoing formalization)
Box arrows (green) in upper quadrant	Development of relationship from micro-entrepreneur standpoint
Box arrows (blue) in lower quadrant	Development of relationship from MNE standpoint
End-to-end thick (blue) downward arrow	Current relationship trend or trajectory with gravitational pull towards formal sector
Oval shape thick (blue)	Resultant action cycle or circle of activity
Double arrows short inside thick oval (black) in upper quadrant	Support towards entrepreneurship growth
Double arrows long inside thick oval (orange) in lower quadrant	Disproportionality which continues to negate mutuality, multiplicity, and equitability
End-to-end thick dotted upward arrow	Mirror of relationship if it grew within informal sector: a “what if” scenario
Oval shape dotted (green)	Action cycle more resonant with poverty alleviation: a “what if” scenario
Double arrows dotted thick (red)	Deterrence of entrepreneurship growth

Figure 19: Relationship between Microentrepreneurs & MNEs in informal settings

How Microentrepreneur – MNE interactions form, transpire or play-out at the BoP

Antecedents: As illustrated in Figure 19 above, a philosophical deficit at entry point of MNEs is a precursor to divergent motives, as often shaped by each actors' life course. No respondent could quite answer why, if poverty alleviation is one of the main goals, MNE concentration is in the narrowing formal sector instead. Or why there are no apprenticeships. As they provide training to (formal) staff, the same benefit is not a standard for (semiformal) micro agents and distributors. Or even why extractive industries accord minerals from Africa little or no value, way less than “public sentiment”. Yet as extortion continues, some large MNEs e.g. banks are exiting the region. Relevant to (pre)existing and/or resultant expectations of locals that are unmet; since inception, MNE-led models note that income from narrow formal sectors “trickles-down”. However, that is ex-ante dependent upon employment, as mostly provided by microenterprise. Such unexplained practices remain vague on the research side and underappreciated in the context; necessitating re-identification and clarification on who is the benefactor, and/or beneficiary, in this exchange.

Determinants of Exchange (Inputs): what happens next is influenced or even dictated by (pre)existing conditions. Given rural-urban migration (see research setting) MNEs concentrate in overpopulated urban areas to guarantee easy market penetration. Hence, *reachability* between the actor groups is high, yet contrastingly, *locus of control* of the focal host group is weak. Even with well-informed national policies like BUBU (Buy Uganda Build Uganda): owing to the abuse of institutional inefficiencies by foreign actors, compounded by inadequate response mechanisms, the majority of locals have little or no power in determining what transpires during exchange.

Actions (what transpires): the circle of activity leans towards a narrow formal sector, projecting downwards away from the majority. Thus, creating an abyss/ would-be activity in a shadowy circle and dashed arrows, which represents opportunity loss. Making *centrality poor* on the host side as represented by a smaller portion of the wider full (or blue) circle. This round-about way of working “for” others rather than “with” them drives a wedge between actors and breeds complacency.

Because the research process is defined by various contextual, conceptual, practical, or theoretical gaps; a clear distinction between such gaps and this particular one that reflects empirical data is needed. Thus, to avoid confusion, the researcher refers to the abyss as **Entrepreneurial Ghosting**.

4.1 Attributes of Entrepreneurial Ghosting as a Relationship Dimension

As the data depicts in Figure 20 below, Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG) is an adverse relationship that stems from divergent needs-based and opportunity-based motives and/or expectations. The dynamic breeds inaction or lag between action and response, inequitable and non-reciprocal exchange of resources, normative content, or knowledge. Locals provide tacit knowledge and market while MNEs mostly hire graduates (including women) and engage the civil sector. Yte microentrepreneurs only receive support, if at all, after MNEs run extensive marketing campaigns. Or MNEs offer ad hoc or abstract one-off training, which is easier to consume, but often lacking; without adequate impact assessment. Paralysis in a pathology to delay or not deliver on promises persists. The resultant opportunity loss breeds continuous disproportion as a derivative attribute.

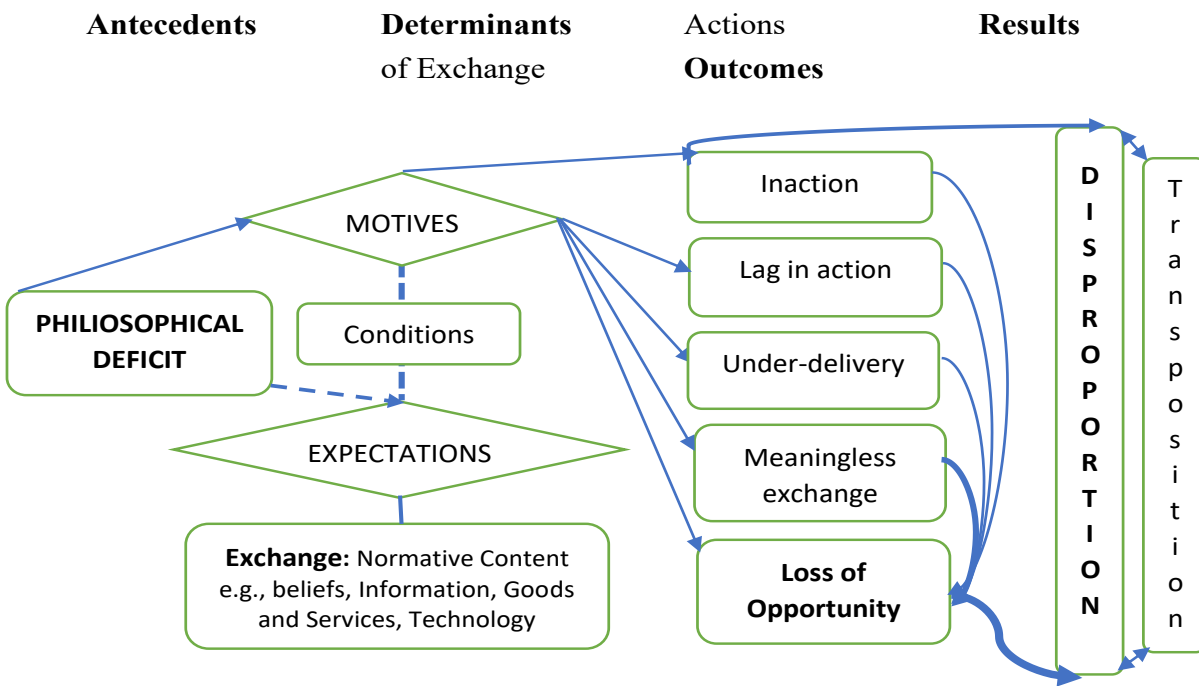


Figure 20: Characteristics of Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Relevant evidence from raw data as extracted from responses is shown in table 15 below.

Table 16: Formation of 1st Order Codes from Raw Data - Towards 2nd Order Codes

Table 4.1: Extract of Responses from Participants – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Participant Group
<p>Selflessness and Welfare Focus</p> <p>“To serve the community during this time of crisis, we shall sleep at the mudaala [market stall]. That was the directive given by leaders [government policy]. Otherwise, what will the wannainchi [people] especially city dwellers eat.” MV1, MV2, MV3</p> <p>“I have given to over 6 of my regular clients, food for free, because they were recently laid off [during Covid]. I wanted to thank them for being loyal during the time when everything was okay.” MV 5</p> <p>“If the end comes, I will not be buried with the products. So, I am here to serve.” CH1</p> <p>Key observation made during the data collection process</p> <p>Vendors, including pregnant women, lived at market stalls to curb the spread during the Covid19 crisis and yet they continue to be available for the community (see exhibits in the Appendix Section).</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>
<p>Needs Hierarchy (Maslow) as Motivation</p> <p>“Anyway, stay home and do what? What will my children eat and how will they survive if they fall sick?” MV4</p> <p>“We have to choose a strategy. We cannot decide [afford] to all go home and abandon our role to the community.” MM 1, MM 3</p> <p>“Those in the villages are lucky they are out of the danger zone. They are working as normal.” CW1</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>
<p>Profit Focus while Exploiting Opportunity outweighs Societal Wellbeing</p> <p>“Business is booming. Airtime sales are through the roof. Data sales have also skyrocketed.” MTN & ATL</p> <p>“You keep hearing about what is going on in Congo with regards to the mining industry, and in West Africa with regards to minerals especially gold reserves and the status of their infrastructure agreements with France? It is very concerning.”</p> <p>“It is the MNEs as off-takers that set ridiculously low prices at the farm gate for the producers, for the raw materials.”</p>	<p>MNEs</p> <p>PSFU reaction</p> <p>MUK reaction</p>

Table 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses from Participants – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Participant Group
<p>Hierarchy of Objectives as Motivation</p> <p>“We have sales targets. That is the job. As long that is done, we are rewarded.” JUM1, SBIC</p> <p>“We do work with vendors and mobile money agents on an as is basis. The commissions we get per transaction also dictate how much the agent gets. They are small. So, we share the small cake.” MTN, ATL</p> <p>“Every business is here to profit- that is the way of capitalism. All else is secondary. This is just a fact.”</p> <p>“We have to uphold our shareholders trust by posting good results and high returns especially during such a time (of Crisis).” SOK</p> <p>“This is the best time to invest and reap higher benefits even faster especially for technology driven start-ups.” SOL</p> <p>“These traditional practices have continuously affected the balance of trade severely negatively.”</p>	<p>MNES</p> <p>URA / URSB reaction</p> <p>PSFU reaction</p>
<p>Market Conditions</p> <p>“It is a cash economy. We demand cash upon delivery and sometimes customers are not home. If it is food that we delivered, where does that leave us?” JUM2</p> <p>“The problem is now coverage and network quality and that of affordability. Smart phones are expensive let alone the data costs.” <i>This comment pertains to market conditions but also specifically to affordability as noted by Micros and documented further below.</i></p> <p>“Online business partnerships are difficult to establish because they can sometimes be pranks or even fraudulent.”</p> <p>“The concern about high operational risks is widespread given market size. Microentrepreneur ties is risky business” SBIC, MTN</p> <p>“We follow what governments set as policy. It is clear that the private sector is always a step ahead of the legislation. “Returns are re-invested and shared through salary payments and taxes.” “This is a broader concern across the board.”</p> <p>“The political situation is also not helping matters, it is three stressful things at once [Covid, national elections, and global wars.]”</p>	<p>MNES</p> <p>PSFU reaction</p> <p>URA reaction</p> <p>MUK reaction</p>

Table 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses from Participants – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Participant Group
<p>a) Low, poor, or lack of access to resources</p> <p>“We hear the government asking banks not to send out demand letters to customers and to give them time to pay back loans. But who will cover the accumulating interest cost?” SC1, MM3</p> <p>“Locals still use kabiliti (This is the term used to refer to analogue phones) especially where rural electrification is still ongoing. They are used mainly as torches to provide light as people walk back to their homes.” BB1</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>
<p>b) Poor or lack of affordability</p> <p>“Even if I had a loan which I don’t, extending repayment in this environment may not be a solution. I am not managing.” CH4</p> <p>“Government is giving out something small [financial resources, usually a one-time small cash payment] in Gulu.” BB2</p> <p>“Nothing was given [in Kampala] where the majority operate. What is the use of all the foreign aid?” CA</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>
<p>Slight Reduction in “Discovery view of Opportunity” (Prahalaad & Hart, 2004) is evidenced. However, “Opportunity Sharing” (London et al., 2014) is widely Lacking</p> <p>“The credit lines with SOL and SOK come in handy. I would not be in position to start if that was not available.” MV5</p> <p>“Training is increasingly achievable these days. It helps a lot for those who are lucky to get it.” MM3</p> <p>“The only problem is interest. The element of persistent high interest rates is a threat to the venture. It affects all of us.” BB1</p> <p>“My contract with MTN is very loose but what to do [no other options]”. MM1</p> <p>“They go by type and size of transactions. We are on our own completely when it comes to any other benefits.” MM3</p> <p>“No health cover, no maternity consideration, and more to that no reimbursements for contract cancellation.”</p> <p>“Definitely no considerations for business rental premises.” MM1, MM2, MM3, MM4</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>

Table 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses from Participants – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Participant Group
<p>Legitimacy Risk as a result</p> <p>“These companies have been here for a long time and yet we are perfect strangers. They do not understand our needs.” SC</p> <p>“We do not understand financial reports, they are not translated in local languages. For whom are they meant?” CH3, BB3</p> <p>“The Company run into problems when its advertising campaign that claimed working with big names such as Facebook and Amazon owners was discovered as fake and it was forced to close – this is the reason they gave us.” MM, CA</p> <p>“An MNE donated empty jerricans to us. Those actions were eye opening. How is that connected to Covid-19, of what use is that? It is public knowledge all over the news. Not that [donating] soda would help much. Surely, it will not cure the virus” PA</p>	<p>Microentrepreneurs</p>
<p>Anti-competitive, hoarding, and protectionist tendencies</p> <p>“What we have observed over the past decade is this almost elaborate divergence between intentions (motives) and expectations.”</p> <p>“It is true that financial reports which are published annually are standardized. However, the standards need to work for the people for whom the information is meant. Without translating them to local languages, they hide in plain sight.”</p> <p>“Have you noticed that the consumer targeted strategies such as marketing and advertising are increasingly highly culturally aligned? Why would this be any different regarding financial reporting?”</p> <p>“When the reports are shared, translations could also be introduced to suit at least the higher percentage of the population.”</p> <p>“Everyone will agree that the crisis really made it clear that our national strategies are not well developed. They are not strong enough to cope with the gaps that MNE strategies are still creating, increasingly, on a daily basis.”</p> <p>“Regarding MNE strategy and financial reporting, this business of one-size-fits all and standardization needs careful review.”</p> <p>“But that is not all. Tax contribution reasoning is fast becoming outdated.” “We need to go back to the drawing board.”</p>	<p>NSSF and ITC</p> <p>comments on legitimacy and a need for cultural alignment</p> <p>MUK</p> <p>on legitimacy and a need for cultural alignment</p>

Table 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses from Participants – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Participant Group
<p>Response towards Observed or Highlighted Challenges</p> <p>“That is why we partner with International Development Agencies such as our recent collaboration with UNDP. It helps to reduce costs as we partner with market vendors. The resources are invested in sensitisation at markets and to the general public.” JUM3</p> <p>“It is up to government to catch up, we just follow [the policy as laid out]” SOK3</p> <p>“What is important for us across the board is to show that the work we do to introduce solar products to those that are not connected on the main grid is worthwhile. They are also catered to. It is what our partners in Europe expect.” SOL3</p>	MNEs
<p>More Observations and Responses</p>	
<p>“The reality is they {MNEs} form the top half of the top taxpayers list in the country. They have done so for the past 30 or so years.”</p>	URA
<p>“Nothing is really out of the ordinary, with the big exception that, we are beginning to see a huge apparent upward trend on MNEs side that is very steep and yet on the extreme, it is completely unrivalled by a very clear downward trend in almost all the markets be it local or international.”</p>	ACCA
<p>“To put it simply, given the record success that top tier global MNEs made, it is a surprise that the talk of poverty still lingers on.”</p>	NSSF PSFU
<p>“There are definitely more resources to go around and manage this ancient problem [of poverty]. The reality is that there is a vacuum.” “It seems that no one is leading the way on putting money where their mouth is on this one, I’m afraid.”</p>	UN Women
<p>“Government has introduced Parish Models at every district level. Focus is also on Saccos through which entrepreneurs receive credit, and also initiatives to support entrepreneurs in the Agricultural Value Chain such as NAADs.”</p>	URA
<p>“We work with entrepreneurs at the border and what we have observed is that there are long waiting times even for the small businesses who group up to make larger purchases together to enjoy price differentials. This is bad [prohibitive].”</p>	TMEA
<p>“Government controls need to be stepped up always been a challenge given a background that paused a threat say 50 years ago. Times are different, yet wars have not gone out of fashion – this is evidence for the speedy need for change.”</p>	ITC

4.2 How the observed interactions support or deter Entrepreneurship

By providing the most employment, microentrepreneurs avail extensive, sought-after market for clothing, telecommunications, household goods, solar products or even paint - to emphasize extent. Not to mention their national resources in extractive industries. However, only a few of them have a non-consumer or supplier partnership with MNE(s). Thus, the interest is to determine whether by providing such demand, they benefit. And to define how such benefit, if any, is realized.

The most noticeable supplier interactions exist in Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) along technology, mineral development, or agricultural value chains e.g. in agency banking or by popular telecommunication agents. As locals increasingly enroll into mainstream micro-mobile-banking payments, micro agents and SMEs dominate this space by size and/or capital, employing anywhere between 5 to 50 individuals (starting below the 9 staff yardstick). Such outfits are often male oriented or owned, although they widely employ females who are perceived as more trustworthy. Relationships are also common in export promotion of tea, maize, coffee (e.g. Louis Dreyfus). Indeed, there was notable demand by MNEs for agricultural products during lockdown. Such visible engagement signals regional development, where locals stand to benefit cumulatively.

Regional MNEs note that the few partnerships as increasingly shaped by technology allow for wider reach to dhukas i.e. small retailers. Swift deliveries to doorsteps boost local *Informal Entrepreneurial Networks* (IENs). In particular, SOL3 say that they bolster gender leadership against the odds which is beneficial to women whose movement tends to be limited by family care and stay-at-home duties. Semi-formal actors benefit through training, or when SOL extends credit to low-income households with irregular inflows e.g. slumdweller, or when a host of artists, dancers and musicians share content online. JUM1 and SOK3 relay that large employers spur a market base which demands local products and services. Those actors can access financing from intermediaries like BRAC and Grameen or enjoy mobile money credit services. The trajectory, if rightly capitalized upon, may be ripe as a recipe for growth.

“Mobile banking is not only an alternative. It is also comparatively simpler to deploy, accessible and relatively straightforward. Certainly, a more rewarding option” MTN. Albeit “marred with prohibitive data charges and technical and language barriers” ITC.

“The success of agency banking all over East Africa sends positive signals” NSSF

“Facebook is great for marketing to immediate family and friends, but it is not working”

“Youtube is a big market if one has a following there.” SC. “Tiktok and Youtube pay us to upload funny or shocking content. It pays artists and bloggers who support us in turn” PA

“I have learnt a lot more from [Stanbic Bank] training than I ever studied in school back then” SB and “This would not be possible without private equity financiers [offshore], business angels. We have recently attracted international bodies such as UNDP” JUM1

However, backtracking the above, NSSF and MUK say that access to products differs from benefit. A snapshot by PSFU reveals a) lack of apprenticeships for informal actors even in the successful telecommunications sector, with only a few in audit firms or bank staff, b) mobile-banking costs are higher on low transaction amounts, meaning that margins from the poor are more significant, c) amidst high transaction volumes, MNEs providing basic products may over compromise quality, lower standards, charge higher interest, or increase credit thresholds as functions of operational costs. **Perhaps most importantly, MNEs exiting this space cite poor cost-to income ratios**, as a result of a digital divide that derails local engagement. Uptake is curbed by years-long outage of Facebook, poor accessibility, high technology cost, and meager earnings from online activity.

Regarding entrepreneur training: MNEs avoid costs for externally tailored or professional training for informal actors “like a plague” to quote MUK, often opting for adhoc training on Bookkeeping and Savings instead. They claim, amidst weak institutional environments, that tax paid should be allocated towards that. Lack of entrepreneurship education on pitching and storytelling exacerbates financing gaps in a largely unbanked population, further derailing eligibility. As a result, such poor visibility can only encourage a perpetual lack of seeding venture capitalists, green, impact, or angel investors; creating a vicious cycle of exclusion that leaves start-up ideas underdeveloped or unexploited. Thereby impeding creativity and curbing innovative capacity in the region.

On credit or financial access: a clear marker of magnitude of entrepreneurs’ predicament in informal settings was the temporary suspension of interest accrual on credit facilities mandated on all commercial banks by the central bank during lockdown. The decree had little or zero effect on microentrepreneurs, since many are excluded from traditional MNE-led financing systems.

On knowledge spillovers and cultural recognition: in a slight move towards “*opportunity sharing*”, MNEs adopt local languages and culture in advertisements. Yet by using complex mono-lingo financial reporting and ignoring low appreciation within the informal sector, they “obscure the loot from locals’ watchful eye” PSFU. On a separate note, partnering more with (male dominated) SMEs – since they are more likely to formalize and meet eligibility criteria – also excludes a majority which operates in the wider micro sector - again, significantly represented by women. Thereby delaying and/or negating intended gains.

Overall, nine themes from literature and raw data are tabulated in Figure 23 (Appendix Pg. 159). The data shows that microentrepreneurs have ownership (but less control) over four themes i.e. raw materials in extractive industries, demand and consumption, cumulative local employment, and local knowledge. MNEs lead on mass formal employment, salary threshold, creating partnerships, technology, and training: mostly for (formal) staff. But, except where government responsibility is paramount, e.g. low level of informal sector training and poor regulatory policy as a component of institutional inefficiencies, MNEs lead on gaps in the rest of themes.

Outcomes (outputs): owing to the above and other push or pull factors, a generally *weak* or *poor locus of control* is posited when locals are left either underappreciated and/or unprotected - perhaps a combination of both. This is further compounded by high innovation costs and mild employment. Due to *poor centrality* in the relationship, creatives or innovators often end up right back where they started or even worse, at a new bottom. Hence, leading to MNE losses, and exits.

4.2.1 Causes of poor or weak centrality in this relationship at the BoP

Most cited gaps stem from a combination of **EG**, institutional inefficiencies and poor response mechanisms. During the nurturing process of start-ups as training or funding support is received, growth may occur steadily. Yet as time goes by, that may recede due to lack of adequate resources, weak control measures, or flimsy short-term contracts. Thus, leaving hard-done-by recipients decentralized and/or desensitized. Take mobile money agents (MM) and market vendors (MV). Most (in urban centers) are registered, operating in semi-formal status, and engaged on marginal return contracts. Although often stationed by roadsides that offer easy public access, they run huge risks in indelicate structures that do not standard safety checks, given that they transact in cash.

One such microentrepreneur, MM2, came from Kalisizo in Masaka, bringing her family along to the city in hopes of finding opportunities like quality education for her children. A chance arose when a cousin shared key details necessary to run a MM kiosk. She registered and attended training on a semi-formal basis by the telecommunications operator and also informally from fellow agents. This combined knowledge helped her gain confidence to operate in a commercially viable location that is central for people traffic. She is surrounded by truck drivers in a huge parking lot: with a constant flow of mobile transactions for fuel purchases and remits to driver's families. Yet she is reportedly "disturbed" by their "persistence" and "feels unsafe all the time".

"Where there would be safety campaigns to protect her, health cover, retirement benefits, partial scholarships for children, cost sharing in rent, there is no safeguard. Yet on paper, she meets all the requirements of a formal business" remarked NSSF.

A stark example of meaningless exchange happened during the pandemic, when Coca-Cola sparked outrage by donating empty jerrycans in Uganda, thereby causing a public media frenzy. Another common and equally perplexing experience is that most banks have failed to attune themselves towards serving local businesses. E.g. they fail to finance locals, instead charging customers UGX 15,000 (equivalent to £3) for using other banks' ATMs to access their own funds, posting high returns even during times of crisis. That drives innovation costs for locals upwards, induces price hikes/ inflation on products, but also by margin, affects small entities more negatively. Eventually, such banks exit this space, citing negative cost-to-income ratios.

Other practices which go un- or underreported are perpetrated by managers and supervisors in tourism & hospitality where harassment of entrepreneurs is unchecked and unpunished in preference for business growth. As a result of such divergent practices, a legitimacy risk persists. This adverse relationship curbs growth and thus, negatively affects communities.

4.3 Effects of Entrepreneurial Ghosting: the art of Transposition

The above-mentioned factors play a role in failure, mostly on the locals' side but also by proxy, reverberating into MNE losses and exits. Selfish practices e.g. exclusion of Uganda (and Tanzania) from social media by Facebook due to market size or for political reasons, stifle selfless doctrines. A major effect of the dynamic is potent backflow that creates a breeding ground for immiseration.

“What [economic or entrepreneurship] reports may not tell you is that every few years, they are more likely observing new faces: Where did the old ones go? This population is largely young and youthful, making it highly unlikely that they retired. It is like switching on and off, swaying or wigwagging between starting and failure” JUM3

Transposition is the art of creating “one-hit wonders”. Unlike transformation (Tsui et al., 2004), and although there may not be a complete absence of growth, this is more about lateral, sporadic directionless movement from one deal to the next, which mostly meets failure. That zigzagging breeds less stable growth. Seeking freedom to create, increased recognition, and more reachability to widen their market, that forces many, including semi-formal actors, to stop and thereafter, out of necessity, start all over again. Or, just purely out of boredom: they form random groups and inadvertently shift power to either legal-terms-bound technology platforms (not locally or centrally controlled), or to other unknown/underground actors.

To add granularity, other representatives of umbrella organizations make import/ export analysis of this resource-abundant region, noting that MNEs exploit institutional voids in extractive industries by hoarding, age-old excessive profit repatriation and anti-competitive practices. On top of that, they still deploy one-size-fits all standardization in failed strategies from elsewhere. Other reports on this otherwise mostly macro conversation are reminiscent of a weak balance of trade, citing significant lack of proportionality that stems from severe underpricing at farmgate e.g., of minerals from as far as Congo, or the hold that, e.g. France, maintains on West Africa’s resources.

“The status quo is, in some ways, comparable to the Uber dilemma that was recently resolved in the UK to protect drivers from exploitation, yet the predicament of most informal sector actors is more dire” remarked the then Head of ACCA Uganda.

This loop sweeps local value and continuously feeds inflation as a factory line for increased austerity measures that favor internationally backed actors. Moreover, inflation is often explained from MNEs’ point of view by those who note job losses; yet rampant tax crackdowns are on the rise e.g. by levying over the top tax (OTT) on locals’ social media usage but not adequately on the platform-based corporations that enjoy huge gains from massive advertising. That haunts many a local trader and creatives who struggle to keep afloat. PSFU echoed similar observations, citing

the understanding of MNEs; “business or venturing is risky, there is always a huge price to pay”. **Notwithstanding, as microentrepreneurs play a small commission-based, low-value-addition logistical role while availing extremely undervalued, somewhat unrecognized raw material and/or local knowledge; they are being ghosted by the very MNEs that they partner with.**

The wedge between the two actor groups starves off start-ups and encourages the demise of local genius, denoted by short lived innovations with high fatality as noted by several authors. As such, locals leapfrog between success, yet remain dangerously close to the clutches of abject poverty. The general sentiment as MNEs plunder regional wealth, is that shortage of strategies to improve this relationship and ensure meaningful exchange of resources, for the benefit of locals, drags on.

5.0 Discussion

This study makes 3 arguments. First, the empirical data signals gaps between BoP theory and the (highly informal) BoP context. Most discourse on BoP models is based on stakeholder theory, proposing the poor as consumers, suppliers, or co-creators (London et al., 2010). However, thus far, no stakeholder mapping exercise as supposedly conducted by MNEs explains why or how, regardless of earlier relational aspects in *Network theory* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), non-action, lag between action and response, or meaningless exchange remain rampant and largely unabated.

Second, the data aligns with Jayawarna et al. (2013)’s view that *motives* are shaped by *life course*. As the determinants of such factors continue to differ e.g. access to resources such as technology, finance, education, health or housing, this raises the possibility that opportunity-based and needs-based actors might be less positioned or bare NO *intention* to benefit each other, or both. At a time when forecasted population growth is dominated by Africa and Asia (UNFPA, 2022), such theoretical standoff pauses significant negative implications.

Third, broadly, two opposite trends that are contrary to necessity entrepreneurs’ expectations (Sahasranamam & Sud, 2016), are observed within the region. While AI-driven MNEs such as Standard Chartered and Barclays banks exit this retail space after having been here over 100 years, other MNEs continue to exploit or mostly extort natural resources. As the anticipated rate of rising BoP populations outpaces the rate of growth induced by MNEs, concentration of their activity in narrowing formal sectors is likely to breed more poverty/ immiseration, which is problematic.

MNE-dense countries in sub-Saharan Africa depict stark antithetical disparities in entrepreneurial growth too. Nigeria's high informality rate (of over 80%) as a huge oil exporter and Ghana's moderate one (50%) both persist alongside many technology hubs. Yet in South Africa's case; with lower informality rate (36%) and over 50 mega labs too, entrepreneurial vibrance is much lower than expected (IMF, 2018; GEM, 2016). These observations do not make sense; they infer that *multiplicity* alone, without meaningful exchange, *does not suffice* (emphasis, not citation). That contradicts Prahalad & Hart (2002), Prahalad & Hammond (2004), London & Hart (2004; 2010), and more recently London et al. (2014).

The last argument borne out of the three positions goes summarily against MNE-led BoP models. To infer meaning and spotlight the gravity of implications, the above-mentioned observations are applied similarly to formal and informal contexts. In formal (AI-ready) economies where stronger *locus of control* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) is upheld to a higher extent by greater institutional efficiencies; MNE reach may be deep enough to cover a wider latitude. This fit may create stronger synergies and multipliers that could be sufficient for growth; perhaps making considerations for mutuality slightly less relevant in so-called developed economies. Notwithstanding, escalating profits remain inverse to housing crises and rising interest rates (IMF/ World Bank, 2015; 2023), with AI-driven MNE exits in UK and EU; symbolizing that **EG** may be in effect beyond the BoP.

Thus, while a link between MNEs and growth could exist, or may have been observed in the past, say from 1950 - 2000 mostly in Western populations (Prahalad & Hart, 2002; Bruton et al., 2013), and/or in emerging markets where MNEs induce multiplicity (London et al., 2020); here in the sub-Saharan region, abusing institutional voids obfuscated as *exploiting opportunity* promotes biased returns, causes opportunity loss, instigates disproportion; leading to even wider disparities.

In the European Union scenario, funding allocated for entrepreneurship education is inverse to local entrepreneurial growth especially amongst females. That attracts efforts to widen reach of entrepreneurship education, causing a vicious cycle (EU Budget notes 2014-2023) which mirrors this study findings. While such a strategy is relevant and worthwhile, it raises serious concerns about how a fast-changing AI revolution may affect such communities. There is a strong possibility that most of the mystery may be unveiled by revisiting the **EG** phenomenon in more depth.

What if Huang and Chen (2021) are right about effects of entrepreneurship on urban growth being negligible, and that what matters is public spending and labor costs? Even so, given the population trajectory, it is imperative to understand how globalization relates to urban entrepreneurship (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2020). While some studies highlight strong MNE relationships, e.g. in the West African garment sector in Ghana (Adom et al., 2013; 2023), even linking observations to reduced informality and increased growth, Decker and Dankwah (2023) find that when MNEs co-opt BoP models, locals lose out especially on financing grounds. Suggesting that MNEs may not breed mutual benefit or growth. Hindering meaningful exchange will only exacerbate an already pervasive *value commitment dilemma* (Borchardt et al., 2020).

Could these findings imply that entrepreneurship has little or no effect towards poverty alleviation? In this age of pervasive nihilism, **EG** co-exists with forecasted population growth (UNFP, 2022) in a trend that reveals a formation which does not meet the would-be path of poverty alleviation. Granted, some growth aligns with earlier propositions, for instance, data evidence that SMEs e.g. BPOs (Banking/Telecom Agents) are taking hold even as China expands into the region to bolster “South-South” engagements. But as a matter of fact, poverty is rife at individual level in resource-abundant nations, while its alleviation is largely relegated as *development jargon* (Simanis, 2014) to non-accountable NGOs of yester-year or even pushed back onto locals from a far post.

6.0 Research Summary

The research shows that while microentrepreneurs are benefactors of MNEs, and not merely or even automatically beneficiaries of this relationship as often depicted, cumulative loss of opportunity from MNE-induced **EG** is sidelining opportunity creation or enabling aspirations. The negative implications heavily lean on locals’ side but also lead to MNE losses and exits by proxy.

Last but equally important, by definition and from history anyway, the presumption that poverty persists due to informality or that informality results from low rates of registration is questionable (Decker et al., 2020 in Decker & Dankwah, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2015); causing difficulty in mapping both concepts. Particularly, as *legally unrecognized* activities (Lloyd-Evans 2008, Pg. 1885 in Babitt et al., 2015) becomes less of a descriptor, the data negates another assumption; that entrepreneurship permanently transforms communities from a lower state to a higher/better one (Baumol, 1996). Rather than stable upward progress, more zigzag shifts or exits are observed.

6.1 Research Contribution

Novelty of this study lies in theoretical development. Building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) to highlight divergence that is encouraged by profit-seeking motives of MNEs, resulting in an abyss of (missing) activity, an adverse relationship between MNEs and microentrepreneurs is revealed. I term it Entrepreneurial Ghosting (**EG**). Giving a name to the arbitrary and adding a layer on top of existing networks theory allows for easier referencing, which brings clarity and succinctness to multilateral conversations.

Significance and potential impact: By so doing, this study extends Pranshatham et al. (2009) and Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2012) who study MNEs and start-ups in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely documented. Most BoP theory documents MNE *practices*. While that is worthwhile, it leaves a wide latitude to better understand how the said practices affect others. This study dwells on MNE interactions, which allow us to understand the relationship dynamic from those that are affected by the said practices; thereby highlighting nuances such as (non)action or lag between action and response, which were previously not dwelt upon enough.

Practical implications: The **EG** relationship concept adds an important dimension of relational metrics by which to measure entrepreneurial activity. The phenomenon is an instrument, actor or contributing factor to growth or detriment: as a negative determinant of success or failure (Shepherd, 2019) at the BoP. Moreover, conceptual attributes such as poor *locus of control* or *centrality* are not limited to informal contexts. That provides a basis to chart re-examinations of MNE-led policy, as observed by landmark exits, even elsewhere beyond the BoP. Particularly, to counteract the dominance of capitalism, the exploration is made from a local standpoint; seeking *concordant objectivity* (Douglas, 2009; Risjord, 2022) to match society's epistemology.

Overall, this study contributes to less than 10% of existing “mainstream” literature on this topic from the under-spotlighted yet equally important sub-Saharan region; thereby supplementing the knowledge base. Local perspectives need not be overly interpreted. Raw data derives fairly accurate knowledge that allows us to walk away from singular “mainstream” views and tell full stories to shed light on the plight of affected peoples responsibly. By so doing, the findings underscore decreasing relevance of MNE-led theoretical models in regional development.

6.1 Possible Recommendations and Proposed Strategies

To reduce or reverse ongoing dysfunction that breeds disproportion via Entrepreneurial Ghosting, cutting out a longstanding philosophical deficit is paramount; by establishing a clear distinction between *exploiting opportunity* and the abuse of institutional voids. To encourage innovation, needs-based motivations of locals should be prioritized within the strategic objectives of MNEs (see also Rosca et al., 2022). AI-driven products and services must align with various languages and cultures to ease familiarity; thereby increasing centrality by strengthening host communities to firm up *locus of control* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). That may draw us closer to mutual growth.

However, since the tools to carve out a new paradigm are still underappreciated and essentially ghosted by drivers of the global economy; (a) responsible frameworks that lay a solid foundation for inclusion by empowering locals, and (b) networking, bridging, and enhancing relationships with others in the ecosystem could provide timely solutions.

A shift by redesigning technological and financing frameworks via socially targeted vehicles such as in the recent **Ethiopia's self-funding story** could work. It took them 14 years to build the largest bridge/dam in Africa without a single multilateral financier's help, instead turning inward. Systems integration and easy-to-use applications or addressing affordability gaps through subsidies like soft and green credit products also attracts local engagement.

Regardless, given the imminent population trajectory, the **EG** cycle could become (irreversibly) damaging; thus, recognition, acknowledgment, and eradication also become critical. Nonetheless, the overall definitive factor for a cure to this divide is rooted in enacting robust policy frameworks (Bhawe & Zahra, 2019). Microentrepreneurs need basic resources, not labelling as taxable entities (Kistruck et al., 2015). Expected gains include increased accountability and trust, improved standards for social welfare, and a better benefits cycle.

6.3 Reflections upon the study process, including limitations

Researchers may be biased in more (un)recognizable ways towards advocacy for socio-economic parity due to world views which underline how one perceives events, that may manifest at different milestones e.g. during data interpretation or theoretical appreciation. Yet as common in qualitative

studies, data samples may be too small for adequate broad representation. Therefore, such manifestations may translate into even more layers that (negatively) affect study outcomes. Therein lies significant *inference risk* (Risjord 2014; 2022).

On one hand therefore, personal opinions ought to be deliberately subtracted, substituted by raw observations independent of pre-existing notions. On the other hand, data interpretation may still blindly and bindingly hold residual threads of a deep underlying understanding of what transpires.

Separately, the era of capitalism embeds “mainstream” ideology symbolizing a gap on top of, and inherent within the topic of inquiry: thereby adding even more weight to the earlier noted philosophical deficit. Relatedly, applying male-dominant theory by past researchers in highly gendered contexts abstracts perception and connotes a looping effect (Risjord, 2022), leading to complexity, yet informality is already so by design. Dominant languages also denote pre-existing issues that affect derivation of meaning during transcription of responses (Grodal et al., 2021). Moreover, lack of homogeneity or organized data due to institutional voids means the researcher bears the responsibility to code raw data.

To weed out biases given the above, triangulation was embedded by engaging different respondent groups and applying multi-methods e.g. backing interview data with photographs. Well-informed and experienced actors are positioned to contribute without as much bias (Merton, 1973), allowing for cross-referencing and fact-checking to distinguish between personal opinion and reality.

6.4 Proposed Future Research

It is imperative to determine the relationship between MNE presence and growth in informal settings; more so as population growth is forecasted from India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Studies on early detection, prevention, prescription, robust management techniques, and cures for Entrepreneurial Ghosting (**EG**) are critical, especially as Artificial Intelligence unfolds alongside a rife digital and financial divide in BoP hubs. A narrative showcasing “one-hit wonders” who met their demise due to ghosting is in middle stages of development, documenting critical elements that lead to such outcomes. Others may explore anti-fragility, endurance, and/or perseverance. Alternatively, to crystallize understanding, a meta-analysis tracing more intrusive attributes and retrogressive scenarios of **EG** is a welcome next step.

6.5 Study Conclusion

These findings divert from Mandela's (2005; 2008) vision of utilizing globalization as a way to eradicate poverty. To be fair, some inherent ontological differences between the two actors in this study perhaps need not be resolved. For instance, while microentrepreneurs' survivalist innovations are an essential well-being backbone, technological advancement is a vital medium for growth. In other words, going by their various distinguishing factors, it would be easy to descend into comparing apples with oranges. To avoid that, I emphasize that instead of MNEs leading on many gaps, they should bear a matching load by acting in a larger supportive capacity.

After all, businesses not only exist for profit; rather, for societal benefit (Davidson, 2009).

In the words of Max Planck, *science advances a funeral (of theory) at a time*. Unless timely corrective interventions are applied to the cracks, Prahalad (2002) glaringly solicits major redress. Given the population growth trajectory alongside the advent of a dynamic AI revolution, as homogenous models dominate (Fu et al., 2023), the *unprotected* latter part of our informality definition begs to be resolved. Ignoring such challenges suggests an imminent threat to leave some behind, in a stalemate that bears on our collective social stability. Yet clearly even if those we study sell grass hoppers; either biometric or social media data can identify who, where, as well as what they do. Moreover, envisaged changes should catapult and stretch our collective creative imagination to further innovation. In closing, Mandela's message and ideology echoes towards an inclusive and harmonious society.

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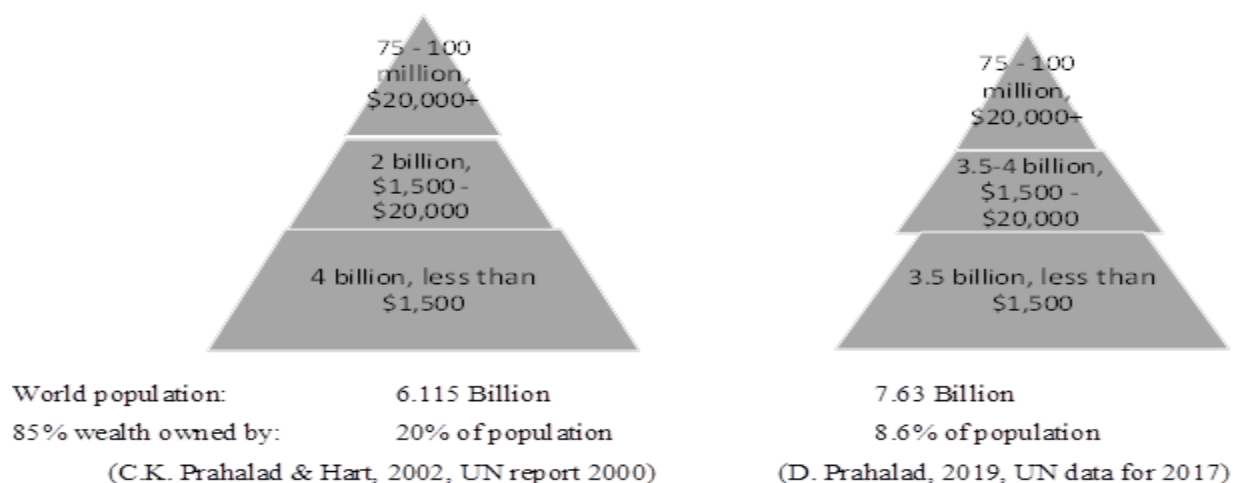
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8.0 Appendix



Same as Figure 13 (see Pg. 105) World Economic Population Pyramid

Changes from Year 2000 to 2017 (Based on Purchasing Power Parity)

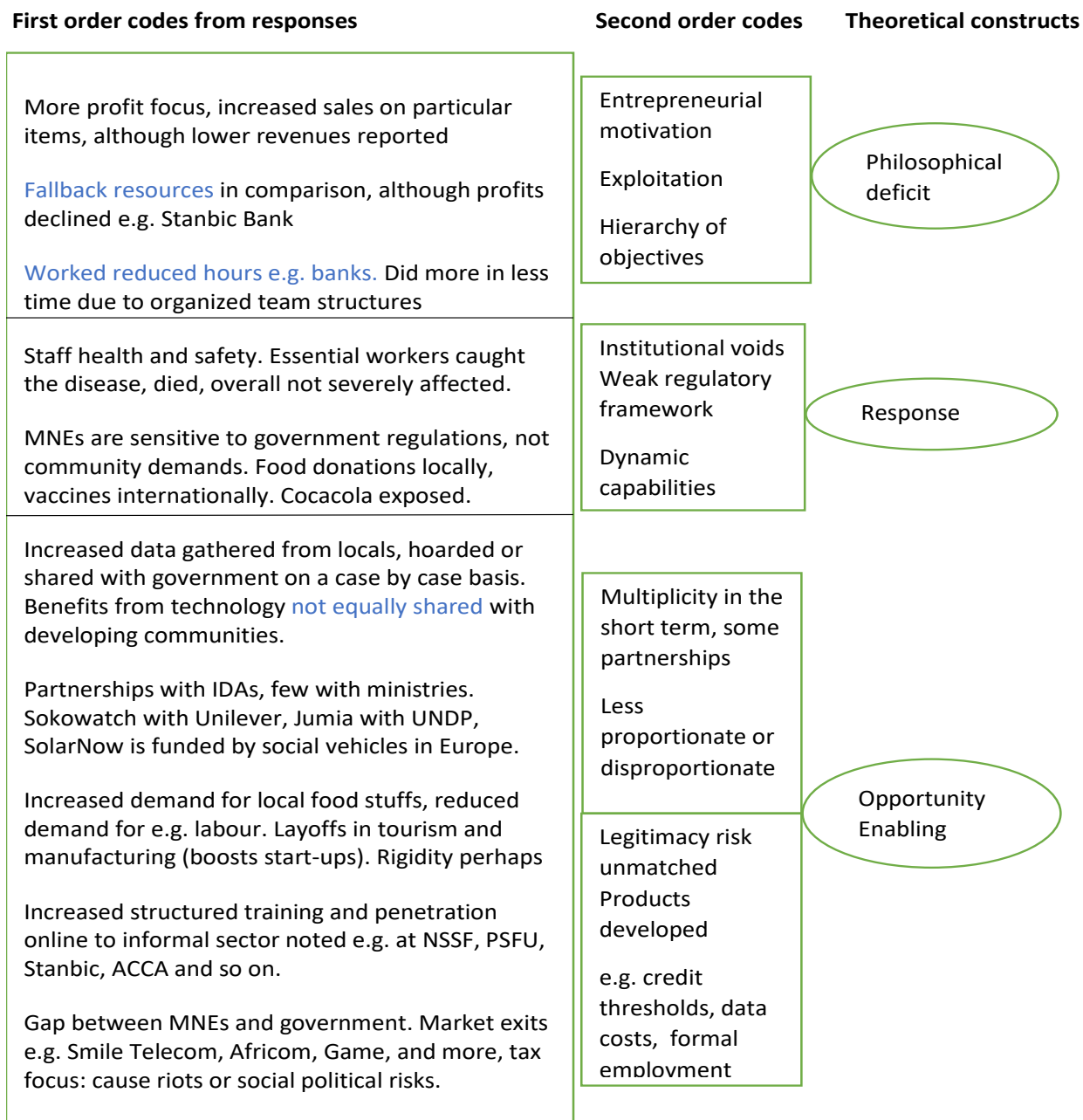
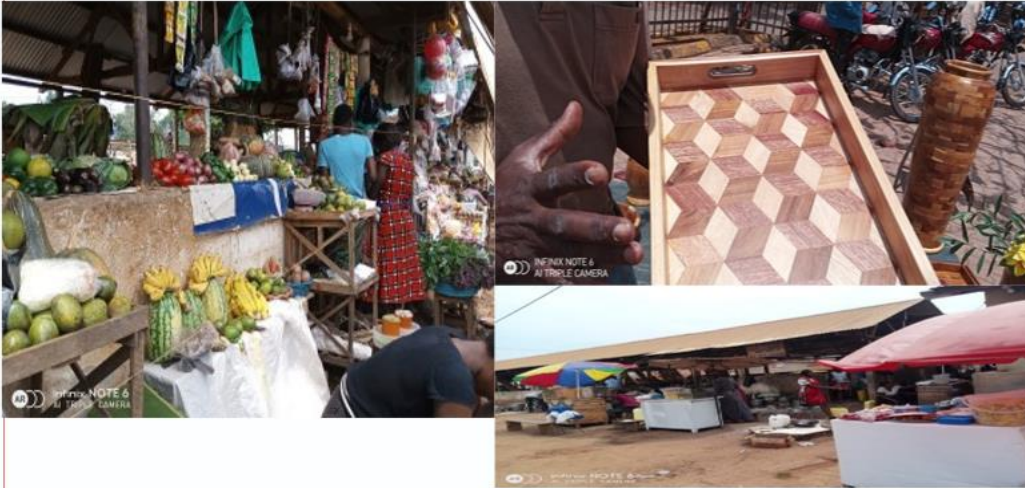


Figure 22: Phase 1b Conceptualizing MNEs and the Ecosystem

Findings: Scanty ties and gaps spur heterogeneous activity



Photograph 1: Towards Data Structure - Market Vendors as Respondents

Findings: gaps deter lasting growth, conceptual relevance?



Registered activities at Mogas Lubowa (a regional MNE), and at Nalukolongo
Preempts questions about conceptual relevance of BoP models or (in)formality for that matter

Photograph 2: Towards Data Structure - Mobile Money agents as Respondents

Interim emerging findings Phase 2 a and b data

Jumia pioneered a platform that allows market vendors to sell food and vegetables online: ingenuity during lockdown.

Partnerships: e.g. Sokowatch with Unilever, and Jumia with UNDP

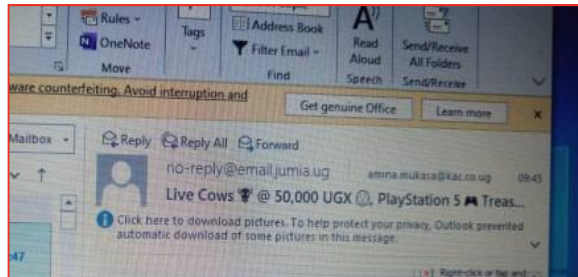
“requirements are much higher and generally suited to established SMEs, but Sokowatch opened my eyes. We find micros where they operate” SOK2

“women like to remain stationed where they can look after children while selling, delivering to them works best” SOK 1

“Solar Now has expanded not only to areas that are not connected to the power grid but in urban city centers where its products and renewable energy are more affordable” SOL1



theculturist.com(Fig.8 photo 1), thenewvision.com (Fig.8 photo 2 and 3)
Essential workers' **nights at stalls during lockdown**



Photograph 3: Towards Data Structure - JUM platform for local market purchases

Ties	Role description	Theme	Role description	Gaps
Strong	Micro-entrepreneurs demand MNE products & services	Demand & Consumption	MNEs' capacity to consume local products & services under-exploited	Opportunity creation
	MNEs are large employers: this has a huge bearing on entrepreneurial activity	Employment and Partnerships	MNEs largely employ from formal sector leaving out the informal	
	MNEs mostly import machinery, phones, apps, and provide data connectivity	Technology	High cost impedes access Micro-entrepreneurs cannot easily afford MNE-led	
Medium	Locals provide local knowledge to MNEs, paid for if necessary Community-led	Data sharing e.g., system or database integration	MNEs collect lots of data and may decide what and when to share or not	Opportunity sharing
	MNEs and Governments provide training mostly through academic or formal institutions and workspaces	Training e.g., incubators, innovation hubs, open source	Informal sector engagement is low Government responsible MNE support needed	Wide
	Micros and MNEs behave similarly when exploiting voids	Behavioral risk	Exploitation by MNEs has graver implications for host communities	
Weak		Legitimacy risk	MNE products & services not culturally or linguistically aligned	Opportunity enabling
		Institutional and Regulatory risk	Institutional voids exacerbated by recent exit of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	
	Micros exist as small and heterogeneous MNEs as homogenous	Nature/philosophical stance	By definition symbolizes a gap not limited to informality	

Figure 23: Elements Pertaining to Microentrepreneur - MNE Interactions

Tables

Table 17: Dimensions of Informality as woven in the History of sub-Saharan Africa

Dimension	Element	Formal	Informal	Author/Year
Antecedents From documented African history	Earliest Civilization	3,000 years of ancient Egypt until 30 BCE, emerging after and alongside earliest Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia	Widely recognized after 15 th century, with the invasion of Africa	Joffe, 2000
	Leadership	<i>Female leaders alongside men e.g., Cleopatra and 200 years before that</i>	<i>Changed hands along the way, characterized by men to date</i>	Reid, 2002
	Cultural Wealth	<i>Precious artifacts and crafts architectural designs before 300 BCE held in Europe</i>	Reduced value for similar art that still exists in true form	Urban, 2010
	Slavery Innovation and Mining	Participants in slave trade <i>Predating and shortly after entrepreneur Mansa Musa in 1300. Whereabouts of this wealth “unknown” today</i>	Enslaved mostly <i>Widely recognized as artisanal miners after Cecil Rhodes’ Rhodesia in Southern Africa during 16th century</i>	Sutton, 1997
Actors	Colonialism	Illegal conquests scramble and partition under “common law”, bore rules and regulations	Colonies. Loss of freedom, overregulated, not compensated	Chinua Achebe, Mandela , Discovery
	Entrepreneurs	Mostly opportunity based	Mostly survivalist and necessity e.g., City micro-entrepreneurs	De Soto, 1989
	Economic sectors	Banking, Telecommunications Mining, Manufacturing	<i>Agriculture on fragmented land, Artisanal mining, Tobacco, the arts and entertainment,</i>	Schneider & Williams, 2013 Williams et al., 2016
	Government regulatory Society	Effective, efficient and sound institutions & service delivery Civil society Professionals	Weak institutions, voids and poor service delivery Private sector Businesses	Baumol, Roy 09 *BPW paper Alvord et al., Tsui et al, 2004
Both as Antecedents	Family	Small family size, regulated through planning	Large family size, challenging to organize, manage and monitor	Dodd et al.
	Religion	Spread religions from Europe and later, Middle East	Ancestral religions of locals “unrecognized” by foreign influence	Bible, Quran
	Land grabs and miss-allocation	<i>Gained land, encouraged fragmentation and allocated through patriarchy</i>	<i>Lost land, not reallocated save in very few instances e.g. recently in 1980 Zimbabwe (old Rhodesia)</i>	Connor & Charway, 2020

& Determinants	Protracted Wars	Civil	Backers and orchestrators as the story tellers as dictated by who won the wars	<i>Sufferers, refugees and immigrants. Misrepresented, their stories erased, and mis-told.</i>	Media, CNN
	Governance Policy Institutional voids		e.g. categorizations, or established labor laws Western greed, conditional terms of trade, hold onto power and influence by infiltrators aided by African traitors	<i>e.g. categorization, weak labor laws Result in lack of service delivery. Weak governance structures, Poor infrastructure, strategy, , disarray in data collection and monitoring and reporting</i>	Baumol,1996 Roy 2009 a& b Huang et al., 2020
Determinants	Ease of entry into industry		High barriers, high cost to register, insure, license and structured process, mechanisms	<i>Low barriers, not registered, insured, nor licensed, low return on initial capital</i>	Rolfe et al., 2012
	Education		Structured and “recognized” e.g. religion-based schools. Science subjects mostly	Undocumented or “unrecognized” <i>although locals appreciate it.</i> Arts subjects mostly	Williams C. C. et al., 2016
Determinants	Access to Finance		Ease of access to finance	Numerous barriers to access	
	Culture		More organizational structure, weaker cultural ties, and formations & individualistic	Rich art and culture, communal, rife patriarchy system	Urban, 2010
Determinants	Preference		Studies suggest men may prefer this sector for leadership and authority	Women prefer flexibility that allows for relatively more time at home	Babbitt et al., 2015
	Employment		More opportunities, can work at home post crisis/ lockdown Supervisors/ salaried earners More access to jobs	Limited opportunity, more isolated from the labor market <i>Shift workers</i> Supervisees/ wages Self-employed mostly	Lloyd Evans, 2008 Williams C. C.
Both as Determinants and Descriptors	Urbanization and Housing Postcode Effect (in-country)		Planned and costly standard Secure and planned urban neighborhoods extensions of empire invasion settlements	Unplanned slums cheap substandard Mostly rural and some urban areas that were designed for low wage workers	UN-Habitat 2009 Kaarshom & Fredricksen, 2019
Descriptors	Gender		Masculinity somehow related to good temperament emotions and judgment	<i>Discrimination e.g. less access to jobs, gender pay gap. What changed since 30 BCE? Capital misallocation</i>	McAdams, 2013; Duflo, 2012 and Guma, 2015
	Poverty		Partial, middle income, mixed bag	Rife: What changed since Mansa Musa? Antecedents as above	Banerjee & Duflo, 2011
Descriptors	Technology		Social media giants. high growth in ecommerce data and advertising. Uncompensated for data	City traders large on social, uncompensated. Rural lack access, poor technological infrastructure, digital divide.	Prahalad on BoP, 2002
	Business characteristics, size & life		Large and Medium Registered with patents, licensed, insured. Established & sustainable	Small and Micro Unregistered, unlicensed. Not patented. Transient, unsustainable	Paper 1 & 2 Kistruck et al, 2015, Katerina and Peter, 2015
Other elements	Disability		Able bodied mostly	Disabled, psychosocially impaired	Guma, 2015
	Race Labels		More towards lighter shades Same mechanisms e.g., the term expatriates	More towards blacks Labeled differently across e.g. immigrants or refugees	Brush et al., 2019

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR - RELEVANCE OF ROLE FORMATION (PAPER 3)

Brief Highlights of Paper 3

The last article in this 3-Paper Thesis emerged on the heels of findings in Paper 2, highlighting the relationship gap in interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs. As earlier granulated, while Paper 2 addresses the central research question (see Chapter 1, 2 and 3), the follow up question herein emerged out of necessity.

The question that this paper aims to address is: *How do Open System Intermediaries influence entrepreneurial growth in highly informal settings?*

This study demonstrates current efforts towards addressing gaps between informal and formal sector actors. The narrative is based upon empirical data collected from 12 members of a gender-led women network that supports trade linkages between the informal and the formal sector. Those responses are additionally checked against data collected from the 13 representatives of key private sector organizations in Uganda's ecosystem, as established in Paper 2. As such, Paper 2 and 3 benefit from inputs and views of those charged with private sector development responsibilities, as common link or thread in the research. Lastly, historical data from the organization, herein considered secondary, also informs the case study.

This article was accepted for presentation at the 7th Innodays Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference organized by Adalia Institute which was held in Casablanca, Morocco in November 2022 under the theme "The Future of Africa". I acknowledge the contribution of supervisors led by Professor Sreevas Sahasranamam in a capacity as detailed in the Appendix section (Pg. 248).

Below is Paper 3 in its entirety.

How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) Influence Entrepreneurial Growth (or Vibrance) in Highly Informal Ecosystems?

THE RELEVANCE OF ROLE FORMATION

Abstract

Entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) embed synergies through networks which increasingly break barriers to support growth in local communities. Informed by Entrepreneurial Networks theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), this study empirically explores an Open System Intermediary (OSI) to demonstrate the role that it plays in highly Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs). The narrative is based on a case study of a women-led network and uses secondary “historical” data from the OSI’s records. It is further substantiated by conducting interviews with 12 OSI members, and responses from 13 representatives of key organizations charged with private sector development responsibilities. To analyze the collective data, an inductive approach is engaged (Grodal et al., 2021; Gioia et al., 2013), Findings show that using their open system infrastructure, OSIs play four key roles: first as curious magnifiers and influential amplifiers, and thereafter as mobile accelerators and replicators of success. Lastly, a typology by classification of role formation is proposed by explaining the rationale behind the concept, the mechanisms through which these roles emerge, and the order or sequence in which they occur. The article posits nuanced models that focus on inclusivity in highly informal entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Key words: Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs), Informal Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (IEEs), Open System Intermediaries (OSIs), Policy Entrepreneurship, Qualitative, Role Formation, sub-Saharan, Uganda

1.0 Introduction

The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2013) identifies six components that drive a community to become more entrepreneurial: financial markets, human capital, education and training, regulatory framework and infrastructure, cultural factors, and funding (finance). Since then, research is increasingly focused on how these elements ought to be combined or balanced under varying scenarios for optimum results (see e.g. Huang & Knight, 2017; Stam, 2015; Wurth et al., 2022).

In communities that grapple with challenges of informality, studies explore the importance of plugging institutional voids through intermediaries e.g. Brac (Mair & Marti, 2009) or Grameen Foundation (Yunus, 2017). Some of this research elaborates factors that influence access to resources or scarcity thereof (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; GEM, 2016/2017; Williams et al, 2016; Sydow et al., 2020), while others take interest in determinants of success or failure of entrepreneurs (Shepherd et al., 2019) or female participation (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Chen, 2001; Murzacheva et al., 2020). However, hardly any studies elaborate upon *how entrepreneurs exchange resources and create opportunities* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986 in Huang & Knight, 2017) at the BoP, thereby missing out on opportunities (Shantz et al., 2018; 2020).

In such contexts, Open System Intermediary (OSI) organizations play a critical role by plugging institutional voids and providing support for innovative activities in varied resource arrangements and combinations (Mason & Brown, 2014; Spigel, 2017; Stam, 2018; Stam & Spigel, 2016), thereby leveraging untapped entrepreneurial potential (Dutt et al., 2016; Gatignon & Capron, 2020). Although the concept of ecosystems is spatial i.e. varying from place to place, and also often unique to a given economy or community (Isenberg, 2010), at its core are networks of entrepreneurs, leadership, finance, talent, and knowledge (Wurth et al., 2022).

An entrepreneurial ecosystem is defined as *a group of interdependent actors and factors which are arranged in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship in the community* (Stam, 2015, Pg. 1765). Intermediaries are agents that link two or more parties. Specifically, Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) are often characterized by efforts of self-driven and committed volunteers, who come together to work towards common objectives without necessarily prioritizing profit (Dutt et al., 2016).

This empirical study builds upon Dutt et al. (2016) by recounting an OSI that plays a critical role in Uganda's entrepreneurial ecosystem by addressing gaps between informal and formal actors. **The central research question** addressed is: How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence growth in highly informal settings?

The narrative is based on empirical data, gathered by conducting interviews with 12 members of the OSI as well as a case study of this very entity. Further, the research is substantiated by data from 13 representatives from private sector development organizations. An open-ended theory development approach (Grodal et al., 2021) is engaged to understand how, by utilizing their open institutional infrastructure, OSIs play a critical role to leverage untapped entrepreneurial potential in what were once considered peripheral communities.

This research contributes entrepreneurial ecosystems theory development by building horizontally upon Dutt et al. (2016), informed by *Entrepreneurial Networks* theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986 in Huang & Knight, 2017). While Dutt et al. analyze country data to expound upon incubators, connectors and sponsors; this study considers an organizational perspective at subnational level (Mair & Marti, 2009; Shantz et al., 2020). A typology of role formation by OSIs is derived i.e. curious magnifiers, influential advocates, and replicators of success; towards increasing local entrepreneur's *locus of control* which is vital for growth. The typology shows how the roles form, categorizing them according to their characteristics and the sequence in which they occur.

The study finds that aside from balancing between market infrastructure development (MDI) and business capability development (BCD) (Dutt et al., 2016); key OSI characteristics, processes, and roles are suited for inducing heterogeneity, which matches the nature of *Informal Entrepreneurial Networks* (IENs). It also inherently supplements gender lens (Duflo, 2012; Nziku & Henry, 2020).

The article is organized as follows. In Chapter 2 below is a review of literature, placing the study within the entrepreneurship landscape, and defining the research boundaries. Followed by the research methods in Chapter 3, comprised of an in-depth OSI case study and interviews of with its members. Findings and discussion are documented in Chapter 4 and 5 respectively, showing how the study supplements or deducts from knowledge. Lastly, the research contribution is noted, followed by references and appendices.

2.0 Review of Literature

To establish what is known (or unknown) about the topic, articles were randomly selected following bibliometric methods from key anchor literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems, followed by abduction along the way. The resultant sample of articles were coded and categorized according to their similarities e.g. in citation words, to form themes. This review spotlights four main themes namely: Elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems, Characteristics of social entrepreneurial networks, including Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) and a gender perspective. Last, a theme from the growing body of knowledge on policy entrepreneurship was also added.

2.1 Elements of Innovation Ecosystems

Van de Ven (1993) was one of the first to describe four key components of what he termed entrepreneurial “infrastructure” at the time: a) institutions that legitimize, regulate, and incentivize entrepreneurship, b) public resource endowments of scientific knowledge, finance and labor, c) market demand, and lastly d) proprietary rights that the private sector accumulates and builds upon through research and development. Isenberg (2010) described entrepreneurial ecosystems as agglomerations of interrelated individuals, institutions, organizations, and regulatory entities that act upon ideas and entrepreneurial innovations. They reveal that symbolic capital or value of mentorship or role models may be determined by cultures. When unicorns or blockbusters remain active by reinvesting profits, they encourage multiplicity as angels, investors, or mentors: causing duplicity, or “entrepreneurial recycling” (Bahrami & Evans, 1995; Brown & Mason, 2017) or “creative assembly” (Hwang & Horowitz, 2012 cited in Malecki, 2018).

A recent review of innovation ecosystems backed by 3 priorly documented empirical studies of video cassette recorders, mobile telecommunication systems, and Apple’s innovation process, provides a synthesized definition, revealing 7 key components (Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020): “the evolving set of actors, activities, artefacts, and institutions including complementary and substitute relations that are important for the innovative performance of (an) actor (s)”. They note that gauging where social capital bridging is stronger or weaker, a matrix can be built to assist in entrepreneurial policy and decision-making: additional research may indicate where to place the bulk of efforts to yield better or optimal outcomes.

Figure 24 below highlights the key components of entrepreneurial ecosystems such as people, technology, capital, and infrastructure: which support progressive entrepreneurial development efforts in local communities (Spigel, 2017; Stam & Spigel, 2016). They note that entrepreneurs’ personal networks have a positively significant effect on small business (Stam, 2015) dependent on age, industry, and institutional context. “Successful ventures, their spin offs and spin outs are more likely to emerge from large anchor firms that act as seedbeds for nascent entrepreneurs”.

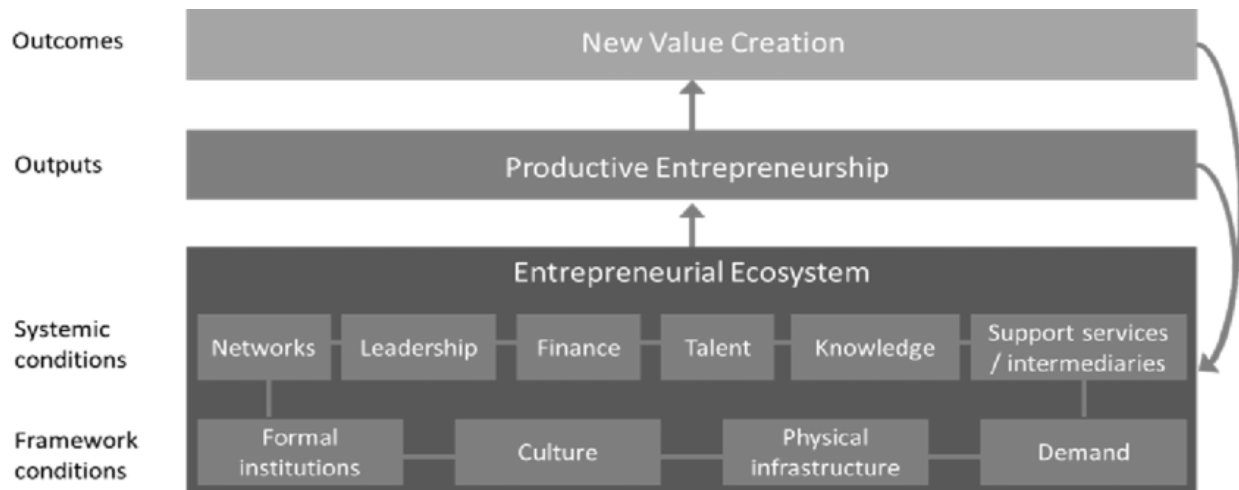


Figure 24: Elements of an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (Stam, 2015)

2.2 Characteristics of Informal Entrepreneurial Networks

Networks are a key element of ecosystems. Existing research explores *individual networks* in *delivery* and *exchange* of content such as information through communication between actors, casting light on the notion of degrees of separation (Granovetter, 1975). Descriptive components like *depth*, *breadth* and *locus* that make up or are inherent in *centrality* or *control* for relationships within *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich et al., 1983 in Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) or their nature and characteristic influence in teams (Aldrich & Kim, 2007), or more recently between actors - and networks (Latour, 2007). Most of this research explores challenges faced by entrepreneurs based on resource scarcity. Network features can influence various stages of the venture creation process and affect the transfer of knowledge (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Few authors explore factors that influence networking ability or capability of entrepreneurs (e.g. Greenbank, 2000).

Some theory focuses on cause-and-effect by or between actors and/or contextual elements (Nuemeyer et al., 2019), or on how they enhance development through spatial features like collaboration or connections both within (by bridging actors) and/or across various ecosystems (Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2016; Fischer et al., 2022).

At individual and small firm level, Nsereko et al. (2022) highlights self-efficacy of local entrepreneurs (termed as *okwebelelamu* in Luganda) as a major contributor to success amidst the numerous challenges of informality. Actors may include community-based organizations (CBOs) which rely upon bonding and bridging (Ahlstrom and Bruton, 2006) or investor-entrepreneur exchange theories (Huang & Knight, 2017). Notably, studies on *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Latour, 2017) have not yet explored the BoP much.

In such a study, Marti & Mair (2009) expound upon BRAC, an intermediary from Bangladesh that plugs institutional voids by extending financing and training resources to Micro, Small and Medium enterprises. What started as a CBO morphed into a large-scale multinational organization that helps people to secure loans towards purchase of land or by providing cash flow for trading in agricultural commodities, with presence in the deepest far-off places in Africa.

Another recent empirical study applies network theory to explore entrepreneurship in Sukabumi, Indonesia, where 102 cooperatives reportedly went out of business over the years. An authority overseeing SME cooperatives cites that they recede due to several factors including *management's inability to manage the cooperatives*, in effect citing institutional ineffectiveness, *inadequate level of education, limited creativity, and limited service within savings and loans schemes* which highlights scarcity in financial access (Purbasari et al., 2020).

Some research offers that it is better to manage one's own business rather than rely on the unguaranteed help of others, while others even prefer running businesses to receiving government benefits (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). That notwithstanding, the question of place is very important (Audretsch in Theodoraki, 2019; Dutt et al., 2016; Fischer et al., 2022) given that such options may not arise e.g. in informal contexts (Mair & Marti, 2009). Hence, plurality in innovation is increasingly led by social capital in relational networks (Dodd et al., 2021; Huang & Knight, 2017; Wigren-Kristoferson et al., 2019), and supported by technology (Prashantam et al., 2018).

A recent study in marketing asserts that informal sellers in formal markets face challenges that are left unmet by regulatory frameworks, given the opportunity cost when informal actors block would-be exchange from experienced or developed actors in the formal sector (Pels et al., 2022). Based on the three pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive; they argue that only one of these conditions is met. Normative. They propose a cultural cognitive reading of institutions, noting that the gap is an access challenge and thus, a market problem (see also Adbi et al., 2019) which are proposed as two distinct institutional categories. Importantly, they suggest *a market facing intermediary between formal and informal sectors*.

2.2.1 Open System Intermediaries

Open System Intermediaries (Dutt et al., 2016) are non-profits that are especially common in instances where governments have not adequately enacted their primary responsibility towards society (Sen, 1999; Elkington & Hartigan, 2007). Voluntary organizing is more pronounced, supporting processes in incubators and accelerators via mentorship or in technology laboratories and hubs (Prashantham et al., 2018); thereby helping entrepreneurs to amalgamate resources.

Dutt et al. (2016) delineates between different types of incubators, informed by world bank data from over 50 countries. The incubators include Universities, Research Centers, local and International Development Agencies (IDAs), Manufacturers Associations and other Trade Support Organizations, government institutions, and NGOs. They propose that using open institutional infrastructure, OSIs engage in two broad categories of activities: a) market infrastructure development (MDI) comprising services and facilities necessary for business growth, and b) business capability development (BCD) which entails developing, improving, and adapting organizational and/or individual capabilities (Dutt et al., 2016; Theodoraki et al., 2020).

They examine how OSIs choose between either MDI or BCD activities and predict that in countries with weaker commercial institutions, OSIs are more likely to engage in MDI activities, while conversely in those with stronger commercial institutions the focus is often on BCD strategies. Next, they observe how sponsors of incubators influence decisions of OSIs as they balance between those activities. Lastly, they go even deeper to examine this balance depending on the joint relationship that exists between each country and the sponsors of incubators.

They find that Government, Academia, and NGO sponsors lean towards BCD in their sponsor's areas of interest, while private sector sponsors such as Manufacturers' Associations focus on improving the business environment in their industries of operation. For instance, by developing new industry standards that make it easier to do business towards successful outcomes.

2.2.2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems & Gender

Neumeyer et al. (2019) studied women entrepreneurs within ecosystems of two municipalities with diverse race and ethnicity in Florida: Gainesville and Jacksonville. Their findings suggest that for specific types or sizes of ventures, network connectivity and social capital distribution are different for men and women. Particularly, when it comes to high growth ventures women entrepreneurs showed a lower degree of bridging social capital than men and the reverse is true in lifestyle or survival ventures. Yet the results also showed that white women in successful businesses have broader networks than non-white colleagues in smaller outfits. Building upon such knowledge, others explore the significance of entrepreneur-investor relationships (Huang & Knight, 2017).

Since Brush (1992, cited in 2019) first described characteristics of female entrepreneurs, gender studies in entrepreneurship remain nascent to some level, or even pregestational in certain contexts. Earlier, McManus (2001) sought to ascertain the effect of female networks and networking on entrepreneurial activity. However, the results were inconclusive in terms of confirming or refuting the hypothesis, i.e. going by their data, the effect of gender on entrepreneurship was not evidenced. This prompted further inquiry, which also triggered further empirical investigations (see e.g. Brush et al., 2019; Duflo, 2012; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Notably, female social entrepreneurs are increasingly researched in voluntary organizing in Western contexts (EU report, 2020/2021).

On motivation: women at the BoP think of starting a business as a means to get income, feed the family and educate their children (Williams & Nadin, 2010). Some do it for social perception i.e., to gain visibility and improve their self-esteem or social status, although this has been reported to have counter-effective outcomes in communities with patriarchal doctrines (Duflo, 2012). And in the emerging markets of Asia, some women prefer to operate in the informal sector because it allows them more freedom and/or work-life balance (Babbitt et al., 2015).

However, while recent research indicates that women's participation, particularly their access to resources, is critical (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Chen, 2001); other studies differ.

In economies where parity between men and women has been achieved, in as far as engagement in the labor market and equal pay for equal effort, or where both genders are equally represented as managers and executives in both technical and professional fields, women are also equally able to start and manage successful opportunity-based high growth ventures such as unicorns i.e. start-ups that are valued at over USD 1 billion (Brush et al., 2019). Further, noting that empowerment has leveled the playing field, scholars remark how far women have come “now reaching the top and holding high office all over Europe and in the US” (Carter et al., (Eds), 2007).

The above notwithstanding, female actors are presumed “socially disadvantaged” (Duflo, 2012). Certain parts of the world reveal even more concerning statistics. For instance, favorable effects of social capital and networks vary with gender (Brush et al., 2019), race and ethnicity (Light & Dana, 2013; Neumeyer et al., 2019), or different types of ventures (Morris et al., 2016). While 25% of the European Union annual budget is plugged into activities that drive social protection, having a huge chunk of funds invested into entrepreneurship education, statistics show that the number of women who become entrepreneurs is dropping: an inverse correlation (WEF, 2016).

Since such studies are barely explored at the BoP, that triggers curiosity to find out what occurs within informal ecosystems. The role of gender in informality or vice versa cannot be overstated (Chen, 2001; GEM 2016/2017) especially in the sub-Saharan region: yet the funding gap for women in the agricultural value chain stands at a staggering USD 15.6 billion in Africa alone (AFFAWA/ AfDB, 2021). As such, the pursuit of entrepreneurship is in some cases psychologically damaging as high failure rates make people worse-off (Shepherd et al., 2019).

In response, some note that state-backed childcare and targeted economic support could increase female participation (Brush et al., 2020; Elam & Tarjesen, 2010); not representative of the BoP.

Elsewhere, across all levels of development, women are 20% more likely to have necessity-based motives rather than opportunity-based ones to establish a start-up: including scenarios where there is no significant difference in education levels (Mwaura, 2023; WEF, 2016).

2.3 Advocacy through Policy Entrepreneurship

The rise of street-born advocacy over the years symbolizes gaps between expectations of society versus the quality or quantity of services provided by government institutions, or the lack thereof. In the European Union, to try and address piracy of information and to predict how the future landscape may be actioned in more responsible ways, data protection laws and regulations targeted towards emerging technologies are critiqued (Goyal et al., 2021) from the standpoint of other actors in the ecosystem. Among other factors, authors also explore the link between education and globalization (Nambissan & Ball, 2020) or information and influence (Anderson et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Even more recently, policy entrepreneurship increasingly relates lessons from past recessions to the post pandemic agenda (Aly et al., 2021; Weible et al., 2020).

Related to gender themes as priorly highlighted, Nziku & Henry (2020) take this approach to understand how policy makers in Tanzania serve the terrain of entrepreneurship which is mostly represented by women. They find that with respect to policy formulation, inclusivity clauses are increasingly included, thereby responding to multiple sensitive societal issues. However, at the enactment level concerned with monitoring to ensure expected outcomes, action is lagging behind. The likelihood of advocacy activity has increased, without necessarily guaranteeing outcomes.

In addition, using profile analysis and archival databases such as Schwab, Ashoka, Skoll foundations, and Echoing Green; Abebe et al. (2020) explore the relationship between passionate activism and entrepreneurial expertise. They derive a typology of four distinct types of entrepreneurs that result from specific career paths or experiences and their scope of engagement within the ecosystem. They find that due to lack of corporate or business experience, or the reverse, an abundance of these elements; entrepreneurship may either flourish or have negative outcomes for those who take long to let go of their initial “cause” that they may be emotionally attached to (see also Aly et al., 2021), rather than realistically aligned with as regards to market or even social suitability. This may affect post-launch venture performance.

To round up this review; in the beginning, our understanding of entrepreneurship was based on assumptions which considered wider labor markets and social classes (Gartner, 1985), assuming that each entrepreneur had the same resources and support, and that what differs was how they go

about combining these resources to create new innovations. What we know in mostly male-dominated arenas and neoclassical theories, is that team characteristics, compositions, and combinations (Shane & Venkantaraman, 2000; Aldrich & Kim, 2007) lend an edge to the exploration and exploitation of opportunities as antecedents to the venture creation process. While such assumptions are common in deduction, practice suggests otherwise (Brush et al., 2019).

Due to knowledge fragmentation in social entrepreneurship, coupled with its multidisciplinary and multifaceted nature, including that of social networks within ecosystems; the conceptual relevance and theoretical foundations of this realm are yet to be crystallized. Thus, dialogue is encouraged (e.g. Zahra & Dess, 2001), with some noting that where social ventures do take place is neither well established nor adequately examined (Creswell, 2017; Audretsch in Theodoraki, 2019).

As such research evolved by re-examining the influence of social capital on venture creation (Bosma et al., 2004; Florin et al., 2003), authors recognize that entrepreneurship is not a vacuum (Austin et al., 2006; Dorado, 2006) and measuring progress in each *context* matters (Stam, 2018). According to a new meta-framework, the opportunity creation process: from initiation to engagement and performance continues to drift away from primarily looking at entrepreneurial or team characteristics alone (Shepherd et al., 2019). It instead adopts several tools and approaches that recognize additional critical elements within the natural economic and social environment (e.g. Stam, 2015; 2018) geared towards helping actors make the right decisions to minimize failure also considered a fundamental antecedent of innovation (Austin et al., 2006; Shepherd, 2019).

Key criticisms about ecosystems literature stem from a perceived lack of strong theoretical foundation due to their tautological nature and weak governance structures (Acs et al., 2018; Spigel, 2017; Stam, 2015; 2018). Since the question of measurability remains, some explore diversity, density, fluidity, and connectivity (Bell-Masterston & Stangler, 2015; Huang & Knight, 2017) as others note a lack of in-depth analysis of cause and effect with regards to governance (Colombo et al., 2019): bringing itemized characteristics of OSIs into focus (Dutt et al., 2016).

Hence the central research question: *How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence (support or deter) growth in highly informal entrepreneurial ecosystems?*

3.0 Materials and Methods

Researchers call for more empirical studies in the field of entrepreneurship (Creswell, 2017; Mair & Marti, 2009; Shantz et al., 2020). To address some of the highlighted gaps in literature, we heed this call by showcasing an OSI which cuts through informal and formal spaces to nurture cross-sector engagements that support local communities.

3.1 Research Setting

The bulk of this research originates and occurs within a registered global network of women who came together to form a voluntary social initiative known as Business and Professional Women (BPW). Fitting the description of an OSI, BPW is a non-profit global community present on 5 continents in more than 100 countries. The organization is run by volunteers who bring together nascent entrepreneurs (most of them informal) and successful businesses, with professionals from various sectors (largely formal) (www.bpw-international.org).

The network was founded a little more than a hundred years ago, in 1919, by Lena Madesin Phillips, a lawyer, then after passing the bar in 1917. It started as “The National Federation of Business and Professional Women” club and became popular because of its timely contribution towards women’s voting rights in the United States as declared in 1920.

BPW International formed thereafter in 1930 in Geneva, Switzerland as a vehicle for societal transformation (Alvord et al., 2004; Tsui et al., 2004). Registered with lean management structures, it is replicated on different continents (see Fig 27 in Appendix, Pg. 201). Regional coordinators and country presidents collectively formulate the secretariat as highlighted by a thick line to depict strong bonds, working relationships and collaboration, while dotted lines represent bridging and linking that occurs with members worldwide. Several in-country groups form a federation.

The organizational strategy is based on a common belief across communities, that there is much to gain through collaboration. BPW’s expansion into Uganda in 2013 and establishment of a community secondary and vocational school in 2016 in the farming village of Kyasa, Namayumba subcounty, Wakiso district provides rich data about OSIs and their under-utilized capacity to create positive societal impact. The school is founded upon a strong entrepreneurship education model.

3.2 Research Design

Given the nature of this research question, a qualitative multimethod was engaged to collect primary data. To commence, pilot interviews were conducted with members of the OSI as well as other ecosystem actors using semi-structured surveys. This took place during lockdown in 2020/2021. To get the comprehensive story, those responses were substantiated with data gathered through engaged scholarship or “historical” participation with the OSI by the researcher.

Phase 1: Interviewed 12 OSI members and 13 representatives of the key organizations

To commence the process, semi-structured survey instruments were designed, each with about 10 to 15 questions. To gain deeper appreciation from a local standpoint, those who form the largest representation of informal entrepreneurs were given more room to share their experiences. This decision enabled the researcher to focus on understanding the context as intended by the design.

Sample selection: in Phase 1a, 12 members were selected from the OSI based on their business acumen, the roles through which they serve within this network, and their availability to engage in the study at the time. Most of the members are instrumental in providing support to others and seeding Microentrepreneurs along the way. Thereafter, in Phase 1b, 13 representatives of different entities that play a key role in private sector development are engaged.

The 13 respondents were drawn from some of the main governing bodies in the private sector: Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), National Social Security Staff (NSSF), Private Sector Foundation (PSFU) and international agents Trade-Mark East Africa (TMEA), ACCA Uganda, International Trade Center (ITC), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and UN Women. Lastly, a representative from each of 3 Multinational Enterprises was interviewed: Stanbic Bank, MTN and Airtel. The latter two are major telecommunications providers across the continent. Various discussions were also held with a Makerere University IT Incubation Hub for academic input.

In total, over 40 interviews were conducted from the 25 respondents. Semi-structured interviews capture the role that each of the entities see themselves playing, allowing them to share their views and experiences, challenges and/or opportunities, and perhaps any other peculiarities that they face

on a regular basis. Over time, there was a need for clarification as the study developed. As such, questions changed and therefore during later stages, even more data was obtained using distinct versions of survey instruments, or at times by letting the representatives guide key conversations.

Phase 2: Case Study of the OSI Organization

The responses obtained in Phase 1 are cross-referenced against “historical” case data from the OSI as narrated by a case study; collected earlier between 2013 and 2019, through personal involvement and engaged scholarship by the researcher as a cofounder of BPW. A participatory experiential construct may supplement validity, which could denote considerable attention to rigor (Grodal et al., 2021). The nature of data includes documentary evidence from files, emails, photographic data, live records, and other imagery. Where substantive, data from the organization’s website or social media was also used to inform the study (see Appendix Pg. 203).

3.3 Analysis

Data analysis follows an inductive approach (Gioia et al., 2013) that builds upon established procedures of open-ended research (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; in Grodal et al., 2021). Owing to different languages, the raw data was transcribed before it was entered into an excel spreadsheet to begin the coding process. Data interpretation was done while ensuring preservation of ethnocentric “rawness” as rich in meaning (Merton, 1973).

As common within these kinds of qualitative studies, data collection and analysis may occur concurrently or sequentially. Therefore, a step-by step narrative of what occurred underpins the application of knowledge from practice to further substantiate theory development.

First order codes were generated following the process of achieving rigor through categorization through open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 in Grodal et al., 2021). The coding process started off by reading through responses to each question, finding commonalities, and initializing them into broad categories. Initially, data from the 12 BPW members was coded. Thereafter, responses obtained from the 13 representatives of organizations acted as a triangulation by either matching, supplementing, complimenting, or contrasting the emerging categories.

As illustrated in Figure 25 below, themes that emerge from initial categories are labelled by recognizing key words and common patterns in the data (Grodal et al., 2021). Words such as access to finance and/or credit, taxation, self-reliance, self-accounting, wellbeing, institutional voids, digital divide, training, government contracts and social media platforms stood out from the raw data. Through a process of iteration and reiteration *emergent categories* from the broad data *are refined*, thereby generating *second order categories*.

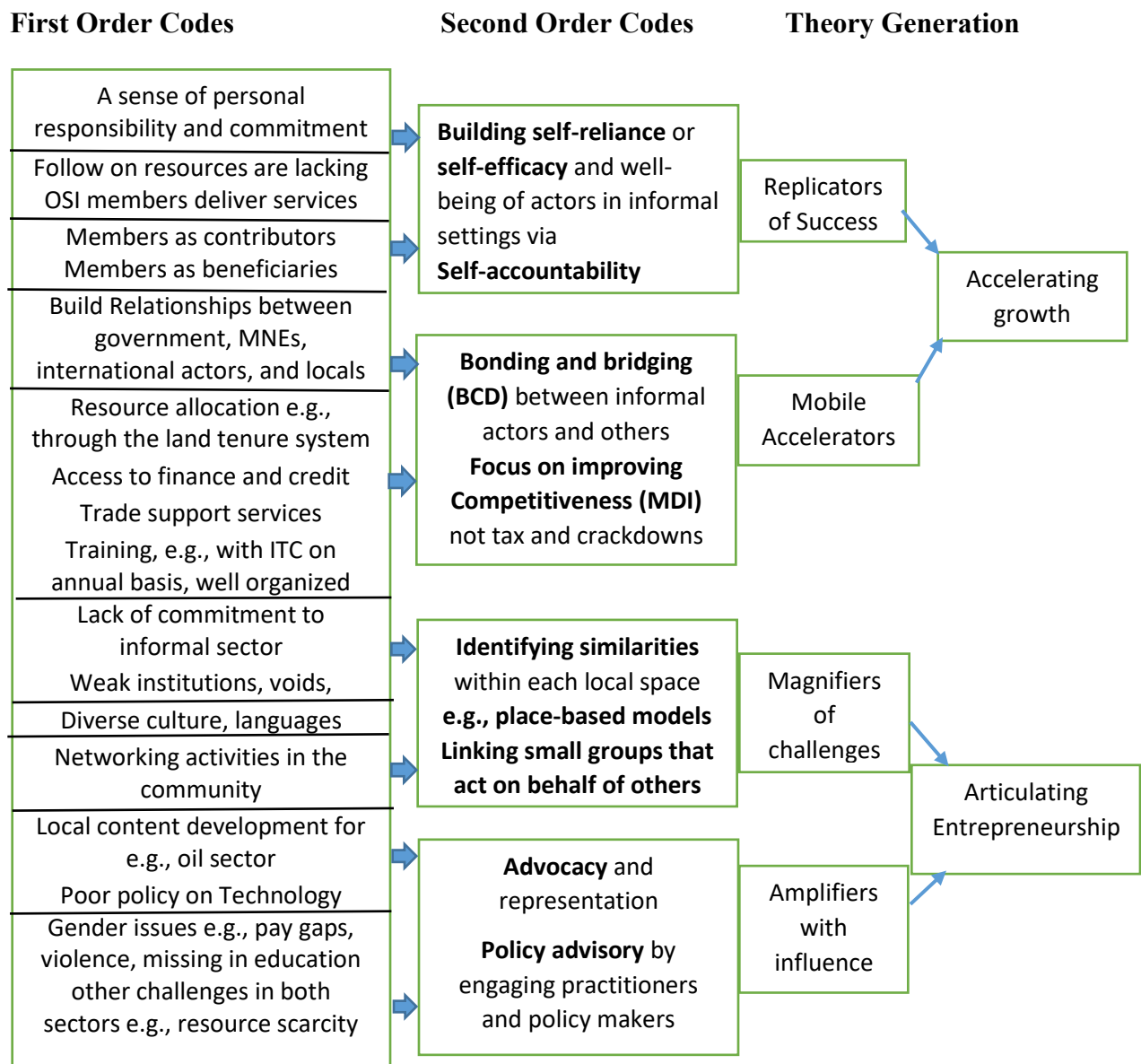


Figure 25: Data Visualization - The Role of OSIs in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks
(Adapted from Gioia et al., 2013)

Definition of 2nd Order Codes: Table 18 below contains the definition of 2nd order categorizations from theoretical constructs, towards theory generation. These 2nd order codes formed from 1st order categories which in turn represent groupings of responses from raw data. The formation of 1st order categories from raw data is expounded upon later in the findings section (see section 4).

Table 18: Definition of 2nd Order Codes from OSI data

Description of 2nd Order Categories Towards Theory Generation	Theory
On of the key elements that are necessary in starting a social venture, especially in spaces that are resource endowed but where there is poorly managed resource allocation, or in resource-scarce environments. (See e.g., Nsereko et al., 2022, Pg. 1 and 2)	Self-efficacy involves self-reliance
Regulating behavior as a common element at the cross-section of non-profit ventures which are aimed at meeting societal needs (Dodd et al., 2021)	Self-accountability
Both bonding and bridging (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006) occur through exchange of information via communication, or beyond that, through direct support and collaboration between individuals and groups or networks or groups of networks which can be defined as ecosystems (Stam, 2015)	Bonding and Bridging
Forming linkages and connections <i>between</i> individuals <i>within</i> given groups that form networks (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006)	Bonding
Forming linkages and connections <i>across such groups or networks</i> (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006)	Bridging
Inputs, whether that be activities or resources, in the business capacity or capability development process (BCD) or by market infrastructure development (MDI) towards entrepreneurial or societal growth (see Dutt et al., 2016). These activities increase the performance or chances of success for entrepreneurs and society at large.	Increasing Competitiveness
Models, or mechanisms; whereby certain areas, for instance relating similarly to climate, or due to similar level of development, may be faced with similar challenges. Therefore, they could be tackled using similar mechanisms within or across different localities. (Audretsch in Theodoraki, 2019; Dutt et al., 2016; Fischer et al., 2022; Wigren-Kristofferson et al., 2019)	Place-based theory Tackling similar issues Small group theory Small teams to represent wider groups or networks
Entrepreneurial activity that is targeted towards policy formulation or change as increasingly documented (Nambissan & Ball, 2020; Nziku & Henry, 2020; Weible at al., 2020)	Advocacy Policy Entrepreneurship

Where huge contrasts about a given question or trend were noted in the responses, this indicated a need for further understanding through probing: prompting the researcher to go back either to the source or to a different respondent to seek further clarification. As such, new questions were paused during the next interview to shed light on any peculiarities. Simultaneously, iteration and reiteration continue, by repeatedly revisiting the central research question to understand how it relates to emerging responses, or by going back to the literature to appreciate interpretations and note new findings. By observing emerging data points within the boundaries of interpretation (Gioia et al., 2013), this enables sharper formation of categories and narrowing down to arrive at final outcomes within the study scope. To enrich the knowledge building process, this loop continues until saturation i.e., when no new data emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

4.0 Findings: The Relevance of Role Formation

First, a triple-pronged approach via bridging, sensitization and literacy helps to (re)direct physical resources towards solving matters of priority, which is where they (those available resources) are needed most. The OSI supports entrepreneurs by riding on practicality of businesses alongside technicality of professionals. OSI membership is targeted responsible representatives in society, with significant career experience and an intrinsic technical and/or financial capacity. Marked by a service-oriented approach, members form supportive channels that enable access to resources by providing mentorship, guidance, connections, and visibility.

Chief among the objectives is to develop the leadership potential of entrepreneurs through skill building, advocacy for women's rights, and mentorship (see BPW International 2020b in the Appendix). Three pillars of advocacy are delivered: board training and certification that enables more locals to play a leadership role in various organizations, support for women-centric national policies, and impactful private business engagement through Private Sector Foundation (PSFU). As well, the network strives to (re)allocate resources from various sponsors and funders to those who need them the most: members also unlock dormant and inadequately exploited government resources and re distribute them within the local community. Lastly, they add a voice to initiatives beyond borders through International Development Agencies (IDAs).

Below, roles that OSIs play in informal settings are conceptualized, comprised of four nuanced stages and elements of role formation as observed from the data.

Figure 26 below represents the main outcomes from this study.

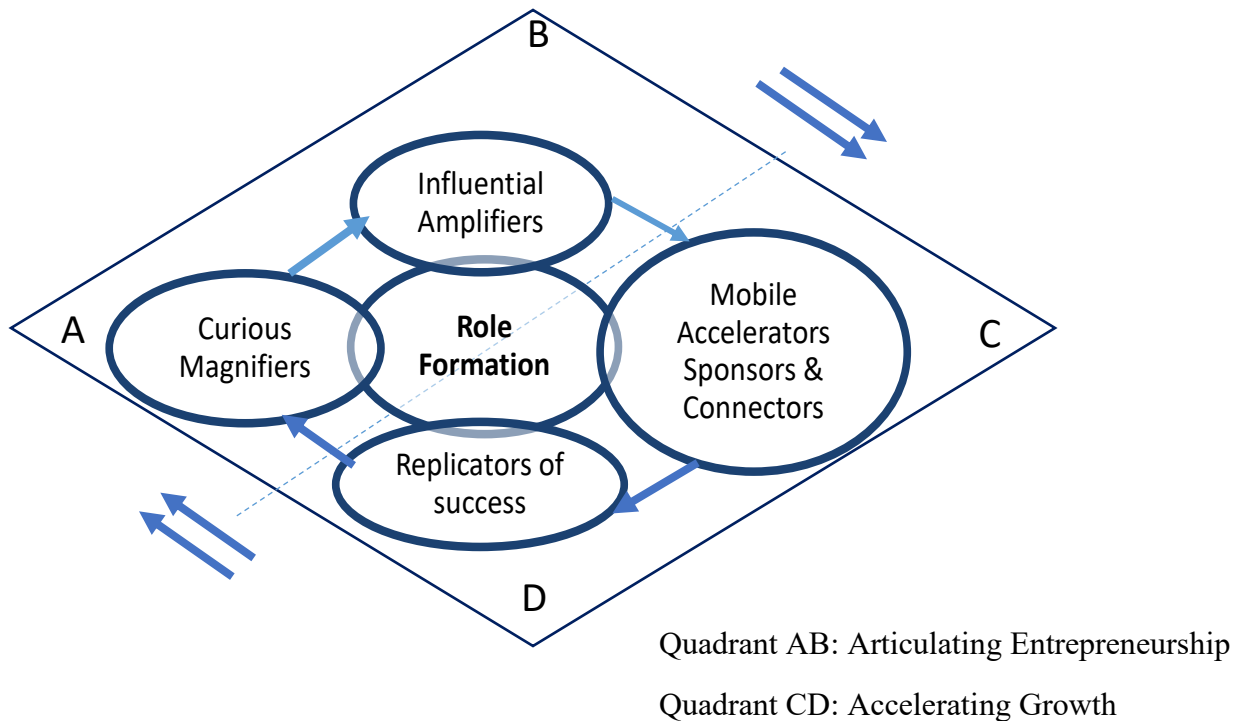


Figure 26: Role Formation in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs)

As illustrated in Figure 26 above, the OSI plays four major roles as defined and explicated below. Those who enact the roles are self-driven and committed towards volunteering their services, being accountable, and setting targets that are bound to continuously move this work forward. They share responsibilities within the network and clarify these roles through frequent communication.

The OSI executes its strategy through members who engage with entrepreneurs and other actors in the community by playing the highlighted four key roles. In particular, the focus is on two discussions or aspects of the process: a) establishing the mechanisms through which observed roles emerge, and their purpose within the ecosystem, and b) highlighting the order or sequence in which they occur by going deeper to understand and document their embedded attributes at each stage. Importance is drawn on the first two i.e., curious magnifiers and influential amplifiers, before engaging sponsors at the incubator stage and lastly replicating successful ventures and processes.

(A) Curious Magnifiers of Heterogenous Activity. The purpose of this role is to build identity and awareness about entrepreneurs amongst themselves and other actors. It is less about discovery, and more about acknowledgement of the *breadth* or *depth* of varied innovations by delving into their thinking, culture, and design process. OSI members recognize and sometimes even name numerous, small, heterogenous activities with microentrepreneurs undertake. Their solutions need to be spotlighted, or else a lingering reluctance to showcase talent arises due to several factors. Key among, is an invisible wall that separates formal from informal actors due to mismatched homogenous designs, ethnic or family customs and beliefs, a patriarchal society in a terrain mostly represented by women, and perceived lack of support from authorities which primary focus on more established business, or merely tax collection. OSIs gain a deep understanding of needs, opportunities, and challenges that entrepreneurs face with the aim of driving growth in local communities, whereby members ponder the innovation landscape with granular fact-finding.

“Along the road towards Nebbi [in Northern Uganda] it is common to find trees (and sometimes the farmers) with lots of excess fruit lying on the ground during the high season, wasting away. So, I started to pick it up (to make juice). Before long, I needed 2 trucks to do just that.” MC

“Now we show a video of what we do on social media. Everybody can relate and join.” LD

(B) Influential Amplifiers. Following building identity, the next action and/or function is to encourage rapport by creating open spaces where supportive conversations can be held within the community. This step involves raising voices to seek support from willing key actors or even using influence to challenge the status quo and advocating for pertinent policy changes with persistence and unwavering commitment. They play an advocacy role not only on behalf of, but alongside entrepreneurs, with the aim to increase local entrepreneurs’ *locus of control*. Members use various media channels and strive to reach top governing bodies towards execution.

The data indicates that while entrepreneurs are indeed best placed to explain what they do and can ably and cohesively express themselves, most (who happen to be women in this context) often only do so in settings where they feel invited, safe, and encouraged. That they do not always feel so, denotes a requirement for appreciation of issues that affect them with an emotive component; to ensure that vital stories are widely disseminated, and their plight is adequately prioritized.

“Reaching out to markets in Jinja and Mbarara to lay a foundation similar to what was done in Gulu made it easy for everyone to get involved without missing a day’s work” GA

“We must tell their story early on, start during education, then monitor and support” PSFU

(C) Mobile Accelerators. Innovative ideas are brought to fruition at this stage. The purpose is to enable meaningful exchange by creating effective avenues and channels through which to execute. Resources are (re)allocated directly or indirectly from sponsors and connectors for Business Capacity and/or Capability Development (BCD) or by contributing towards Market Infrastructure Development (MDI); such as increased investments in health and education. By infusing tailored technology-based models, creating affordable pathways, and building bridges or linkages that enable resource access for and *with* entrepreneurs; they aim to accelerate local growth.

“Before joining the Investment Authority and networking with other business experts, I was so green about the potential of fruit juice business. MK helped me grow.” MC

“The space at UMA show grounds will be modernized with state-of-the-art facilities to encourage increased nomad business outsourcing innovation through co-working” GK

“When I applied for acres of land from the ministry, it was allocated based on the trust that indeed it was going to help people within the same locality. And it did.” WL

“Initially we wanted 5 acres, but the government could only manage 4. What do you do? That is what was availed. We said yes. If we had not succeeded through government, we would have had to offer personal resources otherwise earmarked for family.” MK

The process of connecting is often costly to the local entrepreneur. Most of them cannot afford to engage in repeated long-distance travels to physical incubation centers, if any, often based in far off central (town) areas. Deterrents include basic transport costs, time spent away from the business or family given that some work where they reside, on top of scarce capital or lack thereof.

Therefore, to execute this role, there is often a need for more flexible, agile, and inclusive incubator designs that lend time and other basic resources to entrepreneurs wherever they are positioned: both in the physical or geographical sense, and at their different levels of growth.

(D) Replicators of Success. Industry-based bodies like Law society, Engineers', or Accountants' associations help entrepreneurs (mostly SMEs), and professionals, to form bonds that enable them to pass key issues into law over time; in order to ease the cost of doing business and increase the likelihood of future venture success. Such organization is underdeveloped in the case of microentrepreneurs. To counter this, most respondents cite working with mentors who not only have the kind of networks that provide training, finance, credit, and other key ingredients for success. Having walked the entrepreneurial or professional path is often a necessary requirement for such role models or advisors. Vested interest, for instance towards effective regulation that calls for lower lending thresholds or similar broad issues is important. Beyond that, there is also a need to recognize what works, or does not, through impact measurement and/or assessment.

"I voluntarily pledge to boost 1,000 start-ups in the next 5 years through the expansive education business that we built from the ground up with others' support" BO

"In order to succeed, start small. But do not stay stuck at the same level for years on end. Collaboration, learning, and growth go hand in hand. The best advocate that allows others to work with you is your delivery. So, what value do you add?" URA

"Business outsourcing inflows by technology start-ups breed more homogeneity as they expand or even displace other established actors. I see it in Pharmaceuticals" RB

Generally, the identified roles above are contained within two quadrants. The first one is key i.e., articulating entrepreneurship and the conditions under which actors operate **(AB)**, and thereafter accelerating growth by taking direct or indirect action in **(CD)**. As noted from the data, the roles embed commonalities and/or differences. Also, there is inherent directionality in the typology.

Commonalities and Differences between the Quadrants:

Although each of the four key roles explained above is categorically different, the first two i.e., magnifiers (A) and amplifiers (B) embed sharp commonalities: they are more about gaining clarity via information gathering and advocacy respectively. Similarly, (C) and (D) differ, yet both are more transactional or execution-based: wherein tangible resources such as seed funding or capital injections are usually considered. Fundamental differences exist between quadrants (AB) and (CD) for instance "direct support" (see also Dutt et al., 2016) is more likely to happen in (CD).

For clarity, the roles are also shaped by commonalities amongst communities that breed a given type of entrepreneur, such as geographical settings which drive the necessity of a given innovation. For instance, they may be segmented or amalgamated based on areal challenges or ethnic beliefs. Further, the more socially and purposely and culturally aligned those who offer support are to those that they represent, the better for all actors involved i.e. stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Directionality within the data:

As the data structure in Figure 24 above shows (see analysis section), directionality may not always be concretely defined within the data. However, from the responses obtained, an embedded sequence which the OSI follows during execution is derived to inform the typology. First, members obtain necessary buy-in from entrepreneurs and practitioners in role (A), which happens in quadrant (AB), then independently gain support from the political wing to influence decision making, as shown in role (B), allowing that bridging between sponsors and promoters in private sector and civil society to form seamlessly, in quadrant (CD) through roles C and D repeatedly. This inherent sequence is more effective by unlocking the necessary resources and matching them to entrepreneurs' or actors' needs. This is vital for entrepreneurial growth.

Lastly, technology and social media are cited as ingredients that enable role formation to take place even as they continue serving this purpose over time. The resultant increased legitimacy supports a natural order that is reaffirmed at different stages of entrepreneurial development. After all, entrepreneurs are both benefactors and beneficiaries of the synergistic outcomes that emerge.

To summarize, OSIs are contributors and beneficiaries of the value which arises from resultant synergies, acting as a binding glue that creates and strengthens relationships between key actors within these networks and/or other mechanisms that plug institutional voids. All in all, the case study highlights a core sense of purpose which helps to attract the right actors, solidify the group's confidence, and foster real connections with those who see value in helping others locally.

To substantiate the visualization in Figure 24 (see analysis section), Table 19 below contains interview responses from members of the OSI as entrepreneurs themselves, some reactions from the 13 respondents from umbrella organizations that are charged with a duty towards private sector development, and lastly secondary case data from the OSI that is considered "historical".

Table 19: Formation of 1st Order Codes from Raw Data - Towards 2nd Order Codes

TABLE 4.1: Extract of Responses backed by OSI data – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Source of Data
<p>A sense of Responsibility, Commitment, Self – Accountability</p> <p>“Very little will change if we do not go to them and invite the discussion. Our part is to take informed action.” JK</p> <p>“I pledge to, in collaboration with others on this platform, impact 1000 entrepreneurs within the next 5 years.” BO</p> <p>“So far, the schools are leading the way, but it seems more can be done by way of hands-on capacity building.” BO</p>	<p>Members of OSI</p> <p>(Role Model Entrepreneurs)</p>
<p>“Working alongside them, everything has been set in motion, expect complete commitment and clarity”</p>	<p>Ecosystem</p> <p>PSFU reaction</p>
<p>The best resource are the locals. The only add on would be for them to appoint a small team for representation.</p> <p>This model is indicative of a reliance on personal characteristics, personal governance, or self-accounting of members, rather than institutionalized monitoring or external governance per se.</p>	<p>OSI data</p>
<p>Bonding and Bridging</p> <p>“Access to finance still at nascent level for most. PSFU and telecommunication try to boost bank gaps” YK</p> <p>“ITC will host us as we in turn host them at Acacia Road. Similar to the last, it (training) will be well attended.” RB</p>	<p>Members of OSI</p>
<p>“Continued effort in disseminating information using intermediaries with a rich data base is imminent.”</p> <p>“There is need for data compilation in partnership with telecommunications giants or through Registrations Service Bureau.”</p> <p>“Trade finance products are short term yet the processing normally delays contracts. That docket needs attention.”</p>	<p>Ecosystem reactions</p> <p>URBS NSSF</p>
<p>Coworking spaces have been secured at the Uganda Manufacturers Association (UMA) show grounds.</p> <p>Our technology partners are developing a specialised app for network management that may run alongside other social media but also aid government with the database.</p>	<p>OSI Data</p>

TABLE 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses backed by OSI data – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data	Source of Data
<p>Representative Quotes and Observations</p> <p>A Focus on Improving Competitiveness</p> <p>“Sponsors of current projects are from Taiwan while in Australia we can sign onto a scholarship tenure” LI</p> <p>“If the government had not accepted to give us the land, we would have to relinquish personal ownership of resources otherwise meant for the family.” MK</p> <p>“In Gulu, the University has welcomed the idea although the process of identification is still ongoing.” WL</p> <p>“We will also consult with others on the ground to ascertain an audit trail on the identified location.” GO</p>	<p>Members of OSI</p> <p>(Role Model Entrepreneurs)</p>
<p>“The DPP will waste our time [requires ample time] to go through the processes to ensure auditable results.”</p> <p>“That should begin way before with the children and the youth. Which is why we have entrepreneur programs for them”</p> <p>Allocation or reallocation of resources especially from government to local community – plugging institutional voids</p> <p>The sponsors do not expect any detailed reporting, given community approval of the steering team.</p> <p>They [sponsors] will be on the ground from time to time over the course of project execution.</p> <p>The community was involved in pre-formulation stages. They know the project scope, cost, and milestones.</p> <p>Thereafter, they have now been briefed before commencing on the project and they will be part of the monitoring team from now on – especially during construction.</p>	<p>Ecosystem input</p> <p>PSFU reaction</p> <p>SBIC</p> <p>OSI Data</p>
<p>Identifying similar issues within a given locality</p> <p>“The Covid-19 crisis and resultant lockdown has affected us negatively. Taxes have instead risen. Where does this leave us?”</p> <p>“Societal wellbeing is affected. This is a broader concern that is targeted for action in monthly networking meetings.”</p> <p>Linking small groups to act on behalf of others in the wider group</p> <p>“We have a standard of not less than 20 members per project, larger networks then form a federation.”</p> <p>“We have annual representation at the confederation gatherings including at the annual New York Congress.”</p>	<p>Members of OSI</p>

TABLE 4.1 Continued: Extract of Responses backed by OSI data – Towards 2nd Order Themes

2 nd Order Themes as Generated by Coding Raw Data Representative Quotes and Observations	Source of Data
<p>Advocacy and/or Policy advisory</p> <p>“Why wait? After all everyone shares what they know. Locals have even richer and more granular stories to tell.”</p> <p>“This type of TED talk motivation. This should be a model in our village schools. Let people share experiences.”</p> <p>“In the meeting with IFC, the report on public engagement through government supply contracts is paramount.”</p> <p>“It is important to avail certification especially regarding standards for export promotion.”</p>	<p>International Development Agencies (IDAs)</p> <p>UN Women</p> <p>TMEA</p> <p>ITC</p>
<p>“Why is it adults that do most of the talking? Times have changed. That is old news.”</p> <p>The group is guided by a Charter which draws the rules and regulations, as well as the overall governing policy. The steering team is elected every 2 years renewable, with most members serving 4 years.</p> <p>We have also maintained direct consultative status with the United Nations nearly since inception</p>	<p>Ecosystem Data</p> <p>OSI Data</p>
<p>Prevailing Conditions within the Ecosystem in a broad sense</p> <p>“The problem is now coverage and network quality and that of affordability. Smart phones are expensive let alone the data costs.” <i>This comment pertains to market conditions but also specifically to affordability as noted by Microentrepreneurs.</i></p> <p>“We follow what governments set as policy. It is clear that the private sector is always a step ahead of the legislation”.</p> <p>“The political situation is also not helping matters, it is three stressful things at once [Covid, national elections, and global wars].”</p>	<p>MTN</p> <p>URA</p>

Table 20 below documents key OSI objectives as informed by case data.

Table 20: A breakdown of Bridging Activities conducted by the OSI

Bridging Activities	Purpose and process description	Roles Played by OSI; towards a typology	Gap Bridged	Shortfalls/ yet to be resolved
Informal and Formal actors	Networking Skilling Mindset change	OSI members build or strengthen relationships as connectors.	Opportunity creation Knowledge gap Awareness gap	Limited resources Inadequacies e.g., access and benefit from technology
Informal sector with civil society and policy makers	Reallocation of public resources for locals. Advocacy towards policy action e.g., green solutions	OSI members as influential amplifiers to Government institutions and other regulators	Opportunity creation through policy formulation e.g., as policy entrepreneurs	Economic Inequality Institutional voids Lack of ownership of responsibility
Women with key policy actors via advocacy	Public awareness e.g., gender pay gap or domestic violence	OSI members Government and formal sector actors. Amplifying	Inequality Behavioral change Representation	Gender inequality Policy enactment or implementation
Informal sector with Private sector actors	Advocacy towards Access to Finance Trade support Institution (TSI)	OSI through Local & International funders (e.g., government, PSFU, IDAs)	Opportunity enabling through BCD e.g., Access to Finance	Mismatch in product design e.g., high thresholds, stiff eligibility criteria
Informal actors with International Development Agencies	Training and skilling on key trade aspects e.g., Proposals for Export promotion	OSI through Government organizations and/or SMEs. Replicating success	Opportunity sharing Cultural awareness, ISO Standards	Complexity of standards and procedures. Again, cultural barriers exist, limiting the process

5.0 Discussion

Below, the characteristics, processes, and practices inherent within the OSI model that highlight the nuanced role of social entrepreneurs in informal spaces are discussed, backed by the empirical data as above, alongside existing theory. It is important to demonstrate how these local role models and mentors form or become, and to understand how they support entrepreneurial growth. To shed even more light on ignored matters that need to be prioritized, this exploration is approached from a microentrepreneur standpoint; thereby adding a voice from under-spotlighted contexts.

5.1 The role of OSIs and Entrepreneurial Networks in Resource Acquisition

Aldrich & Zimmer (1986) described a role set as one of the three core groups of entrepreneurs that come together to accomplish a set goal or vision. Field (2003) also states that a network could make things happen where social capital is an important consideration: by connecting people through informal systems, bringing a local sense of responsibility for entrepreneurs (Sahasranamam & Nandakumar, 2020). An important gain in this OSI case is a nonprofit construct (Nissan et al., 2012), through which a donation from within the BoP context *legitimizes* the venture creation process. A charter and bylaws provide the framework and guiding principles on group formations, registration, operations, and standard expectations of all members.

One of the major factors that underlines high entrepreneurial activity in sub-Saharan Africa is at the core of local differentials, where mainstream discriminatory practices breed a culture of hard work, selflessness, and persistent entrepreneurial spirit. This is especially so amongst females (Chatterjee et al., 2022; GEM 2016/2017). Widespread cultural norms prevalent in villages, e.g. girls fetching water over long distances, tilling the land, planting food crops, building homesteads, while caretaking after everyone in the family foster a “manual work” custom in homesteads, rather than balancing intellectual ability in formal spaces. (see Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). By repeatedly playing such roles in this type of environment, not to mention amidst prevailing bottlenecks, e.g. digital or energy divides, strong role models (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986 in Huang & Knight, 2017) emerge: mostly as an unintended consequence, often merely out of necessity.

Novelty of OSIs lies in **heterogeneously** integrating practicality of businesses with technicality of professions to leverage potential that lurks within the informal sector, harnesses opportunity, and fosters real growth. Building identity of entrepreneurs by fostering connections between rookies and experienced actors encourages start-ups to embrace a culture of positive transformation (Alvord et al., 2004; Drucker, 1985; Tsui et al, 2004). Key activities entail widening access to finance, structured training in operations with standard certifications on quality assurance, forging access to international markets for export promotion. The wide definition of allowable projects encompasses global sustainable development goals (SDGs) (BPW International, 2020b) usually delivered in partnership with local government, including the International Trade Center (ITC).

However, the OSI does not directly fund projects; groups do it internally either solely or through unilateral collaboration with other individuals and organizations by local, national, or international alliances. Showing that more localized trading partnerships can be enhanced by forming strategic alliances within each member country, or outside of it and provides a wide latitude of possibilities.

Since the demonstrated OSI aims to fight poverty (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011) through a defined strategy i.e. bridging informal and formal sector actors (Shantz et al., 2018; 2020), neither debt nor equity financing featured in this network: thereby maintaining an enviably low investment cost. Deriving social capital while financial capital plays a supportive secondary role denotes *reduced overregulation* (Bourdeau, 1986 cited in Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006). Stringent regulations in the financial sector, while necessary, tend to constrain regional growth (AFDB, 2021).

During execution, inherent precision helps each part of the network to act in sync; thereby breeding alternative and equally effective accountability mechanisms. For instance, in addition to standard management approaches such as phased disbursements and independent audit, monitoring and control is assured at distinct milestones by those involved, with local commitment. In case of cost over-runs, accountability helps the project team and donors (from within the context) to cement trust and gain agreement for additional funding. Moreover, given interest of local authorities in such projects, less time is wasted on bureaucracy, and no excess regulatory fees are incurred.

Lastly, as synergies emerge from those mechanisms, the group is also characterized by minimal regular reporting, quarterly at most, allowing the secretariat to keep track of member enrollments and activities on a wider scale. To bring awareness to issues of identity, OSIs facilitate televised events or walks to speak out publicly against issues like gender-based violence or reducing the gender pay gap. The group is also globally affiliated with the United Nations (UN) by consultative status and representation, although - that does not interfere in their daily activity. It only helps to open doors of those who are less enthusiastic and therefore need a little more direction.

5.2 Bonding and Bridging - supported by and through Technology

Based on the human-centric motivation of societal transformation (Tsui et al., 2004; Tsui, 2019) this OSI model and proposed typology is rooted in the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999) of opportunity creation. Even with the advent of technology, societal transformation remains the

primary goal of ventures, increasingly led by social capital through action and response (see e.g. Latour, 2007; Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020). While talking to just one girl to inspire and transform her understanding of her own power and place can impact future generations, fostering collective action (Nziku & Henry, 2020) enables women to face reality and reach for higher goals. In turn, the connections encourage more effective levels of social bonding and bridging over time, creating a continuous growth cycle within the ecosystem.

Bonding can be evidenced through individual discussions and training activities, or other such Business Capacity Development (BCD). Bridging takes place when resources are exchanged, or through market infrastructure development (MDI) (Dutt et al, 2016), increasingly driven by China, or when messages are carried across at policy level (Nambissan & Ball, 2020) with civil sector or international actors (BCD) (see also Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006; Huang and Knight, 2017). Social networks and/or software products (MDI) enable actors to link up for cross-trading or to access financial resources through fintech (MDI) or by deploying mobile information clinics (BCD); with broad engagements in key sectors like health and education. In this regard, technology platforms (MDI) provide significant autonomy which creates vibrant alliances that enable BCD.

The concept of accelerators as a form of intervention towards growth is not new. And yet, they are still largely recognized as a physical space (a form of MDI) where training and other BCD (Business Capacity Development) activities are regularly delivered (Dutt et al., 2016). One of such vital programs run by this demonstrated OSI is SheTrades Global/ Africa, an annual trade fair that brings together actors from around the globe to display unique talents, products and services to capture markets across borders. This increases trade and exports touchpoints.

However, some respondents dismiss the high number of workshops to which they are often invited, citing that there is no real sustained benefit to show for it. In this broadly heterogenous culture, the majority voice concerns about a rigid and/or patronizing culture and a persistent inability of matching institutions to cater to locals. Such a lack of morale continues to boost start-ups out of necessity, which motivates entrepreneurs to solidify their own path by working on their craft(s) as individuals or in small groups. Where, as a crucial part of the winning formula, lessons are learnt by sharing ideas & experiences: microentrepreneurs are often left to rely on themselves through self-efficacy (Nsereko et al., 2022). Hence, building “island” communities of action as individuals.

5.3 Policy Entrepreneurship (Inclusivity and Green Components)

As entrepreneurial networks develop (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Greenbank, 2000), they are increasingly reshaped i.e. either weakened or strengthened over time, by certain patterns or events, factors and/or actors. In recent times, these trends are particularly accelerated through social media (Brush et al, 2019): more so in more technologically advanced or developed societies.

However, given the stubborn digital divide as a key contextual descriptor, meaningful *exchange* of resources is still wanting. For instance, green entrepreneurship (Weible et al., 2020) is highly relevant for Uganda's cattle corridor, in an area already riddled with drawbacks to financial access and increased food insecurity. Yet global warming continues to negatively affect and further compromise this society, evidenced by increasing incidents of drought and famine. Some of the adverse effects can be seen e.g. by the Sahara Desert extending downwards.

Findings are crosschecked against studies which note that microentrepreneurs fail to prioritize networking (Greenbank, 2000), by engaging in "island" or obscurity instead (Adom et al., 2023). A closer look at conditions under which most of them operate suggests that low capacity to network is not the main reason why a greater part of local genius remains hidden. Instead, data shows that, pitted against their aspirations, they are willing to work with others who focus on solving local challenges and show timely progress - no matter how small, at no additional direct cost.

For instance, reluctance to have bank accounts is borne by a historical record of those who did so earlier but got nothing out of it. Not to mention, microentrepreneurs' activities are motivated by a need to feed families, educate their children (see also Shepherd et al., 2021) or serve those in need; so, they avoid places perceived to hold no such values.

Lastly, it is important that actors with aligned or interconnected motivations form a cohesive dynamic that pulls in the same direction for positive results. This does not mean that all actors do not grapple with challenges, e.g. difference of opinion or even priorities. The baseline is that the objective to support local growth remains an unwavering commitment for actors across the board. Tangible benefits include widening markets for products, services, and resources while intangible gains are triggered by exchange of knowledge and experiences (Huang & Knight, 2017).

5.4 The Dark Side of OSIs

Networking between entrepreneurs (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Greenbank, 2000) is not an ideal process: it is adorned with imperfections. OSI strategies tend to be broad and may therefore wind up breeding unclear or ill-defined project implementation, especially given resource scarcity. Setting several plans in motion or having an open field of possibilities is exciting. But such flexibility may prove less effective when scattered ideas emerge. To add, although non-compensation in nonprofits has positive cost implications, it is double-edged and conversely problematic. Volunteerism often leaves notable health risks such as accidents, members' or other actors' allowances and insurance costs unmet on some, if not most occasions. Whilst reviewing active and dormant members of the OSI, it was apparent that attrition rates are sporadic, making it difficult to plan ahead or follow through with its objectives. Moreover, unforeseen circumstances and factors beyond the group's control may emerge, e.g. changes in government policy.

To add, most OSI propositions tabled through the lens of social causes are significantly represented by women, needed where most women are situated, or attract more female participation. Historically, until date, these are often viewed as weak in patriarchal societies and/or by those in positions of power (Mwaura, 2023). Again, the spotlight was cast on a digital divide during the 2020/2021 pandemic (wherein data was collected), revealing a relatively weak technological outline, denoting missed opportunity and critical needs (Shantz et al., 2018). Selfish interests buffered by a capitalism paradigm mingle with predatory practices; to devour locals' selflessness.

Lastly however, while undoubtedly, beneficial outcomes arise from collaborative efforts, the process of connecting itself may be unwanted, difficult or risky, e.g. when trust is broken (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Dutt et al., 2016). Notwithstanding, barriers to networking lie not so much in (in)ability of local entrepreneurs, but in the (un)willingness of others to avail the space, afford them the time, prioritize their issues, and provide support along their path. Planning activities to contribute towards well-defined growth objectives also demands a level of discipline. As one member noted, this is true "even if the advocate is engaged in a different business, e.g. musicians". Overcoming uncertainties arising out of the liability of newness and information asymmetry can be immense (Levie et al., 2014). Thus, to foster value commitment and ensure positive outcomes; interconnectedness and collaboration remain key drivers and deliverables for locals' benefit.

6.0 Study Conclusions

To recap, the central research question addressed is: *How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence growth within highly informal entrepreneurial ecosystems?*

Consistent with Dutt et al. (2016) and Mair & Marti (2009), the study finds that OSI models play a critical role to bridge different ecosystem actors including informal and formal entrepreneurs. The roles played by the demonstrated OSI members are aimed at increasing the *locus of control* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) of SMEs/microentrepreneurs. A key characteristic is their commitment to wider societal bonding through **heterogenous activities**. Importantly, in addition to imparting entrepreneurship skills through data sharing, they have capacity to influence decision makers by lobbying to gain political will and pull financial resources for ventures that are communally beneficial; thereby improving societal wellbeing and accelerating growth.

To summarize, the ingredients for growth in informal ecosystems include, but are not limited to: a) articulating local innovations by more experienced mentors and role models that a growing entrepreneurial base can identify with, whereby or through whom locals can visualize themselves as, and therefore aspire to follow in their footsteps, b) gender, as specific to this regional context, c) bridging relationships between informal and formal actors, including by substituting some services or even institutions: the latter from resource-rich settings with local knowledge, while the former possess abundant technological and financial resources, and lastly d) unwavering commitment to ensure rewards and benefits to locals, towards growth.

6.1 Research Contribution

Originality lies in theoretical development: the study builds upon Dutt et al. (2016) by applying *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986 in Huang & Knight, 2017) to showcase how OSI members formulate roles to improve *locus of control* of microentrepreneurs, thereby more ably executing the (institutional) agenda for growth in informal contexts. By drawing on empirical data to frame a typology of role formation (by classification of the concept), supplementation occurs backwards, adding identifiers and/or curious magnifiers of heterogenous activity, and also forwards, adding replicators of success to already documented actors, i.e. connectors and sponsors.

In essence, while Dutt et al. (2016) examines, at country level, three factors that influence OSIs decision or ability to balance between MDI or BCD activities which are external but related to the organization, this study takes place at organizational and local community level, with the OSI role as the unit of analysis. OSIs enable meaningful interplay between key actors at often complementary and sometimes divergent levels of political, economic, and social engagement. The study compliments knowledge at the intersection of informality (Adom et al., 2023; Mair et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2016) and entrepreneurial ecosystems (Stam, 2015; Stam & Spiegel, 2016; Spiegel, 2017; Neumeyer et al., 2019; Wurth et al., 2022) from the BoP. Lastly, it incorporates an inherent gender dimension (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Brush et al., 2019; Nziku & Henry, 2020).

Practical implications: the research emphasizes that growth in local communities is not only dependent upon the ecosystem elements as highlighted in existing literature (Stam, 2015), or the intermediaries and actors behind this matrix (Marti & Mair, 2009). But it is also dependent upon a) how roles form within the context (the mechanisms), b) by whom and with whom they are executed, i.e. ecosystem actors, and lastly, c) the sequence by or within which those roles are delivered or enacted. The question of *place* as a determinant for effective problem solving (Creswell, 2017; Pels et al., 2022) is also addressed by the model as it allows members to tackle problems more effectively within their areas of abode.

In practice, OSI models allow for use and re-use of knowledge and resources by delineating a symbiosis in informal contexts that aligns with Shepherd et al. (2019): celebrating the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship.

Management and policy implications. this study addresses informality and poverty, both of which disproportionately affect women. The demonstrated OSI model denotes attention to gender inequality (Brush et al., 2019; Duflo, 2012; Nziku & Henry, 2020) e.g. by focusing on increasing access to finance. That breeds more interdependent positive consequences in other areas such as increased trust-based and informed decision making. Sustainability is abound at the heart of the model since it delivers on a broad range of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering SDG 4, 5, 8, 10 and 17: quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequality, and partnerships (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

6.2 Study Limitations and Recommendations for future Research

A challenge faced during empirical studies is that, given unique entrepreneurial enclaves e.g. Silicon Valley, urban, or rural contexts; it is hard to build theory by generating or proving findings that cut across all these unique landscapes (see also Adom et al., 2023; Stam, 2015; 2018). As well, data interpretation can be influenced by other factors such as the researcher's or interpreter's or reader's, or reviewer's own upbringing and their world view. Otherwise, pivotal works as referenced are not so easily identifiable, given the specialized and well-defined scope, "prominence" and culture of select journals. To control for such limitations, I incorporated triangulation by widening the source from which data was gathered.

As Huang and Chen (2021) ponder in one of the cities in China, is informal entrepreneurship even relevant to (urban) growth? Their findings suggest otherwise; thereby raising even more questions. Given the digital divide, what role does AI play in institutions towards more robust and/or productive ecosystems? Given a high rate of demise for non-profits, what other hybrid models can drive or derive entrepreneurial growth? Other shortcomings and resource constraints caused by a perverse neocolonial landscape also beg for major (re)consideration. To increase understanding, measurability of BoP models through behavioral studies or refocusing more gap analysis in entrepreneurial identity is vital. That will help to broaden and diversify the knowledge base.

6.4 Summary and Conclusion

As a hotspot of the study, OSI models that rely on role formation have much to offer towards entrepreneurial growth at the BoP. By bridging between different ecosystem actors, they improve competitiveness through wider social engagement. The research emphasizes that *how* entrepreneurs interact and exchange resources *and who* engages them is, or becomes, a determinant of their *success or failure* (Shepherd et al., 2019). Supportive roles are best delivered by those that either match in background and identity, or those with adequate appreciation of others' cultural disposition, customary nature, and socio-economic conditions. Most importantly, by those who share in local entrepreneurs' dreams and aspirations.

To sum up the 'Global South' growth agenda, an age-old Luganda saying puts it best "addirinjana amawolu y'agajjamu omukkuto". It translates to "one who revisits staple food leftovers is bound

to attain satisfaction”: alluding to mainstays in our usual surroundings that are often overlooked (because they are always around), asserting that they remain valuable and important, regardless of whether we (leaders and/or policy makers) recognize and attest to this fact or not. By leaning into policy action and enabling entrepreneurs to share stories from wherever they might be, office or kitchen alike, OSIs set a precedent that serves to fulfill the poverty alleviation promise.

Indeed, the end of all exploration will be to arrive back where it all started and get to know the place for the first time (Eliot, 2013).

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8.0 Appendix

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Figures

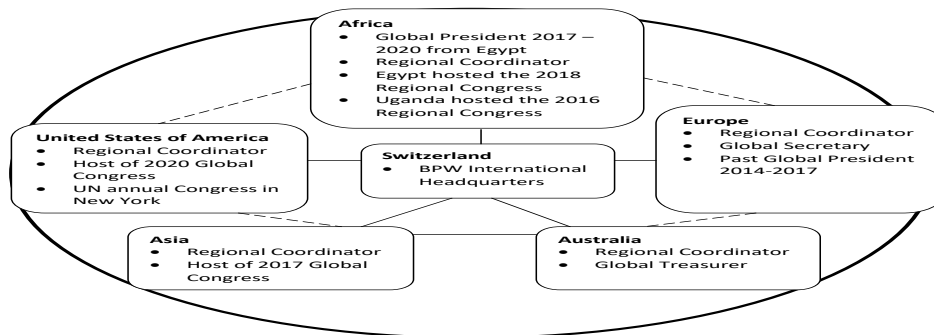


Figure 27: A Global Web Depicting the BPW Organizational Structure

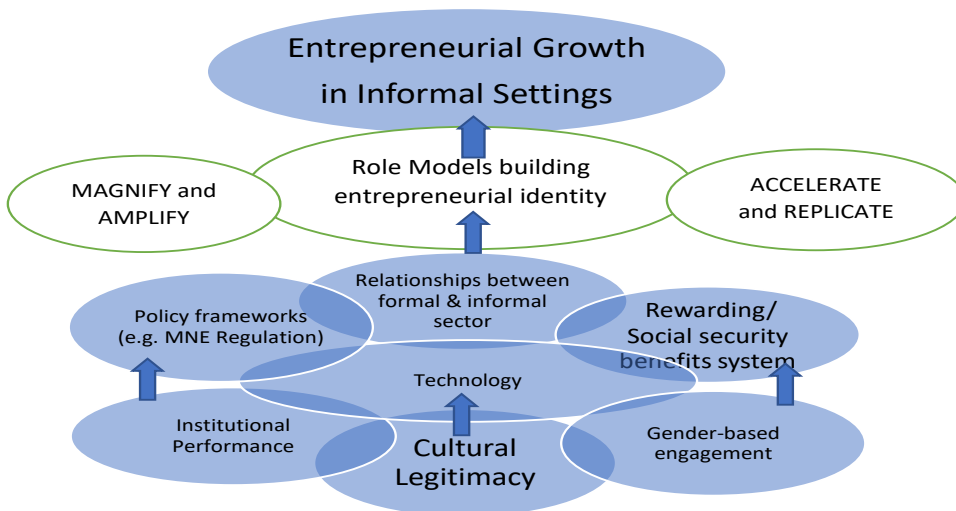


Figure 28: Conceptualizing the Role of OSIs in Informal EEs

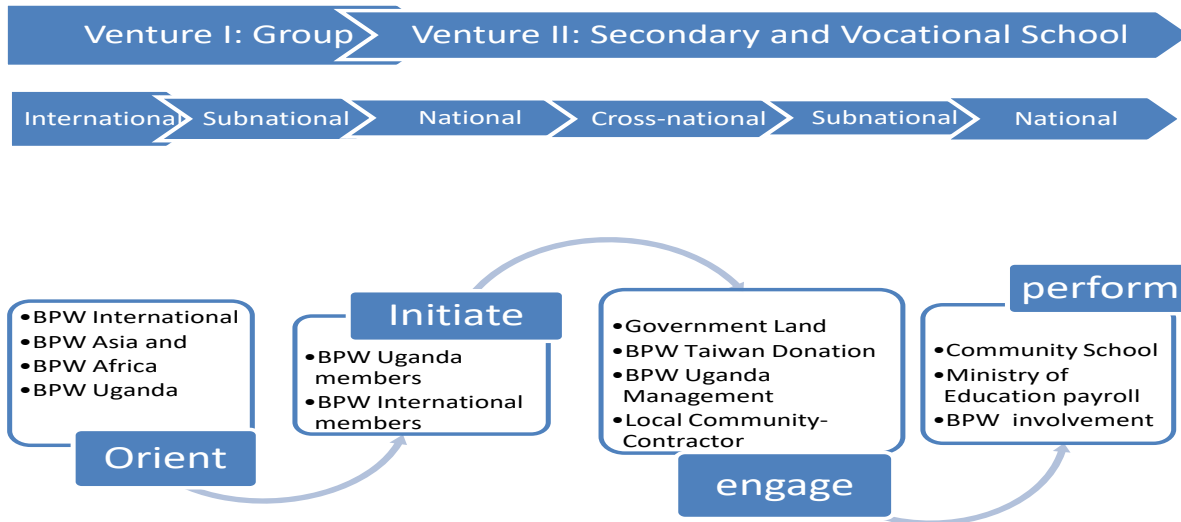


Figure 29: The BPW Uganda Venture Creation Process

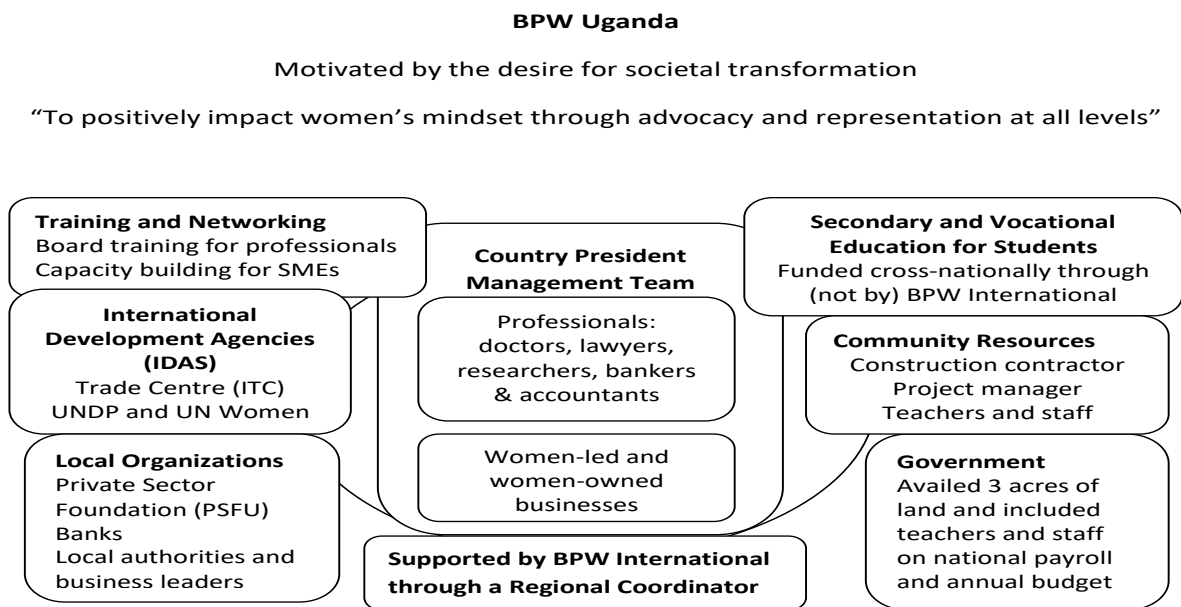


Figure 30: Structure of BPW Uganda

These images have been removed from the public version of the thesis for data protection reasons.

- BPW founded by Dr. Maggie Kigozi, Afsa Mukasa and Rukmini Bonthala in 2013
- Gender-driven place-based model
- Data collected from 2013 – 2019 through an active and participatory approach
- Database of businesses and professionals mostly women-owned or women-led
- Triple pronged approach towards leveraging informality through bridging, sensitization & literacy
- Locally: directs unutilized or underutilized govt and/or private resources towards locals in areas which need them most.
- Internationally: Trade Support Institution (TSI) that links IDAs with locals: i.e. bringing civil society together with the informal sector.
- Fits the multidisciplinary topic of informality as well as multifaceted context of sub-Saharan Africa

Photograph 5.4: Photographic case data – Engaged Scholarship

**Secular and vocational education as Incubators
Sensitization and Bridging actors within the Ecosystem**

These images have been removed from the public version of the thesis for data protection reasons.

Photograph 5.5: Photographic case data - the OSI model

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE – OVERALL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter elaborates upon how the research question(s) is/are addressed by the study findings. Before delving in, a brief recap is warranted. First, the central research question and each of the research sub-questions are revisited and summarily addressed in the Figures and Tables below. Thereafter, a broader discussion is engaged to perhaps explicate what the empirical findings mean for the knowledge base, as well as their implications within the context.

To recap, based on underlying assumptions in BoP theory that MNEs breed multiplicity that proposedly supports mutual benefit, or that they grow by focusing attention on local communities (Prahalad & Hart, 2002; London & Hart, 2010), or that they induce formalization which in turn promotes growth at the BoP (IMF, 2018): a knowledge gap is noted. *To empirically evidence how MNEs build cross-sector partnerships with actors at the local level* (Dembek et al., 2019).

Responding to that gap, this study re-examines such pillars of Base of the Pyramid (BoP) theory through the lens of informality: by exploring interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs. The central research question is: *How do relationships between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurship growth in highly informal settings?*

5.1 Overall Findings from the Study

As illustrated by Figure 31 below, a philosophical deficit at entry point of MNEs is observed, whereby they continue to dive deep into narrowing formal sectors, even amidst the population growth trajectory which indicates growing informality. Building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), a rife relationship dimension which captures the adverse nature of interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs was identified. To focus on this observation, the researcher termed it **Entrepreneurial Ghosting**.

Entrepreneurial Ghosting (**EG**) is a relationship that does NOT serve its intended purpose. Its genesis is that ever-present discrepancy between the motives of MNEs and the expectations of host communities; that encourages inaction, lag, negation, and lack of reciprocity. That compounds loss of opportunity in host nations, leading to continuous disproportion that impedes growth.

Figure 31 below summarizes the key findings. The **EG** relationship dimension is an adverse actor, antecedent, determinant, or simply a contributing factor to entrepreneurial growth, or more succinctly, its detriment. The phenomenon breeds continuous and increasing disproportion by creating one-hit wonders who may limp on or fail, restart, only to fail again: bearing negatively on local community growth and indirectly, on global development.

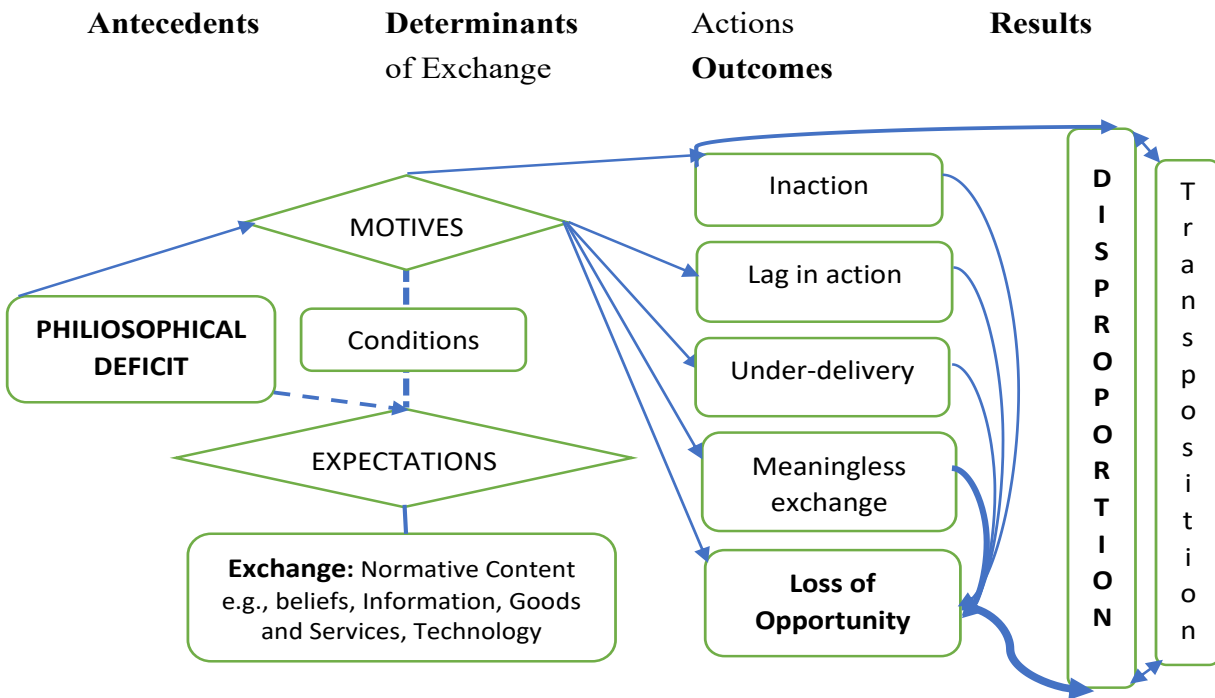


Figure 31: Characteristics of Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Because MNEs engage in narrower formal sectors while ignoring the 2050 population trajectory, they increasingly appear to work *for* those who operate informally, especially in theory, rather than *with* them in practice. To avoid any obscurity or obfuscation, the fact that people have *some access* to technology is not to be confused with them necessarily *benefiting* from it. Subsequently, it is important to recognise this relationship concept as an instrument: whereby targeted action towards its early detection and mitigation could accelerate regional growth.

Tables 21 and 22 below summarize results, discussion and contribution from this study.

Table 21: Summary of Results on Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Research Focus	Key Considerations	Study Results	Relevance to the Field of Entrepreneurship
Focus is on the few interactions between Microentrepreneurs and MNEs, as observed	QN 1: How does the relationship support or deter entrepreneurial growth?	The relationship deters or negates this by MNEs non-action, lag in action, meaningless or non-reciprocal exchange, and intentional under-delivery: causing loss and continuous disproportion.	Contributes to theory development. Addresses the research question and contradicts market-based or MNE-led BoP models. Data herein negates the supposition of mutuality.
The unit of analysis is entrepreneurial growth	What roles do the local actors play?	Mostly downstream logistical roles on low commission-based contracts	Aligns with critics Karnani 2007 a & b, Chelekis & Mudambi 2010, Arora & Romijn
Measured by what microentrepreneurs deem as progress, benefit or success.	How do interactions influence growth?	Where supplier interactions exist, gender leadership is observed underlined by increased technology-driven activity	MNEs appear to support economic growth through multiplicity. And when they do, it can also be visibly gender inclusive.
	How do gaps, i.e. Entrepreneurial Ghosting, influence growth?	Within the few relationships formed: Inaction, lack of reciprocity. Lag in exchange of content, all breed loss and affect entrepreneurs negatively	There is a lack of evidence of equal or equitable benefits: i.e. no shared prosperity. This breeds one-hit wonders
	What role do the two actor groups play towards each other and within the community	Microenterprise avails employment to the majority. MNEs concentrate action in formal sector leaving out the majority who operate informally	MNEs tend to prefer working <i>for</i> informal actors rather than <i>with</i> them. This is problematic; it invites immiseration.
	Data suggests changes in definition of Informality	Through various technological advancements, we now know more about informal actors via social media. The onus is on government, MNEs to harness existing data by data-sharing	The sub-Saharan informal sector can no longer be referred to as undertaking "unrecognized activities" They are a majority, with activities on social media.

The research question: *how do relationships between local microentrepreneurs and MNEs support or deter entrepreneurial growth in highly informal settings?* is thereby addressed. There is evidence of scanty interactions formulated between MNEs and microentrepreneurs. Where relationships are evidenced, also gender leadership was observed. However, most locals did not have any non-consumer relationship of any form (neither suppliers nor partners) with an MNE. Instead, significant *divergence* between opportunity-led motives of MNEs and necessity-based intentions of the local microentrepreneurs was observed, which derails growth.

Table 22: Discussion and Contribution - Paper 2 Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Documented findings and propositions in Existing Literature	Findings from this Empirical Study Paper 2 – Entrepreneurial Ghosting
<p>Identified Gap: There is need for empirical studies to increase our understanding of <i>how MNEs form cross sector partnerships</i> (Dembek et al., 2019).</p>	<p>This empirical study responds to the highlighted gap in Dembek et al (2019). While it takes place in Uganda, additional observations from secondary data about the Sub- Saharan region are revisited to supplement primary data.</p>
<p>Importantly, it appears that most literature about MNE interactions adopts stakeholder theory (see e.g. Simanis, 2014), yet that lacks measurement metrics more so in BoP/ informal contexts (given challenges of synthesized information). It is unclear why only a few studies from emerging markets engage network theory (e.g. Prashantham, Rosca et al., 2022; Bhawe & Zahra, 2019).</p> <p>Even then, most existing literature focuses on MNE <i>practices</i>, placing emphasis on the doer and on what is done.</p>	<p>Differing from most existing literature, I focus on interactions between MNEs and locals. The research is informed by Entrepreneurial Networks theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) noting <i>how actors exchange resources</i> to create opportunity. The theory is applied to appreciate magnitude, evolution and directionality of interactions, which in turn invites a relational lens. This lens draws closer attention as to how locals perceive MNE <u>interactions</u>.</p> <p>That allows us to ponder this relationship dimension while <u>focusing on the affected party</u>.</p>
<p>While some studies suggest that MNE partnerships which go beyond consumer relationships by treating locals as suppliers or entrepreneurs may link to lower rates of informality, e.g. in Southern Africa at 36% or Ghana at over 50% (Adom et al., 2018; Lowe et al., 2018); conversely, others note that practices driven by sale-to-the-poor-at-all-cost unidirectional fortune finding may yield higher levels of informality, e.g. in Central African Republic (CAR) at over 79% and East Africa at 77% (IMF, 2018/2019).</p> <p><u>However</u>, given oil-producing Nigeria with high MNE presence, high poverty rate of over 90%, high informality rate of over 80%, and South Africa which is equally MNE dense, with the lowest informality rate under 36% and high poverty rates in local community townships, existing knowledge paints an unfinished picture.</p>	<p>Findings show an adverse relationship dimension i.e. Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG) between MNEs and microentrepreneurs which is detrimental to local (entrepreneurial) growth, as evidenced by <u>landmark MNE exits at the BoP</u>. Identified characteristics of the EG relationship dimension post it as a deterrent to local growth, even elsewhere that such gaps are observed.</p> <p>Practical implications center around conceptual relevance. The EG phenomenon avails a novel, perhaps even rudimentary way of measuring entrepreneurial activity. Deeper appreciation of this phenomenon could potentially explain, at least in part, nuances in countries with similar MNE presence such as Nigeria and South Africa, with varying levels of informality at over 80% and under 36% respectively (IMF, 2018); and antithetically contrasting local entrepreneurial vibrance or growth (GEM, 2016/2017).</p>

<p>Studies which explore interactions between MNEs and start-ups or SMEs are few and far between, mostly addressing developed or emerging markets (see e.g. Prashantham et al., 2012; 2018; 2022)</p> <p>“Dancing with Gorillas” (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2008; 2020; Prashantham et al., 2018) highlight that in the process of achieving market dominance, larger MNEs sometimes end up disbanding smaller creatives by taking over their ideas to develop them further. Or they may simply stave them off and reduce competition, e.g. in Hollywood, specifically in the movie making business (Vandie & Zaheer, 2014).</p> <p>“Swimming with the Sharks” (Colombo & Shafi; 2016) a study replicated in Europe highlights that those financiers, particularly venture capitalists (mostly MNEs), often only show interest in financing entrepreneurs who have already accessed seed funding from elsewhere. Basically, financial help from funders arrives late, usually after one obtains resources. They avoid taking risks. <u>This is oxymoronic/ perplexing/ paradoxical.</u></p>	<p>Studying the topic in the largest BoP hub makes notable effort towards theoretical articulation. The findings add granularity to the field by unearthing intrinsic & intrusive effects while putting emphasis on to whom Ghosting occurs. When locals are left out by MNE-led financing systems that avoid risk and maximize profit by enforcing stringent lending requirements, and higher thresholds than ordinary creatives can qualify for; that slows growth across the board. This is congruent with Vandie & Zaheer (2014). It also complements Colombo & Shafi (2016).</p> <p>So, not only are Western-domiciled MNEs e.g. Barclays and Standard Chartered banks exiting the retail space at the BoP, and leaving that to be occupied by regional players; but leading banks are also closing down branches in UK, Middle East, and Europe, where EU reports indicate that funding towards entrepreneurship education is inverse to innovation and growth, especially for female entrepreneurs.</p> <p>As such, the study bares <u>significance towards practicality and generalizability</u>, with possible management and global policy implications regarding inclusivity, beyond informal contexts.</p>
<p>Organizational studies in entrepreneurship (e.g. Prahalad & Hart, 2002; London et al., 2016) claim that mainstream giant e-commerce-driven MNEs expand into new markets with the promise of “building back better” economies. However, there is either notable paucity (e.g. Adom et al, 2013; 2023; Decker and Dankwah, 2023) or lack of research on globalization specific to informality, or the BoP for that matter.</p>	<p>Findings contradict Prahalad and others, noting that MNEs do not always form relationships that support local growth. Fairly recently, Coca-Cola donated empty jerrycans to Ugandans during Covid lockdowns, causing a public media frenzy. Ghosting is highly representative of what still rampantly transpires. Thus, the study augments research findings from West or Southern Africa with data from East Africa by also making inference to the region using secondary data.</p>
<p>Studies (e.g. London et al 2014) claim that poverty alleviation is a main goal of MNE-led presence or Globalization for that matter. Their models propose that MNEs breed multiplicity by creating mutually beneficial engagement while considering cultural norms and beliefs of the host communities.</p>	<p>MNEs benefit more from microentrepreneurs. Not the other way round. Empirical data depicts MNEs ripping off microentrepreneurs through flimsy contracts that do not mention any standard benefits, e.g. neither considerations for standard housing nor rental share.</p>

<p>Such propositions raise our curiosity to establish who is the propagator or advocate of market-based BoP theory? In order to understand the beneficiary and benefactor.</p>	<p>Also, the absence of apprenticeships, coupled with obsolete training on bookkeeping as opposed to ideation and translation into substantive wealth generation are factors.</p>
<p>Critics of the above proposition such as Arora & Romjin (2012) note a mirage at the BoP or Karnani (2009)'s observations on MNEs making huge gains in Africa by selling unhealthy products (Unilever selling skin lightening products). I too note that MNE-led models <i>targeted to the poorest members of society</i> (London & Hart, 2010, Pg. 2) presume to support these "poorest", although they do not explicitly claim that to be their primary aim. Rather, their target is to navigate markets profitably. That makes the dominance of MNE-led models on poverty alleviation counter intuitive.</p>	<p>Just this year, Ethiopia unveiled the largest power dam on the continent, which was denied financing by MNEs. What happened there is symbolic of unnecessary Inaction and Lag as the country endured a long spell of depravity in <u>Ghosting relationships</u>. Not to mention, in the resource-richest countries located in Central Africa, MNEs still continue to <i>exploit</i> locals by severely underpricing minerals that fetch exponentially high value internationally.</p> <p>Findings in this context augment Arora & Romjin (2012) and also supports Karnani (2009).</p>
<p>A recent review of BoP theory, Borchardt et al (2020) separate the sample of articles obtained from EBSCO in two groups and conceptualize by comparing value commitment to locals versus emphasis on MNE profitability within these studies. They highlight a <i>value commitment dilemma</i> which is detrimental to host communities.</p>	<p>The empirical data supports Borchardt et al (2016; 2020) by highlighting a significant <i>value commitment dilemma</i> uniquely through the relationship lens. This augments the new and evolving BoP4.0 knowledge base which focusses on embeddedness of MNEs into host markets.</p>
<p><i>Entrepreneurship</i> is about innovators or creatives <i>exploiting opportunity</i> which can be creatively destructive (Baumol, 1996).</p> <p>While some BoP studies document <i>Pro-poor</i> efforts in subsistence farming or renewable energy etc., overall, the literature is still mainly dominated by MNE-led marketing strategies where poverty-alleviation is simply a possible bi-product of the process.</p>	<p>I make the point that <i>exploiting opportunity</i>, as a flagship driver of entrepreneurship, should be differentiated from <u>abusing institutional voids</u> which invite <i>unproductive engagements</i> or even more <i>creative destruction</i> as apparent here.</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Ghosting borders on depravity. Challenging the MNE-led status quo, anchored as a determinant of success or failure (Shepherd et al., 2019), aids the quest for inclusive growth.</p>
<p>Existing BoP theory, from "highly ranked" journals, begs for more infusion of data from the largest BoP hubs, particularly informal contexts; so as to truly be representative of the reality which it aspires to represent.</p>	<p>Showcasing growth from microentrepreneurs' point of view, as a standard unit of reference for entrepreneurs at the BoP, reflects the correct standpoint or entry point into what would rightly represent BoP theory. Thus, making a case for more empirical works from the context.</p>

Generally, there is a significant lack of non-consumer alliances between the two groups of actors, or only a few flimsy relationships, dominated by Business Process Outsourcing models in banking and telecommunications, with fewer interactions in the health or education sectors. Yet nobody seems to know how this era of generative Artificial Intelligence will impact informal societies. Regarding significance of gender in informal contexts: MNEs tend to give women a fair chance. But because even in the few instances where relationships exist, *weak centrality* persists; MNEs also (in)advertently contribute to the gender gap, and increased inequality. Thus, negating intended gains as further evidenced by a current USD 42 billion financing deficit (AFFAWA/ AfDB, 2021), over 30% of which is in the agricultural sector - where most women are domiciled. Based upon such findings, the research tries to map the trajectory by exploring *how EG* develops overtime and the effects thereof; if we go ahead within the status quo, without a corrective plan.

Two downsides are apparent. The first is, some MNEs that have failed to match the heterogenous nature of informal contexts thus far and yet continue to gain (or already gained) by partnering with actors outside BoP context; are exiting those markets. This is the opposite of MNE-led BoP theory. The second is, as informality increases alongside population growth and MNE expansion, in a structure where wider market share and service to the people is still best achieved by improving productivity via lowering operational costs and aiming for higher margins, that will be garnered by focusing on the few corporate/top tier alliances. Yet such practices fuel a cycle of disproportion. Either way, Prahalad's MNE-led BoP theory misses the point regarding local growth.

The study ultimately concludes that while current MNE interactions appear aggregately supportive on the surface, their reasoning for exiting the BoP e.g. high cost-to-income ratios or even digitalization reveals that the models are an unmatched growth strategy for the BoP context. As EG continues unabated, instead of steadfastly supporting creativity and innovation to help grow economies faster, those meager contracts, lack of health benefits or apprenticeships, and so on curtail or even negate intended gains. As such, the notion that MNEs reduce poverty has neither lived up to societal expectations nor yielded tangible results towards that effect. Therefore, going by these findings, we can infer to a notable degree of accuracy that as population growth rates outpace speed of multiplicity, rate of formalization, or local growth; traditional MNE-led models do NOT meet a would-be path of poverty alleviation. More so, during an apparent AI revolution.

Instead, **EG** often breeds “one-hit wonders” i.e. actors who engage in multiple activities, hoping to grow, only to wind up continuously transposed; forced to settle for multiple short-lived entrepreneurial experiences and registrations; (start, fail, stop, change). Thereby over-inflating (otherwise negative) multiplicity that is reported as growth. PSFU noted that poor exchange, e.g. by severely underpricing minerals in Congo through market manipulation and supporting corrupt regimes, MNEs engulf or starve off local outfits that are otherwise critical to development. Leaving such huge gaps unchecked in the “*African Century*” (UNFPA, 2022) may mean that locals will most likely remain unprotected, underserved, or trampled over: which is detrimental. Thus, *exploiting opportunity* as a pillar of entrepreneurship (Baumol, 1996), must be differentiated from exploiting institutional voids, which fuels unwanted *creative destruction*.

Figure 32 below shows the effects of ghosting relationships by MNEs on local entrepreneurs.

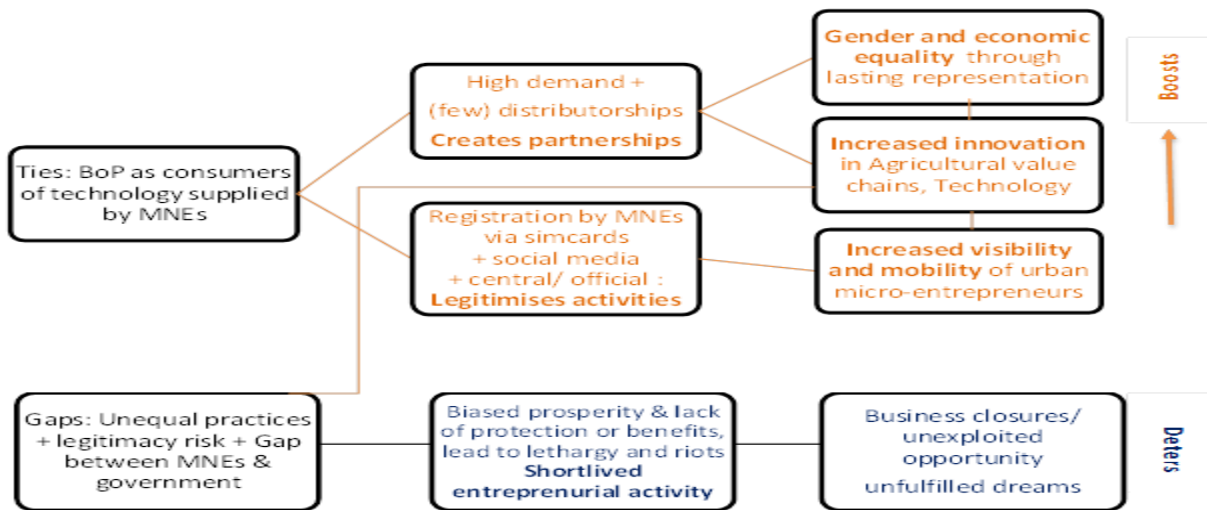


Figure 32: Effects of the Entrepreneurial Ghosting Dynamic on Societal Growth

While it is true that MNEs such as Telecommunication companies invest, and also provide, much-needed training, they lean towards supporting intrapreneurship much more than entrepreneurship, especially at individual or micro level. Moreover, social media platforms also tend to encourage

imbalance in growth by leaning towards creating wealth for their more formal capital-intensive origins, with less benefit for informal societies. Moreover, online training or trading is no longer a stand-alone activity since it is almost impossible to separate it from challenges in financial access. Not to mention, even at the intrapreneur or formal level, there are concerns and unanswered questions as to how or why MNEs constantly report exorbitant gains at the expense of staff and agents for years on end while those who question their strategies wind up disparagingly entangled in some way. Whereas such vices are not unique to the naturally endowed sub-Saharan story, their effects are more detrimental where many live below the poverty line.

Relatedly, even as regional MNEs and other players step in, with a focus on analogue (SSD-based) technology via SMS and mobile money which remains a game changer all over Africa - even taking over banking business especially at the lower echelons; the cost of newer, disruptive technology is priced out of reach for most. These cultural versus cost inhibitors still create a parallel universe wherein the two worlds fail to meet, except at the very points where few actors with ample resources exist. Not to mention, in such environments that may require more resources, a gap between MNEs and government remains imminent.

Following the above, focus is shifted from MNE-led market-based models. The study transforms by spotlighting how open system intermediaries (OSIs) play a significant role to bridge informal and formal ecosystem actors and unleash the potential of local innovations.

To recap what is discussed in the last leg, the question addressed transforms to: *How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence entrepreneurial growth in highly informal ecosystems?*

Based upon network theory (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), the overall study winds up showcasing significance of OSIs towards supporting growth in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENS). OSIs mainly play four key roles that bridge different ecosystem actors at varying levels of growth, wavelengths, by experienced members who act as role models. As curious magnifiers, they use local knowledge to advocate for informal sector by amplifying challenges to those in power including both practitioners and policy makers. They also engage in various incubation activities to improve internal capabilities as well as seek for funding.

As illustrated in Figure 33 below, a typology of role formation is derived to showcase the role of OSIs as observed; identifying their different attributes and sequence within which they occur.

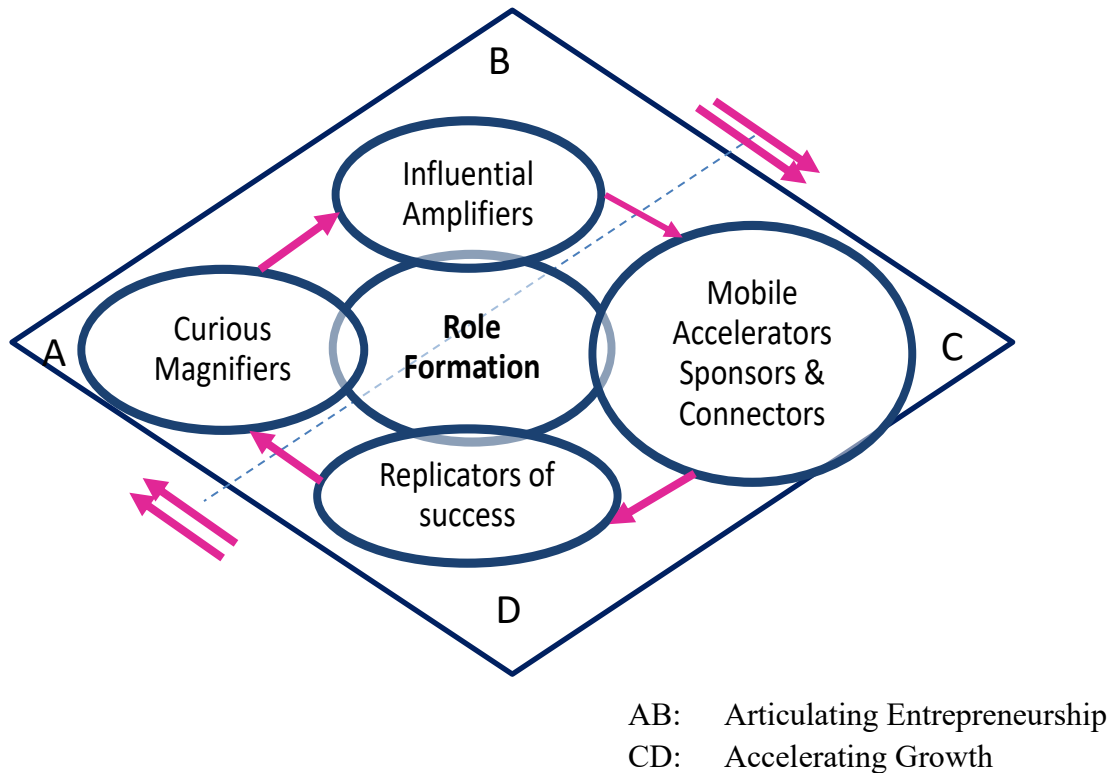


Figure 33: Role Formation in Informal Entrepreneurial Networks (IENs)

A characteristic of OSI models that simultaneously hits multiple notes on the *heterogeneity* scale is their ability to support development goals more flexibly. Role models are often influential figures committed to local growth by engaging at government level and/or with the private sector. They invest time and resources towards improving not only entrepreneurs’ education but also health, advocate for gender issues by reducing the pay gap, or supporting female representation in leadership (Nziku & Henry, 2020). They are also quick to consider approaches to tackle climate change (Anderson et al., 2020) such as green finance. Lastly, they are keen on replicating success.

Tables 23 and 24 below provide snapshot of results, discussion and contribution in the last leg of this exploration.

Table 23: Summary of Results on the Relevance of Role Formation

Study focus	Key Considerations	Study Results	Relevance
In search of alternatives, given findings in Paper 2.	QN2: How do Open System Intermediaries (OSIs) influence entrepreneurial growth in highly informal ecosystems?	Builds upon Dutt et al., 2016 and demonstrates using a case study <i>how</i> OSIs bridge the gap between informal and formal ecosystem actors.	Demonstrates how the OSI executes, detailing the roles played and the sequence in which they occur; thus, deriving a typology of role formation
	The role of OSIs The importance of social capital	OSIs plug the gap between formal and informal sector (Shantz et al., 2018; 2020) by playing four roles. As curious magnifiers, amplifiers, mobile connectors, & lastly as replicators of success	OSIs create more solid relationships based on better appreciation of microentrepreneurs' and ecosystem actors' plight
	The relevance of Role Formation	A typology of Role Formation as a mechanism that supports local entrepreneurial growth, especially where gender plays a significant role, supported by technology.	Role formation as a solution that matches the context better, although not without its limitations.

Table 24: Discussion and Contribution - Paper 3 Open System Intermediaries

Documented Findings in Existing Literature	Findings from this Empirical Study Paper 3 – The Relevance of Role Formation
This empirical exploration happens on the back of, or as a consequence of the findings in Paper 2, which highlights a relationship gap between MNEs and microentrepreneurs. It contributes to ecosystem literature (e.g. Stam, 2015) and explorations regarding how intermediaries make choices to engage in Business Capacity Development (BCD) or Infrastructure development (MDI) (see Dutt et al., 2016)	This study demonstrates the roles that OSIs play to support growth in <i>Entrepreneurial Networks</i> (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) which are highly informal; towards achieving more robust or empowering ecosystems at the BoP . From the data, a typology of role formation is framed by classifying this concept into four major roles: magnifiers of heterogenous activity, advocates or amplifiers, connectors and sponsors, and lastly replicators of success.
Dutt et al. use World Bank country data to examine factors that influence OSIs decision or ability to balance between (MDI) or (BCD) activities which are external but related to the organization. They find that those decisions, e.g. in	The study builds upon Dutt et al. (2016) in two directions. Backwards; by highlighting identifiers or magnifiers of the many heterogenous activities (not discoverers) who are crucial for the survival of entrepreneurs, before sponsors and connectors in incubators. And forwards by highlighting the role of

<p>universities or other incubators, lean towards the key preferences of funders or sponsors of their activities, and much less those of the connectors or other market actors.</p>	<p>replicators of heterogenous success – after sponsors and connectors. For 14 years, Ethiopia dipped into a limited but resource-rich budget along with individual contributors to fund the huge hydropower project which was ignored by global financiers. Such evidence shows that locals are willing to tackle societal challenges no matter how big or small. Although some prefer no additional direct cost.</p>
<p>Studies note that microentrepreneurs are less likely to prioritize networking (Greenbank, 2002), thereby remaining unknown.</p> <p>Another recent study shows that microentrepreneurs’ engagement in innovative income generating activities is motivated by a need to feed their families, educate children (Shepherd et al., 2021), and serve their community.</p>	<p>Findings do not wholly align with Greenbank (2002). A close look at conditions under which most microentrepreneurs operate, pitted against their aspirations, suggests that low capacity to network is not the main reason why a greater part of local genius remains unknown. Barriers lie not so much in (in)ability of local entrepreneurs, but in (un)willingness of ecosystem actors to give them a chance, afford them the time and space, prioritize their issues, and support them along their path.</p> <p>As one member noted, the above is true “even if the advocate is engaged in a completely different activity e.g. musicians”. As a matter of fact, globally, musicians advocate for entrepreneurship by highlighting challenges that locals face, possibly and even arguably more (effectively) than those mighty, well-resourced, and deep-pocketed MNEs.</p>
<p>Existing literature shows a growing trend in gender studies (12% of articles) in entrepreneurship. This is important, given that entrepreneurship in informal settings is represented over 60% by women (GEM, 2016/2017).</p>	<p>To account for such gender relevance, the demonstrated OSI in this study is a gender-led network (BPW). That contributes to the trajectory and interest in gender-responsive studies from the BoP: towards a more inclusive knowledge base.</p>

The study data attests that social capital is a vital denominator for entrepreneurial support and growth, with evidence that informal actors are not reluctant to network. No. Rather, they wind up operating in “island activity” (Adom et al., 2023; Shantz et al., 2019). The cause of exclusion is this rift between formal as “haves” and informal as “have nots” – not in a physical resource sense, but regarding financial and technological gaps. These findings were used to conceptualize how OSIs can reduce EG (see recommendations in section 5.3).

5.2 Summary of the Overall Study

To recap the study process: while the research begins by pondering entrepreneurship in informal spaces: globalization, with respect to financial and technological resources, bubbles to the surface. However, the dominant themes do not derail the research focus, as the objective narrows down towards demonstrating how entrepreneurs create and share opportunities.

While some highlighted studies suggest linkages between MNE presence and growth, this study did NOT find a positive trend as regards local entrepreneurial growth, especially at a micro level. Instead, by spotlighting a significant oil-on-water effect, data shows that those trends are divergent. As such, findings from the study hold some credibility towards a view that instead of delivering good old solid transformation as the end goal of venture creation (Tsui, 2016), MNEs, knowingly or not, are part of the leading causes of sporadic or transient activity, which is often reported as gains from multiplicity; while they cause opportunity loss, which breeds immiseration globally.

To this point, regarding the definition of informality, challenges in registration are reducing, and no longer such a huge hindrance to formalization. Therefore, the label of “*unrecognized*” activity in the existing informality definition (see Babitt et al, 2016) becomes less of a descriptor. Rather, the “*unprotected and untaxed*” part is glaring, begging to be resolved. Informality - and indirectly, poverty - now persist more due to nuanced realities in the latter matter.

Further, digressing a little from the strict research scope, there are challenges in mapping the sector. While some respondents are registered with regulatory bodies, others’ data is only available via a myriad of web-based platforms that are not centrally controlled. And despite a numerously cited digital divide wherein many do not appreciate homogenized complex terms and conditions in replicated text, features of applications e.g. fingerprint security or touchscreen technology may suit the majority of microentrepreneurs. However, even as technology platforms support inclusivity regarding access, they less aptly offer heterogeneity; thus, pausing unique challenges. This calls for better data capturing and sharing systems.

Below is a summary discussion of overall outcomes and identified problems during the study, followed by overall recommendations from this research.

5.2.1 High Generalizability of Entrepreneurial Ghosting

In specific contexts, less formal societies may be more entrepreneurial (“necessity-based-wise”) than highly formal ones. Notwithstanding, technology hubs are few and far between in this region (Prashantham et al., 2018), which makes it difficult to compare dissimilar contexts. Moreover, even MNE-dense formal societies, which boast of relatively higher *centrality* in such relationships, not only report lower entrepreneurial growth, but also peculiar MNE exits as evidenced by ongoing closures of bank branches in Europe – with MNEs citing digitalization.

Looking further afield, findings in this study are congruent with earlier research on MNE practices. “Dancing with Gorillas” (Prashantham & Birkinshaw, 2008; 2020; Prashantham et al., 2018) highlights that in the process of achieving market dominance, larger MNEs in Hollywood, specifically in the movie industry, sometimes end up disbanding smaller creatives by taking over their ideas to develop them further or simply to stave them off and thereby reduce competition. For instance, Europe allocates a significant portion of its budget for entrepreneurship education, yet evidence suggests that entrepreneurial spirit in this region, especially that of women, remains lower than expected (European Economic Commission, 2020/2021).

Most notably, “Swimming with the Sharks” (Colombo & Shafi; 2016) find that to obtain financing from venture capitalists, entrepreneurial start-ups must first obtain financing, which is perplexing. A sub-theme that strongly evidences this and generates wide debate is about green energy for power generation, heating, and transport: where due to rigid structural aspects of MNEs in the oil and gas industry, unequal access in green finance breeds increased environmental challenges.

The study also reverberates broader concepts in health and education such as neurodiversity. Particularly, the Scottish outfit “This is Milk” supports integration of neural diverse entrepreneurs to raise awareness on this topic and highlight their brilliance and contribution in the workplace. During the Scottish Entrepreneurship Seminar (SERS 2022) in honor of Professor Nigel Locket who refers to himself as The Dyslexic Professor, it became apparent that the study resonates beyond academia. Neurodivergent entrepreneurs in South America shared how ghosting at different points along their journey affected their development. Starting in the education sector right through to professional or adult life: they were often treated with contempt, viewed as

secondary, different, or weak. To fully support the vitality of entrepreneurs, neurological factors that foster variant behavior and appreciation of the world as it is, not as we force it to be, need to be recognized by practitioners and policy makers.

Finally, although these observations are further validated by how much wealth MNE proprietors have amassed over the past 50 years or precisely since the end of World War 2, being passed down to new generations while taxation and inflation soar for the have-nots as a fast-growing majority; the EG phenomena may not be limited to MNEs. Nonetheless, a contrast between the 20% entities which claim resource “ownership”, crafting conditions for accessing capital for the 80% who do not meet set requirements, further supports my findings.

As MNEs ghost locals all over the world, for the past 30 years or so, previously hustling and bustling entrepreneurial towns have plausibly been adversely affected. Even in Scotland, which is one of the leading models of social entrepreneurial effort, old towns such as Anniesland, East Kilbride or the more recently rebuilt Govan area in Glasgow face related pressures. The experience of living in those towns reveals (un)told stories which warrant focused attention on reducing EG. At the moment, most small shops of yesterday’s decade are closed or on the brink of extinction; owing to several factors that include EG as articulated in this study. From the above-mentioned observations, there is a danger that MNEs could even erode what would have been gained as an alternative, had they not made entry here at all.

5.2.2 Abstraction and Inefficiency in Theory and Practice

Regarding landmark MNE exits, it is noted that “Northern” MNEs are more likely to exit the “South”. This is evidenced by expansion of regional or “Southern” MNEs which are more inclined to understand contextual dynamics. But even as regional MNEs partner with multilateral organizations and International Aid Agencies (IDAs) to address social causes, the endemic idea that employment increases aggregate incomes which trickle down through increased purchasing power remains problematic. “Trickle” is an old, less fancy, yet somewhat aligned term; referring to small rises in income for the “clueless” party, especially in the face of astronomical profits. Indeed, global reports continue to report that formal sectors outperform informal counterparts, all the while underperformance of formal actors - whose results appear better when compared to a severely financially and technologically constrained base - remains hidden.

Without accounting for the disproportionate state of affairs, and regardless of MNEs' exorbitant profitability, such analysis embeds significant inaccuracies, let alone theoretical futility.

To better understand inherent nuances, consider an average Ugandan microentrepreneur categorized as a disabled single mother with two children (that is not a stretch): with neither regular income nor real contractual guarantees, nor government assistance apart from universal education for the children, on top of which she lives in a slum. Yet survival start-ups at the BoP, who have none of the above-mentioned cushions, are constantly hounded for tax.

Now consider the same actor in an environment where government allocates (notable although not huge) benefits through the Department for Workers and Pension (DWP). Income Support for self-employment, Disability allowance, Single Mother allowance, Child benefit (times two), Child Tax credit (times two), 30 hours per week Childcare (times two), Housing benefit or Universal Credit, ESA, NHS universal healthcare and recently Cost of Living and Energy payments, reductions, or subsidies, even a Christmas gift every now and then: albeit of under 10 pounds, if that. While such benefits are a drop in the ocean (compared to cost of living in the pond), they are useful.

Yet it remains unclear how benefits boost entrepreneurship, since it is increasingly challenging for such businesses to thrive even in a somewhat cushioned environment. evidenced by frequent closures of restaurants and e-commerce ventures. Just like the MNEs which are currently exiting the BoP, they too cite high costs of maintenance or digitization; a sign that more is lacking. Clearly, lingering obscurity which adds to the *dilemma* (Borchardt et al., 2021), can be explained by EG.

5.2.3 Complexity regarding Legitimacy of MNE-led AI models

Prashantham et al. (2018) and recently Prasetyo (2022) discuss other waring problems such as complexity of data privacy laws as highlighted by several global institutions, bidding wars for information as numerously revealed by the media, global-wide violations of mental health resulting from (or into) cancel culture, and those glossy depictions of life that many try to emulate - to mention but a few. While these occur across the board, not particularly limited to informality, their effects are more dire where a duty of care to curb immiseration remains. Thus, even if there are positive effects as technology shortens the distance between actors in different contexts, one-size-fits-all homogenized AI thinking in a digital divide could turn growth into a pipe dream.

5.3 Overall Research Recommendation

With reference to an ongoing AI revolution, MNEs which maintain standardized homogenous operations in, and regardless of, nuanced contexts can no longer hide **Entrepreneurial Ghosting**. In fact, as informal/ BoP markets remain unready for a complete move towards digitalization – for instance they are heavily cash intensive, it is more difficult to “copy and paste” AI-ready models. Therefore, in order to reduce the adverse **EG** relationship dimension, early detection, prevention, and management of the dynamic is critical.

Consistent with Aldrich & Zimmer (1986), growth may be determined by *increasing locals’ locus of control*, and/or instilling robust regulatory policy and legal frameworks, or both. Superimposing nihilistic actors who treat *necessity* entrepreneurs as “small SMES” or even “small MNEs”, e.g. by levying high taxes on personal social media usage, cannot be more flawed. As locals continue to innovate while unprotected, with limited or no access to resources, they need not be weary of thirsty regimes that regard them only as “taxable entities” (Kistruck et al., 2015).

Since the solutions to such institutional inefficiencies are still hindered by weak governance and essentially ghosted by current regimes; I recommend infusing heterogenous **OSIs** by deploying the framed typology of role formation to bridge informal and formal actors. The focus is to work directly *with*, rather than *for*, microentrepreneurs.

OSIs are often led by *role models* (see again Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) who drive growth and development through enduring creativity and wider connectivity. The models are based on self-styled capacity: making them more flexible (than MNEs) in deploying responsible approaches. We ought to support innovation *inspired by the desire to meet social needs which are neglected by traditional forms of private market provisions that have often been poorly served or unresolved by the state* (Harris & Albury, 2009: Pg.16).

By using technology to widen networks, seek funding outside the usual sources, and by delivering cutting edge educational programs on how to leverage natural resources, even within institutional voids, they enhance local knowledge. Thus, building more robust entrepreneurial ecosystems.

OSIs also possess wider latitude and capacity which goes beyond entrepreneurship training. Critically, these *role models* are often influential, easily spreading messages through word of mouth, increasingly via social media platforms. They encourage regional pitching competitions in search of seed funding for microentrepreneurs. They know the terrain, are well versed with challenges, have practical solutions, and often apply resources towards reducing barriers to growth. They were once in the position of Ghosted actors, often remembered only for tax collections (Kistruck et al., 2015); the ones being represented in this Thesis.

Those are a few main descriptors which make OSI models more suitable for informal contexts.

Pels et al. (2022) asserts that informal sellers in formal markets face challenges that have been left unmet by regulatory frameworks for ages (see Paper 1 Chapter 2, and Paper 3 Chapter 4). Their conceptual study is based on three pillars namely regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive: arguing that only one of these conditions is met i.e., the normative pillar. In their view, informal actors block would-be gains from formal sector. Given that their exploration is of a formal market, that view differs from findings herein, where data shows that the normative component is what is missing or divergent, stemming from a longstanding philosophical deficit.

However, where they propose a cultural cognitive reading of institutions, noting that the gap between informal and formal actors is *an access challenge and therefore a market problem*, both research views merge. In fact, others indicate that MNE practices tend to limit informal actors (Borchardt et al., 2020), further augmenting proposals to develop suppliers by widening access to markets for goods and services, in order to curb exclusion (see e.g. Brix-Asala et al., 2021).

As earlier noted, societal expectations keep changing from e.g. meat-loving feasters to organic vegetarians or even from narrow gender definitions to multi-dimensional colorful pronouns. However, MNE motives have not changed much, if at all, over time. As if that is not enough, there are neither visible efforts nor structural incentives - fiscal or otherwise – that can make MNEs want to change, much less regulate themselves, including regarding tax thresholds (Khanna, 2018).

These recommendations are illustrated in Figure 34 below, which conceptualizes enabling fortune *with* Microentrepreneurs as opposed to inducing growth *for* them.

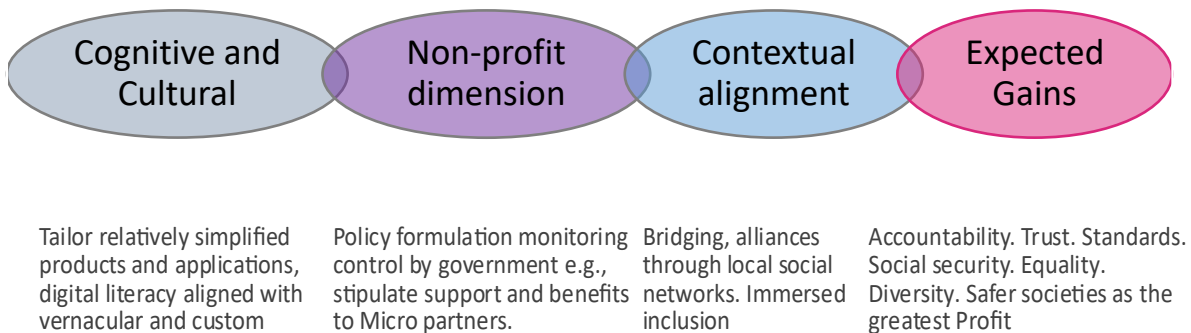
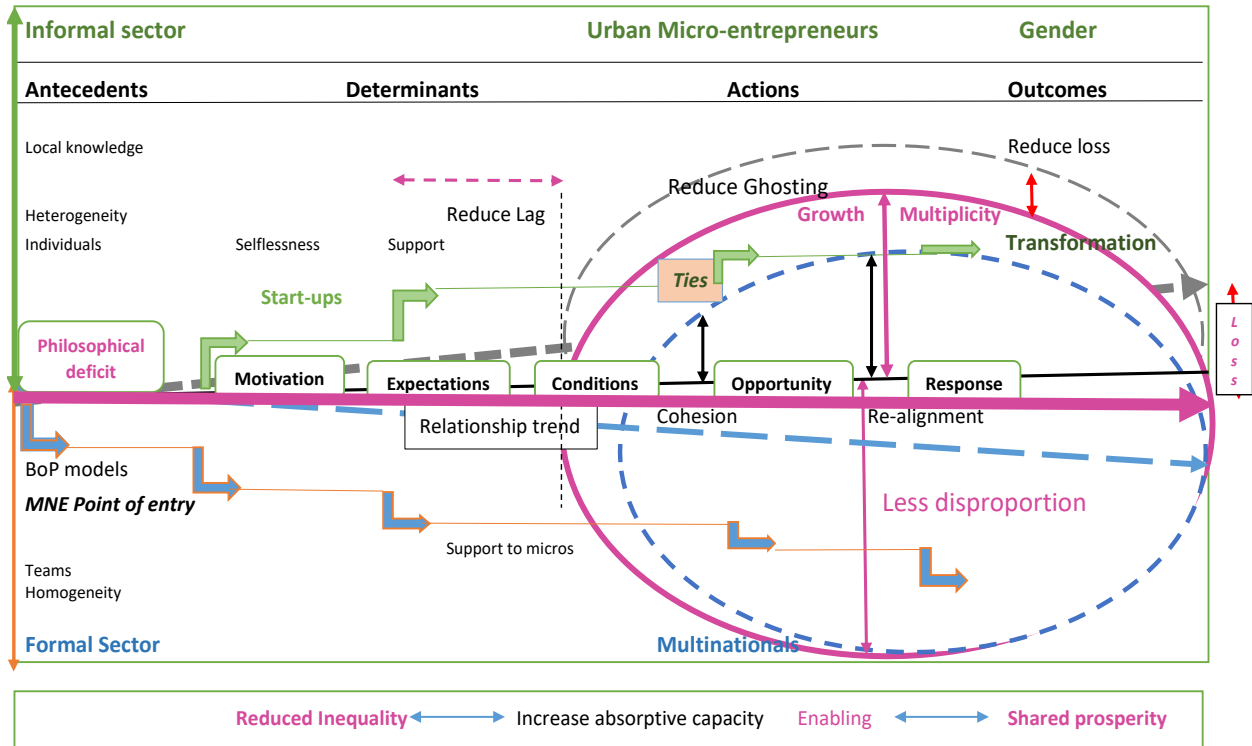


Figure 34: Enabling Fortune with Microentrepreneurs in Informal Contexts

A question arises. What, if anything, would stop OSIs from manipulating the very institutional voids that MNEs abuse? Well, the basis for justification is three-fold as explained below.

The first point lies in the different, yet more aligned motivation of OSIs as embedded in their definition. Notice the introduction of a *pink line* which represents or depicts efforts and strategies that aim to support local entrepreneurs. By advocating for societal causes, e.g. gender inclusion in pitching and funding competitions, internationalizing education using a mix of online and free-to-access models, attracting a broader mix of external factors including responsible green financiers, OSIs aim to *increase microentrepreneurs' locus of control*; and thus, *improve the centrality of relationships* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) with other actors.

Second, the demonstrated OSI model, i.e. BPW, is heterogenous across different countries and yet highly replicable. The concept of role formation supports understanding from both a closer and wider view of challenges faced by locals; thereby enabling OSIs to operate differently and prioritize aligned strategies depending on the nuanced needs of each community. Third, OSIs' horizontal structure (Adom et al., 2018) allows members to respond faster to a broader set of issues. Such flexibility enables tailored solutions and thereby inches closer to deriving meaningful growth.

Examples of (heterogenous) OSIs in Africa include the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) based in Nigeria which reaches out to entrepreneurs across the continent through annual engagements and funding competitions. Others include the Motsepe Foundation (MoF), a South African non-profit, Acumen Fund which is part of Rockefeller Foundation that deploys profit and nonprofit strategies, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Hellos Investment Partners, and Vusi Tembekwayo's My Growth Fund Venture Partners that focusses on how to build capital while ensuring more meaningful exchange.

TEF is particularly interesting. As a part of HEIR Holdings group of companies, also the umbrella organization for United Bank of Africa (UBA), it is one of the most visibly active regional OSIs. The foundation is keen on entrepreneurial support by offering credit facilities; something which banks should do. However, the big difference between these sister models is that banks (MNEs) are often not in position to partner with start-ups while the foundation (OSI) can more ably deliver by structuring tailored entrepreneurial education programs, organizing continentwide funding competitions, and/or by connecting grassroots entrepreneurs to sponsors from a wider global reach.

By comparison, MNE motives or structural capabilities differ.

Separately, another basis for justification of OSIs is born by the combination of ongoing changes in global dynamics, population growth trends, and a visibly inevitable shake-up in our world order. OSIs that are cognizant of “North/South” or particularly “South/South” alliances may be better placed to tackle bottlenecks that locals have historically faced (see also Nziku & Henry, 2020).

As most informal entrepreneurs decry a lack of representation via think tanks such as engineers’ or accountants’ bodies whose synergies can often influence policy; with the necessary resources, backing and support (Weible et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023), OSIs succeed on this task through dialogue, working with civil society, government and ministries, at national and international level. They understand the terrain and are keen on upcoming innovators and creators; making them well positioned to do justice to those identified roles. Thus, to improve the quality of existing relationships, MNEs should be regulatorily mandated to increase depth of engagements by forming partnerships with OSIs; which are in turn best suited to extend wider local reach and coverage.

This proposal is also evidenced within the data itself. By introducing apprenticeships for informal actors, and/or retirement benefits for Business Process Outsourcing entities, online traders, banking and telecommunications agents, or availing basic scholarships for entrepreneurs’ families; the inevitable resultant leap of women in the arrangements automatically reflects positive impact.

Working with or via OSIs helps MNEs formulate meaningful relationships, thereby increasing *locus of control of locals* in more equitable partnerships, as a win-win for informal economies. They can bolster more equitable profitability through standardized contracts, housing or rental cost sharing, investing in basic health care for, and extending terminal benefits to microentrepreneurs. Such a cycle promises to breed mutuality, accelerate growth at the BoP and beyond over time, and thereby support higher returns across the board. Moreover, to share exorbitant earnings with the global economy, entities ought to be taxed in accordance with data that they have accumulated thus far. Such measures have been shown to work, e.g. regarding the Uber case (Kenner, 2018) or growth of pharmaceuticals in India (Adbi et al., 2019; Agarwal et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, MNEs may not take it upon themselves to regularize, much less change old practices. Expecting them to do so is artificial and unrealistic. Rather, improving institutional delivery to build robust ecosystems via socially focused vehicles may ultimately transform such communities.

5.4 Overall Research Contribution

This research addresses a highlighted knowledge gap by Dembek et al. (2019; 2020), i.e. the need *to evidence how MNEs build cross sector partnerships* with locals, by exploring interactions between microentrepreneurs and MNEs in highly informal communities. Substantive to that, three key observations stood out during the review of literature. First, there is paucity, or lack of content, about the effects of globalization in informal settings, the proverbial “Global South”, or the BoP. Second, while the “BoP project” (Chatterjee et al., 2016) embeds a *value commitment dilemma* (Borchardt et al., 2020), there is still an overreliance on understanding poverty within literature, instead of informality as a bite size piece of the puzzle. Separately, studies about MNEs mostly discuss their *practices*. While that is helpful, the focus remains on the doer, leaving a significant lack of understanding as to how those on the receiving end of the said practices are affected.

This study was executed by engaging an empirical multi-method design, using data obtained from interviews, substantiated with a case study: thereby making four main contributions as below.

Contribution to Theoretical Development:

First, to address the highlighted knowledge gap, I explore what transpires between MNEs and microentrepreneurs at the BoP. By so doing, I extend Prashantham et al. (2012; 2018) and Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2020)’s work which expounds upon nuances between MNEs and start-ups in emerging markets, to the BoP where such vitals are barely documented. While most literature on this topic documents MNE practices based on stakeholder theory, thereby giving priority to what they do; I differ by exploring interactions to observe *how* and *when* exchange occurs between the actors – thereby delving into a relational aspect that spotlights the affected.

Secondly, by building upon *Entrepreneurial Networks* (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Huang & Knight, 2017) to appreciate *how aspiring entrepreneurs network & exchange resources to create opportunity* and uniquely doing so in an informal setting; I spotlight an adverse relationship dimension that was perhaps rife but never named before, nor recognized as a phenomenon **i.e. Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)**. Both the study and concept add a new layer on top of *entrepreneurial networks* literature to inform BoP theory. This data from a considerably well-researched but relatively under-spotlighted informal context contributes granularity to the field.

Third, contrary to Prahalad & Hart (2004) and London et al. (2014) who propose that MNEs contribute towards poverty alleviation at the BoP, this study highlights the adverse **EG** dynamic, noting that (non)action and poor exchange negatively affect local entrepreneurs, impeding growth. To recognize and appreciate evolution of interactions, I grouped responses into antecedents, determinants, actions, and outcomes by adapting the ADO framework (Paul & Benito, 2018), and plotted them on a graph to infer magnitude and directionality; showing that withheld opportunity and/or inequitable profit-sharing invites immiseration which then breeds continuous disproportion. As such, the study highlights what MNEs do, but also importantly what they fail to do within relationships at the BoP – that pauses negative effects to others in society. Thereby uniquely supplementing newer contextual studies e.g. Adom et al. (2023) or Mair & Marti (2009; 2011).

Fourth, the study advances OSI literature within the ecosystems silo (Dutt et al., 2016) by highlighting that entrepreneurship in informal contexts is increasingly supported by mentors and role models (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Data shows *how* actors *interact* and who plays what roles within models that have more aligned motives, with significant heterogeneity that better matches the context. Thus, I develop a typology of role formation by classifying the concept, as one of the vital mechanisms by which OSIs support growth in sub-Saharan Africa's ecosystem, through Informal *Entrepreneurial Networks* (IENs). Moreover, the explored gender-led network/ OSI also contributes to a growing gender perspective (see e.g. Chatterjee et al., 2022; Brush et al., 2019).

Contribution to BoP research from a Global “South” perspective:

By extending Prashantham et al. (2018) who study MNEs and startups in emerging markets to the BoP context, the study diversifies existing literature, thereby inching closer towards theoretical articulation. Most research aims at MNE profit strategies as opposed to bolstering local growth, yet a growing volume of ecosystems studies examine Western contexts. I address both these gaps, noting that failure to technologically advance or finance local content at the BoP encourages both poverty and gender inequality (see also Nziku & Henry, 2020); and recommend that OSI models (Dutt et al., 2016) which appreciate global “South” alliances be used to either bridge MNEs with local actors or as substitutes to MNEs. While Dutt et al. (2016) examine three factors that influence OSIs' balance to lean towards either MDI or BCD activities at country-level, I take a sub-national approach to hear directly from the local community, as benefactors and beneficiaries of this study.

Management and Policy Directions:

BoP theory lacks adequate measurement metrics (Arora & Romijn, 2012; Dembek et al., 2019).

As derived in this study, the **Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)** concept provides a novel, perhaps even rudimentary, way of measuring “mutual value” or even “growth”. Contrary to market-based propositions (London et al., 2020), the **EG** relationship formation in essence does not meet the true would-be path of poverty alleviation. As a result, their proposal remains largely unevidenced, as issues on poverty are relegated to unaccountable non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of yester-year as *development jargon* (Simanis, 2014) or pushed back onto locals from a far post. Therefore, early detection and prevention of **EG** become critical. Enabling opportunity by engaging *with* locals instead of *for* them may increase *value commitment* (Borchardt et al., 2020).

Overall, the study supplements a growing BoP 4.0 authorship segment, who propose non-profit strategies in MNEs’ mission and vision (Borchardt et al., 2020) e.g. by inducing heterogeneity (Rosca et al., 2020). OSIs may harness opportunity by investing more equitably while simultaneously *plugging institutional voids* (Mair & Marti, 2009; Pels et al., 2022; Yunus, 2017), e.g. in renewable energy from vast untapped solar and/or hydropower potential, or underdeveloped but rapidly growing health, education, and financial sectors.

Summarily, the study recommendation draws attention to social responsibility (Khanna, 2018). Practitioners and policy makers ought to apply responsible frameworks that bridge formal and informal actors, particularly by closing technological and financial divides, increasing access, and benefit from technology and ensuring increased accountability on the part of multilateral actors. Considering challenges of geoeconomic fragmentation (World Bank, 2015; 2024), a digital divide, etcetera, robust collaboration would be both beneficial and timely. Designing applications that are more culturally agreeable, easier to use and interpret, not to mention gender responsive, allows for deeper local engagement which generates synergistic *value commitment* towards inclusive growth.

In closing, the 3-paper thesis contributes theoretical articulation to the field of entrepreneurship, backed by contextual granularity. The embedded research strategy follows the 7 principles of RRBM geared towards the greater good for societal benefit.

5.5 Overall Study Limitations

Because informality is dynamic, studying the context is - for the lack of a better term – messy.

To begin with, exploring such topics in the era of capitalism calls for awareness that “mainstream” western ideology versus “the others” symbolizes a gap on top of, and inherent within both the research and study contexts, i.e. not only within the literature, but in this case - from historical events and ongoing influence on the continent. In addition, pre-existing neoclassical and/or neocolonial elements add weight to the priorly highlighted philosophical deficit as inherent within the literature, and as observed from the empirical data set.

In relation to the above, stark disparities and persistent inconsistencies such as a 110-country BoP (C.K. Prahalad, 2002; D. Prahalad, 2019) whose structure differs widely from a 205-country “Global South” (Mohanty et al., 2019) do not make data interpretation any easier, much less theory development. The current classifications cause conflation which, frankly, fails to deliver coherent analysis. China, Taiwan, and Singapore in the South bloc, Australia, and New Zealand in the North, affirm that these terms are not birthed from geography, not to mention they are ill-aligned with the actual global outlook. Applying such old philosophy in a neoclassical, post-pandemic and ever more fragmented world (IMF, 2015; 2023) breeds even more complexity.

Moreover, lack of homogeneity or organized data due to institutional inefficiencies creates additional responsibilities in accessing information while building the case from scratch, which may or may not be open to the public. Since local councils and government offices rely on inadequate infrastructure, the duty of searching for and organizing data falls squarely on the researcher’s back. That would be different in formal settings and other jurisdictions where information is organized, easily accessible, and often housed on a website. As if that is not enough, as a female researcher, applying male-dominant theory in gendered contexts such as that of informality connotes a looping effect (Risjord, 2022). Such anomalies create a vicious cycle of ambiguity and abstraction, which puts the researcher in an increased position of responsibility when synthesizing, coding, and interpreting raw data; to coherently document observations.

The above-mentioned elements breed complexity, yet informality is already so by design.

Beyond that, study observations may also denote pre-existing conditions on the researchers' part or even within respondents' input that could affect derivation of meaning e.g. during transcription. Moreover, when we carry out empirical studies, and as common in qualitative explorations of this nature, data samples may be too small for adequate broad representation (Busetto et al., 2020). Meaning that achieving generalizability, let alone simulating the same studies to prove with certainty that a given model is generally more efficient or effective than the other is difficult because many variables continue to change over time.

Further, sub-Saharan ecosystems are diverse, at varying levels of socio-economic development, and quite convoluted; with different cultures and languages, or even different climatic conditions, not to mention nuanced colonial influence on governance. These affect how meaning is derived during transcription and/or data interpretation, pausing implications on quality of outputs.

Therein lays significant inference risk.

In this instance, an element of engaged scholarship helped; the researcher (myself) is immersed in the informal context and had previously done some work with regards to bridging formal and informal sector actors, prior to commencing the official study. Thus, having background knowledge and contacts to some key sources of data.

Researchers and practitioners are increasingly called to order, with many authors encouraging and incorporating responsible research frameworks (see e.g. Khanna, 2018), thereby making efforts to recognize concordant objectivity (Douglas, 2009). As well, entrepreneurs, academics, and civil sector ought to continue playing a part by building upon established platforms in a participatory role alongside responsible think tanks towards inclusive growth.

To move accordingly with this tide and yet firmly grasp the task at hand, in-depth discussions were also held with colleagues in academia during the planning phase and throughout the study process. Working collaboratively with others helped me deliver on this task, and I believe it will also help to harness local entrepreneurial potential for the sub-Saharan region.

Particularly, to weed out biases noted in each of the papers (see Chapters 2, 3, 4), necessary remedial actions were taken as further expounded upon in the reflection section below.

5.5.1 Reflection on Research Process: Achieving Quality through Rigor

As earlier noted, a choice was made to embed an ethical lens by following the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) strategy (Khanna, 2018; Nziku & Henry, 2020). The same strategy was parallelly engaged with the RRBM network and crystallized through a philosophy course at Arizona State University (ASU) in Texas, USA. Particularly, to inform the research from a wider canvass, an ecosystem approach was adopted (RRBM position paper, 2017). Also denoting attention to quality, triangulation (Busetto et al., 2020) was applied as explained further below.

The first type of triangulation is inherent in the research methods employed.

To recap research methods, the choice to employ qualitative methods in a tried, tested and widely accepted open-ended theory development technique (Grodal et al., 2021; Gioia et al., 2013) allows researchers to tell stories directly from the source while maintaining originality of raw data as much as possible (Merton, 1964; 1973).

Paper 1 takes on itemized sampling during the selection process, while Paper 2 and 3 consider simple random selections from the most common microentrepreneurs, regional MNEs, and private sector organizations based on availability and willingness of respondents to participate during lockdown. Plotting empirical observations and adapting Paul & Benito (2018) to emphasize gravity and directionality in Paper 2 is significant towards achievement of the research objectives.

In Paper 3, the case study organization/ network maintains a rich database of actors in both informal and formal sector, from which 12 members were selected. By supplementing interviews with a case study, data formed of individual experiences and opinions is supplemented by “historical” engaged scholarship at organizational-level analysis. This helps to perhaps mediate findings at the cross-section between individual and firm level, spotlighting interplay depicted by discrepancies in responses. Demonstrating OSIs that are playing vital supportive functions at the front and center of private sector development adds a voice to locals’ call for mandates on MNEs (or as apparent, to exit). Lastly, in addition to reducing tunnel vision, an ecosystem design leaves the door open for researchers to go back and re-engage practitioners with published findings.

Second is triangulation by the respondents make up. Qualitative studies seek to study behavior or perception, which often requires close observation of reality on the ground (Busetto et al., 2020). Broad considerations regarding the choice of participants helped to widen the base from which data was sourced, thereby supplementing responses from the two actor groups under study. Private sector development organizations are often well informed and kept abreast of matters as they arise. Their unique, less conflicted, yet diverse standpoints enrich the knowledge building process.

Broad designs help to underscore similar findings and/or highlight disparities (Gioia et al., 2013) which is interesting for this type of research. Fact-checking enables one to reduce bias, base study findings on the most dominant patterns, and focus on any peculiar, outlying, or missing pieces.

Third is triangulation by exploring different theories. Following a broad design also invites depth when considering the most appropriate theories within which to anchor the study. Although I began by re-examining BoP theory as headlined by market-based models in Paper 1, the study organically leaned into network theory, which helped during data interpretation in Paper 2. Given findings therein, the research evolved away from testing BOP assumptions and wound up traversing ecosystems instead; thereby revisiting Open System Intermediaries and touching lightly on policy entrepreneurship in Paper 3. That flow is reminiscent of an intention to remain fluid from the onset, maintaining a wide latitude from which to explore a rather broad spectrum of issues.

This decision to keep an open canvas separate from any mind map, and to color the portrait as responses were gathered instead of sticking to pre-conceived notions or ideas, allowed for flexible (re)evaluation along the journey. Afterall, theories, topics, or concepts have been relatively effectively examined and/or revisited within chosen environments (Stam, 2015). Thereafter, knowledge may be amalgamated to make targeted or generalist inferences across the board.

Lastly, triangulation occurred through formal mechanisms as the research was subjected to peer reviews within leading academic networks towards journal publications, or by presenting at indabas (conferences). Responding to comments and making necessary changes as the content and layout were critiqued, and as feedback was offered upon discussing with formal and informal mentors. That helped me to revise, ensure rigor, and improve upon the research quality, in order to achieve contextually representative outputs.

5.5.2 Reflection on Balance of Power during Data Collection

Right from the onset, a decision was made to account for and/or counteract the dominance of capitalism by showcasing this research from a local standpoint.

Engaging a bottom-up strategy to hear from those that are rarely represented, or from different levels of power, benefits the study by offering a more diverse and balanced approach to knowledge building. Participants included bodaboda cyclists, locals who run small kiosks, market vendors, 4 CEOs of large organizations, 2 Heads of Finance, 2 Public Relations Managers, a Marketing Manager, a Training Manager, and Third-Party Contracts Managers, among others. To curb bias during the data collection process, where applicable, these respondents were encouraged to lead the conversation and share their concerns. Given their level of expertise in the private sector and generally on corporate governance, they are better suited to steer this discussion.

Another key element was to ensure a fair process as part of the research design; by careful data handling while respecting anonymity clauses and managing sensitive information e.g. personal experiences shared by respondents. In any case, an unforeseen crisis-management angle, induced by Covid-19, turned the research plan on its head and amplified the duty of care during the study; thereby also informing a vital part of the research. As such, it was important to keep in mind that people were affected by setbacks triggered by lockdown, with repercussions that go beyond the research scope. It is for that reason that a crisis theme is also included in the review of literature.

Those experiences confirm that in order to conduct a good piece of research, context is indeed key (Hill & Mudambi, 2010; Stam & Spigel, 2016). Yet market-based studies about a supposedly well-defined BoP population are dominated by actors that originate from elsewhere, not well-suited to informal settings. To perfect the art of psychologically distancing oneself from such research while remaining fully immersed in the process, it is important to interact widely with others in the research community. Knowing how others handle such challenges helped clear up a few contradictory feelings that emerged during this experience: thereby allowing me to share and/or unburden myself of what should be open knowledge about this pertinent topic. Lastly, as opposed to glossing over the research journey, expressed reflexivity supplements the study by giving deeper meaning to observations; thereby strengthening outcomes.

5.5.3 Reflection on Researcher Epistemology

It is safe to say, Thesis writing is a delicate activity that requires an enabling environment, and a fairly sound mental capacity. Without solid support and direction, it is difficult to steer such a personal yet collaborative effort forward. In this case, regular face to face meetings helped to ensure sound knowledge management at key stages of the process, marking the territory and scope, and broadcasting progress against set milestones. As Professor Sreevas numerously advised, in order to succeed on this journey, the gift of creative writing (Barney, 2021) must be summoned. Dr. Iain helped to give direction during the revision phase, while Dr. Paul was an independent reviewer of this effort from early on, keen on succinct delivery.

That being said, the research process in and of itself is not easy. The study is broad, informality is complex, sub-Sahara is diverse, Uganda alone has more than 40 languages in a country almost double the size of England, and so on. The data synthesizing process was particularly demanding. At certain intervals, there was all this raw data, and everything was everything; it felt like I was shoveling sand, yet what I looked forward to the most was building the actual castle. So, in addition to following Grodal et al. (2021), engaging colleagues through presentations at Indabas (conferences) was key for progress. I attended over 5 informative indabas, learning equally as much from academia as from the different groups of respondents.

As I pondered how to ground qualitative research for the umpteenth time, Professor Dean Shepherd used an analogy; “reading credible and rigorous research is like looking through a clear window”. The only way to have fairly adequate content is to use the right tools by cleaning the window as prescribed, or as tried and tested by others, i.e. by following best practice. “It is also akin to crossing a river. The decision of where to pit the anchor should have adequate strength to carry the debate each time: lest one applies weak reasoning and everything falls apart”. Imagine pitting the anchor in soft ground. In other words, given that scenario, one’s research may drown...!

A clever revelation from that advice is that the sooner consideration is given to philosophy and a suitable research strategy, the better (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021). What fascinated me most is that what one thinks they understand at the beginning of the journey, for instance about the research onion (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; 2021), and what those elements mean during the

actual research process remains almost exactly the same but formulates quite differently in nature and/or magnitude. And at spontaneous intervals or milestones.

Be that as it may, certain challenges arose. Among factors that affect the learning process, researchers may struggle to find the correct writing style to fit a given audience, especially where language barriers arise. Such was the case during the course of this journey. Other broad realities, both difficult and rewarding, also emerged; coming from industry into academia is no smooth transition. Regardless, data is relayed as availed by respondents since they are best suited to discuss issues that affect their entrepreneurial and/or broadly, our societal growth.

To witness the research developing: as the central question emerges from a theoretical standpoint, while also pouring directly into the contextual or practice gap, that also molds to fit certain set aims and objectives, through to the justification which provides a different way of looking at the study - almost like a mirror to the antecedents of the study. Onwards to how the data collection process shapes up, and so on - all of it is so eye-opening. Yet again, depending on the nature of data obtained and/or how it is interpreted, the overall study contribution may end up in a different academic area and/or field. This can be surprising: and that is exactly what happened in this case.

Because there is no telling how the knowledge seeking process goes, or where it winds up, one can only commit to embarking upon it, and never pre-determine the outcomes. In hindsight, as the Thesis comes together, one must come around early enough to appreciate that the research process digs up broad elements that may not even end up in this final document. Nonetheless, they are all an important part of the process. Lastly, because the study period coincided with a pandemic, relevance of those events was weighed in with responses from the participants. On the researcher's side, a Covid-19 impact statement has also been included (see Appendix Pg. 255).

In the end, the entire thesis is a beautiful chronological art form of science, like a weather-resistant flower of effort, where the delicate balance of its petals form boundaries that represent the most true compass of the sum of its parts. Much like films, sometimes the target audience does not necessarily receive a piece well. But even with this disconnect, its true glory may lie elsewhere. Studies, especially those that are grounded in reality, may often go places, cross even the murkiest of boundaries, and do so in ways that are beyond anyone's comprehension.

5.5.4 Reflection on Researcher Background and Beliefs

Knowingly or unknowingly, researchers naturally come into these studies with a set of varying thoughts and ideologies: which form a key part of science too. A combination of background, upbringing, world view, historical or current global events may build bias in unrecognizable ways e.g. in my case, towards advocacy for equality or economic parity (Nambissan & Ball., 2020). Scholars may also blindly and/or bindingly hold deep underlying understandings of how given study objects exist, express themselves, or operate. And while some of the manifestations may be positive, others might breed negative or even damaging effects to the study.

The above infers that whether aware or not, I may come into the research with preformed or preconceived notions, that could mean and/or result in various predicaments along the way, and/or pause particular implications on the research process; or even more critically, its outcomes. Therefore, one must deliberately subtract personal opinions about the objects or subjects being explored and instead observe and interpret responses obtained independently of such inherent viewpoints (Busetto et al., 2020). As such, personal views were subtracted from this study and placed in the Appendix section (see Pg. 285 - 288).

Still, at least at one stage during the study process, data interpretation happens in the mind. Equally, having such lived experiences may translate into a fair understanding of issues or opportunities that microentrepreneurs face (or not). Thus, some associated risk is inevitable, inescapable.

As earlier documented in Chapter 4 of the Thesis, I hail from East Africa. With respect to microentrepreneurs and MNEs, I have dealt with both extensively in the past. In the community where we were raised, family and acquaintances often engage in informal income generation, for instance baking *mandazi* and cakes. Yet my first “official” job was with Standard Chartered, an international bank headquartered here in the UK. As intrapreneurs starting out in the early 2000s, we took over the then defunct Corporative Bank in Uganda. Most clients that the bank inherited were women. In groups of 5, they borrowed small amounts and built collective credit worthiness. Each equally shared the responsibility to pay back the sum. This financing model made an imprint in my rookie mind. However, shortly thereafter, as the bank took hold and aligned with its target mission and objectives - these were no longer the types of clients that we served.

With time, and promotions up the corporate ladder, we served less and less businesswomen at first, and thereafter less local companies in general. Within a span of about 10 to 15 years serving in different banks, (foreign) corporates accounted for over 75% of my entire banking portfolio. On a personal front, such performance is a great achievement: a desirable outcome for any professional.

Until the realization of a less clear predicament starts to generate concern.

In short, the Standard Chartered Bank branch that we started in 2000 went bust. It closed in 2013. In fact, from the onset of that takeover, such a customer segment, the Co-operative Bank's type of clientele, representative of a local majority, was never the international bank's niche market.

But that's not all. This "Northern" bank's entire regional retail portfolio, painstakingly built over the past 150 years, sold this year (2024) to regional players ABSA and Access banks, citing high cost-to-income ratios. Moreover, 10 years ago (2015), its main competitor Barclays, wholly sold to ABSA too; gradually ending its 97-year expansion into Africa in 2022. Quantifying this exit threshold to match Prahalad and others; annual transactions and/or turnovers of £3 to 5 million. Map that on the BoP population pyramid! Even more bank/branch closures are noted elsewhere in Europe, Asia and the Middle East at unprecedented rates - citing effects of digitalization.

Such observations signal what is happening globally. MNEs at the "top of the AI food chain" may neither meaningfully engage with, nor survive without, the BoP; depicting an oil-on-water effect. Granted, traditional industries like brick-and-mortar commercial real estate and Agri-processing maintain notable local ownership; but the majority of society is caught up in this **EG** relationship. Precisely, this rift between worlds i.e. AI-ready versus the others, America First versus the rest, Brexit and the rest of Europe; symbolizes increased relevance for Open System Intermediaries.

While this realization seems to have evolved very slowly, creeping in almost subconsciously, the desire to do something about it jumped in all at once. Together with others, one a medical doctor and professor, the other a pharmacist in family business, we founded an OSI in a flat hierarchy to address the gap between businesses and professionals. Among other projects, we built a secondary school to bolster entrepreneurship education in Wakiso town council, Namayumba district, where there was no such institution within a 20 Km radius. The school opened in 2016 with 93 learners. That is precisely how we arrived here: through engaged scholarship.

5.5.5 Thesis Summary and Conclusion

From the study findings, a key deliverable of this research is therefore not only to articulate adverse relationships which take shape between formal and informal entrepreneurs, but also to highlight the dynamic as part of systemic failures which breed opportunity loss at the BoP and beyond. While MNEs appear to contribute notably towards development, local value is negated by their divergent motives. Traditional MNE relationships that ignore the local fabric under the guise of institutional voids, e.g. through demand-based partnerships for market expansion alone, without commitment to deliver meaningful exchange, leave huge gaps unattended; leading to **MNE exits**. These observations point to the opposite of Prahalad's (and IMF's) BoP propositions instead.

Imperatively, to identify, mitigate, and curb the prevalence of **Entrepreneurial Ghosting (EG)**; practitioners and policy makers ought to lay early detection and prevention strategies by using refined governance structures alongside more efficient regulatory mechanisms. Ultimately, to boost productive local entrepreneurs and simultaneously harness a more harmonious global society during an apparent AI revolution; there is need to hotspot more responsible models, for instance by headlining institutional substitution through market-facing **OSIs**.

A worthy note to end on is that JUM – as one of the regional MNEs contributing to this research which mirrors Amazon in a different domain - announced closure of its food delivery service in 2023, in line with some observations and findings documented herein. Such an event symbolizes opportunity loss in key lifelines of boda-boda riders, who are some of the most common entrepreneurial actors at the BoP. All the while, extortion of severely underpriced raw materials from the region, e.g. in Congo, goes unabated.

“We view societies that are more harmonious as those that are regulated to benefit the locals. Where key actors share in a common understanding of what development is, who is being spotlighted for it, and how it can be inclusively achieved. Happy societies relate relatively well on social issues, promote a creative and positive bond between actors through collaboration, and encourage entrepreneurship at especially the grassroots. For when people feel recognized, productive, and on top of this duly supported in their daily strife: there is no larger profit than that in my opinion”. Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) 2010 – 2021.

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7.0 APPENDIX

The Role of Supervisors

The responsibilities of the Supervisory Team were maintained as spelt out by the department.

- The Primary Supervisor should coordinate with the Supervisory Team to ensure that these responsibilities are distributed fairly between them.
- Ensuring the student receives an appropriate induction to the registering School/Department, the Faculty and the University (including any resources, study areas and communities)
- Providing satisfactory advice and guidance on the conduct of the research and on the preparation of the thesis, as well as maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise
- Supporting the student with the planning of research and identifying any training and professional development needs
- Monitoring the progress of the student's research programme, reporting on progress to the Progression Panels, and ensuring the student is aware of the need to submit the thesis by the specified deadline
- Encouraging the student to interact with others working in the field of research
- Establishing and maintaining (a joint responsibility with the student) regular contact with the student, including during any periods in which the student is working on their research away from the University, and being accessible to the student to give advice
- Providing timely, constructive, and effective feedback on the student's work and overall progress
- Where appropriate, helping and encouraging the student to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals
- Ensuring that, in the case of students undertaking laboratory work, there is an appropriate level of supervision and monitoring, including regular checks on data-recording and notebooks and occasional checks on the day-to-day conduct of experiments
- Ensuring that appropriate ethical approval, if required, is obtained before research commences.

- Ensuring that the student is aware of relevant sources of advice within the University; including those relating to wellbeing and mental health, careers and the Students' Union; and
- Providing effective pastoral support and, where appropriate, referring the student to other sources of such support within the University.



Thesis Dedication

Most of my family find immense joy and pleasure in play-pretending disinterest and/or inability to comprehend, even just slightly, what they refer to as “doctoral language”. The only exception is that they fully appreciate the teaching component. Precisely why this research is dedicated to them (insert smiley emoji). My husband, David (Dauda) Matsuku, with whom we met during my first year of undergraduate studies at Makerere University, our triumphant trio of daughters Shuga, Anisha, and Sabri (twinning at Uni), and the apple of his father’s eye, “son with 4 mothers”, Akmal – still enjoying primary school football. I am honored to be blessed with such wonderful people: kind, witty, and occasionally stubborn too. The gift of your enduring love and patience during this ordeal means the world to me. May Allah reward you abundantly.

While this dedication is so easy to beam off, thanking any Ugandan family is never a mean feat. Let’s see, where shall we start with the thick ancestry? Tsk tsk... okay here, let’s start with maama. The incomparable Mukyala Hajjah Aisha Nabayunga Nnalongo Mukasa was born and raised in Western Uganda, in Kabwohe along Mbarara-Ishaka road. She is a daughter of the late Hussein Kyofatogabye and Joweria Nanziri (daughter of Kimunyoine, a religious teacher). On top of being a stay-at-home mom and farmer, which was the norm at that time, our maternal grandmother Joweria was also a pro bono native midwife. Known by word of mouth, she traveled far and wide, offering lone-ranger type health services to locals. We were so close, living together on and off before she passed on in 2012; survived by mom, her 3 sisters, 2 brothers, and (great) grandchildren.

On to my father, Al-Haj Abdallatif Ssalongo Mukasa: son of the late Al-Haj Amisi Mukasa of Kalera, along Ishaka road in Shema district. During the 1950s, our great-grandfather the late Kalunda Gwayambadde was one of few chief administrators who oversaw the king’s affairs outside Buganda Kingdom. He was sent to Ankole, where he settled, intermarried, and became multilingual. Anyway, when not tending to his vast hills of farmland, our grandfather Al-Haj Amisi occasionally lived with us. And as such, we were always inundated with visitors: his four beautiful wives, about 40 children altogether - including friends who are not easily distinguishable from blood relatives, and 30 or maybe 40 cousins. They are all an important part of our upbringing. Muzeeyi anchored us well into his later years, even after the passing of our paternal grandma in 1987, meeting (great) grandchildren until his passing in 2009. Secrets to longevity therein perhaps!

On the added upside, our parents' family homes are about a 40-minute stroll away from each other. They first met between a school and a water well, then again years later as mom attended the National College of Business Studies Nakawa (now Makerere Business School), while dad studied at Kibuli Secondary School. And voila! here we are, 7+ children later and 25+ grandchildren wiser.

And all the above just to say, that the national birth rate of 4.78 per woman recently rose to 5.2 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics/ UBoS, 2019; 2024): implying the nation's "offspring power". Conservatively on average, give or take about 2.5 partners for each uncle and 1.5 suitors per auntie at that birth rate and anywhere north of 5 grandchildren, plus solid extended family, and so on. *That brings the totality of this close-knit bunch to well over a thousand immediate relatives, and...* (out of breath) still counting. You get the drift. We are on every continent - just not yet the moon.

Moreover, dad is his Muzeeyi's successor; meaning we get to interact at wider family gatherings. Our cousin Farouk (raised in our home) is a son to late uncle Ssewanyana, who simply vanished during the 1979 war that ousted Idi Amin - befittingly for this cause, "**Last King of Scotland**". This combination of extremes in our homelands, i.e. persistent turmoil alongside strong cultures, symbolizes absolute resilience at best! It always either made me gravitate towards, or completely won me over, to view the world from a local vantage point and a generational spirit of appreciation. Even while veering between work, a bit of travel, and raising families, those ancestral doctrines: community, education, religion, hard work, etc. remain. More is always expected - no pressure.

My husband's journey too, full of good old Fort Portal charm and the occasional loss, led him straight onto the rugby pitch. He played for the Heathens (Mungu ni Wetu), and later for the national team, proposing to me one random Friday shortly after a flood lights game. We tied the knot at Gaddafi National Mosque in old Kampala, the largest and maybe grandest in East Africa. I could go on and on, but this Thesis has a word limit. Best to leave the rest for another occasion.

To family Kalunda-Gwayambadde/Mukasa, Kiribedda/Kyofatogabye, Akiiki/Matsuku, clans and tribes. To friends in Mbarara, Kampala, Fort Portal where my husband hails, Swaziland where his father hails, and elsewhere. I am truly humbled and forever grateful for your unwavering support. We honor the spirit of freewill and also hold each other accountable. Maasha'Allah. Asanteni.

Mrs. Afsa Makrah Mukasa Matsuku (PHD)

ETHICS APPROVALS FOR THIS RESEARCH STUDY

From: Matthew Hannon (via classes) <matthew.hannon@strath.ac.uk>

Sent: Friday, November 27, 2020 3:49 PM

To: Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>

Subject: This email notification is to inform you that Matthew Hannon has updated the grade/feedback of your submitted work for 'Ethics Approvals'.

Note that your grade (and/or feedback) will only be available to you using the link below if the mar...

[HCPHD](#) ->[Assignment](#) ->[Ethics Approvals](#)

This email notification is to inform you that Matthew Hannon has updated the grade/feedback of your submitted work for 'Ethics Approvals'. Note that your grade (and/or feedback) will only be available to you using the link below if the marker has made these visible to you at this time. When available, you can view the grade/feedback here:

<https://classes.myplace.strath.ac.uk/mod/assign/view.php?id=1248913>.

From: Samuel Mwaura <samuel.mwaura@strath.ac.uk>

Sent: Thursday, November 26, 2020 9:56 AM

To: Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>; Sreevas Sahasranamam <sreevas.sahasranamam@strath.ac.uk>

Subject: Ethics

Hi Afsa,

Just to let you know that your form is now with Matt (DoR) for a final check and sign off.

All best wishes,

Sam

[Dr Samuel Mwaura](#)

Lecturer & Director of Post-Graduate Research

Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde
Room 424, 4th Floor, Stenhouse Wing, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0QU

Tel: +44 (0)141 548 4848

E-Mail: samuel.mwaura@strath.ac.uk

Twitter: @DrSamuelMwaura

Skype: s.mwaura

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/samuelmwaura

Website: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/business/huntercentreforentrepreneurship/>

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Mentorship and Guidance from Professor Dean Shepherd

From: Dean Shepherd <dshephe1@nd.edu>
Sent: 03 May 2022 15:39
To: Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: April mentorship call Prof Dean and Afsa

sounds great. another exemplar is Crosina and Pratt in AMJ. I hope this helps.
Cheers,
Dean

On Tue, May 3, 2022 at 10:32 AM Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk> wrote:
Hi Professor Dean,
Thanks for the pointers,
I will embark on following the AMJ style as recommended. For instance basing on 2016: [Building Resilience OR Providing Sustenance: Different Paths of Emergent Ventures in the Aftermath of the Haiti Earthquake](#)
However, if I can find another (easier) AMJ paper, that would be good too because the above is quite advanced in conceptualization. Is there any paper in AMJ that you would point out as.. maybe having a structure that is more suited for early research in your view?
About contribution, had a chat to both my supervisors today and they are keen on co-authoring on this paper which would be great, or co-contributing would be fine too.
Lastly to give some kind of timeline: Next month (June) is departmental annual Review, So perhaps I will have rewritten the paper in the suitable format a few weeks after that.
Kind regards,
Afsa

From: Dean Shepherd <dshephe1@nd.edu>
Sent: 29 April 2022 16:11
To: Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: April mentorship call Prof Dean and Afsa

Afsa,
This is an interesting and important topic. Obviously this paper is still in the chapter form of your dissertation. I think the ideas in the chapter would benefit a great deal by starting to construct a paper consistent with the structure of an exemplar paper. Pick a paper than uses a similar method (even better if the content to the story is different) and then copy the structure of the exemplar. That is, see what they say in the first paragraph of the paper and then write a first paragraph for your paper using the same context. then the next paragraph and so on. This will also involve how you write up the method and structure the presentation of the results. Until it is in this form it is difficult for readers (including me) to fully appreciate the potential of the paper's contribution. I am pretty sure one is there but it requires putting it in a form that effectively communicates it.
I am not sure if this is what you want from me at this stage? Once this is done then perhaps i can work on it with you (as a co-author if you like) or simply give you comments (not as a co-author). Either is fine by me. As for exemplars you could use some of my qualitative papers in AMJ or recent papers in Organization Science. Have a great weekend and keep up the great work.
Cheers, Dean

On Thu, Apr 28, 2022 at 11:25 AM Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk> wrote:

Hi Professor Dean,
Thank you for your time just now, and please find attached a copy the first paper as discussed.
Much appreciated.
Kind regards,
Afsa

From: Dean Shepherd <dshephe1@nd.edu>
Sent: 24 April 2022 00:35
To: Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: April mentorship call Prof Dean and Afsa

CAUTION: This email originated outside the University. Check before clicking links or attachments.

Accepted. thanks

On Sat, Apr 23, 2022 at 7:13 PM Afsa Mukasa <afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk> wrote:

Hi Professor Dean,
Edited to 11am US (Eastern).
Kind regards,
Afsa is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Topic: April mentorship call Prof Dean and Afsa
Time: Apr 28, 2022 11:00 AM Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna

*****DO NOT SHARE MEETING INVITES ON SOCIAL MEDIA*****

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://strath.zoom.us/j/89398707575>

Meeting ID: 893 9870 7575
Password: 158089

Join by Skype for Business
<https://strath.zoom.us/skype/89398707575>

--

Ray and Milann Siegfried Professor, Notre Dame, [Google Scholar Profile](#)
Free Books: (1) [Trailblazing in Entrepreneurship](#); (2) [Entrepreneurial Cognition](#); (3) [Spontaneous venturing](#); (4) [Entrepreneurship Strategy](#)

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Researcher's Covid 19 – Impact Statement

This statement provides an assessment of the level of impact that Covid 19 crisis had on this research process. Below is an account of my experience during the characteristic global event.

This PHD journey officially began in 2019. The plan was to research a water project in Malawi which is funded by the UK government and housed in the Engineering Department of Strathclyde University. In fact, in accordance with the research proposal that was discussed prior to joining the PHD program, although still keen on exploring the informal sector, that study would have enriched academia by combining a granular collaborative aspect between Africa and the UK. Owing to the support that came our way within the HCE department, everything was smooth for the most part. In January 2020, I went home as normal to celebrate my son's birthday and returned to Scotland: ready to follow through with this research plan.

However, in March 2020, the University was closed over pandemic-related developments. Although all news channels were awash with the story: I, like many others, was unaware of what all the chaos meant - not sure of what to do or how to even respond. Going home was not in my plans at all, since I had just been there. But as a mother, I kept a lazy eye on things - just in case action was necessitated. While speaking on the phone to family in the days that followed, I, again lazily, managed to book a flight on Thursday during that first week of university closures. Unbeknownst to me, I would arrive home on Friday 20th March 2020, only two days before the airspace was closed for what seemed like an eternity. And that was that.

To cut the long story short, the research topic had to change. As lockdown unraveled in stages, the study took on a new direction: an empirical effort in Uganda's informal sector would retain similar objectives in line with the earlier proposal. As such, time was lost during this transition period.

Thankfully, the university immediately, or gradually in some cases, switched to online modes of teaching and communication. The HCE team and supervisors were able to meet severally and strategize. As well, Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS) meetings provided an open space to discuss any and all issues as they emerged. The UK nation-wide library access and other online scholarly databases in some regions continued in full force. Such resources brought a sense of stability that went a long way as a lifeline, via which we were able to chin up and carry on.

We continued to teach Management Development Programs (MDP), using that chance to interact with undergraduates who were going through what seemed like an insurmountable challenge at the time. Additionally, based on synergies that were developed during SDS chats, we formed a volunteering team to help new PHD students settle in that year, replicating the model throughout the postgraduate community. Keeping our doors open helped us all to forge a way forward. In fact, we not only managed to submit a group assignment on RStudio regression analysis on time, but to also score highly – well above 90%: the most marks I garnered throughout the course.

Back to the details of my impromptu return home. Upon our arrival at Entebbe with the new language of quarantine, we were bundled up and whisked away to a hotel together with government officials who arrived on different flights. The hotel location is in Ntinda, right in the heart of Kampala city. Thus, to say that I was concerned about not being home with family would be a lie; given that I had been visiting with them only a month prior to those events. And that was me. Concerned, but not worried - until the real drama of it all began.

Simultaneously, a related “global event” was broadcast by the media. The then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was one of the first to contract the virus. This development instantaneously changed my entire outlook on things. I wanted to go home immediately. Why? You see, we were under heavy surveillance by the army; they were pitched inside the hotel, outside in the gardens, and up on the rooftops. Even with all the safety bestowed upon us - depending on one’s vantage point – many felt less comfortable than usual. One may never know what would transpire if those who came from the US or UK were to be declared complexly contaminated.

Our few chats alerted that this was a precarious situation.

In the days that followed, this security detail remained on high alert as army-led medical checks were conducted and blood samples taken to the national laboratory. Watching out for any slight abnormalities. Ready to act swiftly. Some offered that there would be unforeseen consequences if Boris did not survive this thing.

So it went; despite the backlash that he was reportedly enduring on home soil, I have never prayed as hard for someone that I do not know to get well super-fast; purely for selfish reasons.

It turns out that the thought of my life ending unceremoniously on such an unforeseen coincidence, or by factors outside (a non-existent perimeter of) common causes of death, was most unwelcome. Oddly enough, it was only then that a realization really dawned on me; innocent people were dying in much the same abrupt unannounced way without segregation.

Luckily some recoveries, including Boris's, meant that a few of the unknowns were cleared up. And although things generally did not go well as laid bare in catastrophic media reports, there was some light under the tunnel. We went home after 3 weeks. Yes! an extra week of hotel expenses while government monitored the situation - to be sure!

Back home and elsewhere, huge interruptions emerged as schools remained closed for 2 years. Children were bored, remaining indoors for weeks on end, wondering "when do we go back to school with our friends?". Unbeknownst to me, this was just my luck.

Relocation to UK is nail-bitingly costly, and frankly - if not for Scotland - not worth all the fuss. But because separation had already been forced upon us during lockdown, and we were unable to physically interact with others outside our homes, no one in my family needed convincing to join me on this journey. The crisis hid the fact that we were being yanked away from our sea of family, cousins and friends – and that really helped me. Plus, it may come as no surprise that Africans generally tend to do well here academically. That mercifully remained true in this case. C'est lavie!

Overall, given that everything was switched to online mode, then retracted back to hybrid upon return: notable disruptions occurred during the transitions. Accordingly, an extension of 4 months was deemed necessary towards thesis submission.

In closing, although the study was significantly impacted, going by how we were all cumulatively affected as a society, including respondents in this study, the negative effects were not nearly as catastrophic. On a sad note, two key contributors of data to this study succumbed to Covid-related illnesses in 2021 as noted in the Acknowledgement section (see page 4 of the Thesis). Staying in touch with colleagues, working in collaboration with the HCE team, and consideration of others' plight during the entire ordeal heightened my sense of responsibility and gratitude. That attitude helped me to carry through with the project to completion in a timely manner – albeit with a few hiccups here and there.

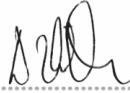
This is to certify that

AFSA MUKASA

has successfully completed the

Responsible Research and Innovation programme

1st November 2021



Professor David Hillier
Executive Head, University of Strathclyde Business School

Certificate of Completion

This certifies that

Afsa Mukasa

has successfully completed the requirements for the
RRBM Doctoral Course in partnership with Arizona State University:

Philosophical Foundations of Responsible Research

14 September to 23 November 2021



Anne S. Tsui, Professor &
Co-Founder



Don Lange, Lincoln Professor of
Management Ethics

RRBM Dare to Care Dissertation Scholarships 2022 Winners

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RRBM Dare to Care Dissertation Scholarships 2022 Winners

Sponsored by the Community for
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RRBM and its co-sponsors are pleased to announce the recipients of the inaugural [RRBM Dare to Care Dissertation Scholarships](#). The scholarships recognize doctoral students in business schools who are conducting dissertation research that follows the [principles of responsible research](#). This year's scholarship program focused on topics related to economic inequality, racial, gender or other forms of social justice in organizations, thereby contributing to meeting one or more of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

This year's winners were selected from among more than 80 applications. Applications were evaluated by a committee composed of senior scholar winners of the responsible research award and accomplished professors who support the principles of responsible research.

2022 Scholarship Winners

(click on the title of the work to see a research summary and its alignment with the RRBM Principles of Responsible Research)

N. Derek Brown

Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley

Examining The Misperception That Equality Is Harmful To Advantaged Group Members

Ibrat Djabbarov

Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University

What Is The Role Of Empathy In Institutional Change?

Olivia Foster-Gimbel

Stern School of Business, New York University

In The Face Of Challenges, How Do Workplace Allies Maintain Their Commitment To Reducing Systemic Inequity?

Ouafaa Hmaddi

Lundquist College of Business, University of Oregon

Can We Bridge The Resource Gap For Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs? A Randomized Field Experiment In Morocco

Diana Jue-Rajasingh

Ross School of Business, University of Michigan

Why Do Markets And Companies That Exist To Create Social Value, Such As Those That Promote Products Addressing Global Health And Human Development Challenges, Often Fail Or Are Slow To Grow? How Can These Market And Institutional Challenges Be Overcome?

Ussama Ahmad Khan

Foster School of Business, University of Washington

How Do Organizations Fighting Poverty Form Relationships Based On Trust, Respect, And Support With Their Beneficiaries? How Do These Relationships Allow People In Poverty To Experience Growth In Their Financial, Social, Emotional, And Cognitive Well-Being?

Afsa Mukasa

Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde

How Do Ties (Or Gaps) Between Indigenous Informal Micro-Entrepreneurs And MNEs Support Or Deter Entrepreneurship, And How Can They Be Leveraged For More Inclusive Growth?

Search on the website

**EURAM 2021 - REVIEWER'S
CERTIFICATE**

EURAM 2021

<noreply@xcdsystem.com>

Thu 22/04/2021 15:32

To: Afsa Mukasa

<afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>;Afsa Mukasa

<afsa.mukasa@strath.ac.uk>

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**REVIEWER'S
CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that

Afsa Mukasa

has been a reviewer for the EURAM
Annual Conference

from 31 January to 10 March 2021

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'f. Sedzro'.

Professor Komlan Sedzro
Conference Chair



Exploring Technological Relationships between Micro-entrepreneurs and Multinationals during lockdown in Kampala, Uganda

Survey instrument for micro-entrepreneurs (women market vendors);

1. Individual/ Business Name

2. Gender Male

Female

3. Family size/ number of dependants

4. Nature of business

Market Vendor

Other

5. Business ownership

Own

Lease /sub-lease

Tenant-share

Employed

6. Number of years person(s) has/have been in business

7. Number of years within the current market, location or area

8. Level of education

None

Primary

Secondary

Post-secondary

9. Primary source of energy

None

Solar

National electricity grid

Other

If other, please specify

10. Tech-savvy indicators. What do you use your phone for during this period?

- Calls and texts
- WhatsApp
- Mobile money
- News and updates e.g., on Covid-19
- Social networks - Facebook / Twitter/ Instagram
- Education for you or dependents
- Zoom
- And other applications

11. Safety procedures followed as regards covid-19

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Facemasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Okwetsyamula (coughing) in the elbow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Social distancing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Hand sanitiser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Washing with soap and water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 1. Never
- 2. A few times
- 3. Moderately and for a few clients
- 4. Significantly and for most clients
- 5. All the time and for all my clients

12. Product range (for market vendors only)

Products	Pre-Lock-down Jan – Mar 15 th	During Mar 15 th - May	After Jun- Aug 15 th
Agricultural products/ foodstuffs a) Low b) Medium c) High	Eggs Matooke Rice (local/imported) Cassava and Potatoes Fruits and Vegetables Beans and Peas Fish Mukene Beef		
Kitchenware a) Low b) Medium c) High	Charcoal Sigiri Saucepans and utensils Electric gadgets		
Other Items a) Low b) Medium c) High	Woven baskets Furniture items Clothes and Shoes Beauty products		

12.1 Any additional information

13. Have you been working with any multinational company either directly or through your suppliers and networks (or other intermediaries) since last year (2019)?

If yes, please provide details

14. Do you work with any of the companies below?

- Jumia Solar Now Safe-boda none

15. If yes, what is the nature of the relationship or agreements

16. How has your relationship with the company(s) changed since last year (2019)? You can include any significant information before this date.

17. Characteristics of services, attributes and functions (for those with ties)

- Marketing and advertising
- Distribution and deliveries
- Capital, financing or credit plans
- Training
- Energy
- Hardware - gadgets solar panels, fridges, lights, TVs, mobile phones
- Hardware - helmets, uniforms, safety jackets, mobile phones
- Software
- Other

17.1 If Yes to training, nature and schedule of training

17.2 Frequency of training

17.3 and if No reasons why not

18. Technological indicators	1	2	3	4	5
a) Know-how	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Attractiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Ease of use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Frequency of use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Data availability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Data reliability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Data costs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Negligible
2. Low or a few times or a little
3. Moderate or Medium
4. Strong or High
5. Very strong or Very high

19. What are the benefits and incentives of working with the company?

20. Business performance indicators

Indicator	Pre-Lockdown Jan – Mar 15 th	During Mar 15 - May	After Jun- Aug 15
New Product Innovations	a) Low b) Medium c) High		
Community reach	a) Low b) Medium c) High		

Volume of sales	a) Low b) Medium c) High		
Cost (purchase price)	a) Low b) Medium c) High		
Sale price	a) Low b) Medium c) High		
Profitability range	a) Low b) Medium c) High		

21. Profitability range per month

2018	2019	2020 Pre-Lockdown	During	After
UGX				

22. What are the challenges faced with regard to the relationship with the company?

22.1 Barriers to ties e.g., costs

22.2 Issues in the operational process

23. Individual thoughts on the situation of market vendors including predictions as regards effects of lockdown and other related or similar bottlenecks.

23.1 How do you feel about the current state of affairs?

23.2 What positive outcomes and surprises, if any, have arisen from this lockdown situation?

23.3 What government interventions have you taken part of, if any, in the period since last year (2019) until date?

23.4 What resources, if any, have you been able to access over the course of your operations since last year (2019) until date – please specify the source e.g. government, multinational company, local company, international NGO, community organization, family members or friends, or other source?

23.5 Are there any particular conditions attached to the transaction while accessing these resources? If yes, please provide details

23.6 What particular challenges, if any, do you face within these relationships?

23.7 In case of problems arising: in your opinion what specific measures relevant to micro businesses should be put in place to make things better?

23.8 How confident are you that the business will continue to grow?

23.9 Any other related information? Please specify below



Exploring Technological Micro-entrepreneur – Multinational ties during lockdown in Kampala, Uganda

Survey instrument for Multinational Entrepreneurs

1. Name of Representative

2. Which Multinational Enterprise do you represent?

Jumia

Solar Now

Safe-boda

3. Products and Services offered:

Marketing and advertising

Distribution and deliveries

Capital, financing or credit plans

Training

Energy

Hardware - gadgets solar panels, fridges, lights, TVs, mobile phones

Hardware - helmets, uniforms, safety jackets, mobile phones

Software

Other

4. Other enabling services

5. What is the uptake or outreach?

low medium high

table x

6. Product costs

Table x

7. Gadgets - Purchase terms and payment plan

8. Software and marketing – purchase terms and repayment plan

Table x

9. Challenges met or envisioned during crisis and lockdown

(range in importance from 1 to 10)

10. Level of training offered – none, basic, formal, comprehensive

11. Timing and nature of training – at onset, weekly, monthly, random, single session, repeat sessions, continuous

12. Benefit to the entrepreneur

13. Purpose of the relationship MNE

	1	2	3	4	5
a) market share	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) profitability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) social innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) community development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) poverty alleviation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 6. No
- 7. A little
- 8. Moderate
- 9. Significant
- 10. Most Important

14. Common problems-

Arrears and failure to pay,

Contact tracing (lack of directory),

Illiteracy,

Poor attitude to technology,

High costs of hardware,

High costs of software,

Data costs,

Availability of data,

Reliability of data

15. Which of the following actors do you work with

Local NGO, International NGO, Local Government, Transnational funds, Angel Investors,
other MNEs, Local Banks, Overseas Bank

16. Nature of partnerships and agreements with other actors

Short term – 9 months or less

Annual

Triennium

Five-year contract

17. Nature of documents. Agreements. Details, if any.

Collateral/ Guarantees

Standard Service Level Agreements

Quality or quantity limitations (Quotas)

Force Majeure

18. Individual thoughts on the situation of market vendors and bodabodas and predictions as regards effects of continuous crises as exemplified by lockdown and other similar bottlenecks.

- a. How do you feel about the current state of affairs?

- b. How do you feel about the current state of affairs, in particular reference to the technological aspects as regards micro-entrepreneurs?

- c. What resources do you provide or are provided by others through this company?

- d. Which particular policy or guidelines regulate the formulation of relationships with the micro-entrepreneurs?

- e. How are these resources utilized?

- f. Resource gaps: what resources would enable more meaningful partnerships between the multinational and the micro-entrepreneur groups?

- g. What positive outcomes and surprises arose from this lockdown situation?

Participant Information Sheet for micro-entrepreneurs

[FOR USE WITH STANDARD PRIVACY NOTICE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS]

Name of department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

Title of the study: Exploring Technological micro-entrepreneur - MNE ties in Kampala during lockdown

My name is Afsa M. Mukasa, I am a doctoral researcher at the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde.

The purpose of this interview and survey is to examine technological relationships between microentrepreneurs and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) in order to establish if this relationship, if any, has helped or not helped them to continue transacting during the current lockdown. The responses obtained will be helpful in contributing towards efforts to stop micro-entrepreneurs from slipping back into abject poverty by documenting evidence of whether these relationships exist, and if they do, the description and nature of the relationships, and most importantly what they find useful as well as what they do not find useful within these relationships.

You have been invited to take part in this activity either because you represent the type of micro-entrepreneurs in the target group or you represent one of the selected MNEs and therefore your input is highly relevant to the research. Participation in the research is strictly voluntary and it is not a must to answer all the questions. All participants have a right to withdraw from the research at any given point in time and this does not affect anyone.

The interviews will be carried out either over the telephone or online mainly using WhatsApp or Zoom and the researcher will record responses using the survey instrument and interview guide. We envisage that each interview may take 30 minutes. If there is a data cost involved for you to take part in the exercise, please mention this at the onset to enable us reimburse you with the costs incurred. The information we will be collecting includes how market vendors have been affected by lockdown measures, how technological components have been relevant, and their predictions about whether the business will survive the crisis. Some of the related information is available through media sources such as News bulletins and also via social media.

The information collected will be uploaded onto private university servers for safe storage. All information provided which is of a personal nature will be treated with utmost confidentiality and the participants will remain completely anonymous. It will be accessible by the academic team of staff who are involved in the PHD process for coding and verification. Personal information will only be retained for as long as it is necessary. Anonymous research data can be retained indefinitely by depositing it in a suitable data repository.

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If you do not wish to participate, we thank you for your attention.

Once the research is successfully concluded we undertake to provide you with feedback upon request. In addition, the results will be made available to the public through a journal publication.

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Consent Form for Micro-entrepreneurs

Name of department:

Title of the study:

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e. how it will be stored and for how long).
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can request the withdrawal from the study of some personal information and that whenever possible researchers will comply with my request. This includes the following personal data:
 - audio or video recordings of interviews that identify me;
 - my personal information from transcripts.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e.data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project **(Yes / No)**.

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Participant Information Sheet for MNE Representative

[FOR USE WITH STANDARD PRIVACY NOTICE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS]

Name of department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

Title of the study: Exploring Technological micro-entrepreneur - MNE ties in Kampala during lockdown

My name is Afsa M. Mukasa, I am a doctoral researcher at the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde.

The purpose of this interview and survey is to examine technological linkages between Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and microentrepreneurs in order to establish if it has helped or not helped them to continue transacting during the current lockdown. The responses obtained will be helpful in contributing towards efforts to stop micro-entrepreneurs from slipping back into abject poverty by documenting evidence of what they find useful within these relationships, and what they do not find useful.

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Title of the study:

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(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Participant Information Sheet for Umbrella Organization Representatives

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Table 25: 3-Paper Structured Thesis

Identified gaps e.g., contextual, theoretical, methodological, or epistemological	How they inform the inquiry- Towards Research Questions	Execution How they were addressed From Paper 1 to 3	Research Contributions by Paper (1 to 3)
Paper 1 responds to: Practical, Contextual & Theoretical gaps Informality rates and GDP, region contributes 58% of BoP population, yet less documented	Conceptual study A review of BoP/ informality literature Highlights what is and/or not known. Guides the research question	Thematic review of 296 articles sourced from the Web of Science database. Builds a theoretical framework on Entrepreneurship at the BoP and informality	Builds contextual articulation and adds conceptual relevance Derives research gap Guides choice of research methods Findings form the basis of study concept
Paper 2 responds to: Theoretical gap and methodological gap highlighted in Pp 1. And a practice gap observed in SSA. Re-examines market-based BoP models as a dimension of informality (Dembek et al., 2019)	Empirical study Activist research Explores nature of interactions between MNEs and local actors in host communities Employs triangulation Highlights a philosophical deficit at the entry point of MNEs into informal contexts	Ecosystem approach to data collection. Multiphase Multimethod Interviews with 43 respondents in 2020/2021 Inductive analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Increasing rigor in qualitative studies (Busetto et al., 2020) (Grodal et al., 2021)	Theory building: Builds upon Aldrich & Zimmer (1986) network theory, spotlights the relationship dimension of Entrepreneurial Ghosting: extends Prashantham et al. (2018). Data shows that alliances support entrepreneurial growth with inherent gender inclusion. However, ghosting is a deterrent.
Paper 3 is necessitated by a Findings gap in Paper 2 It also responds to an epistemological gap e.g., non-profit strategies hitherto not well addressed. Demonstrates the Role of Open System Intermediaries in informal ecosystems (Dutt et al., 2016)	Empirical study About how OSI' roles bridge between informal and formal ecosystem actors Employs triangulation Explores characteristics, processes + practices e.g., incubators, accelerators, and mentoring	Multiphase Multimethod Interviews with 25 respondents in 2020/2021 Substantiated with a case study of an OSI that bridges between businesses and professionals Inductive analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Increasing rigor in qualitative studies (Busetto et al., 2020) (Grodal et al., 2021)	Theory building: Builds upon ecosystem studies (Dutt et al., 2016; Stam & Spigel, 2016) by focusing on OSIs that plug institutional voids. Derives a typology of Role Formation Demonstrates entrepreneur networks (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) in informal contexts. Extends Borchardt et al. (2020) Proposed typology may perhaps be useful towards reducing Entrepreneurial Ghosting

Reflections on Researcher's Views on Capitalism – as Subtracted from the Thesis

The system of capitalism is built upon a myth that positive progress, success, or human desire can only be achieved through economic growth. At individual level, marketing has become this almost cult-like religion which propagates the notion that whatever the world or anyone in this matrix needs, be it emotional, material, psychological and so on; it can be met or solved by purchasing something (blue pill, red pill, whatever). At a collective level, so-called economic growth or development is the magnetic magic bullet. And so goes the population pyramid and purchasing power parity reasoning of Prahalad (2001) and others (followers, cronies, critics, practitioners).

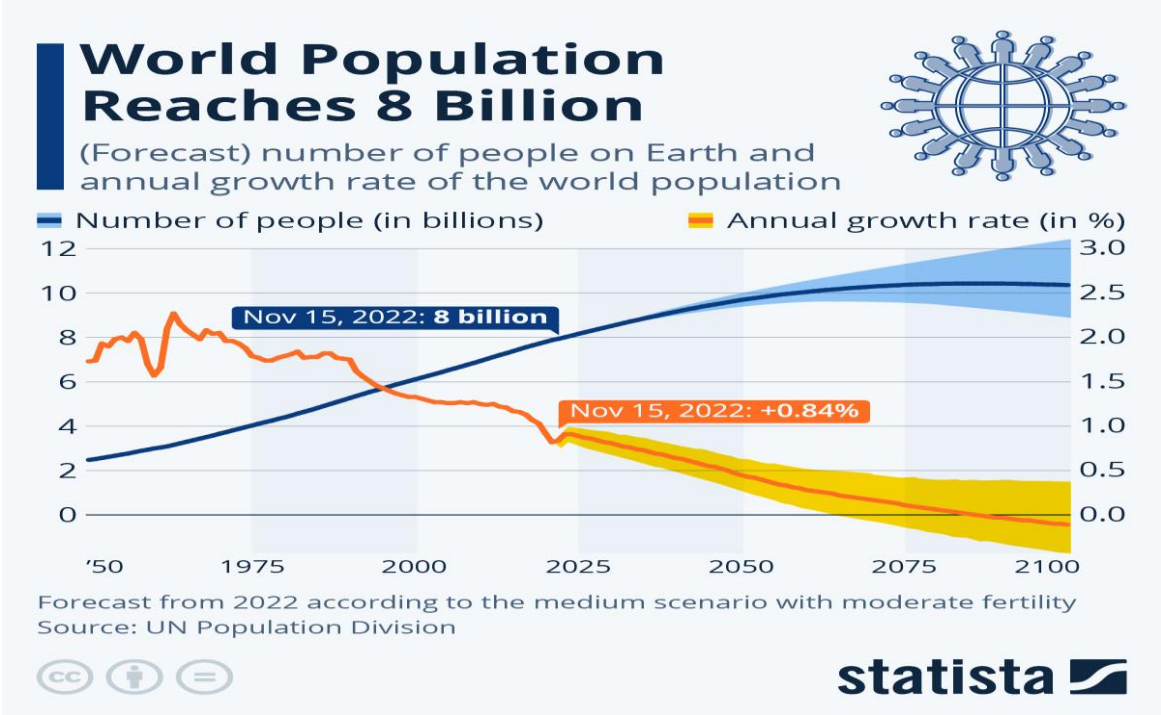
Granted, this study sits among so many that stand up firmer, with much wider reach. As well, mainstream media tends to amplify negativity and underreport success stories, yet many do exist. So, one must avoid pessimism and acknowledge that many an entrepreneur's situation improved overtime: notably post-World War II in the West and pre-pandemic period (D. Prahalad, 2019). Nonetheless, for most of the BoP, not much has changed per se (see Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). As the 1% or 10% bathe in extraordinary wealth, poverty breeds exponentially; spreading to places that, even if only for a brief moment, were once unaware of it.

Looking back 200 or 300 years ago, which is way after Eastern civilization - let us briefly recap a few key aspects of what was happening in leadership; Western industrial revolution (1760 - 1840), Taiping rebellion in China (1851 - 1864) and the Mahdist movement in Sudan (1881 - 1885) (Harari, 2020 cited in MClung & Barr, 2021). In those days, a cornerstone of human evolution, the marriage institution, was okay from the age of 7 - or as recently as the past or present century from the age of 13, depending on how deep one looks. Some married family members that they grew up with. All the while, kings beheaded "their subjects" over simple frustrations.

We often frown upon such things as quite awry and unthinkable. They must have been mad. Right? That is, even before discussing Slavery, the Nazis, the Holocaust, Rhodesia, or recent Genocides. Which brings us to the elephant in the room: the most popular way to settle grievances during the olden days was to publicly stage a duel. That progressed to wars. So crazy. Right? Yet now, ordinary humans do this unannounced, all on their own, even to children in schools. There we are. World wars, ethnic cleansing, what causes them - all of it – still lingers on here in our midst.

One may refer to old practices as odd, but in real terms, their success or failure rates may be more telling about us. Look at us. The state of our institutions may have firmed up 50 or 60 years ago, if at all. Yet with all the technological advancement that one might add to the situation, maybe some of them were never meant to be astute in the first place. Who knows? Beyond the systems we use to (un)settle grievances amongst countries; look at the glaring modern-day slavery. If that is not convincing enough, let us ponder the global community’s mental state, especially in the ‘more developed’ West. How exactly have our problem-solving skills improved over time?

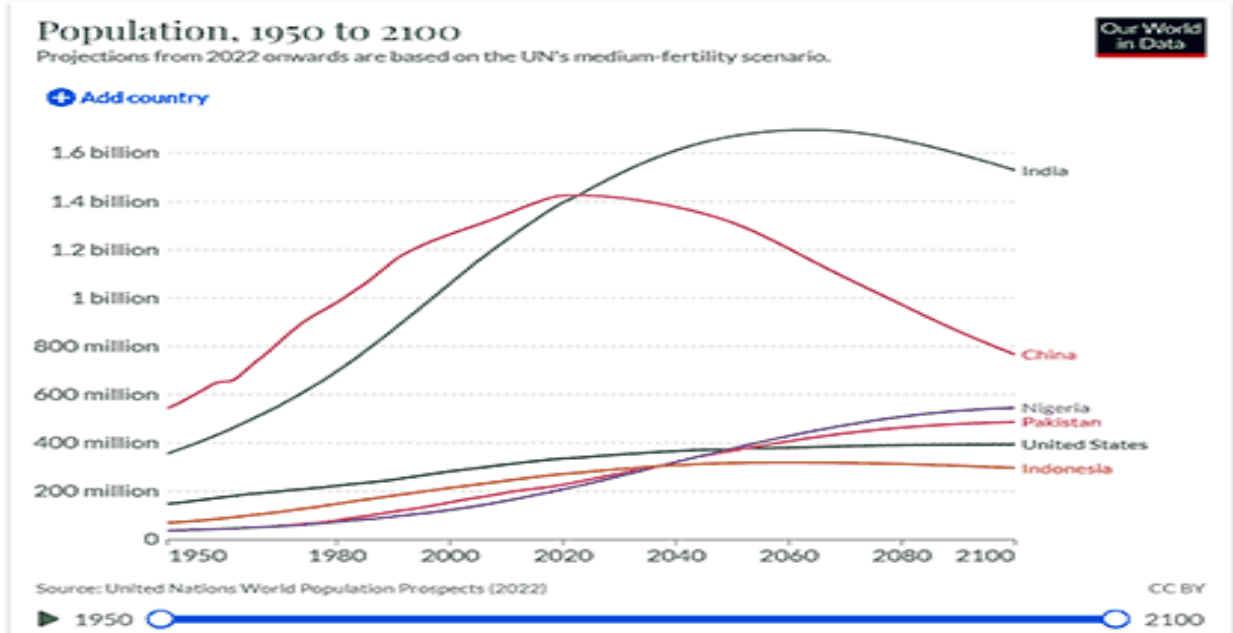
Meanwhile, African populations are growing at unprecedented rates, bearing huge significance on assumptions within BoP theory. Yet for these communities, which will represent the majority even elsewhere outside Africa, forceful extraction of extremely underpriced resources rages on without meaningful benefit to locals - under the nose of global leadership. Amidst all the noise and confusion, those who know the right thing to do seem to prevent themselves, and others, from doing it. It therefore must be said that the laxity with which leaders are mismanaging and/or blatantly ignoring the critical issue of poverty in resource-rich nations is alarming, to say the least.



Global Population Growth & an Inverse Annual Rate of Growth (Statista, 2022)

Based upon such a predicament, it appears as if global leadership doubts that society warrants the change for which it begs. Such (non)action threatens to undermine otherwise great historical lessons or render them useless. How do we hope to solve the growth puzzle - backing exploitation by one party against others, siphoning severely underpriced raw materials from naturally endowed places, while encouraging misinformation and disinformation by referring to owners as “poor”? To what end is all the profiteering anyway? Obstacles lie in unwillingness of societal leaders to agree on simple truths, while the magic bullet is rooted in (the) capitalism which we continue to propagate. Turning down the divide-and-rule philosophy would help, but following Brexit and America First, that apparently sits at the shores of wishful thinking.

Due to such unreadiness to end poverty; this generation may come to be referred to as negligent if lucky, or downright culpable. That is especially true given both the speed and eloquence with which the young generation articulates their varying ideas and emotions, let alone reintroduce an ever-changing, elusive identity (as if mercury-made self-image) at every turn. Seemingly, even as we are reduced to mere data points, drastic change is unnecessary unless a titanic-sized catastrophe happens. Nonetheless, past lessons ought to be applied towards improving the human condition, albeit on slippery slopes as progress naturally begets. But not to be completely ignored.



Population Growth Hotspots (UNFPA, 2022) - The Case for Informality

With there being no end in sight yet such old roadblocks clearly require new navigation systems; this is, without a doubt, the long game. Those that come after us, the ones that we are busy impoverishing today, will be left with no choice but to abolish the current version of capitalism and poverty along with it. Moreover, they will use no magic at all; just the resources that baby boomers are bequeathing them, and brain cells.

Matter of fact, this revolution is already happening in recognized and/or unfathomable places alike. It is apparent in the very same spaces where (the) capitalism that we pride ourselves on was built, even glaringly burning the *capitol* down. Pun intended.

As we busily shrink generations into oblivion in this era of misinformation and disinformation, and a nihilistic system that does not recognize its own rule of law; resistance is building within the very leading power structures. As we sit on the fence with party gate, magnificently water our gardens on the moon while letting those on earth dry out, having pointed to a black president in USA's recent past yet still unable to show how that propelled the world forward; instead, we shroud the media with obscurity on serious issues of governance. As we muse about how far we have come, dilly dally with bunkers and humanoids or take Artificial Intelligence as new religion; we fail to tax technology oligarchs based on huge databases and exponential, overinflated, profit which is composed of ourselves, our things, our chips, and even our ancestors' activities.

When that impoverished brainy lot takes its exponentially reduced inheritance, for the most part, and uses it to draw up fresh plans; the revolution will shape up in the very same places where systems were built after the proverbial World War II. When those who came before us reportedly said "never again" ... and collectively agreed to embark on a new direction.

Well, for now, 80 years on ... here we go again.

As such, research will remain a cornerstone of global development well into the foreseeable future.

The End (and to new beginnings)

Total words in the Thesis: 91,370

Excluding references, including appendices: 80,231

Excluding both references and appendices: 69,705

