

<https://doi.org/10.5559/di.33.1.01>

HABITUS RESHAPING THROUGH THE SEARCH FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEGITIMACY IN THE HIGH VELOCITY FIELD

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UDK: 338.45:004.4

Original scientific paper

Received: February 3, 2023

Using the conceptual peculiarity of Bourdieu's theory, in this paper we aim to provide a new theoretical contribution to the understanding of the relational dynamics of legitimation in entrepreneurship. In-depth, contextual examination of entrepreneurs in 70 companies in the computer programming industry was carried out to determine how legitimation practices are shaped in relation to the dynamics of the relationship between entrepreneurs and the social structure. We base the methodological strength of the research on the rigour of the grounded theory method, using multiple data sources and data collection techniques (in-depth interviews, observations, and qualitative and quantitative secondary data). Our results reveal that susceptibility to hysteresis of habitus is what strongly defines the directions of the search for legitimation. By elucidating them, we show the natural coexistence of entrepreneur profiles of conflicting legitimation strategies, while also contributing to the understanding of shaping the entrepreneurial habitus in the high velocity field.

Keywords: entrepreneurial legitimacy, habitus, Bourdieu, computer programming industry



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INTRODUCTION

Applying a holistic, multi-layered lens to the study of legitimation (Stringfellow et al., 2014), we seek to answer the question of how entrepreneurial legitimacy is acquired in relation to the individual values of the entrepreneur and the resource configuration he or she possesses. We also aim to uncover how the legitimation search is directed by the dynamics of the relationship between the entrepreneur and the social structure (de Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Drori et al., 2009). Approaching legitimation as a highly contextual process, we examine it with a deep, qualitative research lens (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002) that is multilevel and respects the interrelationship between the entrepreneur and the environment (Tatli et al., 2014). Interpretive support in this challenge is provided by the richness of the conceptual repertoire of Bourdieu's sociology (Forson et al., 2014).

Abundant qualitative data arising from 77 entrepreneurs in the computer programming industry illuminate the otherwise difficult-to-obtain relational interplay between the entrepreneur and the structure. The susceptibility to hysteresis of habitus, or a lag in adaptation to the dominant structure (Bourdieu, 1977), revealed by our results, strongly defines the directions of the search for legitimacy. By elucidating them, we provide a new theoretical implication to the understanding of the process of creating an entrepreneurial habitus in the high velocity field (Stringfellow & Maclean, 2014), demonstrating at the same time the natural coexistence of entrepreneurial profiles of conflicting legitimation strategies.

Legitimacy is a social assessment of the acceptability, appropriateness, and/or desirability of one's actions (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). By ensuring legitimacy, actors promote organisations, structures, and practices that are perceived to be beneficial for themselves, their social groups, or their community (Bitektine, 2011). Practices of gaining legitimacy are calculated business strategies (strategic paradigm) that are shaped in relation to the constraints and challenges of the social system (institutional paradigm) (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). They are a kind of search for 'the company's license to operate in society', appearing in different stages of development, from legal and economic responsibility, through an ethically and socially responsible company to an advanced model of proactive legitimation (Rendtorff, 2020, p. 5; pp. 17-20). Once gained, legitimacy makes it easier to obtain financial resources, quality employees, business partners, and stakeholders' support, increasing the company's chances of survival and growth (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002; Rendtorff, 2019). This process is of re-

ciprocal causality since favourable financial performances contribute to maintaining legitimacy (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002), and it changes along with evolutionary shifts in the relations between an organisation and society (Rendtorff, 2020).

De Clercq and Voronov (2009) conclude that the newcomers' legitimation as entrepreneurs involves two processes, 'fitting in' (adopting institutional norms) and 'standing out' (initiating institutional transformation). In this context, the ability to legitimise depends directly on cultural and symbolic capital. Stringfellow et al. (2014) investigate the relational dynamics of the search for the legitimacy of service firms in a mature industry. The authors discover that strategic and institutional legitimation is highly contextual, and its drivers are multiple, from the structure of the set of resources to the dispositions and values of entrepreneurs within a specific field. Striving to further the refinement of this emerging theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) in uncovering the dynamics of legitimation, we conceptually follow challengers (de Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Stringfellow et al., 2014), holding the Bourdieusian framework with a tool that has gone the furthest in the sophistication of the relational ontology on which it rests (Drakopoulou-Dodd et al., 2014).

THE CONCEPTUAL REPERTOIRE OF BOURDIEU'S THEORY

How does Bourdieu interpret social dynamics? The stage of social actions, the *field* as he calls it, is relational terrain (Swartz, 1998) – a dynamic network of objective relations of individual and collective players (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It is a space of purposeful struggle for capital which is conducted by *illusio* – the collective worldview of the field (Forson et al., 2014). The business, artistic and cultural fields are just a few of the many possible fields of play (Bourdieu, 1985), being arbitrated by variable, more or less institutionalised social norms (Rendtorff, 2014, p. 246).

The field is 'history of matter' and is only one state of society, a state that becomes a mechanism of production of the social world only in the face of history incarnated in bodies – what Bourdieu calls *habitus* (Kalanj, 2002). Habitus is the internalisation of rules and hierarchy of power in the field (Swartz, 1998). It can be understood as a 'sense of play' (Bourdieu, 1977) or 'a social habit determining individual action' by shaping the worldview of individuals (Rendtorff, 2014, p. 247). As Rendtorff (2014, p. 247) points out, habitus construes the rule, the expectation, the norm and the ethos of the practical logic, influencing the stability of the field.

Habitus is an aspect of 'the historical praxis' (Rendtorff, 2014, p. 247), its development takes place unconsciously and path-

dependent (Swartz, 1998). Immersed in the unknown order of the field, it resists adaptation, striving to maintain the natural forces that created it. Bourdieu (1977) calls this loyalty to the past *hysteresis*, emphasising the disparity between new opportunities 'on the ground' and the habitus of the actor which is (at least temporarily) likely to miss them.

The power for which the struggle is waged in the field is accumulated labour – *capital*, as Bourdieu (1986) says, which along with the material form (economic capital) appears in the form of social capital (networks, acquaintances), cultural capital (cultural goods and services), and symbolic capital (prestige, honour, reputation). Additionally, cultural capital occurs in three states: embodied state (style, manners, behaviour), objectified state (cultural capital with physical existence), and institutionalised state (degree and type of formal education). All these forms of capital are subject to conversions in various directions, with ease and coverage (Bourdieu, 1986), constituting social relations and forming 'the logic of praxis beyond the logic of exchange' (Rendtorff, 2014, p. 250). Thus, for example, objectified cultural capital in the entrepreneurial field (luxury business space) is transformed into symbolic capital (prestige and high status) (Zott & Huy, 2007), just as social capital turns into economic capital through the mobilisation of acquaintances (access to new markets, reaching attractive customers) (Anderson et al., 2007; Liao & Welsch, 2003).

Obviously, competing for capital in the field is a struggle for legitimacy, a kind of exchange of capital in which valuable resource acquisition is a key indicator of legitimacy. It is a conversion game that embraces all resource forms, and can be more or less successful, compared to the existing configuration of capital and the actor's habitus in charge of cultural alignment of practices with the field (Stringfellow et al., 2014; Stringfellow & Maclean, 2014). The research question we ask ourselves is focused on examining how entrepreneurial legitimacy is acquired through different practices of entrepreneurs (the processes by which different forms of capital are engaged and exchanged) and how legitimacy practices are created in relation to the dynamics of the field in which entrepreneurs are embedded and their habitus. This is the relationship that Bourdieu (1977) illustrates with the formula: (habitus x capital) + field = practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The grounded theory strategy (Glaser & Strauss, 2012), the chosen qualitative method, relies on an inductive approach of creative theory development from data. We collected primary data through in-depth interviews and observations during the

interviews. The interview participants were owners or directors of companies registered in the Republic of Croatia whose main activity is computer programming and consulting. Due to assumptions about the local ties within the industry, we initially considered that location is a criterion for participants' selection that can create a richer corpus of information. Therefore, in the initial sample, we selected participants from 6 local self-government units, which we considered to be three different local centres of the industry (first: City of Zagreb, Varaždin County; second: Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Istria County; third: Osijek-Baranja County, Virovitica-Podravina County). Then, we selected participants from six counties in the following way: we knew three of them and asked them to participate (convenience criterion), two participants were suggested by previous participants (snowball principle), and 28 participants were selected using a random number generator (the goal of the random sampling was just to simplify the selection since we previously had no contacts or other resources that would enable a different selection procedure). Accordingly, based on mixed purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), 33 entrepreneurs participated in the initial phase of the study. The selection of participants in the later stages of the study was guided by theoretical sampling. For example, we preliminarily identified the specific conversions of social capital into cultural capital reflected through entrepreneurs' networking in the academic/university field. By data comparisons, we linked these conversions with the emerging category 'entrepreneurial habitus'. However, categories and relationships were not saturated, and it was decided to include the topic in the interview guide and to gather data from new entrepreneurs who network in the academic field. Additionally, the inclusion of new participants in the sample was guided by a negative case examination (see next chapter). Throughout the whole research, a total of 77 interview participants from 70 companies participated in the study (Table 1).

We applied Charmaz's (2006) guidelines on reaching saturation in combination with several other criteria (see Appendix 1). According to Charmaz (2006), the process ends when gathering fresh data no longer indicates new properties of core categories or new conceptual connections. This was achieved after a little more than 50 interviews. However, we continued to collect new data, primarily due to the nature of the inquiry and the expected profile of the research audience.

In order to arrange a meeting, the selected entrepreneurs were contacted by telephone, with interviews mostly conducted at the company's headquarters (39 interviews) or a nearby café (15 interviews).

Characteristics of participants/companies		Number and percentage (a total of 77 participants and 70 companies) ^a
Gender	Women	7 (9.09%)
	Men	70 (90.91%)
Participant's age	Less than 35	21 (27.27%)
	35 - 40	14 (18.18%)
	41 - 50	20 (25.97%)
	51 - 60	12 (15.59%)
	More than 60	6 (7.80%)
	No data	4 (5.19%)
Level of education	High school	11 (14.29%)
	Bachelor's and master's degree	63 (81.82%)
	Doctorate	3 (3.89%)
Company's age	Less than 10	36 (51.44%)
	10 - 19	17 (24.28%)
	20 or more	17 (24.28%)
Number of employees	0 or 1	10 (14.29%)
	2 - 9	36 (51.43%)
	10 - 19	11 (15.71%)
	20 - 49	11 (15.71%)
	50 or more	2 (2.86%)
Company's region	City of Zagreb	33 (47.15%)
	Primorje-Gorski kotar County	9 (12.86%)
	Split-Dalmatia County	6 (8.57%)
	Osijek-Baranja County	5 (7.14%)
	Istria County	4 (5.71%)
	Varaždin County	4 (5.71%)
The other five counties (total)	9 (12.86%)	
Revenue	Maximum	approx. 6.4 million EUR
	Minimum	approx. 300 EUR

TABLE 1
Interviewed participants and companies

^a In five cases the interview was conducted as a group conversation.

A small number of interviews were conducted remotely via Skype or in the researchers' offices (16 interviews). With open-ended questions during the interview, we encouraged more closed participants to give detailed explanations instead of yes/no answers (e.g. *What do you think...what is the benefit of such networking?*). Some participants talked about failed entrepreneurial ventures, current financial failure, or certain sensitive aspects of their personal lives (e.g. divorce, dropping out of college). To maintain their trust, we approached the discussion non-judgmentally and with empathy (*Yes, you're just starting with a hosting service? You need to hit the ground running... – researcher's comment during the participant's story about the reasons for financial failure*). Permission for audio recording of interviews, as well as other relevant ethical issues, had been determined by prior agreement with the participant and the written statement of the researchers on the ethical handling of data.

FIGURE 1
Data sources and primary and secondary data collected in the research



In addition to the primary data, we used data from relevant secondary sources. Secondary data were accessed by searching the database of the Financial Agency and via comprehensive Internet search (a search with the keywords 'name of the entrepreneur, the company name' was conducted for each entrepreneur who was interviewed). Figure 1 shows all the data collection techniques and data sources used in the research, as well as the types of collected data.

In parallel with data collection, we conducted data analysis. Manual processing began with multiple readings of transcripts, careful segmentation of qualitative data, and initial coding (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
Illustrative clips from
data analysis¹

Interview clip	Initial code
<p><i>In principle, we use software from company XX, meaning a company that produces open-source solutions on which web solutions are then built. So it is now one whole community. It means you have somebody, since there is de facto a low barrier to enter, who is going to work on it. A lot of companies also do what we do, but few of them relatively contribute, which refers to what we do, where we gain some trust... Basically literally showing what we know... We show what we know, literally giving our [programming] code... and we even invested a lot... a lot of our people spent a lot of working hours working de facto for no one, right? But we really got it back... We got it back through that credibility that cannot really be bought. So, our Ivan... We have in principle two .. Ivan and Ante are our two best developers in the company. The oldest, if anything... Ivan... he, de facto in that community, I will not say he has the status of a star... but everyone knows of him. Any developer who has touched that software knows that there is a person by the name of Ivan Marić, who works at Comtex, right?... and who created this and that software, because, de facto they all use it. We really get it back because, in the community when they find out that this is the company where Ivan and Ante work ... and Ante, on the other hand, is just like outsourced workforce, but he literally contributed the most to the system, to a huge number of users. When people see that they work for us,... that is why we sold ourselves, now we no longer need to prove or pay for any advertising... so that someone understands us and that we are inside... (Vedran)</i></p>	<p><i>community</i></p> <p>community networking</p> <p>low entry barriers</p> <p>struggle for power in the community</p> <p>gaining trust by sharing knowledge</p> <p>engagement of expertise in the struggle for power</p> <p>gaining credibility</p> <p>expertise of key employees</p> <p>visibility in the community = gaining customers</p> <p>feeling of pride</p>

Focused coding then identified the most common and relevant codes grouped into categories. We achieved the final stage in conceptualisation by identifying the relationship between data and categories in the axial coding phase. The whole process of analysis was accompanied by constant comparisons, writing memos, and graphical presentations of the results (Charmaz, 2006). Figures in Appendix 2 show the grouping of focused codes into categories 'entrepreneurial habitus' and 'technological habitus'. In the initial phase of the research, the main categories were emerging and we made assumptions about

the main conceptual connections between the categories. In this phase, the analysis was carried out by two researchers separately, after which they compared and discussed the initial results. The researchers agreed on the preliminary findings and considered together aspects related to theoretical sampling. In the further phases of the research, the analysis was carried out by one researcher, which is the limitation of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Grounded on our data, we identified three profiles of entrepreneurs with regard to the struggle for legitimacy in the field. The legitimacy profiles (which we called Don Quixote, transitional entrepreneur and pragmatist) differ concerning the entrepreneur's habitus, company characteristics (size, organisational structure), capital structure and conversions, and the field on which the entrepreneur dominantly relies (Table 2). A key distinguishing dimension of the profiles is habitus (technological, entrepreneurial, or between these two extremes), which we typified according to early entrepreneurial experiences/family context, early professional aspirations, skills and practices, identity, traits and values, and business vision (see Appendix 2). Real entrepreneurs may deviate from the ideal profiles in some of the dimensions. The deviations are mostly explainable, not large (the property is not on the opposite side of the continuum), and most often refer to one dimension and not the key one (habitus). For example, the entrepreneur named Branimir meets all the criteria of a pragmatist, except for the trend of economic capital movement (the company's income does not grow, as is characteristic of an ideal pragmatist, but stagnates, which we explained in the phase of the company's life cycle). Similarly, some entrepreneurs slightly deviate from the profile concerning the number of employees, the character of the organisational structure, or the manifestation of some form of capital. In addition, we have identified a group of entrepreneurs who, according to company characteristics and habitus, belong to a transitional profile, but the structure of symbolic capital and social capital and capital conversions bring them somewhat closer to Don Quixote. Similarly, there are some entrepreneurs at the intersection of transitional entrepreneur and pragmatist. These variations, combined with insights into the previous professional path of participants, show that the habitus is subject to reshaping, and the boundaries between the legitimacy profiles are not rigid. Entrepreneurs fit into the technological habitus – entrepreneurial habitus continuum, with a position that can be at the intersection of two adjacent profiles and does not necessarily have to be permanent (Figure 3).

TABLE 2
Differences between
profiles of
entrepreneurs

One entrepreneur from the sample is a negative case in the data (according to different dimensions, he could be classified into three different profiles). We examined the case by including entrepreneurs with similar visible characteristics in the additional sample (e.g. capital, company size), which did not affect the results. We explained the negative case by the specifics of the participant concerning the set of traits, skills, and professional and life experience.

Dimension / Profile	Don Quixote	Transitional entrepreneur	Pragmatist
<i>Habitus</i>	technological habitus	transitional habitus	entrepreneurial habitus
<i>Company characteristics</i>			
Number of employees	below the industry average (0-2 employees)	predominantly on average or above the industry average	above the industry average
Organisational structure	informal	informal or in transition from informal to formal	formal
<i>Field, capital and practices</i>			
Dominant fields	industry field	industry field, gradual adoption of norms of the entrepreneurial field	entrepreneurial field, industry field
Economic capital	profit or loss, lower level of operating income, and stagnation	heterogeneity	high level of operating income, and profit, growth of operating income
Social capital	personal and business informal networks and acquaintances, predominantly networks in industry, and bonding social capital	various forms of formal and informal networks in industry and beyond, bonding and bridging social capital	formal networks, strategic partnerships, attending conferences and similar events, networking in other fields (for example, university field, political field, and institutional field)
Cultural capital	expertise gained through self-learning and experience (passion for programming/web design), and geek identity and manners	expertise, cultural capital in the objectified state related to industry (relaxed style of dress, 'Google' hegemony in the company) or a classic style of interior and dress	expertise, luxurious office space, more formal attire, business style and manners
Symbolic capital	'invisibility' in the media, weakly expressed symbolic capital in the market field, weaker interest in activism in the industry field, and symbolic capital exclusively in the industry field	visibility in the media, reputation in industry, reputation gained through knowledge sharing and activism in industry	pronounced visibility in the local or national media, local recognition, sponsorships, social responsibility, and reputation in the market and the industry
Dominant forms of capital	cultural capital in the embodied state, symbolic capital (in the industry field)	symbolic capital, social capital	economic capital, symbolic capital

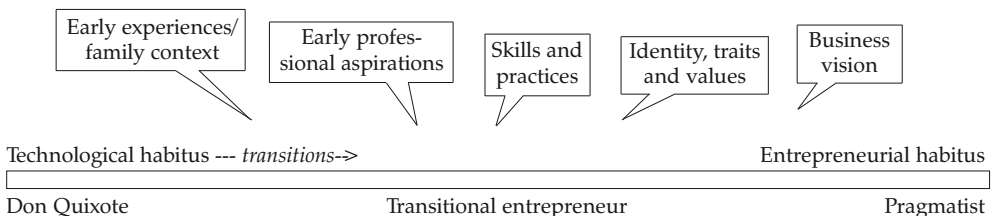
(continues)

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Dimension / Profile	Don Quixote	Transitional entrepreneur	Pragmatist
Dominant capital conversions	conversions of informal social capital into economic capital (use of acquaintances in industry for the purpose of acquiring customers), conversions of informal social capital into cultural capital (transfer of knowledge within industry)	conversions of cultural capital and social capital into symbolic capital (lectures at conferences, writing articles and blogs, activism within industry associations, presenting the expertise of key employees and organising events in industry as fundamental mechanisms for building reputation), conversions of symbolic capital and / or social capital into economic capital (use of formal and informal networks and reputation in industry and in the market in acquiring customers)	conversions of symbolic capital into economic capital (use of reputation in the market and industry in acquiring customers), conversions of economic capital into symbolic capital (financial investments in recognisability), conversions of cultural capital and social capital into symbolic capital (market and industry activism as a reputation-building mechanism), conversions of symbolic capital and social capital into cultural capital (use of networks and reputation for the purpose of appropriating new quality employees)

The legitimacy profiling and the habitus typology we developed are unique since they are drawn inductively from data. We rely on Bourdieu's framework in general definitions that make up the components by which we distinguish our profiles. However, what is hidden within the categories (the properties by which we have identified and described them), and conceptual connections between categories, are original knowledge, gradually developed, and confirmed through theoretical sampling. For example, we started with the theoretical concepts of field, and capital and its different types. However, various practices by which entrepreneurs carry out capital conversions in several identified fields are revealed inductively from our data. The continuation of the paper provides an elaboration of each entrepreneur's profile, starting with the habitus and characteristics of the company, through the field in which the actor is embodied, to the capital forms and the practices of capital conversions.

FIGURE 3
Continuum technological habitus – entrepreneurial habitus with dimensions of habitus distinction



Don Quixote: The search for navigation through the intricate game of entrepreneurship

Don Quixote is a technology-oriented *casual* entrepreneur. As a result of his² strong technological habitus, he is imbued with a dreamy passion for industry accompanied by a vision of a revolutionary product or fascination with a certain technology – he simply enjoys being unfettered in creative creation. Entrepreneurship is for him an incidental occupation, only a mode of realisation of professional freedom – a mechanism through which '*this kind of work can be legally charged*' (Mladen).

His rather romantic fixate on technological creation leads to market blindness. As the story of the entrepreneurial beginnings of Renato's team suggests, the business philosophy is focused on the superiority of the product's technical quality while underestimating market research and customer relationship development activities:

We did business for the first few years... it is enough that my [program] code is super clean. How I am going to sell it for the first projects ... we did not even think about it. Here, let us say the first software we created was used to send faxes, some online service that could send a single document to hundreds of addresses. Something like spam machines, first... And we did it all, programmed it... It was top notch... but we did not figure out how to send one fax. You could send a hundred faxes, but you could not send one fax. (Renato)

Don Quixote resists the development of managerial roles and feels best in projects that he can realise on his own. He attributes to himself a lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills. As a result, and striving to remain loyal to the identity of the developer, he usually works alone or runs a company of only a few employees. In fact, as Tomislav suggests, he is satisfied with his limited scale and has no aspiration to grow. If the growth 'happens', it is followed by stagnation or a return to self-employment status:

I thought... if more people were hired... I would still be able to program most of the time, so I would hire someone to do the administration for two or three hours... However, that did not work. So, then I reduced the number of people again and ended up as the only one in the company doing the programming. (Tomislav)

Here we find resistance to commercial ethos (Pret et al., 2016) related to the hard-to-tame 'geek' identity (McArthur, 2009) and the pursuit of authenticity in creation (Stringfellow & Maclean, 2014). It is hysteresis, loyalty to the past visible through Don Quixote's resistance to adapting the habitus to new opportunities 'on the ground' (Bourdieu, 1977).

The industry field (relations of actors with other actors within the computer programming industry) is the structure

in which Don Quixote dominantly operates. This field is a specific, somewhat rebellious context of clear resource dynamics and flexibility in the structure. It is a space of struggle for a monopoly over symbolic capital – for Don Quixote the most valuable form of capital primarily created by the 'boyish' ('dječackom') competition of expertise of various actors and groups:

In our profession, this [key of success] is very much related to knowledge [and] experience... Considerably, I do not know... these developers are, well, quite vain and [bring] themselves into this work. They are literally those 'boyish' stories – Who is stronger? ... Who knows more? ... So, it is exactly as follows... This one did this, and now that one did that with this addition, and the third one did [something even better] ... (Goran)

As illustrated above, for this profile embodied cultural capital (industry expertise gained through experience) is very valuable, far more valuable than institutionalised cultural resources such as formal education and certification. Its accumulation usually begins at an early age (during high school or study), and continues with (self-)learning in the later stages of career development. Regardless of the dominant form of acquisition (work in industry, attending electronic courses, participation in community gatherings) and the level of valorisation (individual level or company level), it is a kind of 'skeleton' of resource configuration, from which the construction of legitimacy arises.

Objectified cultural capital is another dimension of distinguishing this profile of entrepreneurs. A relaxed style of clothing (T-shirt, jeans, trainers) away from, as David calls it, a 'service look' leaning on a repulsive corporate culture, is a natural segment of visual identity. It is complemented by relaxed, uninhibited manners, an informal way of communication, and a unique narrative filled with specific communication codes – terms in English incorporated into dialectal or standard Croatian. Don Quixote's rhetoric and behaviour of relaxation and being unrestrained, which we find in our data, can be connected with what the literature recognises as behaviours by which the actor unconsciously responds to isomorphic pressures to fit in (Liao & Welsch, 2005), signalling belonging to the industry field – habitus suitability to the field *illusio*.

Suitability to the industry field also stems from the gender of Don Quixote. He is a (competitive and independent) man,³ in this typically male (and masculine) branch – the stereotypical perception of the industry reproduced through the actual significant underrepresentation of female strength (Šmaguc, 2020).

Although he has a low economic capital (visible through low income that stagnates or falls), Don Quixote withstands the brutality of the market engaging his social capital. The informal networks and acquaintances he nurtures originate from friendships created while studying and/or acquaintances gained in a previous job, and are maintained regardless of current business effects. The reach of these connections extends to the market field where they influence the creation of customer groups and the formation of business partnerships. In addition to converting social capital into economic capital, he also engages informal social resources for the acquisition of cultural capital (transfers of knowledge within the industry). These findings indicate that Don Quixote's market survival rests on the use of 'strong' ties (Putnam, 2000) originating from a collective past (Drakopoulou Dodd et al., 2018) with other actors in the industry field. They are very valuable as they are a platform for synergistic consolidation of technological habitus knowledge (Anderson et al., 2007).

Transitional entrepreneur: A learning adventure through a 'living' entrepreneurial experience

As our data shows, the technological habitus does not necessarily have to be permanent. Subjection to new experiences pressures some Don Quixotes to assimilate into the orthodoxy of entrepreneurship. This process of diminishing hysteresis of the technological habitus, or the gradual growth of Don Quixote into a transitional entrepreneur, is a long and often difficult one. It is a kind of interplay of 'implanted' technological and 'rising' entrepreneurial habitus accompanied by '*internal struggles with oneself*' (Denis) to abandon or tame the dominant professional identity (programmer/designer/engineer) and adopt the social role of entrepreneurs. Vedran, '*a typical FER member*',⁴ as he calls himself, also went through such a struggle:

I almost stopped being a programmer, and definitely was not a good one, at a time when everyone was better at the company... it was not very comfortable, not to spend time any more, I don't know... studying technology, which is your passion and why you actually became involved in the whole endeavour ... at the expense of now studying, let's say, how to hire a good employee... things that were of no interest to you in the past...' (Vedran)

In the process, which is slow and hard, the transitional entrepreneur gradually acquires entrepreneurial skills and absorbs the norms of the market and entrepreneurial field. Going through the experience of running his own business, he becomes aware that business progress requires delegating technological tasks and channelling energy into people manage-

ment activities, market research and customer care. At the same time, accepting a new role not only refers to the transition in terms of a set of daily routines but also means certain changes in the value base and perception of business:

... in general in our industry people, developers... look at everything else, and this one here does not do anything... like with project management, marketing... what is considered... it is nonsense, we do the right job...and let us say now, when I am a kind of entrepreneur and when we need people, I can really see how important management is and how important people really are. (Timon)

That dispersion of effort is exhausting and results in sacrifice 'following the profession', in order for the actor to fully commit to the new role. Nevertheless, *the nature* of the transitional entrepreneur remains technological even after long-term exposure to entrepreneurship. This can be seen in the difficult renunciation of the identity of the programmer, the desire to keep in touch with technology while also retaining a dominant business vision. He is an actor who does not dream of freedom of self-employment like Don Quixote, but equally does not have the ambition of aggressive growth. The ideal is to maintain a 'mindset' of a small company of 'optimal size', one that enables balancing business aspirations and intrinsic pleasures related to enjoying the technological aspects of a business. This is reflected in the characteristics of the transitional entrepreneur's company, which does not exceed the category of a micro or small entity with an informal or semi-formal organisational structure.

When it comes to objectified cultural capital, the transitional entrepreneur prefers a relaxed style of clothing congruent with the industry norms, but is restrained in this and does not hold back from business attire when the occasion demands it. In some cases, the mixing of the norms of the industry and the entrepreneurial field is also visible in the appearance of a business premise – it is filled with 'youthful' colours and is equipped with furniture that creates the impression of creativity, playfulness, and informality. Work units are predominantly open-space, and the impression of 'funky' culture is enhanced by the presence of pets in the company, an informal style of clothing, and a number of items for the entertainment of employees. Such an interior reflects the 'google ambience' (Timon), motivated by impressing and retaining (future) employees of the company.

These entrepreneurial practices revealed from our data could be connected with what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call model-following and imitation of orthodoxy – a kind of mimetic isomorphism that leads to the homogenisation of practices within the industry. Unification or homogenisation

is in the function of acquiring the cognitive legitimacy of a 'young IT venture' (Überbacher, 2014), primarily among audiences in the industry field. It is also what Bourdieu recognises as symbolic violence (in this case against existing and potential employees) – the mechanism of 'mild and masked' domination based on legitimacy, positive sense, and 'naturalness' (Swartz, 1998).

The structure of the social capital of the transition entrepreneur is more dispersed compared to the social capital of Don Quixote. While the latter relies almost exclusively on informal connections within the industry, the transitional entrepreneur tends to build a wider range of informal and more formal networks (through, for example, membership in certain associations that are not exclusively related to the industry). Social tissue intertwining with cultural resources is the basis for creating a specific set of practices to legitimise the entire company. These conversions of social capital and cultural capital into symbolic capital refer, for example, to measuring expertise at '*community gatherings*', activism within industry associations, organising events, and sharing knowledge through articles, *blogs*, and conference lectures. They are a fundamental mechanism for building a company's reputation reflected in recognition in the industry community or even media visibility. These symbolic resources, along with what Putnam (2000) calls bonding and bridging social capital, ensure the transition entrepreneur the acquisition of new customers, generating the company's economic capital.

Pragmatist: Hybridisation of the logic of multiple entrepreneurial support fields

While Don Quixote poorly absorbs the grammar of the entrepreneurial field or adopts it gradually through a 'living' experience by changing it into a transitional entrepreneur, for pragmatist, our last profile, the exposure to the *illusio* of the entrepreneurial field began during (primary) socialisation. A typical example of this process is exposure to an entrepreneurial role model within the family:

...my father was an entrepreneur. He was selling car parts and he had a company of six or seven people... because of him, I saw roughly what it means to be an entrepreneur and somehow I learned a lot from him and I acquired some work habits. So in the very beginning it may not have been so clear [to my parents] what I was doing and why I was doing it...but somehow they let me go... they never told me not to do something. (Saša)

The early entrepreneurial aspirations of the pragmatist were manifested in youthful enthusiasm and proactivity during high school and student days (involvement in the work of

student associations, work during full-time study), idealisation of entrepreneurship as a career choice, and finally, the very realisation of entrepreneurship. Early involvement in various forms of entrepreneurship with some actors, such as Hrvoje, ended unsuccessfully, but were an extremely valuable experience as they created continuity in the process of entrepreneurial learning starting with families and peer groups:

...I just graduated... [and then I] founded my own company, so over the last 4-5 years we were developing one software solution, we also expanded the company to some 10-11 people. However, it somehow did not work, it did not survive on the market..., but we got a lot of foreign contacts, that is, people who asked us who made it for you! Then we realised that we are pretty good at making software, producing software, and not knowing anything about market placement yet. (Hrvoje)

This, as Mato calls it, refers to 'entrepreneurial growth'. It was less painful at some places, especially when it was accompanied by formal education and/or previous work experience in the field of economics and management, but also when the family field with symbolic support was the source of more tangible support as well, related to the creation of a resource base. Such is, for example, the experience of Alen, who at the beginning of his entrepreneurial journey was instructed by his father in '*...some tricks about pure business... with people, with payment, with VAT and other things...*' or Šime, who acquired the first business premises and 'pocket money' for maintaining liquidity thanks to the support of his mother. These findings could be associated with the intergenerational transmission of entrepreneurial intent stated by Kim et al. (2003) – the phenomenon based on a supportive family environment of the future entrepreneur.

With an entrepreneurial supportive context, the early birth of entrepreneurial aspirations was often related to specific traits and values of the pragmatist, such as ambition, aspiration to disrupt the *status quo*, desire for freedom at work, and the difficulty of enduring authority. These values gave impetus to the creation of entrepreneurial habitus especially when they were in conflict with the functioning of the professional field in which the entrepreneur was previously involved. We illustrate this with the experience of Igor who dared to become an entrepreneur motivated by the rigidity of the corporate system he worked in:

[I was] unhappy in the corporation, I could not progress. So I would never [progress] to a C level of the company where I could decide on something, and I considered myself competent and capable enough and experienced enough to become a project manager or something over time. (Igor)

Exposure to entrepreneurial learning has resulted in a specific set of dispositions of the pragmatist – he becomes embedded in the entrepreneurial field. First of all, in terms of identity, he is aware of his social role in the company. Answering the question 'Who am I?' (Fearon, 1999), he resolutely self-categorises among entrepreneurs and managers:

I am an entrepreneur and a manager... I am ... a manager because I run a company of 120 people, and an entrepreneur because I am constantly trying to think of something new in that company, start, organise and so on... and do some things. (Saša)

As the leader of a larger company with a more formal structure, he is an ambitious and confident visionary who is marked by self-presentation and negotiation skills, with a penchant for the distinctive linguistic presentation of the company. As a rhetorically skilled charismatic leader, he passionately and thoughtfully presents his company and uses his performance towards the 'external audience' to emphasise his commitment towards customer satisfaction. Such rhetoric is aligned with embodied and objectified cultural capital reflected in his professional approach and business style of clothing, 'appropriate' to the expectations of the environment.

All these instruments of the pragmatist, revealed in our data, are symbolic actions, a kind of artefact by which he manages the impressions of an external audience (Zott & Huy, 2007) signalling spontaneously affiliation to the world of entrepreneurship and management. This clearly points to what Bourdieu calls actor assimilation (Sorić, 2012) – a process by which he aligned the understanding of the entrepreneurial (and market) game with hegemonic understandings of the field.

The pragmatist is also distanced from the other two profiles by the structure of social capital, which is very diversified, generated by networking in different fields (e.g. the political field and the institutional field). High economic capital (reflected in the high and growing income and profit) enables him to invest in luxurious business premises that contribute to the company's reputation. The reputation is also strengthened by the involvement of entrepreneurs in sponsoring local events in industry and entrepreneurship, accompanying activism, social responsibility and media exposure. These practices of engagement of economic, social and cultural capital to create symbolic capital are nothing but '*...putting on a slightly better, more expensive suit in presenting yourself to the outside...*' motivated by the efforts to make a growing company '*visible to better-quality market segments*', and at the same time to '*interesting, more professional talents*' (Hrvoje) – a scarce resource in the industry field. Here we see that the pragmatist creates symbolic capital by engaging various other types of capital and uses

it, apart from acquiring customers, to attract new, quality employees.

A clear and ambitious business plan corresponds to reflections in line with the logic of market rhetoric. The pragmatist sees the future of his venture primarily in the growth of business. In doing so, the experience accumulated through learning enables him to be constantly involved in entrepreneurial discovery, and even one whose realisation requires entering into strategic partnerships, portfolio entrepreneurship, or expanding business activities to very remote locations. Such ambition and self-confidence, combined with leadership skills, although masculine values, we also found in women of this profile, indicating the dominantly masculine orientation of a typical pragmatic entrepreneur.

Finally, the pragmatist has another quality – he has the urge to transfer the 'sense of play' to new 'entrants' into the field. This is manifested in his collaboration with the academic community, involvement in the 'life of the local or national start-up community', identification with the role of business angel and mentor to new entrepreneurs, and related activities in the field of symbolic violence (Swartz, 1998). They imply the use of accumulated entrepreneurial knowledge and experience and their transformation into valuable symbolic resources in the form of personal prestige – a kind of label of an experienced 'mentor entrepreneur'.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The empirical segments of our work have yielded scientific contributions in the form of new insights that refine the theory of legitimacy. Namely, the findings suggest that the struggle to gain legitimacy in the industry field is not reduced to a simplistic distinction between incumbents and newcomers. Although the conceptual literature points to the potential complexity in gaining legitimacy, the extensive empirical material allows us insight into the relational intricacies of the process of gaining and retaining legitimacy because we bridge multiple levels of analysis, considering that entrepreneurs operate in the interspace between the macro level (the field to which the entrepreneur belongs) and the micro level (entrepreneurial practices) (de Clercq & Voronov, 2009).

Entrepreneurial practice in the researched technological field shows two forms of legitimacy. One of them is the legitimacy of technological expertise in which it is evident that individuals with a strong technological habitus showing a quixotic effect are motivated by the intrinsic goal of self-realisation and independence in the profession and the extrinsic motives of programmer reputation and company survival.

Another form of legitimacy rests on the social role of the entrepreneur, and the individual who adopts the identity of the entrepreneur is oriented towards the business goals of employment and growth.

Although the two mentioned principles of legitimacy seem conflicting, entrepreneurial practice shows that this does not have to be the case. Empirical findings suggest that entrepreneurs with a dominant quixotic trait can achieve and maintain legitimacy, whereas there are also companies whose owners have a dominant entrepreneurial profile, but the legitimacy of their company rests on the technological reputation of employees, prominent programmers, who provide strong symbolic capital to the company. The transition profile shows that neither habitus nor forms of legitimacy are a fixed category, and that the protagonists in the market use available resources in the form of, first of all, social and cultural, and then symbolic and economic capital in a new way. In combination with their own habitus, they look for the best strategy for gaining legitimacy for themselves. Our results show that a broader repertoire of strategic legitimacy is in emerging or high velocity fields, as Stringfellow and Maclean (2014) suggest.

'Space of possible' in the high velocity field enables the coexistence of different actors, and 'competing possible' often turns into cooperation of actors in the field (Šmaguc & Vuković, 2020). This can probably be partly explained by the structural characteristics of an industry that to some extent has the characteristics of a contestable market. Low entry barriers, small minimum efficient size of the company, and equality in the availability of technology allow for free entry and exit (Kovačević & Vuković, 2006). The growing market, which has recently shifted from local through national into global, allows growth for those with innovative strategies, and survival to those with lower commercial aspirations if they skilfully use available resources, such as strong social ties.

In addition to empirical knowledge, the paper carries a certain theoretical contribution within the research area. We strengthen the integrity of the research by implementing Bourdieu's multilevel approach (Forson et al., 2014), which despite its popularity, is still not saturated in entrepreneurship. We also leave the stamp of contribution through the methodological framework as it could contribute to the recognition of the grounded theory method within the community of entrepreneurship researchers (Mäkelä & Turcan, 2007).

With regard to the practical implications of the research, the findings point to the need to improve the offer of education programmes for technology entrepreneurs and strengthen education for entrepreneurial competencies of technological occupational profiles in the higher education system. Acquiring knowledge of how to organise a business, how to

think about the customer, research the market, and commercialise the product would encourage the development of managerial skills and the adoption of social roles required by entrepreneurship, facilitating quixotic struggle and enhancing the transition to entrepreneurial habitus (where the transition is possible).

Although the interpretive lens and the qualitative approach are the only ones that shed in-depth and multi-layered light on the dynamics of legitimation, their limitations need to be acknowledged. The findings relate to a specific context and are not directly applicable in other substantive areas. However, substantive theory can be one of the building blocks of a higher level of generality and thus the final contributions do not remain idiosyncratic (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). This study is a step forward because it investigates the mediating effect of the habitus between capital and the field, which is a 'vital piece of the interlocking puzzle of enterprising' (Reid, 2021, p. 645) in entrepreneurship theory. Future related studies on a different (industrial, spatial, and other) environment would favour the development of a more robust theory of legitimation (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). Likewise, longitudinal ethnographic studies of each of the three entrepreneur profiles would contribute to the further development of the theory. Relying on more research techniques and examining different perspectives (such as employees or family members), ethnographic case studies would ensure researchers more intimate familiarity with the context (Drori et al., 2009), contributing to the enrichment of knowledge about the transformation of legitimacy strategies and habitus and linking them to the business life cycle.

NOTES

¹ The names of all participants were replaced by pseudonyms.

² Presenting the legitimacy profiles with male pronouns (he, his) signals masculinity as an aspect of legitimacy in the industry. We thank the anonymous reviewer for the comment and suggestion.

³ All of our participants classified into Don Quixote are male.

⁴ (Former) student of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb

Ethics statement

The research presented in the paper received a positive opinion from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Organization and Informatics, University of Zagreb (classification: 602-11/21-25/1; registry number of the document: 2186-62-14-21-7). The Committee concluded that the research is ethically acceptable and in accordance with the guidelines of the University of Zagreb Code of Ethics.

APPENDIX 1

Sample size criterion	Description
Saturation of categories and conceptual relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are no new properties of the core categories and no new conceptual relations after analysing data from slightly more than 50 interviews with 56 participants
Research scope/ nature of inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a complex phenomenon involving human actions is being investigated (+) • in addition to interviews, other data sources are used (-)
Characteristics of the research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participants are not homogeneous, but the heterogeneity is not large (0) • participants are knowledgeable about the topics covered in the interviews (-)
Resources and time available for research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research is limited by financial resources (costs of fieldwork, costs of transcript writing service) (-) • time to conduct research is limited (-) • access to participants is relatively easy (+)
Experience and other issues related to researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the researchers in the team are of different experience levels (0) • in the further stages of the research, the analysis was carried out by one researcher (+)
Research audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • given their numerical dominance in entrepreneurship, the study will potentially be evaluated by quantitative researchers who may be skeptical of the small number of participants (due to their familiarity with large-scale quantitative samples (+)

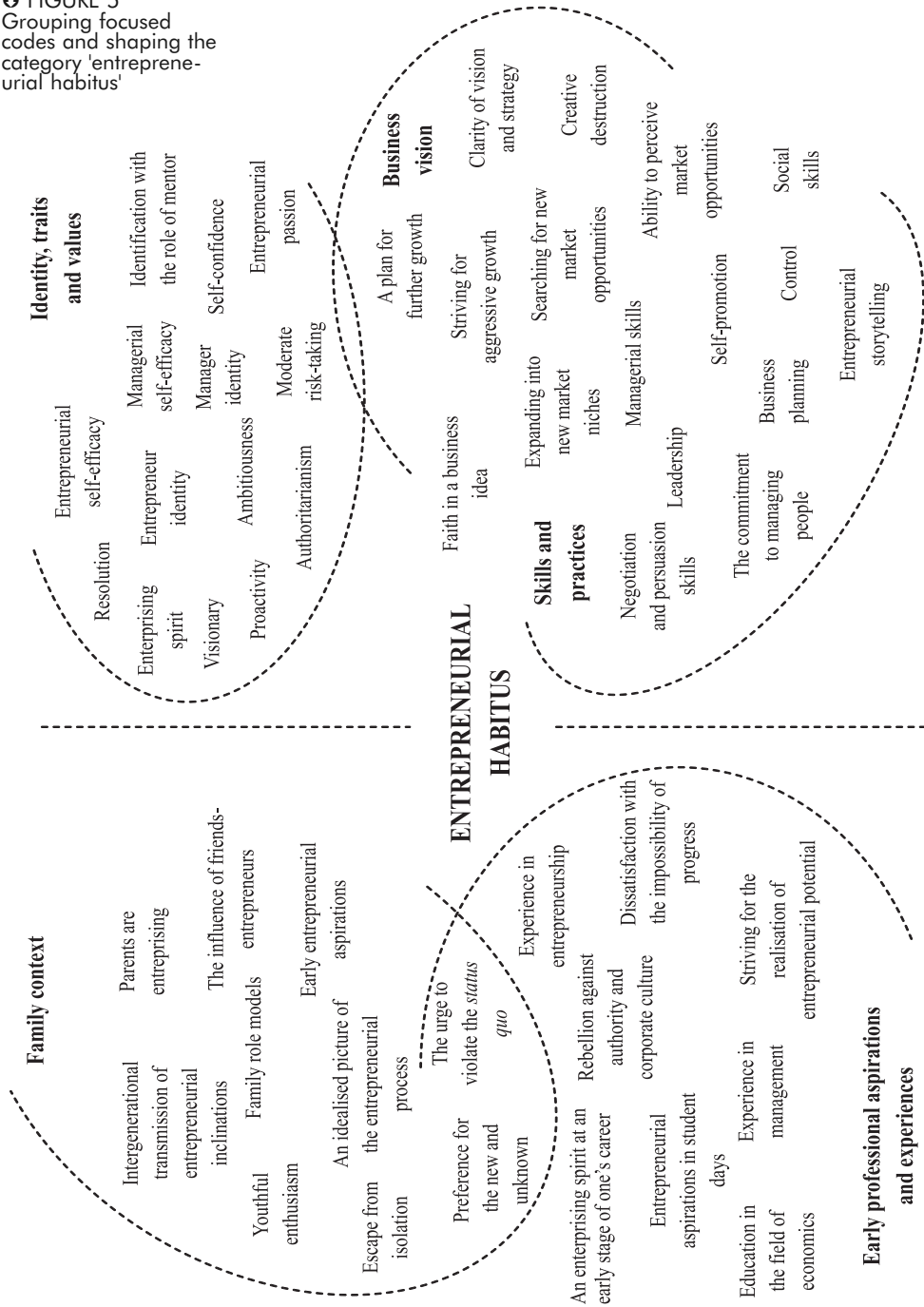
Affects the sample in the direction of: + increase, - decrease, 0 neutral

FIGURE 4
Considered sample size criteria

Criteria adapted from Charmaz (2006), Baker and Edwards (2012), and Bonde (2013)

APPENDIX 2

FIGURE 5
Grouping focused codes and shaping the category 'entrepreneurial habitus'



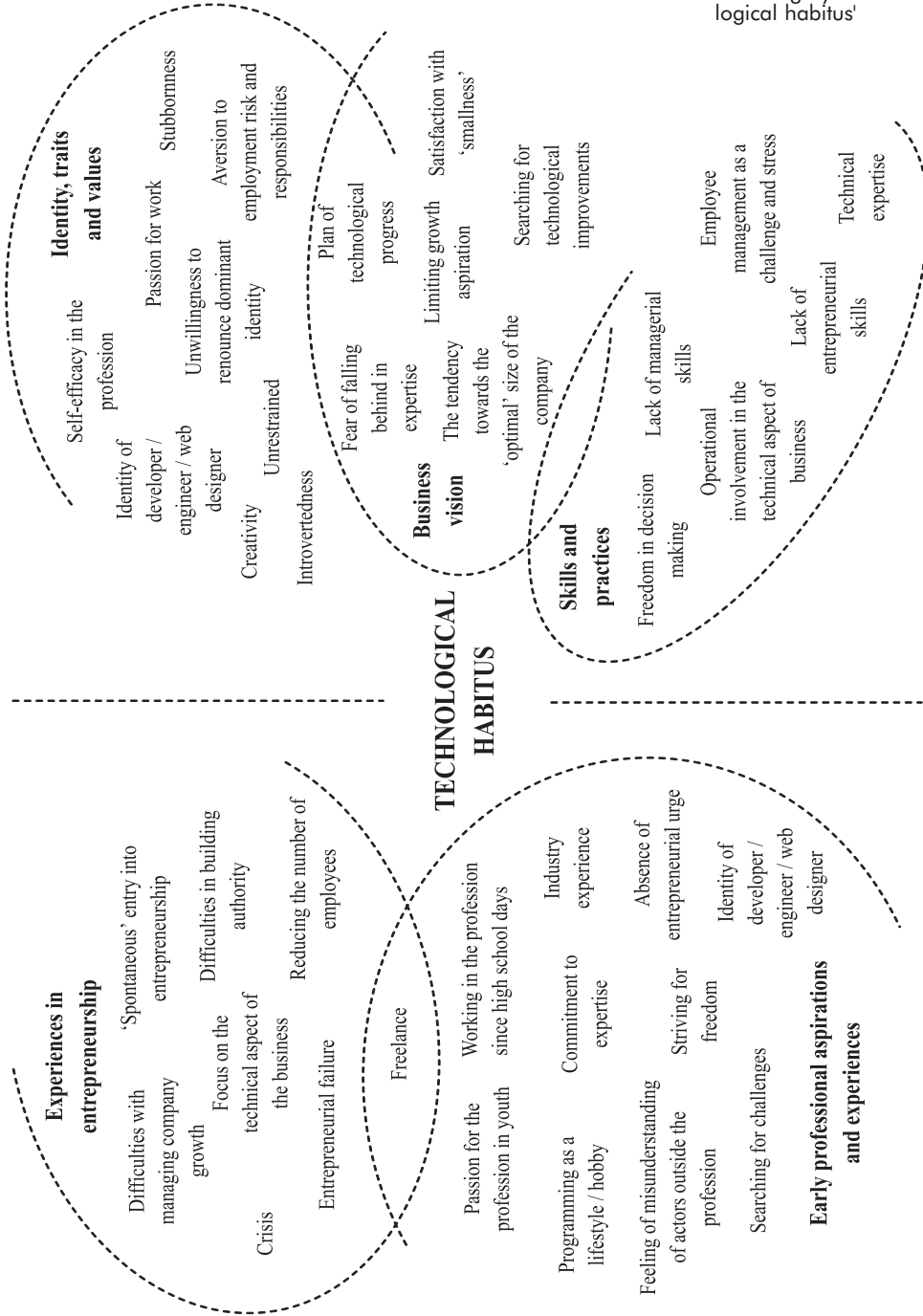


FIGURE 6
Grouping focused codes and shaping the category 'technological habitus'

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Preoblikovanje habitusa kroz potragu za poduzetničkim legitimitetom na polju brzih promjena

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Služeći se konceptualnom osebnjuošću Bourdieuove teorije, ovim radom nastojimo dati novi teorijski obol razumijevanju relacijske dinamike stjecanja legitimiteta u poduzetništvu. Dubinskim, kontekstualnim ispitivanjem poduzetnika u 70 poduzeća iz industrije računalnoga programiranja bavimo se pitanjem kako se prakse stjecanja legitimiteta oblikuju u odnosu s dinamikom između poduzetnika i društvene strukture. Metodološku snagu istraživanja temeljimo na rigoroznosti metode utemeljene teorije, koristeći se višestrukim izvorima i tehnikama prikupljanja podataka (dubinski intervjui, opservacije, kvalitativni i kvantitativni sekundarni podaci). Naši rezultati otkrivaju da je podložnost histerezi habitusa ta koja snažno definira smjerove potrage za legitimitetom. Rasvjetljavajući ih, pokazujemo prirodnu koegzistenciju profila poduzetnika oprečnih strategija stjecanja legitimiteta, ujedno dajući doprinos razumijevanju oblikovanja poduzetničkoga habitusa na polju brzih promjena.

Ključne riječi: poduzetnički legitimitet, habitus, Bourdieu, industrija računalnoga programiranja



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