



University of Antwerp

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Feminisms and Entrepreneurship: Investigating a Troubled Connection

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Francesco Paolo Lagrasta, PhD

Politecnico di Bari (IT), Department of Mechanics, Mathematics and Management

Who am I



- BA in **Energy Engineering**, MA in **Management Engineering**, PhD in **Industrial Engineering**
- **PhD thesis** (defended in April 2023) entitled “**The role of feminisms on entrepreneurial behavior and strategy**”
- Adjunct Professor in **Economics and Business Organization**
- **Co-founder of ES-cogito**, an academic spin-off providing business consulting in the fields of **sustainability and ESG**
- Passionate about **entrepreneurship, feminisms, and qualitative research**

For research collaborations, materials, discussions, and friendly reviews feel free to contact me

Personal website – <https://francescopaolo-lagrasta.github.io>

Institutional e-mail – francescopaolo.lagrasta@poliba.it

Agenda

1. Introduction

- Background
- Why this topic?

2. Literature review

- Purposes
- Bibliometric overview
- Main themes
- Key concepts and a proposal

3. Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

- Purposes and research onion
- Feminist cultures and values
- Sampling and interviewing
- Data Analysis
- Results
- Impacts and conclusions

Background

At the intersection of feminisms and entrepreneurial motivations

Feminist cultures have historically proven to enable the empowerment of disadvantaged groups: the history of feminisms is the history of the diffusion of values and beliefs capable of generating disruptive social changes, often **challenging patriarchal contexts and dominant economic models**.
(Davis 2017; Delap 2020)

The analysis of entrepreneurial subgroups (e.g. academic entrepreneurs, ecopreneurs) has often made it possible to **identify motivational factors that do not characterize traditional entrepreneurship**.
(Hayter 2011)

The analysis of the **factors involved in the adoption of entrepreneurial behaviour** is an open scientific domain of vital importance for global economies and for the development of more inclusive and empowering entrepreneurial ecosystems.
(Linan and Fayolle, 2015)



Why this topic?

... beside personal interest
and passion

**Understanding entrepreneurial
phenomena generating high
social value**

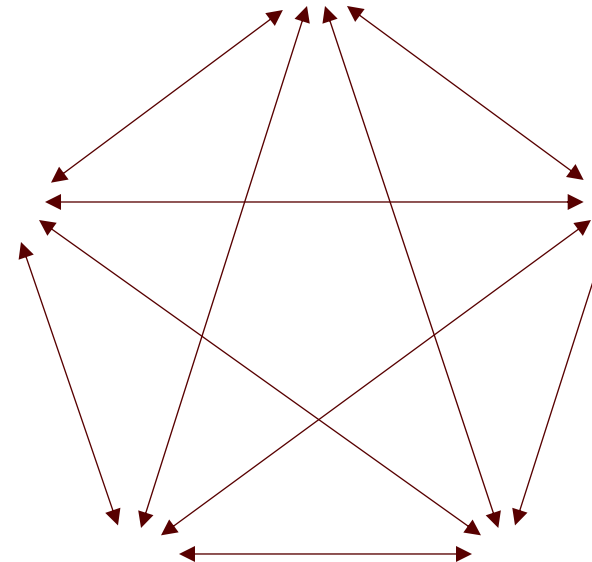
(Orser et al. 2013; Delap 2020; Alkhaled 2022)

**Need for more inclusive
entrepreneurial
environments**

(Orser et al. 2013; Harquail, 2019)

**Understanding the role of personal
cultural orientation in developing
entrepreneurial motivation**

(Aramand 2013; Lortie and Castrogiovanni 2015)



**Raising academic awareness
on neglected entrepreneurial
subgroups** (Orser et al. 2013)

**Contributing to overcoming
dominant entrepreneurial
archetypes**

(Gupta et al. 2009)

Literature review

Purposes

Objectives

- Identify extant studies focusing on feminist entrepreneurial phenomena
- Identify theoretical and methodological foundations of feminist entrepreneurship research



Research Questions

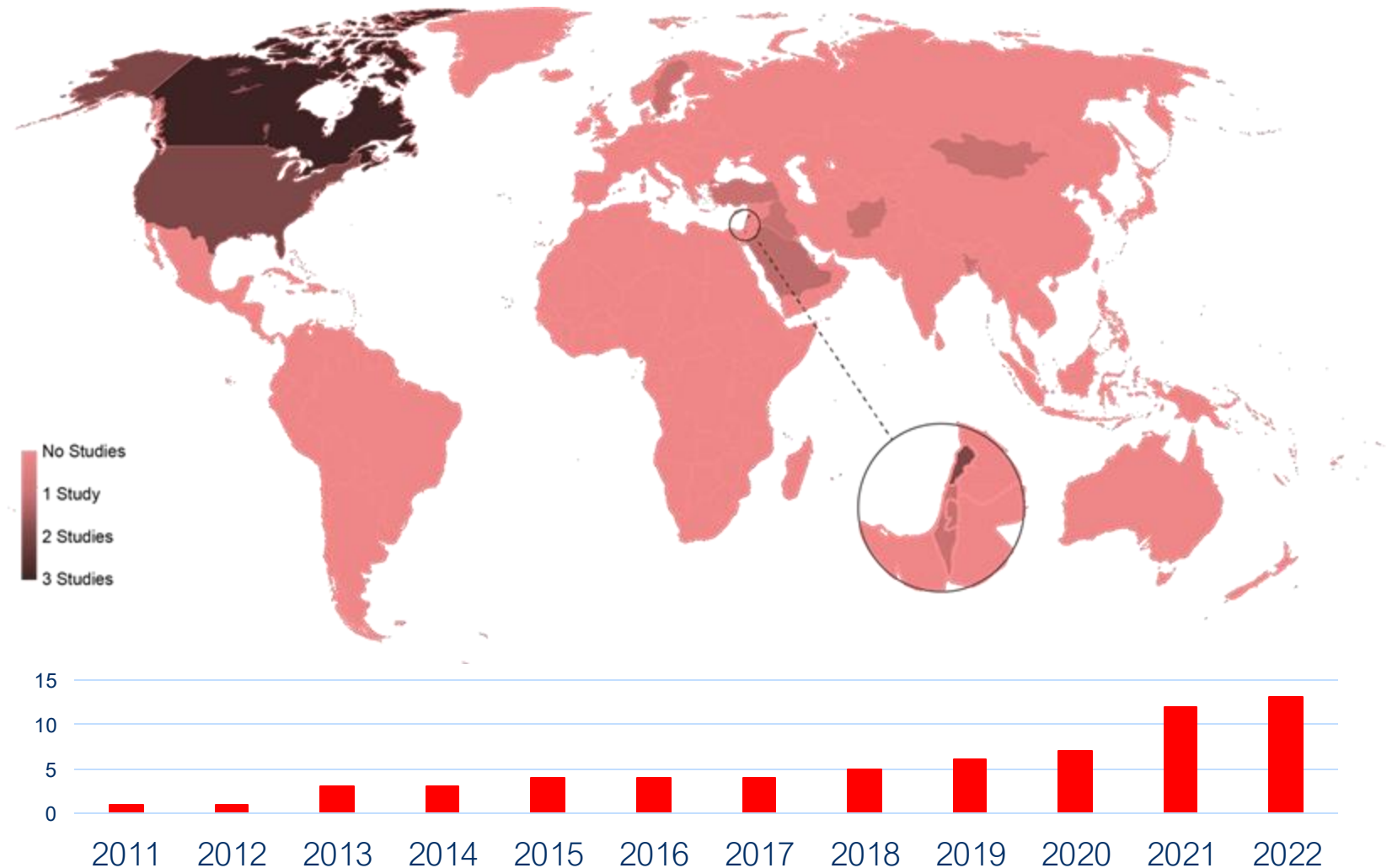
- What are **the theoretical lenses adopted** to frame feminist entrepreneurship within empirical studies?
- What are the **methodological protocols adopted** to empirically investigate the phenomenon of feminist entrepreneurship?
- **How is the feminist entrepreneur defined in the extant literature?**
- What are the **industry and the size of the companies** run by the feminist entrepreneurs investigated by the extant literature?

Literature review

Bibliometric overview

Main Results:

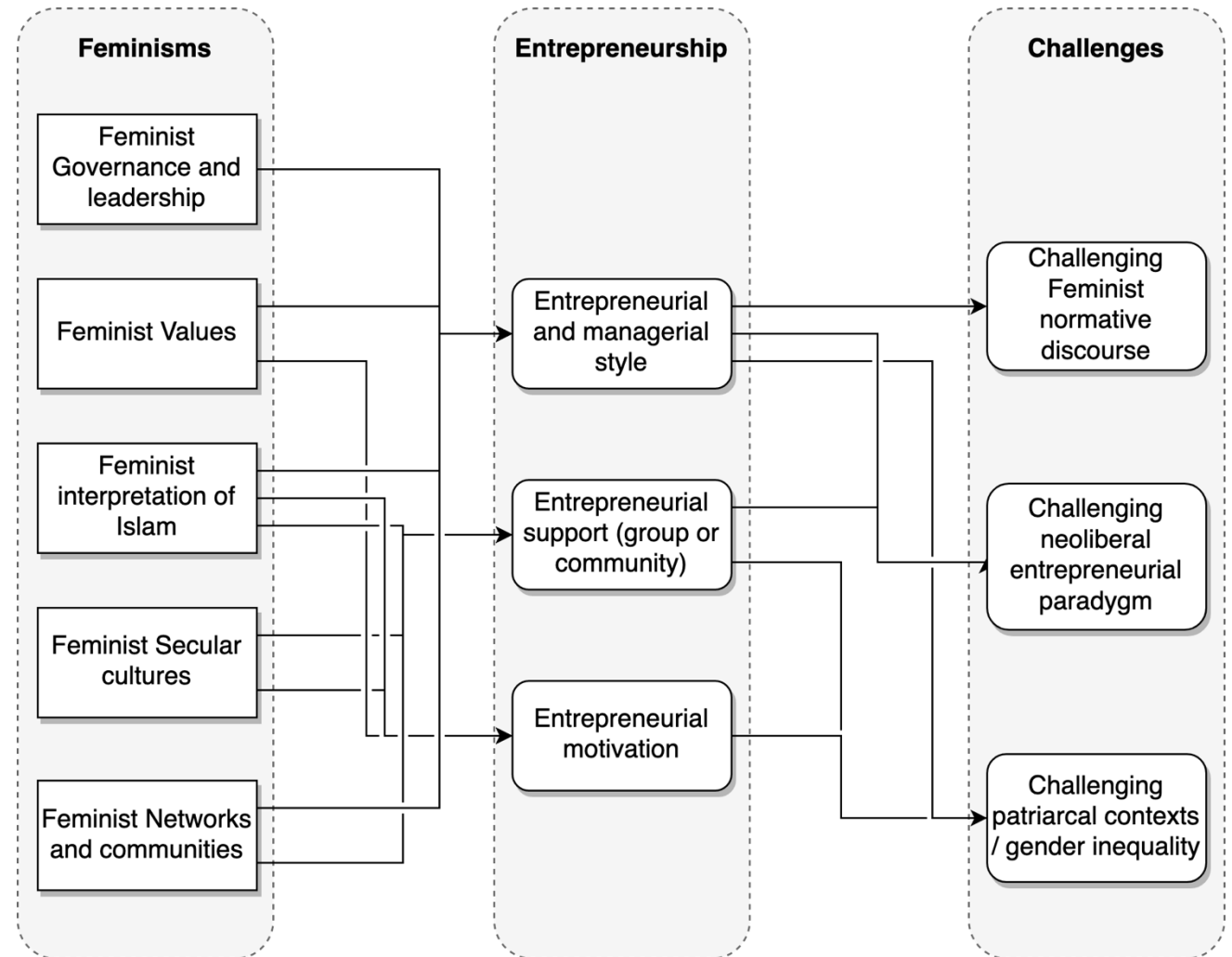
- 13 empirical studies selected adopting a systematic literature review protocol
- No study investigating Italian feminist entrepreneurs nor most developing countries
- Mainly aimed at **theory building** and phenomenon exploration
- Lack of a comprehensive theoretical framing



Literature review

Main themes

- **Feminisms** (with focus on Islamic Feminism and feminist governance and leadership)
- **Entrepreneurship** (with focus on entrepreneurial support and style)
- **Challenges** (with focus on gender equality)



Literature review

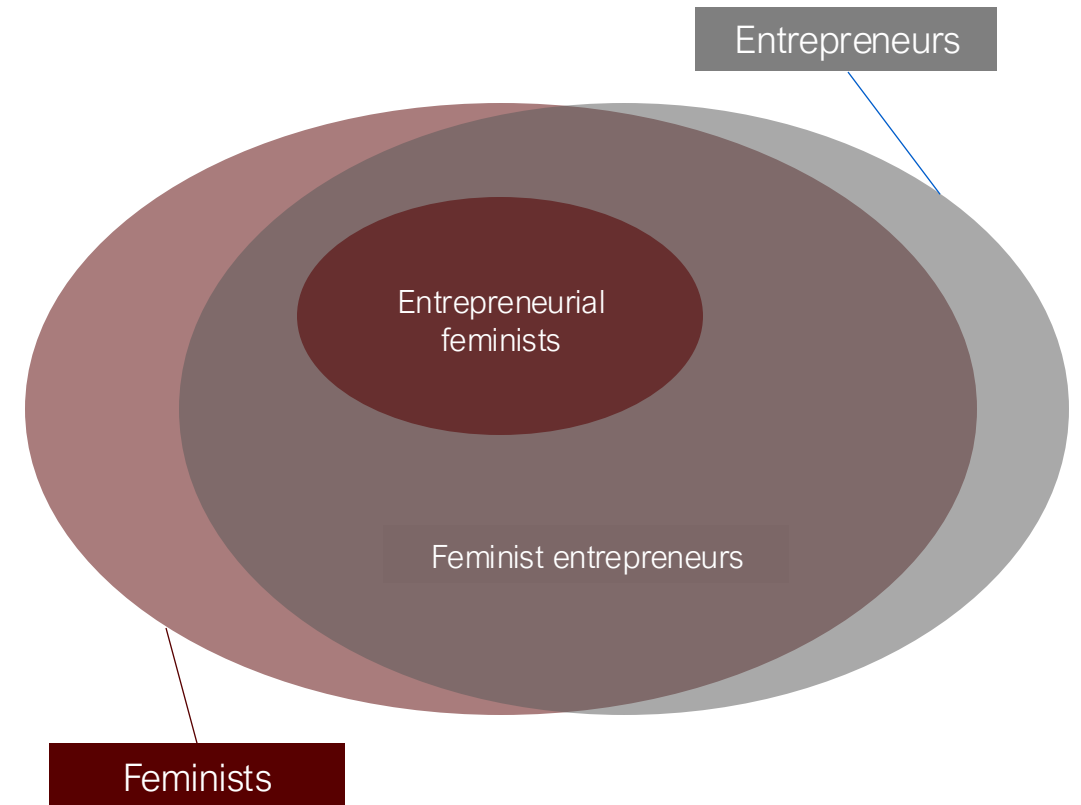
Key concepts and a proposal

Feminists: individuals who recognize men's and women's unequal conditions and desire to change this
(Ahl 2004, p. 16; Orser et al. 2013)

Entrepreneurs: individuals who own and manage a business and are self-employed
(Orser et al. 2011; Tlaiss and McAdam 2021)

Feminist entrepreneurs: entrepreneurs who recognize men's and women's unequal conditions and act, manifestly or latently, to pursue gender equality
(derived from Ahl, 2004; Orser, Elliott and Leck, 2013)

Entrepreneurial feminist: change agents who exemplify entrepreneurial acumen in the creation of equity-based outcomes that improve women's quality of life and well-being through innovative products, services and processes
(Orser, Elliott and Leck, 2013; Alkhaled, 2021)



Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

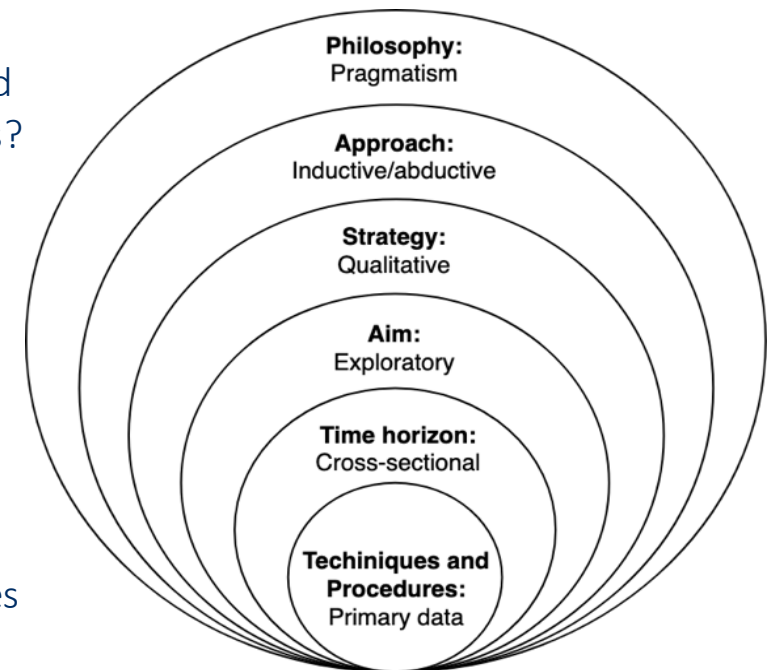
Purposes and research onion

Research Objectives

- Identify feminist entrepreneurs' values set
- Explore the domain of feminist entrepreneurs motivations
- Identify possible relationships between feminist values and entrepreneurial motivations
- Explore feminist business practices

Research Questions

- What are the feminist values recognized and shared among feminist entrepreneurs?
- What are the entrepreneurial motivation underlying feminist entrepreneurship?
- How do feminist values intervene in shaping entrepreneurial motivations?
- What are the feminist business practices shared among feminist entrepreneurs?



Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Feminist culture and values

Cultures are sets of shared values and beliefs.

(Porter 2001; Hayton et al. 2002).

Values are statements generally considered as true within a cultural group, capable of guiding one's behavior.

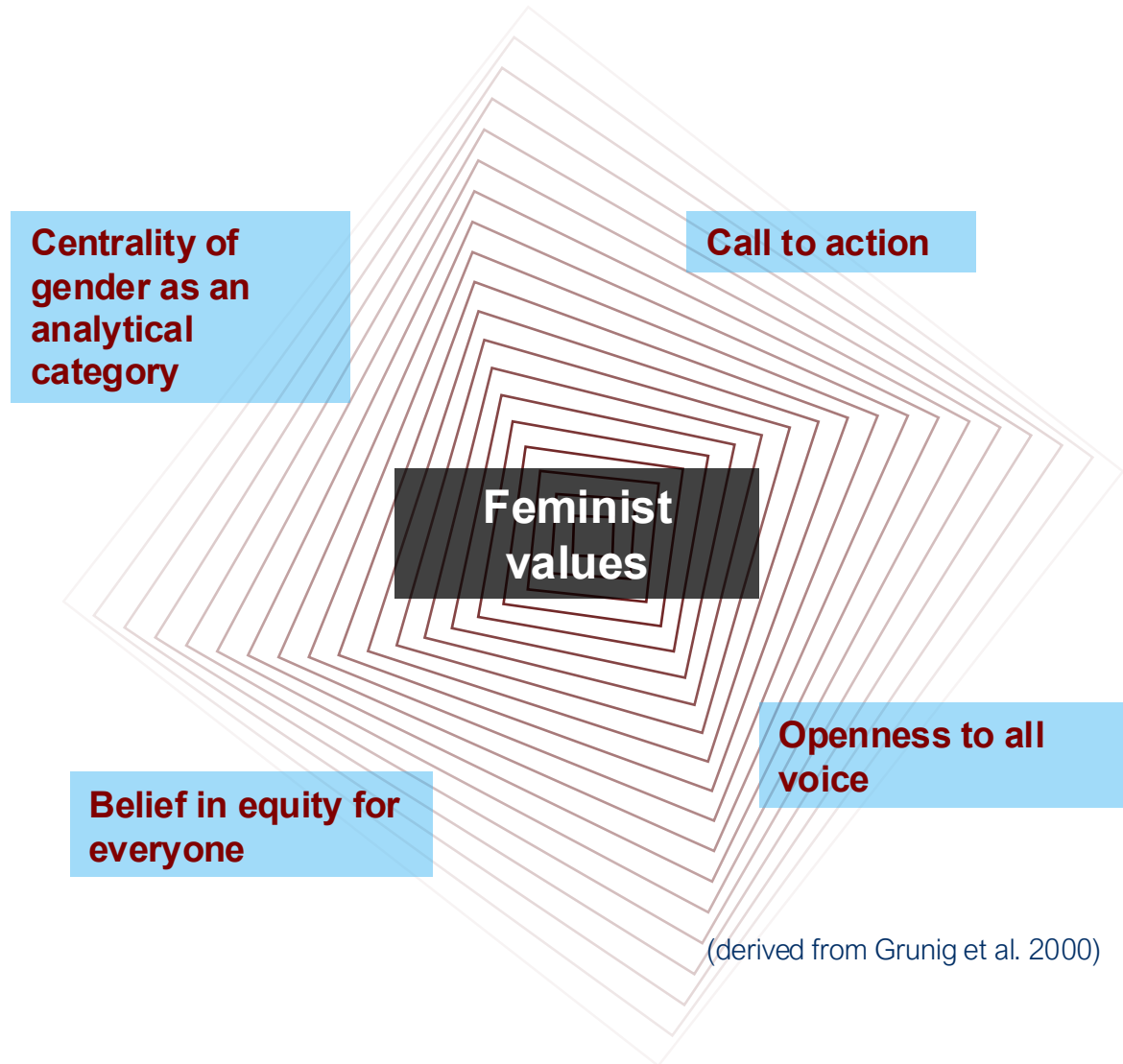
(Kluckhohn 1951; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980)

Behaviors are the manifestation of one's values.

(Ajzen and Fishbein 1980)

Feminist values are not homogeneously recognized.

(Grunig et al. 2000; Olesen 1994; Hoffman 2001)



(derived from Grunig et al. 2000)

Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Sampling and interviewing

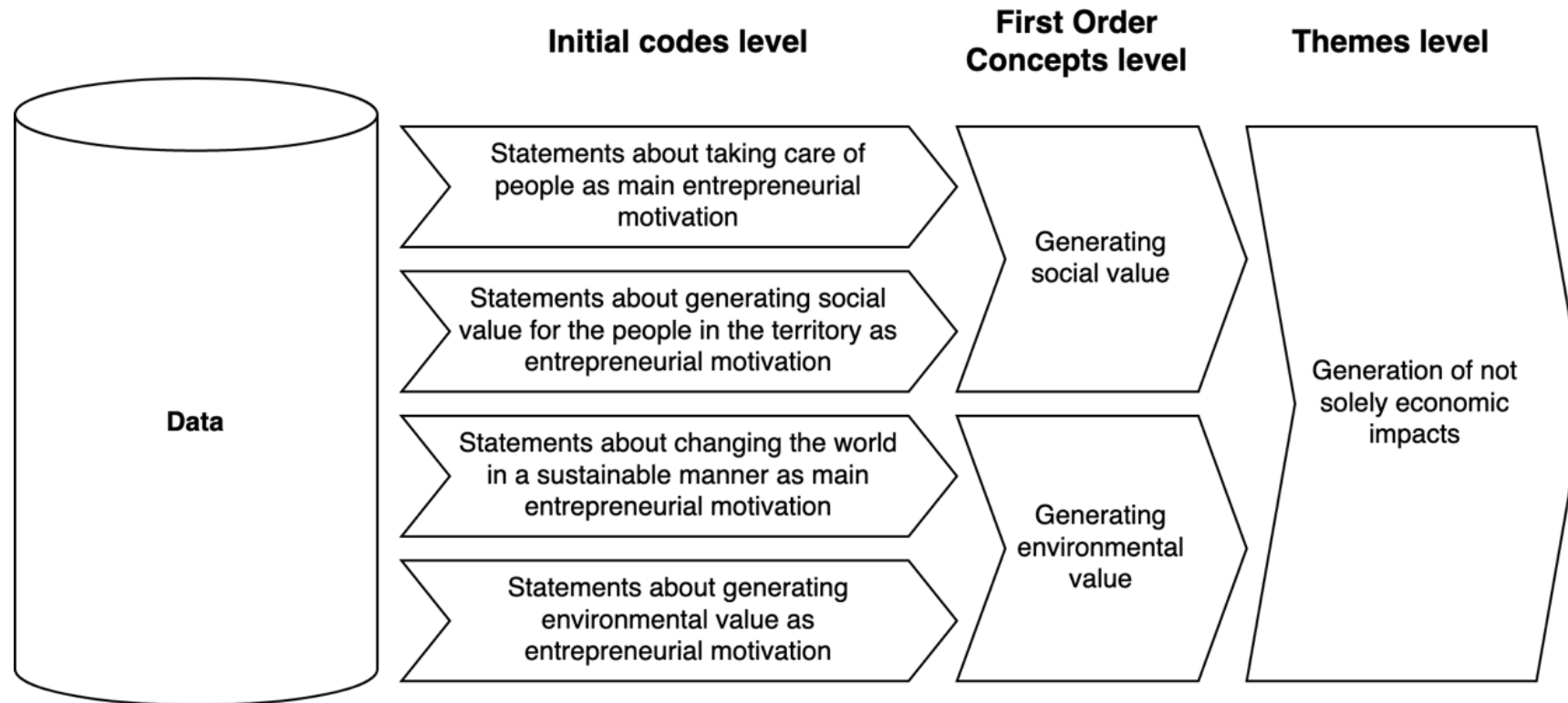
In order to identify the interviewees, a **non-probabilistic purposeful sampling method was adopted**. Purposeful sampling is widely adopted in qualitative studies and involves the selection of particularly informative cases to answer research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). This approach to sampling has already been used in literature aimed at investigating feminist entrepreneurs (Orser, Elliott and Leck, 2013; Alkhaled, 2021). Using the candidate's personal and professional network, **informational material about the research was disseminated, accompanied by a call to action to contact the candidate to participate in the interview.**



Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

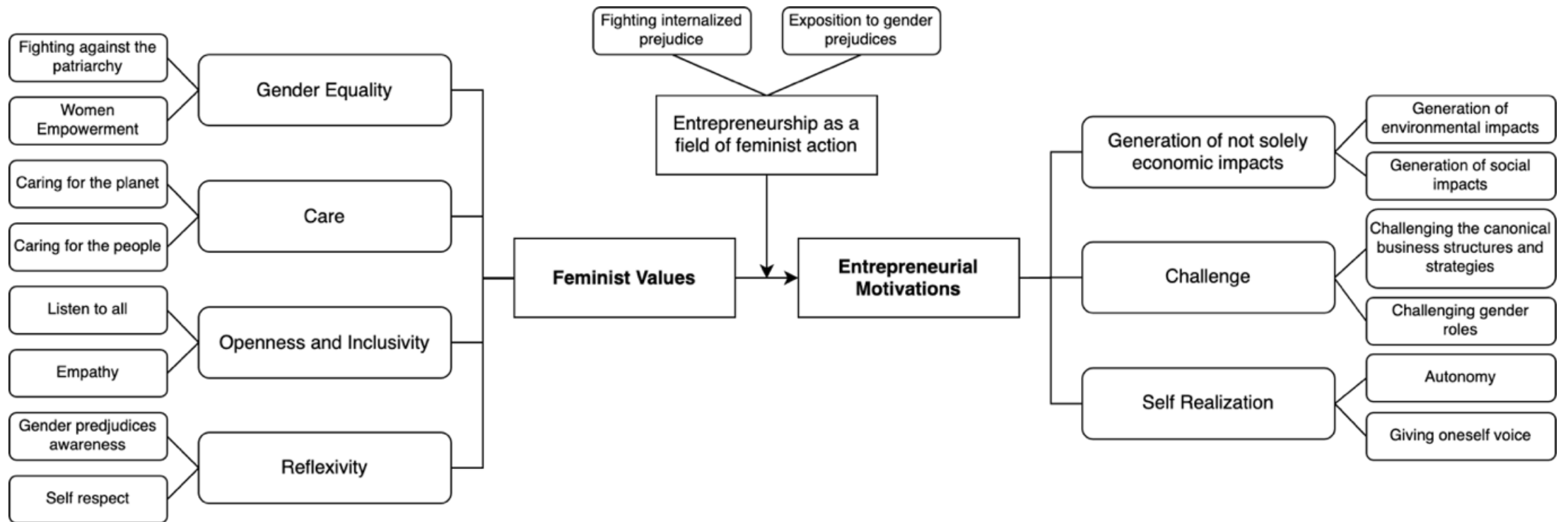
Data analysis

In order to analyse the data collected through the interviews, I used the textual data analysis methodology known as content analysis, informed by (Gioia et al. 2013) and Wæraas, A. (2022).



Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Results



Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Results

1 st Order Concepts	2 nd Order Themes	Aggregate dimension
Empathy Towards the customer	Customer relationships	Outward practices
Looking after the customer		
Purposeful relationships with the customers		
Inclusive communications	Customer segments	
Inclusive customer segments		
Diversity and inclusion	Human resourcing	Inward practices
Selecting ethical partners and collaborators		
Costs of abiding by feminist practices	Costs	Limits and constraints

Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Results

The motivations that emerged, configure themselves **as directly concerning the sphere of desirability and attitude**. The identified entrepreneurial motivations were directly associated with entrepreneurial behavior, which is assessed by the interviewees as enabling impact generation and self-realization, and leading to challenges to canonical business and gender stereotypes.

Motivation	Dimension	Current insights and advancements
Generations of not solely economic impacts Generation of social impacts Generation of environmental impacts	Community social motivations	The work confirmed the generation of social and environmental impacts among the main motivations for feminist entrepreneurship, bringing this category, from a motivational perspective, into line with that of social entrepreneurs. Economic impacts are only marginally mentioned among the motivations for entrepreneurship,
Challenge Challenging the canonical business structures and strategies Challenging gender roles	Achievement, challenge & learning	The work has made it possible to illustrate how entrepreneurial motivation is instantiated within the feminist entrepreneurial population subgroup. The motivational meaning of the challenge comes close to that of achieving a personal vision and could be configured as a proactive response to a condition of dissatisfaction (Haynes et al., 1999).
Self-Realization Autonomy Giving oneself voice	Independence & autonomy	The work made it possible to highlight how feminist entrepreneurs associate self-realization with entrepreneurial intention. Self-realization is understood in this sense not as a motivation for economic independence but as the process of creating one's own entrepreneurial reality in autonomy, mirroring one's own set of values..

Investigating Feminist Entrepreneurship in practice

Impacts and conclusions

Research Impacts

Deepen **the relationships among values, entrepreneurial motivations, entrepreneurial intentions and strategy**

Inform Theory of Planned Behavior and motivational studies with qualitative inquiries from the feminist entrepreneurial subgroup

Managerial and educational impacts

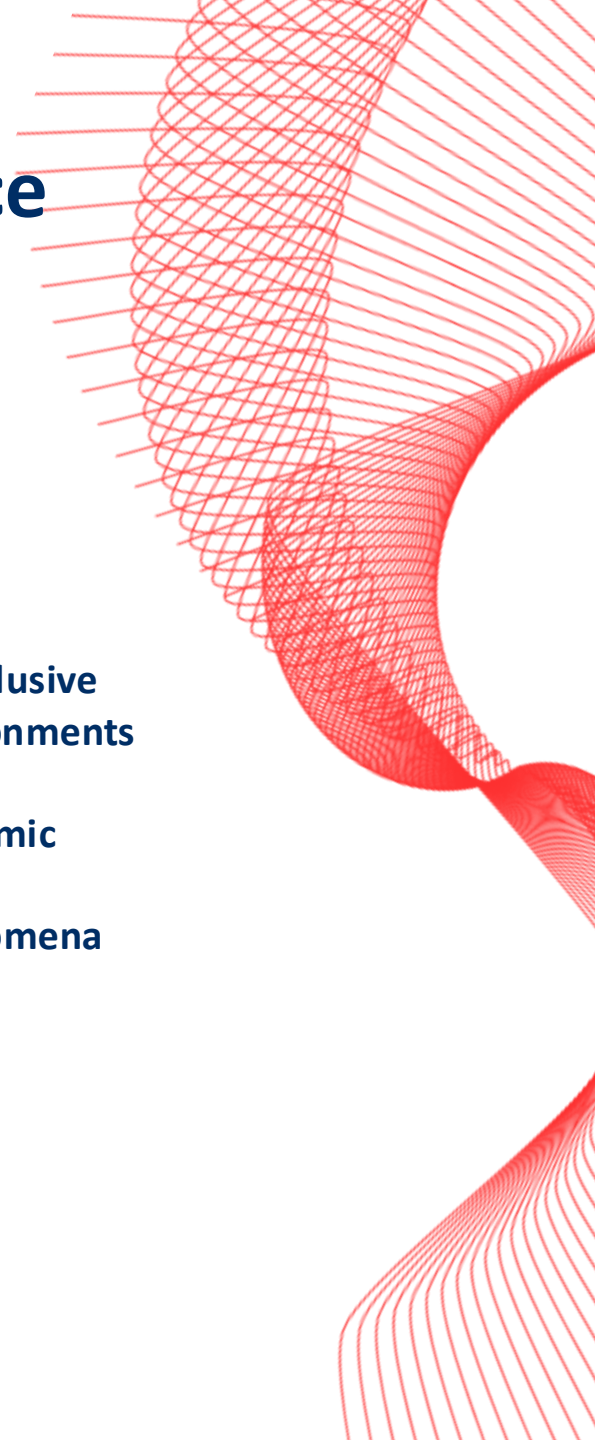
Provide startup and business services providers with **knowledge about the role feminist cultures play in entrepreneurial intention development and strategy**

Provide teachers, educators and practitioners with **knowledge preparatory to feminist entrepreneurial training courses**

Societal impacts

Help building **more inclusive entrepreneurial environments**

Raise **social and academic awareness towards entrepreneurial phenomena rooted in not solely utilitaristic values set**



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The content of this presentation is derived from:

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