

ENTREPRENEURIAL PLACE  
LEADERSHIP

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
RESEARCH VOLUME 15

**ENTREPRENEURIAL  
PLACE LEADERSHIP:  
NEGOTIATING THE  
ENTREPRENEURIAL  
LANDSCAPE**

EDITED BY

**ROBERT NEWBERY**  
*Northumbria University, UK*

**YEVHEN BARANCHENKO**  
*Northumbria University, UK*

and

**COLIN BELL**  
*North East Local Enterprise Partnership, UK*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan  
India – Malaysia – China

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## ABOUT THE EDITORS

**Robert Newbery** is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Head of the Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Strategy Department, Northumbria University. He has worked extensively in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America and has founded and run a number of entrepreneurial businesses having a PhD, MSc, MBA, and BSc. He is Co-editor of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. His research interests are focused on international entrepreneurship, particularly in developing contexts, with publications in the *Journal of Business Venturing* and other highly ranked journals. He is currently conducting research into the entrepreneurial experiences of people operating in “peripheral” communities. He publishes on entrepreneurship in international development, rural development, and entrepreneurship education.

**Yevhen Baranchenko** is a Senior Lecturer in Strategy and International Business at Northumbria University, where he received his PhD. Situated within the areas of strategic management and entrepreneurship, his research explores the internationalization of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) SMEs and the role of an SME managers’ global mindset in driving international opportunity identification through international knowledge acquisition and networking activities. His research also examines the impact of institutions on the ease of doing business in transition economies, revealing the importance of institutional quality and its implications for entrepreneurial autonomy. He leads projects developing knowledge exchange between higher education institutions and SMEs in Eastern Europe. His other research areas include ethical leadership, organizational commitment, and the employability of employees.

**Colin Bell** is Business Growth Director for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Prior to this, he was Consulting Services Director and an owner of business growth and software business Winning Moves Ltd. He was instrumental in achieving high growth and the expansion of the business in the UK and Internationally this included the development and delivery of programs such as Growth Accelerator and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP’s Great200Leaders. In 2013, Winning Moves was sold to the West Midlands Manufacturing Consortium (WMMC) who delivers the Manufacturing Advisory Service in the North East, North West, and West Midlands. He spent two years as part of the WMMC senior management team before moving to the North East LEP.

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# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Matt Baillie Smith** is a Professor of International Development and a Co-director of the Centre for International Development at the Northumbria University. An interdisciplinary development academic, his research focuses on civil society, citizenship, and development, with particular interests in volunteering in humanitarian and development settings, young people, and learning and education.

**Colin Donaldson** is a Leader of the Entrepreneurship Department at the EDEM Business School, Valencia, Spain. He received an MSc with distinction in International Business at Ulster University, Northern Ireland and earned a PGCE at Bath Spa University (United Kingdom). He obtained his PhD in Business Management at the University of Valencia.

**Walid Mohamed Eid** is a Serial Entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience and a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Business Management at the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport – College of Business, and the American University in Cairo – Executive Business School.

**Karen Foster** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Dalhousie University and holds the Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Rural Futures for Atlantic Canada. Her recent publications include the edited collection, *The Right to be Rural* (2021, University of Alberta Press), and 2016's *Productivity and Prosperity* (University of Toronto Press).

**David Jamieson** is a Research Fellow based at the Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University currently working on aspects of Digital Citizenship. His research interests are in the areas of digital government, procurement and the role of platforms including Living Lab approaches.

**Lorraine Johnston** is an Associate Professor in Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. Her recent co-authored books include *Public Enterprise & Local Place: New Perspectives on Theory and Practice* in the series Routledge Studies in Governance and Public Policy and *Leading Local Government: The Role of Directly Elected Mayors* with Emerald Publishers.

**Joyce Liddle** is a Professor of Public Leadership and Enterprise and a Director of Research. She has published over 200 articles, 25 book chapters, and 14 books, she co-edits an annual book series on Critical Perspectives on International Public Management, and she chairs the Editorial Advisory Board, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

**Mike Martin** is a Professor of Enterprise Information Sciences at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. He has over 40 years' experience in the Research and Development of Information systems and telecommunications. For the last 20 years, he has been researching and consulting in the information and communications need to support multi-agency care and wellbeing.

**Giampaolo Montaletti** holds a PhD from Bologna University, is a Senior Manager working for the Regional Government of Lombardy, Italy, and Visiting Research Fellow at the Northumbria University. He has extensive experience in theoretical and experimental public policy design, with significant expertise in statistical analysis. He is highly experienced in strategic frameworks development and budget management, as well as design and construction of new policy instruments.

**Nathan Pellow** is a PhD student at the Northumbria University. He has worked across the public and private sectors in many different job roles. He has been mostly teaching for the last 10 years of his career. He has worked on a number of research projects during his career.

**Edita Petrylaite** is a Senior Lecturer in Strategy at Northumbria University, UK. She holds a PhD in Gender and Consumer Behavior. Her research interests include gender, masculinity, strategy, consumer behavior, leadership, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial marketing. She has published her research in marketing, entrepreneurship, and human resource development journals.

**Angus Robson** is a Senior Lecturer in Business Ethics and Leadership at Northumbria University, UK. He undertook his PhD in Leadership and Ethics in Scottish Banking. He has published on ethics in the contexts of banking and care work, most recently in the journal *Nursing Ethics*.

**John Shutt** is a Professor of Public Policy and Management at the Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. He has worked for Sheffield and Birmingham City Council's and Central Lancashire Development Corporation. He has extensive European and International experience working in China, as Visiting Professor, at the Zhejiang University of Technology ZJUT, Hangzhou, China.

**Anthony Tibaingana** has been a Lecturer of Marketing and Management in the School of Business, CoBAMS, Makerere University, for more than 10 years. He was previously the Head of the Department of Marketing and Management. Prior to this, he was Country Manager of Global Business Labs. He is a Researcher in Business and Management with interests in customer care, marketing research, consumer behavior, entrepreneurship, and agribusiness. He obtained a PhD in Business Administration from Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria South Africa in 2017. He has an MBA and a Bachelor of Commerce from Makerere University. He won a Production and Operation Society Doctoral award for emerging economies in 2017.

**Jorge Villagrasa** currently works as a Researcher and Professor at EDEM Business School, Spain. He developed his PhD in the University of Valencia, Spain, analyzing the effect of the characteristics and perceptions of managers on their organizations' performance. Likewise, he has developed his professional career in diverse universities of the USA, Belgium, and Spain, as well as in different private consulting firms.

**Rob Wilson** is Professor of Digital Economy at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. His research interests are in the areas of public service information systems and digital public services including the role of infrastructure. He has widely published in these areas including works on Digital Government and the Innovation of Digital Healthcare for Oxford University Press. His most recent works explores the role of complexity in shaping the co-creation of public services.

**Sharon Zivkovic** is an Adjunct Research Associate at the University of South Australia, a Lecturer in Social Enterprise and Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Adelaide, and a Visiting Fellow at Northumbria University. She is on the Board of the University of South Australia's Yunus Social Business Centre.

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# CHAPTER 1

## ENTREPRENEURIAL PLACE LEADERSHIP

Robert Newbery, Yevhen Baranchenko and Colin Bell

### ABSTRACT

*In a world where we recognize entrepreneurial means, ends and values in terms of geographies of meaning, this book explores the phenomenon of Entrepreneurial Place Leadership. This book identifies that a place-led perspective of entrepreneurial development is becoming increasingly important, given narratives around entrepreneurial ecosystems, spatial and temporal contexts, and the active design of entrepreneurial institutions. This introductory chapter outlines the rationale for the book, explores the entrepreneurial landscape and then highlights the chapter contributions. It concludes by drawing together policy and practice recommendations and suggesting directions for future research.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial place; leadership; entrepreneurial landscape; community; complex adaptive systems; entrepreneurial ecosystems

### INTRODUCTION

*Entrepreneurial performance is contingent on the place where entrepreneurship happens. Viewing entrepreneurship through this lens, this edited book explores how entrepreneurs lead, and are led, in the context of places as locations with meaning (Cresswell, 2008) that are past, present, emergent, transient and complex. Operating within this context, we start with entrepreneurs as agents that discover and exploit lucrative, value laden, opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).*

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In turn, leadership is taken as a process where, at its simplest, a leader guides followers toward a goal (Northouse, 2013).

Place can exert a significant influence over entrepreneurial actions, strategy and performance (Murithi, Vershinina, & Rodgers, 2019; Tiwasing et al., 2018), and this has been recognized in calls to focus on the context of entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011) and through a burgeoning literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems (Acs, Stam, & Audretsch, 2017). Here the primacy of place is apparent in terms of the constraints and affordances to action that determine entrepreneurial performance, with combinations of geography, demographics, institutions, culture and policy, defining the opportunity set available to entrepreneurs (Nambisan, Wright, & Feldman, 2019).

Places become distinct venues, events and occasions, where the entrepreneur can compose, practice and perform their craft. They can do so as entrepreneurial leaders assembling a cast and developing a scenario to maximize their performance or as cast members themselves (Gupta, MacMillan, & Surie, 2014), where the organization of place is curated by ecosystem managers' intent on developing and growing the entrepreneurs of the future. This is particularly important in economically and socially uncertain times with entrepreneurial place managers experiencing challenges imposed through "unprecedented" situations such as the Coronavirus pandemic and the climate emergency.

Entrepreneurship, place and leadership are phenomena that are each subjective and dynamic in nature. Meaning, value and goals are cognitive constructs of individuals operating in society, which can be subjectively interpreted and translated in different ways (Scott, 2014). While a certain value, such as a pound or dollar may appear relatively objective, it means less to a Billionaire than to a refugee living below the poverty line. While entrepreneurs are often seen as individuals focused on financial value, they may seek social or environmental values as well (Apostolopoulos, Newbery, & Gkartzios, 2018). Whilst leaders enact scenarios to move toward common goals, possibly the most charged scenario is place, where distinct geography becomes laden with meaning through history, lived experience and a shared interpretation with others.

These phenomena are also dynamic, in that opportunities, resources, values and meaning morph over time and space. Entrepreneurship and leadership have been regarded as future facing, being "sciences of the artificial" (Simon, 1996) that are focused on end goals that do not yet exist. Meanwhile, places may be interpreted in a future-facing way through entrepreneurial goals and leadership visions; however, they tend to be understood through personal and shared histories. The temporal context is therefore just as important as the spatial context (Baker & Welter, 2020) and when we discuss place as a location of meaning, the place is a snapshot in space-time. Drawing the phenomena together in a subjective, dynamic process-driven social universe, in this book, we define entrepreneurial place leadership as being about how locations with entrepreneurial meaning can be created, maintained, exploited and amplified to generate future value.

In the following sections, we set the scene with an exploration of an entrepreneurial landscape, before discussing the individual chapter contributions that

make up the book. Finally, we take a policy and practice perspective and make recommendations to align entrepreneurial “place-making” policy with practice.

## AN ENTREPRENEURIAL LANDSCAPE

Given the focal interest in place, one way of exploring this is through the metaphor of the entrepreneurial landscape. We borrow heavily from the concept of the “therapeutic landscape” (Gesler, 1992), a term used to explore why certain places contribute more to a sense of wellbeing than others. In our context, an entrepreneurial landscape is one where interactions with place influence, and are influenced by, entrepreneurial agency and practices, which in turn define and alter the evolution of the landscape over time. This entrepreneurial landscape is characterized by previous approaches to mold its physical, social, political and economic complexities. This may be through an active process of traditional leadership where a scenario is built and a cast assembled (Gupta et al., 2004); or through an accidental congealing of networks that temporarily align on a common purpose (Murdoch, 2000); or through a more dynamic, mutual and collaborative shared leadership that is more abductive in nature (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

The entrepreneurial landscape mapped out in the chapters of this book, metaphorically hosts individual dwellings, communities, planned settlements, districts, regions and nations. The individual dwelling represents the entrepreneurial location of meaning for the archetypal entrepreneur, self-building for themselves and their family (Schumpeter, 1936). These may be temporary encampments or may take on a more permanent feel over time where opportunities are concentrated (Dimov, 2011). The entrepreneurial community represents a self-organized collective, where the whole can be seen as having agency rather than just the individual (Paredo & Chrisman, 2006). The planned settlement reflects the entrepreneurial support organization (ESO), the intermediary organizations that have been designed with the purpose of reducing risk and stimulating entrepreneurial opportunity (Bergman & McMullen, 2021). The district or cluster may be an extension of the planned settlement, or more often a loosely specialized collection of other entrepreneurial places (Piore & Sabel, 1984). Finally, the region and nation are mixtures of more and less entrepreneurial places. Drawing on the concept of institutional voids (Kistruck, Webb, Sutter, & Bailey, 2015), there are places in the entrepreneurial landscape that are munificent and others that appear barren; however, it would be difficult to find a place with no historic entrepreneurial meaning – even empty fields and ancient ruins contain a past entrepreneurial meaning, which may in turn offer an affordance for future entrepreneurial action (Gaddefors, Korsgaard, & Ingstrup, 2020).

## CHAPTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Having discussed the contours of the entrepreneurial landscape, we now turn to the chapter contributions in this book, each approaching different aspects of

the landscape through a mix of lenses. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on places characterized by individual and self-organizing communities of entrepreneurs. *Foster* looks at entrepreneurial responsibility to place and the places in question are rural Nova Scotian communities. Here entrepreneurship is regarded as something that emerges when a suitable opportunity structure emerges at the intersection of individual and society (Watson, 2013). Exploring the context of responsibility to place, the chapter highlights how different values and meanings define entrepreneurial places, evoking Adam Smith's moral character of an economy (Sayer, 2007). In this case, place leadership resides in the individual entrepreneurial values that work for positive impacts within the local community that are sustainable beyond the life of the individual. These values may conflict with the objectives of policymakers and economic development officers that focus on competitiveness and profit maximization. The chapter concludes by suggesting that sustainable entrepreneurial places require a better understanding of the unique meanings ascribed to a location by its inhabitants. In the case of rural Nova Scotia, rather than meanings constructed around profit maximization, Foster argues that these should instead be built around stable employment, responsible resource use and sufficiency of livelihoods for others in the community – requiring a distinct leadership vision.

Petrylaite and Robson offer a different way to think about place and focus on the dynamic connections that exist between individuals within space–time. Here the focus is on situated masculinities and leadership, offering a specific socio-cultural context. The place is a team of entrepreneurial males situated within a higher education establishment in the North East of England. A “situated” perspective, often used to describe learning-oriented communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991), is a useful way to consider how the meaning of place is embedded in the meanings negotiated within a network of individuals that come together in a particular space through a temporary congealing of connections (Murdoch, 2000). The chapter sets out how leadership theories often relate to a leader–follower binary; however, in contexts such as these relational leadership becomes the active process (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). Individuals are both active–passive leaders–followers in a plural and dynamic form of entrepreneurial leadership. Within this situated educational space–time, the chapter shows how negotiated masculinities affect this plural leadership and entrepreneurial outcomes. The chapter suggests that the values and meanings given to these entrepreneurial places, through the plural leadership mode of the team, can be as heterogeneous as the individual members.

Chapters 4–6 focus on places we might characterize as the planned settlements of an entrepreneurial landscape. Each of these chapters describes a variation of the ESO that includes incubators, accelerators, labs and co-working spaces. These ESO have been described as ubiquitous (Bergman & McMullen, 2021) and we may regard them as key places, with recognizable architectures, that may be a common place within an entrepreneurial landscape. The place described by Donaldson and Villagrasa is a University entrepreneurial ecosystem in Valencia, Spain. This is a place designed to promote a value-laden entrepreneurship (Hudson, 2001) through a carefully managed culture that curates' networks, context and shared

knowledge. Within this place, embedded experience, signs, symbols and other cultural artifacts for supporting an entrepreneurial mindset are highlighted as important. The entrepreneurial leadership of the founder has been indelibly imprinted on place through these cultural artifacts and will be perpetuated and transmitted over time as individuals incorporate them into their developing entrepreneurial identities.

Tibaingana, Baillie Smith, and Newbery explore refugee ESOs operating in Kampala, Uganda. The chapter highlights the importance of the target population to the construction and operation of these planned entrepreneurial places. The chapter shows how the dominant discourse of entrepreneurial self-reliance is used to promote, justify and fund these refugee ESO. However, the key entrepreneurial agency in the research appears to reside with the leaders and founders, rather than the refugees. The founders vary from domiciled refugees to NGOs and Government-led agencies, and while they speak to the hi-tech/innovation discourse of entrepreneurship, their actions are focused on supporting the survival of refugees through the provision of language skills and livelihood strategies. The chapter shows how the refugee ESOs play a critical role as entrepreneurial communities (Paredo & Chrisman, 2006) that promote locally needed, and often frugal, innovations within the community – a different role to that usually assigned to ESOs, where nascent entrepreneurs with resources are empowered in their agency within a safe space.

Following this, Eid explores the first private Business Accelerator (BA) to be established in Egypt. While the BA model is based on a recognizable template imported from Silicon Valley, its placement within a developing economy presents its own challenges. However, while contemporary literature sets an expectation for a mismatch to occur when entrepreneurial frameworks and theories developed in the Global North are transplanted to resource-constrained contexts in the Global South (Brunton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013; Kimmitt, Munoz, & Newbery, 2019), the benefits and issues in this chapter are reassuringly familiar. In this developing context, the BA's impact is amplified: providing the safe space required by Egyptian entrepreneurs to overcome an institutional fear of failure (GEM, 2014); access networks for those with limited entrepreneurial experience, and help remove the barriers around startup. However, while this helps fill a national institutional void around startups, the entrepreneurial landscape is incomplete and post graduation from the BA, approximately 50% of startups fail after 1-year.

In Chapters 7 and 8, we climb a hill in the entrepreneurial landscape and look down upon broader geography of entrepreneurial meaning. These chapters explore entrepreneurial place leadership from the perspective of the policymaker or policy entrepreneur. Montaletti, Martin, Wilson, and Jamieson explore the Lombardy region in Italy. The chapter approaches entrepreneurial public policy leadership through the theoretical lens of Multiple Stream Analysis (MSA) (Kingdon, 1984). This recognizes that public policy leadership is often an anarchic and mismatched “garbage can” of disconnected policies, and describes a sense-making approach to more cohesive entrepreneurial policy (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). MSA sets out multiple streams that include problem, policy, politics and, as added in this chapter, platform. This then highlights the importance

of policy places, including events and occasions, to facilitate the required conversation, negotiation and constructive dialogue. The key role of the entrepreneurial place policy leader is to align the streams through their vernacular knowledge of the sociotechnical system. Pellow, Shutt, Liddle, and Johnston develop this theme further and compare the North East region of England with the Amsterdam City region of the Netherlands. The comparison highlights a fragmentation of policy in the North East that echoes the “garbage can” analogy in the previous chapter and emphasizes the importance of underpinning culture, values and knowledge in supporting a cohesive entrepreneurial improvisation.

Finally, in terms of the entrepreneurial landscape, Zivkovic is focused on the architecture of entrepreneurial places. The chapter characterizes social entrepreneurial places as complex adaptive systems comprised of self-organizing component parts, operating under conditions of uncertainty (Goldstein, 1999). It is the relationships between components that tend to be under-theorized and they argue that these ecosystems cannot be controlled, but can be influenced. They explore a tool that helps manage the conditions that will, in turn, allow entrepreneurial and innovative outcomes to be nurtured and amplified. Complexity also addresses leadership theory and they suggest that leadership is not necessarily embodied in a role or person, but can be a process embedded in the interactions of agents in the system. The entrepreneurial architects must therefore consider the conditions and the framework and build leadership into the process. These conditions include generating information-rich networks that cross-diverse stakeholders; encouraging the emergence of innovation; allowing self-organizing processes to occur; and supporting the process of leadership by encouraging stakeholders to learn and adapt. However, policymakers require concrete and quantitative feedback to support progress and this chapter presents an ecosystem tool as one way to measure and promote the transition to a systems approach.

Overall, the chapters in this book explore a variegated and heterogeneous entrepreneurial landscape that is characterized by historic path dependencies, rich microcultures and negotiated values.

## A POLICY AND PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE

Having explored the entrepreneurial landscape and discussed the chapter contributions of the book, it is important to consider what this means for policy and practice. The policy and development literature explores “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to produce favorable development outcomes (Ray, 2001). Top-down expertise has been criticized for ignoring local contexts, while bottom-up vernacular expertise can ignore strategic approaches and best practices available elsewhere (Apostolopoulos, Chalvantzis, Liargovas, Newbery, & Rokou, 2020; Lowe, Phillipson, Proctor, & Gkartzios, 2019). The entrepreneurship literature suggests that context is particularly important for entrepreneurial outcomes (Baker & Welter, 2020).

Petrylaite and Robson discuss how policy interventions work best when they are designed against the local context and consider aspects such as gender, age

and local cultures. Donaldson and Villagrasa suggest that the consideration of local entrepreneurial values, entrepreneurial spaces and entrepreneurial practices are essential to the development of a functioning entrepreneurial ecosystem. In addition, and of particular relevance to the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic, Pellow et al. recognize that some regions are structurally more vulnerable, entering recession earlier and emerging later, making it paramount that policies designed to support economic recovery fully consider the local context.

Although the notion of developing policy that fully considers the local context is both logical and sensible, the chapters presented in this book suggest a disconnect between policymakers and the entrepreneurs, businesses and places that they serve. Several broad areas are evidenced in the book that appear to be contributing to this disconnect. Policymakers are often driven by the need to deliver economic outcomes, leading them to focus on activities that are deemed to deliver higher economic returns and generate and distribute wealth in and across regions and places, such as export-led growth (Foster) or innovation-led startups (Tibaingana et al.). The pursuit of such economic outcomes is well-intentioned and often held against a belief that their achievement will also address social outcomes, such as improved living standards through better employment, higher wages, or improved productivity. This belief can however fail to address the more immediate needs of the people and businesses who coexist within a place. The failure of policymakers to address these immediate needs, such as the need for refugees to become self-reliant (Tibaingana et al.) or businesses in rural communities to sustain themselves (Foster) can suppress the achievement of the higher economic outcomes to which they aspire.

Foster highlights that the pursuit of policies that deliver higher economic returns are often applied to places where they simply do not fit. Policymakers have a temptation to apply policies that have been applied successfully in other places without considering the local social and economic context. Pellow et al. suggest that policymakers tend to be relatively risk adverse and one dimensional in their thinking; seeing the world through their own policy lens and therefore failing to consider the wider policy perspectives that could lead to more radical and innovative thinking. This narrow view could in part explain why the generic economic thinking discussed above is applied by policymakers inappropriately.

Of perhaps greatest consequence to the disconnection of policymakers and places is the lack of effective local policy implementation structures (Pellow et al.). Montaletti et al. suggest that policymakers need to have the ability to pull together the multiple streams of problem-policy-politics-platform together across political cycles in a more persistent and sustainable way. Pellow et al. suggest that these multiple streams have not been effectively aligned in areas such as the North East of England, where local policy implementation structures prevent new radical thinking. This reinforces the view of Zivkovic that local socioeconomic development is reliant on a complex adaptive system that effectively connects the key components and their interactions together. A failure to do this is evidenced in inefficiency, fragmentation, poor collaboration,

confusion and unnecessary tension between stakeholders (Donaldson and Villagrasa, Montaletti et al., Pellow et al., Zivkovic).

In considering how this disconnect between policy and practice may be reduced, we make a number of recommendations below for policymakers:

1. *Reposition enterprise as a means of tackling social issues:* ESOs often address poorly constructed policy through flexing the design of their interventions to address the local needs that would otherwise have prohibited the achievement of policymakers desired outcomes. In doing so they bridge the institutional gaps between siloed policymakers (Kistruck et al., 2015), joining the dots locally and helping policy-makers to understand how enterprise and entrepreneurship can support the achievement of wider policy outcomes. Tibaingana et al. for instance suggested that supporting refugee self-reliance did not deliver against ESOs original policy goals but did perform an important service delivering social and economic outcomes. Foster equally highlighted how entrepreneurs with “non-economic” motivations could be supported to develop economic stability and resilience in rural places. These scenarios represent an opportunity for ESO to target policymakers who are tasked with delivering both social and economic outcomes, thus positioning enterprise as a solution and creating better alignment between policy and practice.
2. *Develop dynamic, adaptive and intelligence-led tools for consensus building:* Donaldson and Villagrasa point to the need for entrepreneurial ecosystems to cater to individual entrepreneur’s idiosyncratic needs and ambitions. Tibaingana et al. and Eid suggest that intelligence gathered from ESOs and BAs is essential in gaining a deep understanding of service users, providing data and intelligence to enable continuous policy review. Petrylaite and Robson and Zivkovic suggest that adaptive learning or online tools can support continuous policy review through the collection of data and insights. Montaletti et al. highlight the importance of embedding platforms into the streams of analysis to enable effective joined-up policymaking. Each suggests that policy development is a dynamic process that best adapts to intelligence, insights and events.
3. *Apply systems thinking to the creation of local policy implementation:* Pellow et al. suggested that effective entrepreneurial ecosystems need effective local policy implementation structures and Montaletti et al. suggested that the characteristics of an effective structure would provide policymakers the ability to pull together the multiple streams of problem–policy–politics. From a practitioners’ view, this may be achieved practically through the creation of dynamic local policy systems that are underpinned by adaptive data and intelligence processes and structured around the key implementation components (Zivkovic) of governance, strategy, funding and delivery.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the following chapters present a compelling journey through the entrepreneurial landscape and one which offers distinctive viewpoints and