

Bricolage and its Strategic Connotations: A Study of Greek Social Entrepreneurs in Times of Crisis

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This study examines how social entrepreneurs contend with severe resource constraints in times of crisis. To explain entrepreneurial responses to such limitations, researchers use the concept of bricolage, which involves creatively combining scarce resources to solve problems. Although previous studies have disregarded bricolage's potential strategic connotations, this paper uses qualitative data from 44 informants in 20 Greek social enterprises to reveal the coexistence and entwinement of strategic and bricolage behaviours. The paper adopts a strategy-as-practice (SaP) lens to conceptualize this phenomenon subsequently. SaP refers to strategy as the joint actions, interactions and negotiations among actors that shape an integrated organizational whole. SaP and bricolage have fundamental commonalities (e.g. taking a practice view of inventive behaviours), making them ontologically compatible. Two reciprocal ideas emerge from this exploration: 'formational bricolage' can organically shape an emergent strategy, while 'strategic bricolage' guides and, in some instances, constrains bricolage behaviours and practices.

Introduction

The field of social entrepreneurship research has expanded since key early publications (e.g. Dees, 1998; Mair and Marti, 2006) and has continued to receive attention from leading management journals (Bonfanti *et al.*, 2024; Glasbeek, Wickert and Schad, 2024; Hiettschold *et al.*, 2023; Vedula *et al.*, 2022). Social entrepreneurship encompasses harnessing business principles and tools to address societal and environmental issues like unemployment, ecological deterioration and unequal access to medication (e.g. Haugh, 2007; Mair, Battilana and Cardenas, 2012; Santos, 2012). Social entrepreneurs often work with stretched resources (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Loosemore, 2015), even more so than commercial entrepreneurs with easier access to funding (Zahra, Newey and Li, 2014). To keep their ventures alive, social entrepreneurs must actively 'make do with whatever is at hand' (Lévi-Strauss,

1966, p. 17). *Bricolage* captures this idea and is a central concept in social entrepreneurship research (Kwong *et al.*, 2019). It is a behavioural response to resource scarcity (Gundry *et al.*, 2011). A widely adopted definition of bricolage in the social entrepreneurship literature is making do by innovatively combining scarce, underutilized or neglected resources to solve problems and exploit opportunities, thus allowing firms to keep their resource consumption to a bare minimum (Baker and Nelson, 2005). In this respect, Desa (2012, p. 733) discusses social entrepreneurs' 'pragmatic uses [of] fragmentary resources', highlighting the adaptive and practical nature of bricoleurs' agency when dealing with constraints and immediate needs or challenges.

However, an acknowledgement of potential strategic connotations is missing from bricolage conceptualizations. I argue that scholars should consider *strategy* – defined as shaping venture paths (Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2020; Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) – in bricolage research. This perspective would offer a more precise depiction of bricolage's empirical manifestations, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Alsharif *et al.*, 2021; Tsilika *et al.*, 2020; Witell *et al.*, 2017), and contribute to its

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ongoing theoretical development. In this context, this paper argues that it is insufficient to claim that utilizing stretched resources for problem-solving, developing solutions or exploiting opportunities is inherently strategic. Thus, the study aligns with the growing interest in examining the relationship between bricolage and strategy (Chen, 2024; Visscher, Heusinkveld and O'Mahoney, 2017).

The paper draws on qualitative data from 20 Greek social enterprises. In recent years, Greece has experienced severe and intertwined economic, political and social crises. Consequently, Greek social enterprises have invariably faced severe resource scarcity. In this study, bricolage has emerged as an anticipated, validated and commonly adopted entrepreneurial coping mechanism for organizational survival amid crises, forming a distinct basis for an examination of bricolage's potential strategic connotations.

This study's contributions are twofold. First, the findings acknowledge that bricolage behaviours and strategic behaviours may intertwine rather than merely coexist as separate phenomena. For instance, it shows that social entrepreneurs creatively address real-world problems with limited resources *while* shaping venture paths (i.e. they form strategies; Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2020). Such findings provide a theoretical rationale for conceptualizing the two phenomena together. Second, rather than risk depicting strategic behaviours as narrow bricolage traits, this paper opts for conceptual blending, involving a reciprocal idea exchange between established research fields (Cornelissen and Durand, 2014; Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon, 2011). Specifically, it draws on the strategy-as-practice (SaP) literature, which defines strategy as the joint actions, interactions and negotiations among actors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). SaP and bricolage share ontological characteristics (Okhuyesen and Bonardi, 2011), such as a practice view of inventive behaviours and an acknowledgement of ambiguity, unpredictability and complexity. Consequently, SaP can offer valuable insights for conceptualizing the strategic behaviours that manifest alongside bricolage, while bricolage, in turn, can enrich SaP research by offering perspectives on resourceful practices in constrained environments.

Theoretical background

Characterizing bricolage

Bricolage is a well-recognized concept in organization studies (e.g. Rao, Monin and Durand, 2005; Steffens *et al.*, 2023), entrepreneurship research (e.g. Kuckertz *et al.*, 2020; Stinchfield, Nelson and Wood, 2013) and social entrepreneurship studies (e.g. Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey, 2010; Waddock and Steckler, 2016). In social entrepreneurship literature (e.g. Bacq *et al.*, 2015),

which this paper addresses, a widely adopted definition of bricolage is 'making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities' (Baker and Nelson, 2005, p. 333). Baker and Nelson (2005) add that bricolage often utilizes untapped and degraded resources, enabling companies to operate with minimal means. Baker and Nelson (2005) characterize bricoleurs as improvising constructivists who challenge perceived limitations, seeking to build creative solutions where others would quit if given similar resources. Thus, bricolage is an act of positive rebellion against the institutional status quo (Phillips and Tracey, 2007). Selz (1975, p. 161) similarly portrays bricoleurs as creators, shaping 'the beautiful and useful out of the dump heap of human life'. Even though this idea of creative constructivism may evoke terms like 'tinkering' (Phillips and Tracey, 2007), 'cobbling together' (Desa, 2012) and 'hacking' (Baskaran and Mehta, 2016), bricolage does not inherently entail shallowness. Appropriately, organization theorists Duymedjian and Ruling (2010) depict bricolage as a 'deeply embedded regime of action' (p. 142). This perspective suggests that bricolage incorporates metaphysical principles such as systems thinking and nonlinearity and portrays bricoleurs as akin to artists or skilled craft workers who cultivate intimate relationships with the elements they work with. Here, the bricoleurs' internalizing of material properties shapes their nature of knowing (i.e. epistemology), which involves sensing what works and intuitively responding by reusing and recombining scarce resources (Harper, 1987). Duymedjian and Ruling (2010) argue that bricolage is rooted in empirical realities where ongoing interactions – rather than dyadic cycles of planning and doing – shape emerging outcomes in the moment. In this way, the bricoleurs' metaphysical, epistemological and empirical positioning allows them to tackle problems creatively, usually under resource scarcity (Ladstaetter, Plank and Hemetsberger, 2018; Papazu, 2021). As research has progressed, scholars have developed numerous bricolage depictions (see Table 1) to capture its different manifestations.

Emerging critiques of bricolage

While bricolage has garnered significant scholarly attention, it has also faced criticism. Baker and Nelson (2005) initially noted that excessive bricolage across numerous activities (i.e. 'parallel bricolage') could hinder venture growth. Senyard *et al.* (2014) further examined the negative effects of bricolage in firms. Kickul *et al.* (2018) questioned whether the portrayal of bricolage as inherently positive is justified, arguing that associating bricolage mainly with commendable outcomes could reflect a one-sided, essentially biased ontology (comparably, see Fischer and Sitkin, 2023 in the leadership domain). Similarly, Reypens, Bacq and Milanov (2021) recognized the

Table 1. Various bricolage depictions in the literature

Name	Description	Key references
Cognitive bricolage	Creatively using existing knowledge and experiences to solve problems	Fan and Zhai (2023)
Collaborative bricolage	Emphasizing relational dynamics	De Klerk (2015)
Collective bricolage	Acting across organizational boundaries with others	Duymedjian and Rüling (2010); Khurshid and Snell (2021)
Component bricolage	Utilizing readily available components that were initially designed and built for other purposes	Ravishankar (2016)
Convention-based bricolage	Relying on conventions to guide interactions among bricoleurs over short periods and in non-exclusive spaces	Duymedjian and Rüling (2010)
Corporate bricolage	Creating solutions with what is available in large firms	Miller (2021)
Cultural bricolage	Creatively reconstructing cultural resources to restore social and cultural connections after they have been weakened	Langevang and Namatovu (2019)
Digital bricolage	Coordination mechanisms involving digital assets and tools	Rüling and Duymedjian (2014)
Entrepreneurial bricolage	A synonym for bricolage in business ventures	Baker and Nelson (2005)
Entrepreneurship education bricolage	Combining students, business mentors and university resources to develop innovative solutions	Kannampuzha and Suoranta (2016)
External bricolage	Entrepreneurial bricolage with an external orientation	Li and Yu (2023)
Familiar bricolage	Long-term interactions and the physical presence of bricoleurs in a shared space, enabling informal collaboration through close relationships and trust	Duymedjian and Rüling (2010)
Family-based bricolage	A subset of collective bricolage involving kinsfolk	Scuotto <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Financial bricolage	Using easily accessible, small-scale financial resources	Kariv and Coleman (2015)
Human capital bricolage	A means of human resource replacement	Banerjee and Campbell (2009); Steffens <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Historical bricolage	Reconstructing past narratives of the environment and cultural practices	Illia and Zamparini (2016)
Ideational bricolage	Emphasizing perceived benefits instead of necessity	Mair and Marti (2009); Desa and Basu (2013)
Identity bricolage	Innovatively recombining cultural categories for identity formation	Glynn and Navis (2013)
Input bricolage	Creatively using available (e.g. low-cost) materials and human resources to solve problems or seize opportunities	Yu <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Inventor bricolage	Leveraging existing inventors to exploit patent-driven opportunities	Banerjee and Campbell (2009)
Institutional bricolage	Creating new institutions by utilizing elements from past and present institutions while making the most of scarce resources	Campbell (1997); Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey (2010)
Internal bricolage	Entrepreneurial bricolage with an internal orientation	Li and Yu (2023)
Intrapreneurial bricolage	Using limited resources within a large organization to overcome constraints and mobilize resources	Halme, Lindeman and Linna (2012)
Labour bricolage	Involving customers and suppliers in projects	Desa (2012)
Linguistic bricolage	Resourcefully using language to express identity in diverse contexts	Janssens and Steyaert (2014)
Localized bricolage	Reconfiguring local resources into new products and services	Cheung and Kwong (2017)
Market bricolage	Leveraging non-business relationships into business opportunities	Yu <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Material bricolage	Focusing on tangible resources	Desa (2012); Kang (2017)
Necessity-based bricolage	Decreasing reliance on dominant suppliers of primary resources and minimizing input expenses	Desa and Basu (2013)
Network bricolage	Depicting founding teams' tendencies to leverage pre-existing contacts	Baker, Miner and Eesley (2003)
Organizational bricolage	Creatively using available resources to solve problems and innovate inside an organization	Pina e Cunha, Cunha and Kamoche (1999)
Parallel bricolage	Managing multiple projects that use bricolage simultaneously	Baker and Nelson (2005)
Phronetic bricolage	The practical activity of 'wise managers' who construct knowledge by drawing from diverse methods and data sources	Trnavcevic and Biloslavo (2017)
Policy bricolage	Policymakers pragmatically integrating ideas from various sources	Mason and Araujo (2020)

Table 1. (Continued)

Name	Description	Key references
Political bricolage	Creating new political institutions by repurposing elements from prior and existing institutions	Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey (2010)
Pragmatic bricolage	Adapting to the practical needs of social systems while integrating diverse viewpoints without adhering to a predetermined formula	Heracleous (2022)
Resource bricolage	Emphasizing resource recombinations	Tasavori, Kwong and Pruthi (2018); Abid <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Selective bricolage	Using bricolage in specific circumstances rather than uniformly	Baker and Nelson (2005); Hong and Snell (2023)
Skills bricolage	Using non-material (human) resources in bricolage	Desa (2012)
Social bricolage	Emphasizing social value creation, stakeholder participation and persuasion	Zahra <i>et al.</i> (2009); Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey (2010)
Social venture bricolage	Predominantly linking to social development (e.g. health and education) rather than market-driven outcomes	Desa and Basu (2013)
Spatial bricolage	Using the resources available in the nearby physical environment	Korsgaard, Müller and Welter (2021)
Strategic bricolage	Using available resources and relationships to create long-term opportunities and sustained working relationships	De Klerk (2015)
Symbolic bricolage	Creating legitimate new institutions by utilizing pre-existing cultural symbols	Campbell (1997)
Technical bricolage	Combining existing institutional principles in new ways for instrumental purposes	Campbell (1997)
Technological bricolage	Creatively using limited technological resources	Su, Zhang and Ma (2023)
Top management team bricolage	Top management teams' efforts to resolve resource constraints	Chang <i>et al.</i> (2022)

adverse consequences of bricolage (e.g. product quality issues), and Steffens *et al.* (2023) examined the potentially harmful effects of bricolage on profits and sales. These critiques reveal tensions surrounding bricolage (Shepherd and Suddaby, 2017), which are essential for ensuring the 'health and vitality' of its academic discourse (Solinger, Heusinkveld and Cornelissen, 2024, p. 3). This study extends such critiques and explores the lack of theoretical linkages between bricolage and strategy, motivated by three considerations.

First, interest in this linkage arose from the observation that most bricolage depictions (see Table 1) show an absence of explicit strategic connotations. As Mintzberg and Waters (1985, p. 257) eloquently put it, strategies are 'patterns in streams of actions' that arise from and recursively govern daily realities in a double bind. Accordingly, strategies move ventures towards a more integrated whole (Baldacchino *et al.*, 2015; Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005). By contrast, bricolage depictions chiefly highlight making do with limited resources in novel ways to solve problems (Baker and Nelson, 2005), develop solutions (Miller, 2021) or exploit opportunities (Banerjee and Campbell, 2009), none of which are *inherently* strategic. Even when strategies arise as bricoleurs 'are making it up as they go along' (Senyard *et al.*, 2014, p. 215), scholars overlook this aspect. Some exceptions include the works of De Klerk (2015) and, recently, Wee, Scheepers and Tian (2022) and Khan *et al.* (2023). However, these studies address strategic bricolage only in a

brief and cursory manner. Moreover, Chen (2024, p. 4933) qualifies bricolage as 'strategizing by doing' without clarifying how the interactions between actions and strategy develop. Lastly, Chang *et al.* (2022, p. 206) call the link between bricolage and strategy a 'black box' and urge exploration through additional theoretical lenses. Overall, the prevailing academic interpretation firmly situates bricolage in the realm of action, leaving its potential intersection with strategy implicit. This oversight may result in an overly restricted understanding of bricolage, limiting its explanatory capacity in describing the nuances and complexities of real-world bricolage manifestations. Recognizing the strategic implications of bricolage, though, one can argue that its dynamics – manifested through continuous streams of actions – potentially shape and refine strategies that align dispersed business elements (Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005). Equally, these strategies may recursively influence the bricolage process. The present study explores such interplay.

Second, acknowledging that scholars have linked bricolage with ventures surviving highly resource-constrained, uncertain and dynamic environments (e.g. Baier-Fuentes *et al.*, 2023; Santos *et al.*, 2022; Ying, Wang and Liu, 2022) raised questions about how the strategy literature might inform bricolage in this context. Kaplan (2008), for instance, is a strategy scholar who describes how firms survive periods of high uncertainty by strategically and creatively leveraging ambiguo-

ous information resources from turbulent surroundings. Moreover, Wenzel, Stanske and Lieberman (2020) offer strategies that enhance firms' chances of survival during crises, whereas Pollard and Hotho (2006) recognize strategies as critical organizational instruments for addressing crises. Such studies highlight the pervasive nature and importance of strategy during periods of ambiguity and upheaval. While bricolage and strategy can exhibit overlapping characteristics (Hernández-Barahona, San Román and Gil-López, 2023), it is important to exercise caution against conflating the two – that is, treating bricolage as a standalone strategic approach (e.g. Mateus and Sarkar, 2024; Potluri, Ananthram and Phani, 2024; Yuan, Liu and Lyu, 2024). Therefore, a deeper investigation is needed to understand how bricolage and strategy might interrelate.

The third research motivation is grounded in practice. Although scholars have addressed bricolage and strategy separately, practitioners may not necessarily compartmentalize these concepts. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011, p. 341) argue that practitioners experience and navigate reality's 'irreducibly situational nature', suggesting that breaking down reality into smaller parts may come at the expense of overlooking essential characteristics of the whole. To mitigate this risk, management scholars may benefit from adopting a more holistic stance (Harper, 1987). However, only a few entrepreneurship scholars have shown interest in jointly exploring bricolage and strategy, and progress in this area remains limited. For instance, Salunke, Weerawardena and McColl-Kennedy (2013, p. 1085) define bricolage as a 'strategic combining of existing resources', although it remains unclear what role bricolage plays in this situation. Furthermore, Kwong *et al.* (2019, p. 16) perceive bricolage as a 'legitimate business strategy' to help entrepreneurs facing resource constraints and crises 'to fully utilize the meagre resources that they have in their possession', although the strategic nature of this approach is unclear. Finally, Ott, Eisenhardt and Bingham (2017) explore strategy formation, arguing that bricolage helps scholars perceive entrepreneurs as simultaneously thinking and acting while noting the theoretical gaps in how these concepts interrelate. Thus, the nexus between bricolage and strategy remains a largely unexplored area.

Methodology

Empirical setting

Greece provided a severely resource-deprived context to study. The country's debt crisis in 2008 led to severe austerity measures, an economic meltdown, the mass emigration of skilled workers and an influx of migrants from war zones, depleting institutional resources for years. Then, in 2020, the COVID-19

pandemic triggered another economic contraction of 10% after modest annual growth of 2% between 2017 and 2019. This resource-scarce environment provided a suitable setting for observing and analysing bricolage behaviours that might remain hidden in more conventional circumstances.

Sampling and data collection

This study investigated social entrepreneurs in Greece. While social entrepreneurial ventures often operate with scarce resources (Doherty, Haugh and Lyon, 2014; Loosemore, 2015), economic crises inevitably worsen the situation. Hence, bricolage is an indispensable approach for social entrepreneurs to utilize their meagre resources (Kwong *et al.*, 2019). Data sampling activities began by mapping out the social enterprise landscape in Greece in October 2016. This involved Internet searches, accessing social media platforms, online forums and agendas of local business events such as those organized by the British Council in Athens, identifying award-winning social business initiatives, running an inventory of business incubator participants, assessing public sector institutions' activities, reading domestic and international news coverage on entrepreneurial activity in Greece, accessing over 20 European Commission policy papers on social entrepreneurship (e.g. European Commission, 2014), reviewing the pursuits of savvy Greek entrepreneurs and checking a Greek government registry of social enterprises. A comprehensive list of Greek social enterprises emerged from the research, and companies that could be collaborators were contacted. Considering the high probability of startup failure, social enterprises with three or more employees, a functional online presence, visible engagements in the local community and being operational for at least 1 year were of specific interest. I emailed these firms and followed up with a telephone interview.

In late 2016, 11 telephone interviews were conducted with social entrepreneurs to engage potential collaborators, build rapport and explore empirical contexts. These were followed by 10 face-to-face interviews in January 2017. This field visit served to identify themes for social entrepreneurs. Given the multiple Greek crises, all interviewees had experienced significant resource shortages. In October 2017, another 12 face-to-face interviews focused on areas where the informants had encountered challenges. Because social enterprises in Greece are small entities, it was necessary to add more sites. Several social entrepreneurs introduced the author to peers with distinct perspectives (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011). The evolving data gradually influenced the sampling approach (Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004). For instance, at a later stage, the researcher deliberately searched for social enterprises using technology to address societal problems. Moreover, the

Table 2. Sampling and data collection

Aspect	Description
Sampling	Interviews, Internet searches, social media platforms, local business event agendas, award-winning social business initiatives, business incubator participants, public sector institutions, news coverage, European Commission policy papers and a Greek government registry.
Timeline and frequency	A total of 44 interviews were conducted at various stages: 11 telephone interviews in late 2016, 10 face-to-face interviews in January 2017, 12 face-to-face interviews in October 2017 and 11 additional interviews in the summer of 2022.
Participants	Greek social entrepreneurs have three or more employees, a functional online presence, visible local community engagement and at least 1 year of existence.
Procedures	Consent was obtained at the start of each interview and recorded in the audio file. The interviewer explained data management policies and assured anonymity.

interviewer obtained consent at the start of each interview, explained data management policies and assured participants of their anonymity to encourage open communication. During the COVID pandemic, another opportunity arose to scrutinize social entrepreneurship during a crisis. In the summer of 2022, while informants still had vivid recollections of steering their ventures through the pandemic, another round of data collection yielded 11 additional interviews with both prior and new informants, focusing on their experiences managing a business through a disruptive crisis. The study's evolving insights shaped the questions at this interview stage without divulging any conceptualizations. Concealing academic concepts like 'bricolage' from informants helped capture authentic responses. This data collection round proved instrumental in providing answers to the research inquiry. Working over an extended period deepened the relationship with informants while producing subtle changes in the study's theorizing.

Overall, this study drew on 44 interviews with representatives from 20 social enterprises in Greece. The primary data set consisted of transcribed interviews with company identifiers, sampling phase numbers and interview numbers. For instance, the label '04/Ph-02/03' refers to social enterprise 04, the second sampling moment and interview 03. The field trips complemented the interview data by producing personal notes from extensive city walks, enabling the author's deeper immersion in Greece's atmosphere during a crisis. The intervals between interview rounds allowed for capturing developments over time, rigorously analysing the empirical material and consulting the literature. In addition, the media channels of social enterprises, email exchanges with interviewees and policy papers on Greece's social enterprise sector informed this study. Table 2 summarizes the study's sampling and data collection.

Analysis

Coding. MAXQDA, a qualitative software tool, facilitated the analysis from a technical perspective, creating more space for 'meaning-making' (i.e. interpreting lan-

guage or material things; Flick, 2013). I first highlighted relevant in-vivo interview segments in MAXQDA and subsequently articulated first-order codes representing singular ideas from the informants' viewpoints. This initial analysis remained close to the interview data and did not use academic terminology. Next, provisional second-order categories were formed (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) to interpret the data related to groups of codes, thereby enriching their meaning. At that point, the analysis took a conceptual turn in interpreting empirical ideas while engaging with the literature relevant to the study. Thus, with little focused a priori knowledge at the study's outset, theoretical perspectives gradually took root (Locke, 1996). Social entrepreneurship scholars like Weerawardena and Mort (2006) have adopted a similar approach. Finally, aggregate dimensions developed to interweave the underlying categorical levels, alluding to complex overarching ideas or themes (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). Saturation was achieved when the data became confirmatory and robust in the final stages of data collection (Suddaby, 2006). Figure 1 illustrates the ensuing data structure, which further informs the findings section.

Focal concept. Pivotal studies (e.g. Baker and Nelson, 2005; Senyard *et al.*, 2014) have associated bricolage with making do with limited available means and applying resources in novel ways. Recurring empirical evidence of these behaviours emerged through the interviews. For instance, one social entrepreneur expressed resource scarcity by saying, 'I used my last salary to start [my new venture]' (02/Ph-01/01). Another informant from the retail food industry shared, 'In the beginning, [my day job] was my main income and how I paid my bills. I worked on [my new venture] after midnight' (05/Ph-01/01), referring in a subsequent interview to the emergent, intuitive nature of a fundraising campaign at the startup stage of her social business: 'We didn't have a specific goal. [...] We just knew that we didn't want to just go there and ask for money. We wanted it to be more creative and engage more people in supporting our cause' (05/Ph-02/01). Another social entrepreneur highlighted the creative potential of seemingly

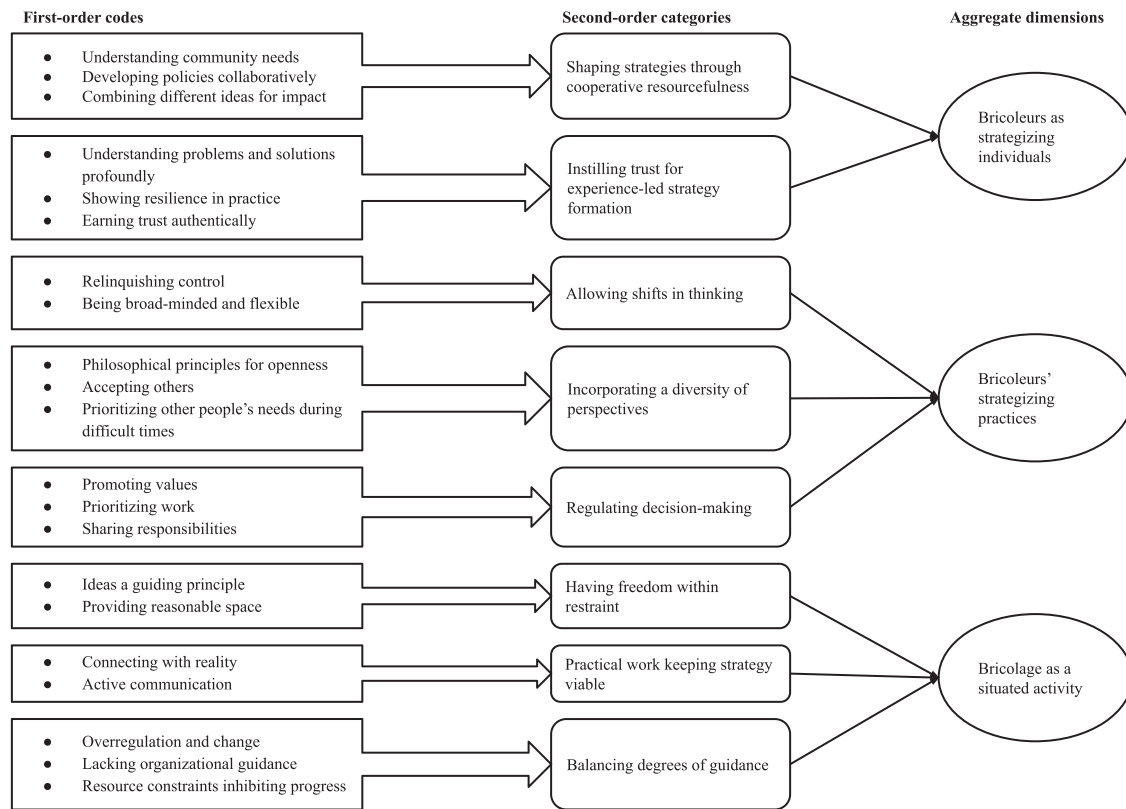


Figure 1. Data structure diagram.

unavailing resources: ‘On the beaches, you have all this plastic waste. So, we started a series of workshops to see what trash can be and explore how it’s a resource that hasn’t yet been activated’ (08/Ph-01/01). Most other participants in this study similarly emphasized applying scarce resources, such as money and time, in novel ways and using creativity to develop and sustain their ventures, predictably confirming bricolage’s prominence in social enterprises in a crisis context. This inductive study unpacks bricolage, particularly how it can embody strategic connotations, as explored in the next section, and how the SaP literature may inform conceptualizations of bricolage.

Findings

Bricoleurs as strategizing individuals

The first notable observation pertains to individual bricoleurs: social entrepreneurs and their staff addressed comprehensive real-world problems with scarce resources while learning, reflecting and collaborating to make pivotal decisions that impacted their ventures’ paths. Such strategizing (Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2020) arose integral to bricolage, facilitated through cooperative resourcefulness and trust-building.

Shaping strategies through cooperative resourcefulness. Some social entrepreneurs expressed a strong interest in their ventures’ general trajectories while engaging in bricolage. Hence, utilizing scarce resources went beyond creatively solving everyday issues to shaping strategies that diverge from established bricolage types (see Table 1). For example, one social entrepreneur in the health technology sector (09/Ph-01/01) demonstrated a keen awareness of his startup’s initial challenges: ‘I had to talk with many people from this industry to understand what exactly happens’, ‘We tried to find a way’ and ‘There was not a process’. The informant emphasized the leveraging of scarce resources (i.e. business contacts) while experimenting to advance his venture. These elements conform to established bricolage conceptualizations. However, acquiring knowledge about his venture’s subject matter, plotting a way forward and defining the necessary business processes *also* fundamentally changed his venture’s strategic orientation. While he bore the ultimate responsibility, his frequent use of ‘we’ during interviews highlighted a collaborative effort. Such cooperative strategizing efforts – characterized by learning, thinking and acting collaboratively (Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2020) – were integral to the social entrepreneur’s practices with co-workers amid the enduring constraints of limited resources in a crisis context. This entrepreneur provided further evidence

for this argument, explaining how he leveraged his current network, primarily established through his affiliation with a business incubator, for strategic purposes: 'We talked with people from the business world and other sectors [...], and they gave us important feedback on how to make our strategy and have a solid plan.' This remark shows that while bricolage was significant (e.g. drawing on pre-existing network resources), it also involved strategizing and informed the entrepreneur's understanding of market dynamics, venture positioning and operating models.

Instilling trust for experience-led strategy formation. A social entrepreneur addressing refugee unemployment demonstrated a similar interest in experience-led strategy formation while inevitably employing bricolage in Greece's crisis-ridden context. He explained that he and his colleagues rely on their instincts about potential objectives and subsequently invest heavily in pragmatically developing their ideas: 'We are testing. We are trying many things. We try many ideas' (02/Ph-02/01). This response could be viewed as representing conventional bricolage, emphasizing tinkering to get things to work with minimal resource expenditures. However, the entrepreneur conveyed an extra, crucial layer of meaning by adding: 'We do not have a problem with making mistakes because we know that to build something long-term, we have to make mistakes' (02/Ph-02/01). Thus, 'testing' and 'trying' are not only about attempts to fix everyday issues through bricolage; they can also include real-time strategizing, as indicated by his allusion to building 'something long-term'. However, involving other organizational members in the process, which required a trusting team environment, was not automatic for this entrepreneur. His willingness to relinquish control was critical in establishing this environment, as highlighted by his struggle to loosen his grip on his venture (02/Ph-03/01):

It's very difficult when you have sacrificed so much for this. It's very difficult to trust, [...] to give something very important to others. That was my main problem: not having control. But now, there are many things I don't have any idea about, which is amazing because it's the first time that I trust people.

The informant's comments imply that relinquishing control to create a trust-giving environment had become a valuable intangible resource, enabling various aspects to run without his involvement ('there are many things I don't have any idea about'). This occurrence seemed highly personal to the entrepreneur ('which is amazing because it's the first time that I trust people'), indicating that strategy involved more than clinically directing a company to move from one state to another. Thus, the leader created space for others to significantly contribute to shaping the venture's trajectory, often without

their leader knowing. Table 3 expands the depiction of individual bricoleurs as strategizing practitioners.

Bricoleurs' strategizing practices

The second prominent observation concerns bricolage practices, the substructures guiding the informants' actions and behaviours, underscoring the importance of embracing sudden shifts in thinking and incorporating diverse opinions while regulating decision-making (Rouleau, 2013).

Allowing shifts in thinking. Informants indicated that shifts in thinking could suddenly produce entirely different strategies. For example, a social entrepreneur in the arts sector who was under time pressure and faced resource constraints mentioned 'We needed a lot of time for our many projects, which we didn't have. We didn't even manage to translate our website' (07/Ph-01/03). As he planned to also develop a bespoke software solution for supertitling theatre plays, he realized an alternative option was available. A business contact had a product to drastically expedite the entrepreneur's time-to-market of a service offering: 'I realized that this person has 15 years of experience. He has the contacts. He has well-working software, so why develop my own?' (07/Ph-01/03). This intuitive insight was more than network bricolage, as it was swiftly incorporated into his company's strategy as a guiding principle: 'And that is [...] a shift, within me and the strategy [...] We need collaborations, and we need to define what is the core of our work and what is not necessary for us to do. Let's give it to someone doing it better' (02/Ph-02/01). This example shows how bricolage in action, pragmatically utilizing 'resources at hand' such as existing business contacts and their resource pools, can also lead to strategic reorientations that help ventures to navigate resource-deprived environments. This move towards collaboration for matters outside the firm's core competencies was not premeditated; it emerged unexpectedly from practice.

Incorporating a diversity of perspectives. Another social entrepreneur indicated keenness for involving her team and maintaining a broad outlook on her venture while reducing her workload: 'I understood that being in control all the time makes you very narrow-minded and difficult to move [...] because you need to control everyone else. So, this requires a lot of time and effort, and then you cannot move because you're too heavy' (08/Ph-01/01). By fostering a more inclusive and collaborative environment, she sought to avoid becoming 'narrow-minded', thus enhancing her ability to flexibly appreciate different perspectives, ideas and experiences. This practice would likely produce better strategies while helping to distribute the workload and reduce stress levels.

Table 3. *Bricoleurs as strategizing individuals*

In-vivo sample	First-order codes	Second-order categories
My venture came out of my personal experiences with poor care for the elderly in Greece. What we want to do is to help seniors and their families to find a trusted caregiver. And also help women over 45 to find a decent job, a nice environment to work in and with a good framework for their job. So, this is how my company started. (15/Ph-04/01)	Understanding community needs	Shaping strategies through cooperative resourcefulness
I think we have reached the point of the crisis where the museums have to find different funding. They had to approach other audiences to buy tickets and they started saying, 'Okay, maybe we are not the masters in the world; maybe we should start hearing what the community has to say, and what they really want'. (08/Ph-01/01)		
I'm communicating with other parties, and it has to be translated to investment, money, products and society. I want to bring multiple stakeholders together to cooperate in Greece. (17/Ph-04/01)	Developing policies collaboratively	
Sharing with the team and continuous evaluation was something that helped me very much. The team has great knowledge of the business, and they have helped me understand many times what the difficulties were. We evaluated each condition with different scenarios. (20/Ph-04/01)		
I am a teacher of the classics. I teach ancient tragedy. It sounds completely different, but it's not, because Plato and Aristotle and all the Greek philosophers have taught me many things, including how to understand what enterprising means. Philosophy helps me to sustain myself and the enterprise. (18/Ph-04/01)	Combining different ideas for impact	
We have kept all expired products in a storage area since 2013. Recently, we invited very poor people to participate in free upcycling workshops. Now, we have tens of amazing items from jewellery to coasters made out of trash. Vulnerable people have now been trained, energized and empowered. They have a job with us. So, it's a social and environmental upcycling project. It is doing very well despite the lockdown. (01/Ph-04/01)		
Recycling waste is not enough. You need to find the social causes of pollution. It's very important to focus on active citizens who will take decisions in the future. So, we focused on trash and the youth community, and we started a series of workshops to make them express themselves as artists and alter the meaning of trash. (08/Ph-01/01)	Understanding problems and solutions profoundly	Instilling trust for experience-led strategy formation
We are trying to figure out how to set up a proper business plan and business model. It's a bit weird because we are running a project and we have run projects. It's a double thing because we are doing something, and through this work, we're trying to see how to build a sustainable company. (06/Ph-02/01)		
I tried to find a regular job, but it was not easy because they told me 'You're a single mother of a little guy, so you cannot work late nights'. I then said 'Okay, I will create my own company'. (15/Ph-04/01)	Showing resilience in practice	
We went through many crises, but we always survived. The secret might be that we rely on people, not systems or programs. People contribute to all the programs, offer new ideas and the everyday functioning of the venture. And even if they make mistakes, we keep trusting them. (18/Ph-04/01)		
The people here don't have the time to enter business contests because they're doing real work. And I appreciate that more than seeing the very prominent examples again and again. Because if you see the business competition, it's very specific enterprises being promoted again and again. This is a problem. (04/Ph-01/01)	Earning trust authentically	
I asked my team if they still feel comfortable and trusting enough and if they understand that we only have rewards at the end. This is building trust big time because we don't have it down legally. This was the biggest challenge of all: to establish trust. Without trust, we have no company. (17/Ph-04/01)		

Regulating decision-making. The notion of diversity of opinions was not boundless; evidence suggested inherent limitations. For example, an informant (07/Ph-02/02) worked for a resource-strapped social enterprise that relied heavily on bricolage. (Her boss had indicated in two prior interviews that the venture had faced severe, prolonged financial problems for years.) The informant discussed managing an 'explosion of ideas' in the venture. Typically, these ideas came from her boss, whom she described as 'very enthusiastic', usually

arriving at work in the morning saying 'You know what, I have a new idea'. However, the boss's rapid, action-oriented style of mixing and matching ideas and resources to generate new actions sometimes created friction. Although the boss viewed specific options as instantly viable, the informant did not always concur with those perspectives. Thus, she embraced conducting strategic dialogues to decide whether and how to pursue an idea: 'At the end of the week, we usually do a kind of unofficial reflection. How was the week,

Table 4. *Bricoleurs' strategizing practices*

In-vivo sample	First-order codes	Second-order categories
My approach to leading the enterprise has changed. I'm not so involved. I don't see any reason to be because things can work perfectly without having someone always patronize them. I don't want to be patronizing the enterprise. (18/Ph-04/01)	Relinquishing control	Allowing shifts in thinking
Very quickly, the CEO stepped back from active management, and he only kept in contact with me [as the designated new CEO]. He stopped exchanging with everybody else in the team because the team would then refer to me. So, I was making all the decisions. (09/Ph-04/02)		
I have to have the mental flexibility to change and incorporate new insights to survive. I'm looking for income streams. I have no other choice but to be open. (17/Ph-04/01)	Being broadminded and flexible	
Of course, the practical aspects of our solidarity principle changed according to the specific needs of a situation. So, it was different during the economic crisis and the pandemic. And now, with the food prices that have come up, it switched again. So, we're trying to adapt to new challenges that emerge. (14/Ph-04/01)		
Our people here are not disabled at all. I found more disabilities in people that we call normal with, like, psychological disabilities, personal thinking disabilities and moral disabilities. In my philosophy, my people rely on themselves. (18/Ph-04/01)	Philosophical principles for openness	Incorporating diversity of perspectives
I am a paid volunteer. Solidarity and collective action have been present since I started. All its members accept these values, and they're present throughout the organization. (14/Ph-04/01)		
I try to give space where necessary. For example, with a telework discussion, I discussed it a lot with the team because there were a lot of feelings involved, like feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood. If you go to work every day and you're anxious [about street safety], teleworking is important. But with other subjects, maybe I close the discussion sooner because I can't negotiate everything. (09-Ph-04/01)	Accepting others	
I have a mentor. I've known him for the past 13 years. He's a great businessman, a great person and a friend. All our discussions affect me. I believe we need someone helping us to do this job. (15/Ph-04/01)		
We did martial arts in the mountains during the COVID lockdowns. That was not very legal. We also took them out in the countryside to do tai chi or gymnastics because it was not very good for my staff to be locked down, psychologically. (18/Ph-04/01)	Prioritizing other people's needs during difficult times	
If I don't have money to pay myself, like last winter, I don't pay myself. For me, the first important thing is for people to get paid. And if we have an issue as a company, then I can wait. It's normal for me. (15/Ph-04/01)		
I see my role as CEO as someone who wants to make sure that our principles and values are intact and that we adhere to them to make life easier for people around me, whether they are employees or they are from the extended make-up of the company. (01/Ph-03/01)	Promoting values	Regulating decision-making
We try to foster collaboration and a culture based on values and principles. This is very important because, in the past, there were many problems around this topic. (03/Ph-01/01)		
We speak about our ideas, like, we have this and this. We cannot do everything. We have to put our ideas in a long-term plan because we also have other priorities. So now we are prioritizing, which is difficult. Everything seems important. We work with different partners and want to try different collaborations to see what works. So, we need to be very open, but at the same time not too open, or else we lose our minds. (07/Ph-02/01)	Prioritizing work	
If one of our farmers doesn't have a product that is needed, then we discuss this with other small farmers locally and throughout Greece. With all of them, we discuss prices that are better than the market. So that helps the cooperative to function and the farmers to have a good income. (14/Ph-04/01)		
I try to share my experience with the staff. And every one of us has the opportunity to come up with new ideas and take action and have responsibility. (16/Ph-04/01)	Sharing responsibilities	
I try to value very much the employees' expertise and give them the feeling that they're responsible for what they're doing and that they're not told what to do for every little thing, for sure. And that, even for bigger things, their say is really important and needed. (09/Ph-04/02)		

or what was good for us?' She realized they 'cannot do everything'. Thus, while bricolage was a common approach, it was tempered by an overarching strategy: a 'long-term plan', in her words. This approach provided

a way to harness the plethora of ideas and allowed her and the firm 'to be very open, but [...] not lose [their] minds'. Table 4 elaborates on strategizing practices in bricolage.

Bricolage as a situated activity

The third key observation recognizes bricolage practices as situated activities, acknowledging bricolage as manifesting within broader strategic contexts that can either support or inhibit its functioning.

Having freedom within restraint. During a conversation with a co-founder of a social enterprise in the arts sector (08/Ph-01/01), the need for an overarching vision was emphasized, especially considering the crisis in Greece: 'I think if you don't have a strong vision [...], it's very difficult to overcome all the challenges.' This social enterprise faced severe funding issues, a lack of access to professional networks, environmental instability and a brain drain of qualified young Greeks that complicated staff recruitment – thus, the enterprise was compelled to engage in active bricolage. The co-founder noted that having a broader strategic perspective acted as a dynamic superstructure, 'a specific goal' or 'umbrella' under which colleagues 'work as they want' (08/Ph-01/01). This freedom within restraint allowed new hires and novel business partnerships to exhibit unique characteristics while operating 'in the same vision' (08/Ph-01/01). Such dynamics suggest that strategy could curb bricolage by making do with scarce resources while considering a broader game plan. This distinction depicts bricolage as a situated activity interrelating with its strategic surroundings.

Similarly, a social enterprise actively engaged in network bricolage (Baker, Miner and Eesley, 2003) adopted regular planning techniques to prioritize and guide other vital activities (09/Ph-01/01): 'We are asking [our beneficiaries] questions to understand what they need. After this, we collect all this data and design a pilot program [...] to test everything we come up with. [...] I think this is a good process.' The phrase 'test everything we come up with' indicates the development of entrepreneurial services using resources methodologically while adhering to a more comprehensive strategic framework that reflects the broader needs of beneficiaries. This approach suggests that ventures employ adaptive problem-solving based on their unique circumstances and constraints, supporting the idea of bricolage as a context-dependent activity.

Practical work keeping strategy viable. Another social entrepreneur warned against being led by the monetary focus of fellow social entrepreneurs rather than following a clear strategy (02/Ph-03/01):

Other non-profits follow the money, meaning when a foundation announces a call about a grant, the non-profits usually follow this path to get the grant. So, they change their projects; they change their operations; they change everything. [...] They focus on any topic to stay alive.

This point suggests that resourceful behaviours could be counterproductive, while highlighting the disadvantages of straying from the venture's broader vision. The informant indicated that 'following the money' in his company's market meant prematurely writing off previous investments and striving to change activities – as implied above – while intensifying competition among social ventures opportunistically pursuing the same scarce resources. However, in trying to meet the requirements of prospective sponsors, social ventures often end up becoming like others. By contrast, the informant argued that his venture's strategic consistency over time allowed for developing 'in-depth expertise within their field', thereby further strengthening its unique positioning while gradually facing fewer competitors in its market segment. Sustaining this enduring strategic focus can be a long, treacherous journey involving a significant degree of making do with limited means. The informant (02/Ph-03/01) explained this experience:

We've been working on this voluntarily for two years. We've quit our jobs to do that. I don't think many people have the patience to do this. [...] Now we started seeing that this can take us somewhere, to the next step, because we're generating income.

Working on a venture full-time for 2 years without pay during a domestic crisis shows patience and dedication. Understandably, the interviewee felt relieved to finally witness financial gains and progress towards his venture's objectives.

Balancing degrees of guidance. Nevertheless, staff in social enterprises expressed sensitivity to overly controlling or detailed overarching structures. For instance, informants explained that the government imposed excessive control and unnecessary restrictions: 'The state always tries to create many rules and details; [they] believe they must regulate everything. So, they create a framework that is not very productive for the social economy' (03/Ph-01/01). Such experiences may shape employees' general preference for autonomy and their dismissal of others trying to enforce their own vision, as illustrated by the following comment from an employee informant (03/Ph-03/03):

They [regular employees] cannot do anything without asking [the director], unfortunately. That makes people tired. They organize something, and then [the director] has another idea, interferes, and the idea is [gone]. You have to let people do things.

These excerpts show a delicate balance between overarching superstructures (e.g. regulatory frameworks, strategies and internal decision-making mechanisms) and the flexibility needed to achieve goals. Powerful entities (e.g. the state or an individual company director) can

Table 5. *Bricolage as a situated activity*

In-vivo sample	First-order codes	Second-order categories
Gradually, the number of sponsors and staff is increasing, which helps us to increase our social impact every year. Through a comprehensive plan that we have started to implement, the goal for the next year is to have two more employees. (20/Ph-04/01)	Ideas a guiding principle	Having freedom within restraint
When we started, we were saying 'money is not a motivation'. Which is true. But after 1 year, you know, working a lot for the company, suddenly money <i>is</i> a motivation, <i>becomes</i> a motivation. Just to give something back to our staff, something financially. (02/Ph-1/01)		
I'm very grateful to all the members of my team. Because they believe in our vision and they give all their energy to do our best, of course, they do that because they have the freedom to do what they want. We do not do any micromanagement, we support their ideas, but they are responsible, and they can take decisions. (09/Ph-04/01)	Providing reasonable space	
Our experts propose decisions that, in most cases, I consider to be final. If I see an important reason that we have to change direction, then I step in. But I always ask people to inform me of the context, give all the details and explain why they're proposing this decision. I try to have them in a leading role in their areas. (09/Ph-04/02)		
I do a part of my everyday operations. The day-to-day work and helping the team to go on. Also, I engage my network, which prompts me to think a lot and envision how we're going to grow and where we want to go. (15/Ph-04/01)	Connecting with reality	Practical work keeping strategy viable
I have learned more about giving tasks to people. That's something I practised a lot. Like creating a task, explaining to somebody what is expected, giving them some margin to be creative or suggest things, but also implementing what is needed. And then following up on how this has been done and whether it needs adjustment. (09/Ph-04/2)		
There's much informal communication between the members. So, they became closer during the [Greek] crisis and the pandemic. But that's not a formal thing; it's something that happens. (14/Ph-4/01)	Active communication	
A huge part of our work is to raise awareness among donors. So, this involves a lot of communication. Because we are a small organization, we only have one communications expert. So, we try to collaborate in different ways. (09/Ph-4/02)		
I am not formally a social enterprise, and that's because I wanted to make fast decisions and build up my own team [which the standard legal model for social enterprises apparently inhibits]. The for-profit form lets me have a functional team that is dedicated, with the same horizon and the same vision. (17/Ph-04/01)	Overregulation and change	Balancing degrees of guidance
For social enterprises, the big problem is the bureaucracy in our country. We needed 6 months to legalize our enterprise. This is the period needed just to establish it. (16/Ph-04/01)		
The project didn't finish simply because the ministry changed policy suddenly. This happens often in Greece, so we couldn't go on. The ministry had promised to pay some money. And then, in the end, they said no, we don't have money. So, everything collapsed because we had planned on what they'd told us. (03/Ph-02/03)		
So, the business part is expanding. From the beginning of this year, we recognized that sometimes the structure is getting a bit loose. Because of our flat organization, you have to be very focused all the time. These days, we discuss finding a way to change the organization structure. (14/Ph-04/01)	Lacking organizational guidance	
We say something, and we don't stick to it as a strict rule. This is a problem. For somebody who sees us from the outside, we're disorganized. I've heard it from the German volunteers who were here. The organization was a big problem for them. (03/Ph-2/02)		
So, our sponsor came from Austria amid capital controls, but our resources were very low. We were in shock; it was a societal shock to have our bank accounts frozen in our country. (17/Ph-04/01)	Resource constraints inhibiting progress	
We have 10% inflation, so one of our employees started working a second job a couple of months ago; three or four times, he works in a coffee place. We want to increase the salaries, but if we increase the salaries, we'll have problems with our sponsors. (09/Ph-4/01)		

easily stifle individual initiative through excessive formal regulation or informal control. Table 5 provides additional empirical evidence supporting the view of bricolage as a context-specific activity.

Complementary insights via thematic mapping

The diagram in Figure 1 is based on the work of Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) and provides a structured and hierarchical depiction of qualitative data. However,

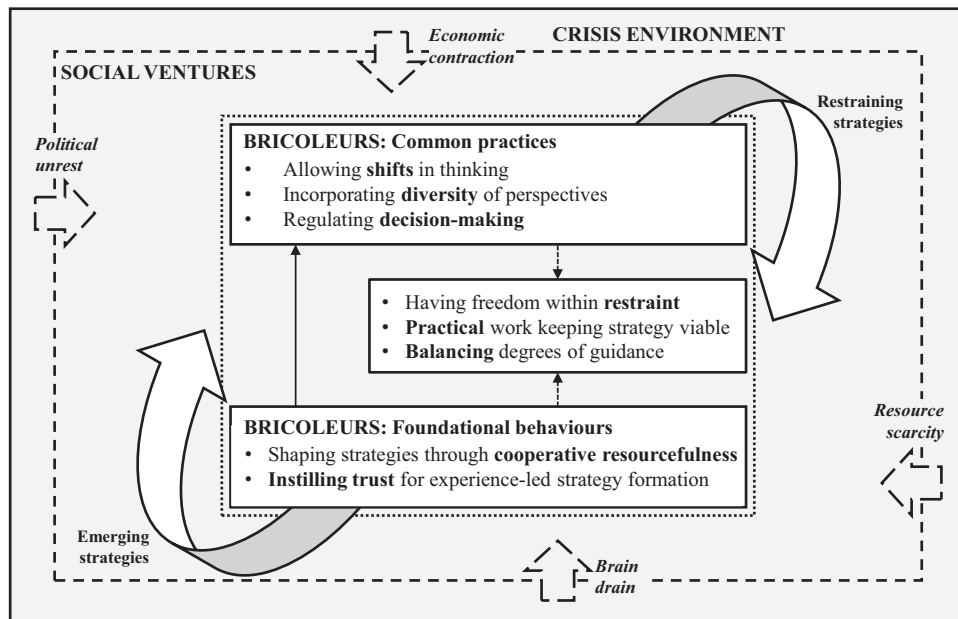


Figure 2. Thematic map.

such diagrams offer limited insight into relationships. A thematic map can address this constraint by offering an interconnected representation of the empirical setting and data analysis (Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008). The thematic map in Figure 2 encapsulates critical elements from the paper's preceding sections into a single representation. It illustrates how ventures in crisis environments – marked by economic contractions, political unrest, resource scarcity and brain drain – can trigger the practices and behaviours of bricoleurs. The curved arrows in the diagram indicate that strategy is a two-way process: strategies can emerge from the interplay between foundational bricolage behaviours and common bricolage practices; conversely, strategies can restrain further strategizing. The thematic map also depicts the second-order categories 'Shaping strategies through cooperative resourcefulness' and 'Instilling trust for experience-led strategy formation' as a 'Foundational behaviour' (i.e. precondition) for the second-order categories 'Allowing shifts in thinking', 'Incorporating diversity of perspectives' and 'Regulating decision-making'. Such relational notions help us understand that, for instance, without trust, the incorporation of perspectives may be impeded. Similarly, the diagram suggests that shifts in thinking require a willingness to shape strategies through collaborative resourcefulness.

Discussion

This study examined social entrepreneurs in Greece amid crises, highlighting bricolage as vital for their func-

tioning. In addition, it identified strategic behaviours among the bricoleurs, which extant bricolage research has only sparsely recognized. A thematic map (Figure 2) complements the data structure diagram (Figure 1), synthesizing critical concepts from earlier sections and their interconnections. To practitioners, the thematic map conveys the holistic nature of social entrepreneurial activity in a resource-deprived (crisis) context, helping them navigate its complexities more effectively. By acknowledging this 'relational whole within which they [practitioners] carry out their tasks' (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011, p. 346), this paper seeks to conceptualize bricolage and strategic behaviours together, offering a more accurate depiction of 'what actually happens' in organizations (Alvesson and Gabriel, 2013, p. 250). Rather than reducing strategic behaviours to mere aspects of bricolage or engaging in one-directional theory borrowing (i.e. importing a concept or theory from a source to a target domain), this paper employs conceptual blending (Cornelissen and Durand, 2012, 2014). Conceptual blending involves a synergistic exchange of established ideas in a 'two-way process of correspondence' (Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon, 2011, p. 318), providing a multifaceted theoretical perspective on an organizational subject (Cornelissen, 2017). Such work challenges conventional thinking by drawing connections between disciplines (Breslin and Gatrell, 2020). The study's conceptualizations involve an interplay of bricolage with SaP to leverage their theoretical richness and depth. Their analytical entwinement (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011) fosters a deeper understanding of this study's empirical findings. This approach exemplifies configurational theorizing (Cornelissen, Höllerer

and Seidl, 2021) and aligns with studies that synthesize distinct yet complementary approaches to studying organizational phenomena (e.g. Harvey and Berry, 2023; Hua, Harvey and Rietzschel, 2022).

Bricolage meets SaP

SaP's defining element involves the joint actions, interactions and negotiations among actors from which strategies emerge (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). SaP recognizes that strategy arises from actors' continuing efforts and contextual practices. Hence, strategy is something that people 'do' rather than something an organization 'has' (Butler, 2018). This idea grounds SaP and bricolage in a shared foundation. Like bricolage, SaP describes dynamic and multifaceted work behaviours and processes involving practitioners, their actions and their prevailing organizational contexts (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007). Moreover, SaP and bricolage both acknowledge ambiguity and unpredictability, while rejecting purely linear and rational approaches to solving organizational issues. Other ontological commonalities are incorporating flexibility, connecting with materials and exhibiting relationality (i.e. collaborating with others; Butler, 2018; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Thus, SaP exhibits a strong conceptual kinship with bricolage, making it suitable for communicating the strategic nuances associated with bricolage.

Butler (2018) highlights that organizational activities may only retrospectively be recognized as strategically significant. While this notion has gained traction in SaP research (Jarzabkowski, Burke and Spee, 2015), bricolage theories have scarcely explored this aspect. Nonetheless, as shown in this study's empirical data, it is plausible that bricolage yields strategically relevant outcomes. Although there are various recognized bricolage perspectives, almost none explicitly incorporate strategy into their definitions (see Table 1). Since definitions aim to encapsulate a concept's meaning (Glasbeek, Wickert and Schad, 2024), this omission suggests a gap in the existing conceptual understanding of bricolage, which limits the ability of scholarship to explain bricolage scenarios involving strategic undertones. Therefore, it seems fitting to propose a synergistic conceptual 'entwinement' of bricolage and SaP perspectives that offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding organizational phenomena involving both bricolage and strategy. Combining bricolage and SaP 'produce[s] emergent and novel meaning' (Cornelissen and Durand, 2012, p. 152) that neither could achieve independently. This dynamic embodies a two-way interaction between constructs, distinguishing it from unidirectional borrowing, where only one construct informs the other (Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon, 2011). This paper's inquiry into bricolage and SaP introduces a largely uncharted perspective to social entrepreneurship schol-

arship. Earlier work by Ladstaetter, Plank and Hemetsberger (2018) introduced the concepts of SaP and bricolage in social enterprises. Yet, their study focused primarily on the causal factors and resolutions of practice breakdowns while hardly addressing the strategic dimension. By contrast, this study examines the connection between bricolage and strategy within social enterprises, expanding the limited knowledge in this area through SaP.

Conceptualizing bricolage's strategic aspects

Scholars typically describe SaP through three interrelated perspectives: the role of individual actors ('practitioners'), the significance of their strategic resources ('practices') and their strategizing as a situated activity ('praxis') (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This arrangement can also convey the potentially strategic features of bricolage.

Practitioners: The role of individual actors. First, SaP emphasizes the role of individual actors, including but not limited to senior management, in shaping organizational strategies (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). This challenges the conventional idea that strategy is solely a top-level management prerogative, positing that individuals with other organizational roles can also strategize. Likewise, this study identified individuals at various hierarchical levels whose cooperative resourcefulness helped to advance solutions to everyday problems while exhibiting strategic behaviours. Although some were in senior positions, many others were not. An illustrative example comes from a previously cited social entrepreneur in the health technology sector (09/Ph-01/01), who emphasized the importance of collaborating with employees to address strategic matters. While conventional bricolage research has disregarded multilevel strategizing, SaP can bridge this gap, offering new theoretical viewpoints to conceptualize the role and behaviour of strategizing bricoleurs. For instance, SaP embraces a human-centred standpoint by recognizing the unique blend of cultural traits, skills, talents and experiences embodied by individuals engaged in strategy development (Rouleau, 2013; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). This perspective may trigger new avenues in bricolage research, such as conceptualizing bricoleur profiles that exhibit (or evade) strategic behaviours, irrespective of their place in the organization. Correspondingly, managers may use bricolage to swiftly respond to unexpected challenges or opportunities, whereas employees can realize the strategic potential of their superiors' endeavours by further developing practical outcomes through their everyday activities and interactions with others. This scenario shows that bricolage and strategy can manifest concurrently yet differently at multiple interrelated levels.

Other theories associated with SaP, such as discourse theory and practice theory (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), may further inform the scholarly understanding of bricolage's strategic dimensions. Discourse theory provides a lens for examining how language and symbols construct and legitimize strategies (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2008). Thus, language and symbols are not neutral representations of reality; they are performative (Marti and Gond, 2018). By analysing the discursive practices of organizational practitioners, theorists can reveal how bricolage is framed and interpreted and how these framings shape strategy-making. Moreover, practice theory focuses on actors' everyday (subconscious) routines and habits that shape organizational behaviour (Tengblad, 2013). Examining bricoleurs can reveal their tacit knowledge and skills underpinning their capacity for strategic improvisation and innovation in resource-constrained environments.

Practices: The significance of strategic resources. Second, SaP considers practitioners' strategy-making resources, such as tools, methods, procedures, behavioural norms, informal mechanisms and principles (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Suddaby, Seidl and Lê, 2013). This view differentiates actors (i.e. the first SaP perspective) from the resources or practices used to attain results (i.e. the second SaP perspective). An example from the preceding findings section illustrates this idea: an informant (07/Ph-01/03) considered developing a bespoke software solution – a complicated activity under any circumstance – until he realized a business contact already offered a fitting solution in the marketplace. Although some may perceive this case as typical of network or material bricolage (Baker, Miner and Eesley, 2003; Kang, 2017), it is beneficial to emphasize the strategic implications of this insight. The entrepreneur's realization of an available resource fundamentally altered his attitude towards making or buying a software tool. He eventually opted to buy the required software instead of developing it himself, significantly lowering his firm's financial risks while increasing the tool's operational stability, availability and functional capabilities. Therefore, the software purchase represented a strategic shift in his venture. This example underscores how the SaP perspective can provide theoretical avenues for a more nuanced exploration of bricoleurs' decision-making practices. Specifically, it allows us to examine how bricoleurs employ contestation, legitimization and motivation (Suddaby, Seidl and Lê, 2013) when shaping their ventures' trajectories.

Praxis: Strategizing as a situated activity. Finally, SaP identifies strategizing as a situated activity. When people 'do' strategy, they do so within a broader context that both surrounds and shapes their work – a phenomenon known as praxis (Seidl and Whittington, 2014). Praxis transcends mere strategic resources (i.e. the second SaP

perspective) in that it can involve intangible aspects like ideas and social, cultural and economic factors surrounding strategizing practitioners (Suddaby, Seidl and Lê, 2013). Informants in this study regularly referenced these instances, for example, when an overarching vision acted as a resource that contained work activities. These activities required bricoleurs' in-situ sensing and responding. Bricolage scholarship has mainly examined this dynamic through a sense-making lens, involving an individual's cognitive processes, emotional responses and other psychological factors (Baker, Miner and Eesley, 2003; Weick, 1993). SaP can offer an expanded perspective. For example, a functional alternate viewpoint linked to SaP is structuration theory (Kotamäki *et al.*, 2021; Vaara and Whittington, 2012), which conceptualizes how actors shape surrounding structures through their agency while the structures recursively shape their agency (den Hond *et al.*, 2012). To bricolage scholars, structuration theory offers insights into the reciprocity between individual actions and their surrounding social structures. It could also explain how bricoleurs may forge a sub-optimal situation in their attempts to strategize with only a few resources and become 'trapped' in their ventures' limited adaptive capabilities, constraining their agency and abilities to fulfil their strategic visions.

Interplay of practitioners, practices and praxis. SaP's core constituents – practitioners, practices and praxis – need not necessarily be fixed and disjointed. For example, Chia and Rasche (2010) describe how these elements interact by comparing strategizing practitioners to *builders* and *dwellers*. Builders are practitioners with reasonable and conscious control over their work resources and activities. Their praxis, plausibly, is less prominent and they may deliberately shape strategies. By contrast, dwellers are steeped in their social environment to the extent that their individuality and resources become less discernible; they act and behave primarily according to their social conditioning. Thus, their praxis is of paramount importance. In this instance, strategies may form more communally. This builder–dweller distinction offers valuable inroads for analysing how bricoleurs navigate resource constraints and social contexts to formulate strategies.

Conceptualizing SaP's bricolage aspects

Just as SaP's three interrelated perspectives provide a framework for understanding bricolage's strategic characteristics and offer pathways for novel research, bricolage can also have implications in the opposite direction, that is, to illuminate SaP's key features and inspire new research.

Resources. Like entrepreneurial bricoleurs, SaP practitioners use their organization's tangible and intangible

resources to formulate and implement strategies. This may include leveraging the knowledge of employees at varying organizational levels, utilizing existing technologies or adapting successful practices from other contexts. However, SaP research often overlooks the importance of resource scarcity in organizations (Kohtamäki *et al.*, 2021), which aligns with Rabetino, Kohtamäki and Federico's (2021) broader assertion that strategy research tends to neglect the conceptualization of resource scarcity. By contrast, coping with resource scarcity is a cornerstone of bricolage theory (e.g. Baker and Nelson, 2005; Busch and Barkema, 2021). Bricolage emphasizes that organizations can overcome resource constraints by creatively combining existing resources to pursue new opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances. Integrating such principles into SaP research can better explain how organizations strategize despite resource scarcity.

Navigating time through trial and error. SaP recognizes that strategies emerge over time through interconnected activities, learning processes and adjustments (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The entrepreneurial bricolage perspective can help SaP scholars view these activities as incremental, iterative and non-linear processes, emphasizing the substantial role that trial and error may play in navigating time and space (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010; Garud and Karnoe, 2003). The SaP literature has largely neglected the transformative power of trial and error and experimentation more generally, and this critical aspect of entrepreneurial bricolage can significantly inform future research endeavours in the SaP domain. For instance, bricolage scholarship shows that organizational learning occurs through experimentation and adaptation over time (Halme, Lindeman and Linna, 2012). This insight can clarify how SaP practitioners in resource-constrained environments learn and integrate new skills and understandings into strategies.

Conceptual blending: Formational and strategic bricolage

Scholars contend that conceptual blending can help describe phenomena in new ways (e.g. Cornelissen and Durand, 2012, 2014; Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon, 2011). In this context, SaP can benefit from entrepreneurial bricolage as much as the other way around, as illustrated above. To capture the dynamic relationship between bricolage and SaP without suggesting a set, unidirectional order, this paper introduces the term 'formational and strategic bricolage' (FSB). This idea employs two subordinate elements to highlight the potential for a reciprocal relationship between bricolage and SaP. *Formational bricolage* highlights the role

of bricolage in practically shaping and informing strategic direction from the 'inside out'. Like a 'builder', the improvisational actions of the formational bricoleur organically contribute to an emergent and overarching business strategy. By contrast, *strategic bricolage* works from the 'outside in', conveying the potentially limiting influence of strategy on bricolage practices. Strategic bricolage posits that broader objectives and constraints can guide the bricoleurs' everyday resourcefulness and improvisational efforts, confining innovative aspirations by setting permissible boundaries within which a bricoleur functions as a 'dweller'. This bidirectional builder–dweller dynamic is akin to how chess players develop their overall strategies one move at a time ('formational bricolage'), while the existing chess board arrangements constrain and guide their moves ('strategic bricolage'). In FSB, bricolage and SaP theories intertwine, transcending conventional bricolage's narrow categorizations. This more holistic perspective emerges from conceptual blending and can extend beyond bricolage–SaP combinations.

Conclusion and future research

This study's findings underscore the dynamic nature of FSB, where bricolage practices and behaviours can shape emergent strategies (formational bricolage) and broader strategic objectives can, conversely, guide improvisational efforts (strategic bricolage). This bidirectional relationship offers new insights into how social enterprises can effectively operate and innovate under challenging conditions. While this study contributes to bridging the gap between bricolage and strategy in social entrepreneurship, it has several limitations that future research could address beyond the general directions already suggested in the preceding sections. First, this study focused on social entrepreneurs in Greece during times of crisis. Future social entrepreneurial research could explore FSB in different cultural contexts and economic conditions to progress towards more generalizable findings, resonating with studies such as those by Desa and Basu (2013), which examine various degrees of resource scarcity. This expansion could include examining FSB in affluent industry sectors to identify potential contextual factors that influence its manifestation. Second, processual studies (Langley *et al.*, 2013) could provide deeper insights into how FSB evolves, particularly as social enterprises move through developmental stages and experience different external conditions (e.g. Perrini, Vurro and Costanzo, 2010). Such research could reveal how FSB practices adapt to shifting organizational priorities, resource availability and environmental dynamics, offering a more nuanced understanding of its role throughout a venture's lifecycle (McMullen and Dimov, 2013). Third, future studies could employ

quantitative methods to test and validate the proposed relationships between bricolage and strategic behaviours, building on approaches such as those used by Bojica *et al.* (2018) in their study of bricolage and decision-making in social enterprises. This quantitative research could involve developing measurement scales for FSB and examining its antecedents and outcomes. By pursuing these research directions, scholars can further develop and refine the concept of formational and strategic bricolage, thereby enhancing the understanding of how social entrepreneurs navigate resource constraints while strategically pursuing their social missions.

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