UNIVERSITY OF QUEBEC IN MONTREAL

THE IMPACT OF HUMAN CAPITAL TRANSFER ON START-UPS

DISSERTATION

PRESENTED

AS PARTIAL REQUIREMENT

OF THE DOCTORATE IN ADMINISTRATION

BY

BA ANH KHOA DAO

MARCH 2021

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

L'IMPACT DU TRANSFERT DU CAPITAL HUMAIN SUR LES START-UPS

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DU DOCTORAT EN ADMINISTRATION

PAR

BA ANH KHOA DAO

MARS 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

I would first like to thank my supervisors, Professors Jocelyn Desroches and Yvan Petit, whose expertise were invaluable in formulating the research questions and methodology. Your insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher level.

I would like to acknowledge my colleague Audrey-Anne Cyr with whom I had multiple conversations and her insights have always been of great help.

I would also like to thank Professors Isabelle Le Breton-Miller and Olivier Germain for their valuable guidance throughout my studies. You provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my dissertation.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my jury committee, Mrs. Isabelle Le Breton-Miller, Mr. Wadid Mohamed Lamine and Mr. Olivier Germain for graciously accepting to evaluate my dissertation.

In addition, I would like to thank my parents for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear. You are always there for me. Finally, I could not have completed this dissertation without the love and care of my amazing wife, Rosemary Borrelli, for her support and patience in the last few years. This dissertation has been a success thanks to your continuous support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures x

List of Tables xi

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms xii

RÉSUMÉ xiii

ABSTRACT xiv

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW 4

1.1 SME Growth 5

1.1.1 Internal Factors 6

1.1.1.1 The Effect of Founders' Characteristics on Venture Growth 7

1.1.1.2 The Importance of Resources for the Venture Growth 8

1.1.2 External Factors 10

1.1.2.1 Environmental Factors of Venture Growth 11

1.1.2.2 How Legitimacy is Created and Why it Matters 14

1.2 Network and Partners Support for the Venture Growth 17
1.2.1 Founders Social Network 17
1.2.2 Institutional Partners 19
1.2.2.1 Business Incubators (BI) 19
1.2.2.2 Venture Capitalists (VC) 21
1.2.2.3 Angel Investors (AI) 22
1.2.3 What Partners Bring to the Table 23
1.2.3.1 Financial Capital 24
1.2.3.2 Social Capital 24
1.2.3.3 Human Capital 25
1.2.4 Interaction with the Partners 27
1.2.5 Friction with the Partners 27
1.3 Resources 28
1.3.1 Resource-Based Theory (RBT) 29
1.3.1.1 Resources within the RBT 29
1.3.1.2 Capabilities within the RBT 30
1.3.2 Resources within Entrepreneurship 32
1.3.2.1 Effectuation 33
1.3.2.2 Bricolage 35
1.3.3 Link between RBT and Effectuation and Bricolage 37
1.4 Literature Summary 39
CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 40
CHAPTER 3 PRELIMINARY STUDY – SHARK TANK 50
3.1 Research Design 50
3.2 Research Context 51

3.3 Sampling 52

3.4 Data Collection 52

3.4.1 Video Clips 54

3.4.2 Internet Excerpts 54

3.5 Preliminary Results 54

3.6 Preliminary Study Conclusion 59

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH 60

4.1 Research Context and Methodological Positioning 60

4.2 Research Design 64

4.3 Data Analysis 73

4.4 Research Evolution 77

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS 82

5.1 Partners Contributions 82

5.1.1 Contribution Process 86

5.1.2 Pre-seed (In Search of MVP) 91

5.1.2.1 Challenging Feedbacks 94

5.1.2.2 Narrative and Pitching 96

5.1.2.3 SU Process 97

5.1.2.4 Domain Expertise 99

5.1.2.5 Cross-industry Expertise 100

5.1.2.6 Synthesis of the Pre-seed Stage Contributions 101
5.1.3 Seed (Finding the Product-Market Fit) 103
5.1.3.1 Challenging Feedbacks 110
5.1.3.2 Narrative and Pitching 112
5.1.3.3 SU Process 114
5.1.3.4 Domain Expertise... 116
5.1.3.5 Cross-industry Expertise 119
5.1.3.6 Management and Organization 121
5.1.3.7 Planning and Project 124
5.1.3.8 Professional Expertise.. 127
5.1.3.9 Shared Expertise 130
5.1.3.10 Specific Expertise 133
5.1.3.11 Synthesis of the Seed Stage Contributions 136
5.1.4 Serie A (Scaling the Venture) 137
5.1.4.1 Domain Expertise... 142
5.1.4.2 Management & Organization.. 143
5.1.4.3 Board & Governance 144
5.1.4.4 Fundraising.. 146
5.1.4.5 Decision-making 147
5.1.4.6 Synthesis of the Serie A Stage Contributions 147

5.2 Interactions with Partners.. 148

5.2.1 Interactions With AC 148
5.2.1.1 Different Types of AC 148
5.2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Learning Process with AC 150
5.2.2 Interactions with AI 152
5.2.2.1 Different Types of AI... 153
5.2.2.2 Entrepreneurial Learning from AI 154
5.2.3 Interactions with VC 157
5.2.3.1 Different Types of VC 157
5.2.3.2 Entrepreneurial Learning from VC 159

5.2.4 Synthesis of the Interaction with Partners....161

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION....163

6.1 Integrative Model of Start-up Resource Orchestration....164

6.1.1 Structuring the Start-up Resources Portfolio....164
6.1.2 Bundling the Start-up Resources to Build Capabilities....168
6.1.3 Leveraging Start-up Capabilities to Exploit Market Opportunities....170
6.1.3.1 Fit Between Entrepreneurs and Partners....174
6.1.4 The Interaction with Partners and the Resource Orchestration Process....179
6.1.4.1 Pre-seed or The Nascent Entrepreneur....180
6.1.4.2 Seed or The Emerging Entrepreneur....181
6.1.4.3 Serie A or The Professionalizing Entrepreneur....183
6.1.4.4 Roadmap to The Interaction with Partners....185
6.1.5 The Model Revisited....189
6.1.5.1 Knowledge Creation....190
6.1.5.2 Legitimacy Threshold....195
6.1.5.3 The Evolution of Partners interaction....197
6.1.5.4 Entrepreneurial Learning....198
6.1.5.5 Start-up Resource Orchestration Process....202

6.2 The Conceptual Framework Revisited....209

6.2.1 The Connection Between Partners and Resources Gathering....209
6.2.2 Effectual Behaviours in Resources Gathering....209
6.2.3 Bricolage Behaviour in Resources Gathering....210
6.2.4 The Connection Between Resources Fit and Growth....211

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION....213

7.1 Industry Context 214

7.2 Field Validation 217

7.3 Future Research 219

7.3.1 Alternative Investment Models 220

7.3.2 Partners Governance 224

7.6 Research Contributions 225

7.7 Research Limitations 228

Appendix A Interview Guide 230

Appendix B Coding Structure 234

Appendix C Ethical Certificate 240

References 241

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

2-1: Integrated Model of the Resource Orchestration Process 45
2-2: Conceptual Framework.. 49
4-1: Comparative Analysis Iterative Process 72
4-2: Coding Process – Overview of Two Rounds.. 75
4-3: Coding - Three Rounds of Behaviours 76
5-1: Characteristics of Growth Stages taken from Panache Ventures (2019)....... 84
5-2: VC Experience.. 123
6-1: Structuring the Resource Portfolio Process for Start-ups 167
6-2: Bundling the Start-up Resources to Build Capabilities 168
6-3: Leveraging Start-up Capabilities to Exploit Market Opportunities............ 170
6-4: Entrepreneurs-Partners Relationships.. 177
6-5: The Interaction Process with Ecosystem Partners 186
6-6: The SECI Knowledge Creation Process taken from Nonaka, I. and Toyama, R. (2015) 193
6-7: Learning Process for BI and AC.. 200
6-8: Learning Process for AC and VC 201
6-9: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Pre-seed Stage 204
6-10: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Seed Stage 206
6-11: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Serie A Stage.................. 208

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1-1: Environmental Factors ... 13

1-2: Links between RBT and Effectuation and Bricolage ... 38

3-1: Summary of Studied Shark Tank Ventures ... 53

3-2: Types of Capital Promised by AI from Shark tank ... 56

3-3: Partners' Impact on the Success or Failure of Projects on Shark Tank ... 58

4-1: Participants' Recruitment ... 68

4-2: List of Interviewees ... 69

5-1: Summary of the Contribution Process Based on the Lean Start-up Stages ... 90

5-2: Pre-seed Contributions ... 92

5-3: Seed Contributions ... 105

5-4: Serie A Contributions ... 140

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AC: Accelerators

AI: Angel Investors

BI: Business Incubators

FF: Family and Friends

IPO: Initial Public Offering

KPI: Key Performance Indicators

LP: Limited Partner

LS: Lean Startup

MVP: Minimum Viable Product

OKR: Objectives and Key Results

PE: Private Equity

RBT: Resource-based Theory

SECI: Socialization-Externalization-Combination-Internalization

SME: Small and Medium Enterprises

SU: Start-ups

TMT: Top Management Team

VC: Venture Capitalists

RÉSUMÉ

L'approche du « capital humain » dans la littérature en entrepreneuriat a porté principalement sur les caractéristiques propres à l'entrepreneur au moment de la création de son entreprise. Celles-ci correspondent habituellement aux traits de personnalité de l'entrepreneur, ses compétences, son expérience, et son niveau de formation et d'éducation.

De leur côté, les capitaux humains fournis aux entrepreneurs par les partenaires d'affaires s'avèrent souvent être d'un autre type, i.e., des connaissances ou compétences managériales, et d'autres spécifiques aux industries. Il nous a semblé important de déterminer comment ce nouveau capital humain impacte/influence la croissance des petites entreprises en démarrage ou en émergence, les start-ups, qui ont significativement moins de ressources que les entreprises déjà établies, plus âgées.

Ancrée dans une approche terrain qui favorise les entrevues et les observations auprès des entrepreneurs et de leurs partenaires, notre recherche doctorale tente de découvrir/documenter quels sont les processus d'acquisition et d'utilisation des ressources acquises par les startups et comment ce processus se réalise dans l'écosystème entrepreneurial.

Les résultats de l'étude indiquent qu'il existe des capitaux humains critiques que les entrepreneurs peuvent acquérir de leurs partenaires, et que ceux-ci varient selon les différents stages du cycle de vie de la startup.

Le processus d'apprentissage diffère aussi selon les différents types de partenaires. Pour les partenaires tels les incubateurs et les accélérateurs d'entreprises, l'apprentissage se fait principalement à travers des classes et des échanges de groupe. Pour les anges investisseurs et les capitaux de risque, l'apprentissage se fait surtout lors de réunions du conseil d'administration ou lors de séances d'encadrement individuel.

Et à mesure qu'elles se développent, les start-ups travaillent avec différents types de partenaires. Grâce à nos entretiens sur le terrain, nous avons pu développer une évolution type des relations entre entrepreneurs et leurs partenaires avec l'objectif d'aider les entrepreneurs en développement à comprendre ce processus d'interaction. Une association/rapprochement le meilleur possible entre eux est également identifié pour aider à reconnaître comment cette interaction influence l'acquisition de ressources.

La principale contribution de cette recherche doctorale est de développer une meilleure compréhension et réalisation de l'importance pour les entrepreneurs, d'accumuler les capitaux humains. L'étude démontre que les entrepreneurs devraient être conscients qu'ils ont besoin de certains types de capitaux humains, d'interactions ciblées avec leurs partenaires, et que ces besoins évoluent avec la progression des startups. La perspective de la recherche provient donc des deux côtés de la relation entrepreneur-partenaire et sert à comprendre les mécanismes permettant aux startups de croître et de prospérer.

Mots clés: Capital humain, étude de théorie fondée, acquisition de ressources, conduite de ressources

ABSTRACT

The approach on human capital in the entrepreneurship literature has mostly been on what the entrepreneur possesses at the creation of the firm. Those were seen mostly as the entrepreneur's traits, competencies, experience and education. The human capital provided by the partners could represent managerial or industry-specific competencies or knowledge. It is important to assess how it affects small and medium enterprises growth. Even of more salience is its impact on start-ups who would be more resource constrained than older firms.

With a grounded theory study consisting of interviews and observations, this doctoral dissertation aims at uncovering what the process of resources acquisition and orchestration is for startups and how it is enacted within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The results from the study indicate that there are critical human capital entrepreneurs can acquire from their ecosystem partners and that it varies based on the different stages of the start-up's lifecycle.

An important finding is the mechanism of human capital transfer from the partners. The learning process differs from the different types of partners. For partners such as business incubators and accelerators, learning is primarily achieved through classroom and group exchanges. With angel investors and venture capitalists, on the other hand, learning is accomplished during board meetings and one-on-one coaching.

As start-ups progress, they work with different types of partners. A typical evolution of the relationships between entrepreneurs and their partners, surmised from the interviews, is suggested to help nascent entrepreneurs better understand the interaction process. A fit between them is also identified to assist in recognizing how the interactions influence resources acquisition.

The main contribution of this doctoral research is to develop a better understanding of the importance of gathering human capital for entrepreneurs. What the study highlights is that they have to be aware that they need certain types of human capital from their partners and that these needs evolve as the start-up progresses. The perspective from this research comes from both sides of the relationship and serves to truly understand the mechanisms that would allow a start-up to grow and thrive.

Keywords: Human capital, grounded theory study, resources acquisition, resources orchestration

INTRODUCTION

The study of entrepreneurs within their ecosystem has shown that start-ups (SU) are confronted with a scarcity of resources (Welter *et coll.*, 2016) and their judgment about resources employment decisions could be critical (Foss *et coll.*, 2010). It would be important for founders to understand that the importance is not "having better resources, but in knowing more accurately the relative productive performances of those resources" (Alchian *et coll.*, 1972). In that regard, it would seem that a look at the interaction between founders and their ecosystem would lead to a better understanding of how they can acquire resources from them.

More particularly, it is of interest to investigate the entrepreneurial ecosystem partners that invest time, and in some cases money, to support SU. As such, venture capitalists (VC), angel investors (AI) and accelerators (AC) seem like the appropriate partner to study in their interaction with entrepreneurs. VC are organizations that finance the early growth of new ventures (Zacharakis *et coll.*, 1998). They are "professional investors that use institutional money to invest" (Vanacker *et coll.*, 2013, p. 1076). On the other hand, AI is a "wealthy individual who acts as an informal VC, placing his or her own money directly into early stage new ventures" (Wiltbank *et coll.*, 2009, p. 118). AI differs from VC by their level of commitment. They have a more active involvement and they have a higher desire to help entrepreneurs (Collewaert, 2012b). Finally, an AC is a "program that offers mentorship, office space, and a small investment in exchange for equity" (Wise *et coll.*, 2014, p. 9).

With the focus of research mostly on financial (Gilbert *et coll.*, 2006) and social capital (Bergek *et coll.*, 2008; Davidsson *et coll.*, 2003; De Carolis *et coll.*, 2009), there is a dearth of studies about human capital. In addition, the majority of those studies have focused on the founding team characteristics such as work experience and education (Marvel *et coll.*, 2016). There is little known about what human capital can be acquired by entrepreneurs and how it is achieved.

Fisher *et coll.* (2016) argue that new ventures should build legitimacy to different stakeholders throughout their life. This is particularly important in the early onset (Lounsbury *et coll.*, 2001; Zott *et coll.*, 2007). But because those different stakeholders possess different objectives and perspectives, entrepreneurs are faced with a difficult task. Although Fisher *et coll.* (2016) claim that there exists a legitimacy threshold for entrepreneurs as their firms evolve, there would seem to be contrasting forces playing against each other for the legitimization of entrepreneurial firms. Building a network is of critical importance to entrepreneurs (Sarasvathy, 2001, 2009). In the process of acquiring and maintaining this network, entrepreneurs should build up legitimacy towards different actors. They should consider the tradeoffs involved in going in one direction as opposed to another. The decisions and actions undertaken by entrepreneurs are important even before they started their venture.

This current study examines how the interaction with institutional partners in the entrepreneurial ecosystem can provide founders with the human capital necessary for their growth and long-term survival. It looks at the relationship between founders and VC, AI and AC and how it can profit them.

The approach on human capital in the entrepreneurship literature has mostly been on what the entrepreneur possesses at the creation of the firm. Those were seen mostly as the entrepreneur's traits, competencies, experience and education. The human capital provided by the partners could represent managerial or industry-specific competencies or knowledge. It is important to assess how it affects SME growth. Even of more salience is its impact on SU who would be more resource constrained than older firms.

This research aims to answer the following question: how does human capital acquired from ecosystem partners contribute to the SU and the entrepreneurs?

In relation to the main research question, there are a few sub-questions:

1. What human capital is acquired by the entrepreneurs?
2. How is human capital transferred from the partners?
3. How does this acquired human capital change the way SU operate?
4. How does the interaction with the partners influence the way entrepreneurs gather resources?

This thesis dissertation is structured in eight chapters. Chapter I presents a literature review on some topics relevant to the current research such as SME growth, partners support to that growth, and resources. Chapter II presents a theoretical model of resource orchestration as well as the conceptual framework of the study. In chapter III, I present a preliminary study of AI with the help of the Shark Tank television show to highlight what types of contributions can be provided by partners. Chapter IV puts forth the methodological approach with the research context and methodological positioning including the epistemological stance and axiological assumptions. I present the results in chapter V with an emphasis on a classification of human capital contributions based on the SU stage, and a description of the interactions with the partners. In chapter VI, I discuss the results from the previous chapter while revisiting the interaction process and the conceptual framework presented in chapter III. Finally, I conclude in chapter VII with commentaries of some findings that are outside of the current research parameters as well as suggestions for future research and the research limitations.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is structured in four parts. The first part introduces the concept of SME growth. The second part reviews the literature on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and what the partners can provide to the entrepreneurs. The third part presents the resources and how they are represented in the entrepreneurial literature. The fourth part summarizes the literature review and puts it in context with the research question.

In order to better assess the concepts salient to the research question, this following chapter presents a literature review on SME growth, SME legitimation, network and institutional partners, and resources as they relate to SME. While growth is the central theme and deserves to be fully examined, the other concepts are important in providing an overview of how they interact in the growth of SME and, most particularly, SU.

The purpose of this literature review is to help understand how the interaction between a SU and its partners affect the growth process of the firm. The focus would be on exploring and highlighting within the literature how growth can be achieved by entrepreneurs and founders of SU. It will provide an insight into the critical factors allowing for the growth of those firms faced with the liability of newness and smallness.

SU legitimacy provides an insight into how new firms are able to develop reputation and trust among their stakeholders. It might play a critical role into how they grow in showing their partners that they are capable of accomplishing their established goals. How legitimacy is built and how it is linked to growth is therefore really important for the study of SU. The make-up of a SU network could impact its growth. Who entrepreneurs know and how it can help them carries some weight in the development of those SU. While there might exist a variety of actors within the network, it would seem appropriate that the ones that follow the firms closely are the ones that will provide the most support. As such, the depth of the relationship with their partners might indicate what they can retrieve from it.

Finally, the resources the SU possesses play a vital role in its growth. While the resources available at the onset are of vital importance, the resources they gain from their partners might be particularly important. What these resources are and how they affect the way firms perform are critical within entrepreneurship research. The interest in resources can be defined through two different research streams. In the first one, resources are seen as strategies to help the firm gain a competitive advantage. The Resource-based theory (RBT) is one such theory. In the second research stream, resources are more specifically related to the entrepreneurial venture. These are the behavioural theories of entrepreneurship such as effectuation and bricolage. The intersection of those two streams provides an interesting insight into how SU accumulate and build their resource bundles to insure their growth.

1.1 SME Growth

SME growth can be evaluated with different measures: percentage change in employment, percentage change in employee turnover, change in profitability per employee and firm size (Lee *et coll.*, 2001; Robson *et coll.*, 2000; Witt, 2004). Growth and profitability might be at different opposites of the firm performance spectrum. In this regard, growth would be achieved at the expense of profitability and vice versa. As such, profitability measures should be carefully considered when discussing growth.

The factors associated with growth can be divided into internal and external ones. Internal factors come from within the firm, and most importantly, the founding entrepreneur. External factors, meanwhile, originate from outside the firm, mostly from its environment.

1.1.1 Internal Factors

Internal factors originate mainly from within the entrepreneur or the entrepreneurial team. It consists of elements influencing the objectives and strategy of the SU. In that regard, the growth of an SME is primarily related to the motivation of the owner-manager and how they pursue their venture (Cassar, 2006; Chell *et coll.*, 2000). Conditions such as their lifestyle and family welfare play a role into how they perceive their firm and how they balance between growth and stability (Stevenson *et coll.*, 1989). In this regard, “a business's 'orientation to growth' may be 'declining', 'plateauing', 'rejuvenating' or 'expanding'” (Chell *et coll.*, 2000, p. 204).

The characteristics of the founders play a role in the growth of the firm. First, competencies refer to individual characteristics required to perform a certain job (Baum *et coll.*, 2001). It is separated between general and specific competencies. Second, founders' experience refers to the founders history. Finally, the founders’ education has a minimal impact on growth. It might potentially be detrimental to new venture growth. This would be related to the nature of new ventures. It could be that education holds a “less important role in running smaller firms because they are simpler. […] more educated people have been drawn into the private sector or have opted for professional jobs, ‘those with less formal education seem to be more venturesome’” (Lee *et coll.*, 2001, p. 597).

Those founders' characteristics, most particularly their competencies and knowledge, might constitute the original SU resource bundle. Resources are critical to all firms but are particularly important to SU because of the limited quantity they usually possess. They help drive the growth of firms internally by providing them with the necessary tools. They also act as a boundary between the firm and the outside world as it seeks to acquire and assimilate new resources.

1.1.1.1 The Effect of Founders' Characteristics on Venture Growth

A new venture is influenced greatly by the characteristics of its founders (Baum *et coll.*, 2004; Baum *et coll.*, 2001; Lee *et coll.*, 2001). As opposed to older and bigger firms, new firms rely heavily on the founding team and the top management team (TMT) to handle the venture's operations.

Founders' competencies refer to the elements contributing to the performance of a specific job. It is separated into two distinct categories: general and specific (Baum *et coll.*, 2001). General competencies are transposable to many situations and many businesses. They can be mastered by many people and allow adjustment to different environments. They consist of elements such as "oral presentation skill, decision-making ability, conceptualization ability, diagnostic use of concepts, and use of power" (Baum *et coll.*, 2001, p. 293). On the other hand, specific competencies are idiosyncratic to certain trades or industry. These competencies would not be easily transposable. However, they would be crucial to a venture's growth.

Experience refers to the breadth and validity of previous involvements in business and work (Lee *et coll.*, 2001). It consists of three components: entrepreneurial, industrial and managerial. Entrepreneurial experience relates to founders' previous involvements in entrepreneurial ventures, mostly the number and the roles played within them. Industrial experience relates to the founders' previous involvements in business in the same or a similar industry to their current venture. Managerial experience relates to more general involvement into management no matter the context. These different types of experience would play a different role on the growth of the venture at different junctures of the life of the firm. Entrepreneurial experience represents how many times and at what level they were previously involved in an entrepreneurial venture. It would effectively play a role in the early onset of the new venture. It could provide the tools and knowledge at the start and for the growth of the newly formed firm. Industrial experience represents the familiarity with the specific industry. It would be most useful from the ideation phase to the growth phase. It might help identify opportunities and provide a network of contacts. It also serves as a source of idiosyncratic knowledge and abilities that are helpful for the new firm. Finally, managerial experience represents the number of years at a management position. It would be most useful at latter phases with increasing numbers of employees. Essentially, venture growth would be related to the previous experience of their founders. However, the type of experience will dictate where the firm might thrive and where it might struggle.

Education might relate negatively to venture growth (Lee *et coll.*, 2001) for younger and smaller firms. In effect, as opposed to larger firms, their operations are simpler and might require less knowledge. As such, it might not be so much that education is harmful to venture growth but that more educated individuals would work in larger firms rather than SU. Another explanation would be that education serves as an institutional buffer. It could provide individuals with a set of guidelines that direct how they act. In this instance, it might direct owners toward more accepted and safe behaviours. It would thus prevent more entrepreneurial and risky actions that could be beneficial to venture growth.

1.1.1.2 The Importance of Resources for the Venture Growth

Resources hold value because they act in different manners to help firms grow. First, they provide both the tools and ingredients that allow SU to build their firm. Second, they serve as a source of motivation for entrepreneurs to seek out help and support from resource providers. Finally, they can be useful in showcasing the firm's legitimacy to their stakeholders.

New ventures are usually confronted with a scarcity of resources (Welter *et coll.*, 2016). They are thus in a situation to be *bricoleurs* of resources. Bricolage is defined as “making use of a resource because it is available cheaply or for free, rather than because it is the ‘right’ resource, and then combining it with other resources to take advantage of some new opportunity” (Baker, 2007, p. 11). New ventures therefore accumulate resources from their onset and might find a use for them later. As such, those accumulated resources could potentially serve as a source of advantage for the firm if they have the following characteristics: valuable, rare, inimitable and nonsubstitutable (Barney, J., 1991; Kellermanns *et coll.*, 2016). In the same thought, intangible resources would seem to be the most important. With many resources and a difficulty to ascertain how they will be useful for the growth of the firm, judgment about resources employment decisions could be critical (Foss *et coll.*, 2010).

An effectual logic to resources accumulation and management provides some understanding to how new ventures can achieve growth (Brettel *et coll.*, 2012; Sarasvathy, 2001). It “takes all available means as the starting point of the process [of venture success]. Some of these means will have shown their value for the process ex-post, and some will not” (Brettel *et coll.*, 2012, p. 170). Therefore, the importance is not “having better resources, but in knowing more accurately the relative productive performances of those resources” (Alchian *et coll.*, 1972, p. 793). Penrose (1959) also highlights the heterogeneity of resources and how decisions about resources are critical to growth. As such, “the development and entrepreneurial growth of the firm is an evolutionary and cumulative process of experimentation and learning about resources in which resources and capabilities may serve as cognitive drivers for strategy” (Foss *et coll.*, 2008, p. 79). In this regard, each firm possesses idiosyncratic resources bundles and how they are used.

There is a complexity to the inner working of the firm and how it interacts with their environment. As such there is a casual ambiguity in the value of a firm’s resources and how they provide value. Until the firm founder-s reflect on their resources, they might not properly evaluate their values. Regarding firm growth, it might be necessary to change how resources are perceived. It is suggested that “transitions from network bricolage to network resource-seeking behaviours may characterize SU firms' successful transitions to accelerated growth" (Baker *et coll.*, 2003, p. 271). This resources decision-making is the responsibility of the founders and it is indicative of the growth of the firm. It is their behaviours that effectively converts resources to the specific needs of their firm (Dew *et coll.*, 2008).

Founders are required to accumulate resources and judge on their value to help their firm grow. As such new resource skill is important, it involves "finding capital and human resources and setting up new operations and new systems" (Baum *et coll.*, 2004, p. 589). It is related to the creation and communication of the firm's visions.

1.1.2 External Factors

Among the main determinants of SME growth are market conditions and, to a lesser degree, business advice and external collaboration. Growth is affected by the environment of the firm (Baum *et coll.*, 2001; Hitt *et coll.*, 2001). Three dimensions of environment are particularly important: dynamism, munificence and complexity. In this regard, "each new venture will face a different set of relevant environmental forces. No organization can be consistent with all environments; the point is for the new venture to be clear about the particular mix of environmental factors that is important to its survival" (Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002, p. 416).

Additionally, a determinant that could be important for growth would be legitimacy. It serves as "a social judgment of acceptance, appropriateness, and desirability, enables organizations to access other resources needed to survive and grow" (Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002, p. 416). It plays a role in the growth of firms by helping acquire resources and guide strategic actions. It is particularly important for new ventures because they have no history on which resource providers can judge the firms. These resources afford firms with faster growth (Florin *et coll.*, 2003). In such case, a team of founders is related to higher growth than a single founder since every member of the team brings different resources (Ucbasaran *et coll.*, 2003; Witt, 2004). Those resources are of three main types: human, financial and social (Birley *et coll.*, 1994; Cassar, 2006). SU are generally faced with an issue of legitimacy. As they are usually built from the ground up, they would start with no legitimacy and no reputation. It thus becomes particularly critical to understand how they gain legitimacy and how in turn it helps them in their venture. Of particular salience, how they build their legitimacy with important stakeholders might represent a vital part of their growth.

1.1.2.1 Environmental Factors of Venture Growth

The market environment of a firm might affect the venture growth. It primarily plays a role in resources acquisition and uncertainty faced by the firm (Baum *et coll.*, 2001; Florin *et coll.*, 2003; Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002). The three components of market most related to venture growth, munificence, dynamism and complexity, affect the firm's ability to effectively exploit the opportunities associated to competitive success (Hitt *et coll.*, 2011).

Munificence refers to the level of resources available to a firm in a market environment. It is "context specific for the firm. Moreover, entrepreneurially minded individuals gain access to resources in the environment to generate competitive advantage and create value" (Hitt *et coll.*, 2011, p. 61). In this instance, environment munificence would reflect a general external perception of the state of the market. It could thus prove to be an advantage for creative firms working in low munificence markets (Baker *et coll.*, 2003; Baker *et coll.*, 2005).

Dynamism refers to how quickly a market changes. It is related to how much uncertainty is generally present in the environment of the firm (McMullen *et coll.*, 2006). A dynamic, and thus uncertain, environment means that both the quantity and quality of information are reduced and creates ambiguity on the decisions made within the venture. High dynamism would be positive for new venture creation and innovation (Aldrich, H., 1999; Wang *et coll.*, 2008).

Complexity refers to the overlapping of networks, suppliers and clients (George, 2005). It matters most when firms should make decisions on the strategies needed in response to the industry. The more complexity involved; the less strategic options would be available to the firm. In this regard, "complex environments, composed of many firms, may be more difficult for entrepreneurs to comprehend" (Baum *et coll.*, 2001, p. 294).

Those factors of the environment are primarily important because "each new venture will face a different set of relevant environmental forces. No organization can be consistent with all environments; the point is for the new venture to be clear about the particular mix of environmental factors that is important to its survival" (Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002, p. 416). As such, it would be important for new ventures to clearly identify their environment to manage their growth properly.

Table I-1 displays those environmental factors and provides a definition of each by McArthur *et coll.* (1991). It also gives a context in which each of them could be represented with a low or high level. This indicates how to identify and classify those factors within an industry.

Table 1-1: Environmental Factors

Market component	Definition (McArthur *et coll.*, 1991)	Context	
		Low	High
Munificence	Environmental munificence describes the extent to which an environment can support sustained growth. Studies of business policy often address the effects of environmental munificence when they focus on stages of the product life cycle, because the rate of sales growth serves as the key variable underlying both concepts.	Low resource environment such as low legitimacy or new markets	High resource environment such as mature markets or high-growth markets
Dynamism	Environmental dynamism describes the degree of market instability over time and the turbulence caused by interconnectedness between organizations. Dynamism [is] operationalized as industry new-product innovation [...]. Keats and Hitt (1988) found dynamism to be significantly related to operating performance. Paine and Anderson (1977) suggested that firms in uncertain environments utilize more innovative strategies.	Low instability environment such as regulated or mature markets	High instability environment such as new or high-growth markets
Complexity	Environmental complexity describes the degree of heterogeneity and the dispersion of an organization's activities.	Low complexity environment such as single provider or client markets	High complexity environment such as multilayered suppliers or clients with vertical or horizontal integration

1.1.2.2 How Legitimacy is Created and Why it Matters

Fisher et al. (2016) discuss how "legitimacy assessments represent a social judgment that resides in the eye of the beholder, they are audience dependent" (p. 385). They assert that firms need resources to grow, most notably younger firms. They argue that these firms need different types from different stakeholders throughout their life cycle. Additionally, they address how the firm's identity changes, not only with whom it works with, but also with how entrepreneurs define themselves based on the different stages of the firm. As such, it is deeply embedded in the firm's routines and how they are enacted within their venture. How a firm acts thus has important implications on how they are perceived by their different stakeholders. In this regard, Zott *et coll.* (2007) claim that symbolic actions can influence the firm's legitimacy and their ability to acquire critical resources. They also assert that "because entrepreneurs deal with a variety of resource providers who have different interests and values, a symbolic action that appeals to one might not appeal to another. The "law of requisite variety" is likely to apply here" (p. 97). SME therefore would have to be careful about how they act and carry their business as it might involve a path dependency. The firm's action and identity building also play a role into the culture of the firm and how they develop their own story (Lounsbury *et coll.*, 2001). An entrepreneur's storytelling consists of another way to build legitimacy and gain access to resources. Therefore, symbols and stories are deeply rooted in how entrepreneurs gain legitimacy, collect resources and help the growth of their firms. There might be a four-way interaction between the actions of the firm, the social evaluation of their partners, the symbols they try to convey and the stories they tell. The recursivity among those four might play a critical role into the growth of the firm.

Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). He describes it as a socially constructed evaluation based on cognitive dimensions that are accepted by a general audience. Legitimacy is important for organizations for many reasons. First, it provides credibility as the stakeholders perceive legitimate firms as being meaningful, predictable and trustworthy. They can understand them better. Second, it provides them with continuity because it helps those stakeholders perceive the firm as being worthy. They are more compelled to help and to provide resources because they would appeal to them as being desirable, proper and appropriate. Third, it provides a sense of the type of support the firm can seek. Essentially, the firm can gain an understanding of a threshold of legitimacy depending on the level of support required, from very passive to very active. Legitimacy thus affects directly how firms acquire support and resources.

Legitimacy is linked to the "liability of newness" (Brüderl *et coll.*, 1998; Brüderl *et coll.*, 1992; Bruderl *et coll.*, 1990; Freeman *et coll.*, 1983; Stinchcombe *et coll.*, 1965). Firms creating new markets or new firms entering older markets are faced with the daunting task of starting with no legitimacy (Aldrich, H. E. *et coll.*, 1994; Suddaby *et coll.*, 2005). They are then confronted with the difficulty of building their capital of resources with little or no support. In order to build legitimacy, a few strategies are predicated (Suchman, 1995). First, entrepreneurs can conform to their new environment. This would send a signal to incumbents and to the environment's stakeholders that the firm is showing allegiance to the current order and will not cause waves. Second, entrepreneurs can select their environment. This would require that they are very knowledgeable about the targeted market. In this instance, they need to understand their own inner workings as well as the mechanisms of the environment. They might also consider how well protected the targeted market is. If there are gatekeepers, they would need to be identified and dealt with. Third, they might have to manipulate their environment. As such, they would be required to be more proactive and build a good story, an explanation of why it is a good idea to change the current social reality.

There is a great need of educating the different stakeholders to the new perspective and improve their knowledge of it. Those strategies could be helped with the firm's rhetoric, most notably the institutional vocabulary and the theorization of change (Suddaby *et coll.*, 2005). The institutional vocabulary consists of the creation of a language specific to the firm as it relates to its environment. It requires the "shaping perception of an abstraction through language selection, common metaphors, and the use of common referents [and] is thus a key component in challenging the taken-for-granted nature of an existing institutional order" (Suddaby *et coll.*, 2005, p. 59). In that sense, firms looking to create or enter a market would need either to adapt or to impose their vocabulary. A theorization of change, on the other hand, affects not the vocabulary itself but rather on how it is worded. It plays into the comprehension of the vocabulary. It influences how the vocabulary is perceived by reducing its uncertainty and creating a link to the environment.

SME encounter two main types of legitimacy problems: cognitive and sociopolitical (Aldrich, H. E. *et coll.*, 1994). Cognitive problems are related to how new ventures spread knowledge about themselves. They would not be able to call for action as they have no hard evidence that they will be rewarded by doing so. Sociopolitical problems are related to how they conform to the understood principles, rules and standards. They lack the external source of validation to help their argument. This is particularly salient in new industries as there is a lack of legitimacy related to the small of numbers of firms and the absence of a history. It is thus exceptionally hard for new firms in new industries to thrive " because they must learn new roles without having role models, and they must establish ties with an environment that does not understand or acknowledge their existence" (Aldrich, H. E. *et coll.*, 1994, p. 648). These new firms can gain support and cooperation by increasing familiarity with their stakeholders. It is achieved through building trust, reliability and reputation.

1.2 Network and Partners Support for the Venture Growth

New ventures are faced with many difficulties. As previously stated, resources are hard to come by for new firms. Two sources of such resources are the founders network (Baker *et coll.*, 2003; Chell *et coll.*, 2000; Florin *et coll.*, 2003; Hitt *et coll.*, 2001; Ostgaard *et coll.*, 1996; Witt, 2004) and the help provided by institutional partners such as VC, AI and incubators (Baum *et coll.*, 1998; Lee *et coll.*, 2001; Robson *et coll.*, 2000; Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002).

1.2.1 Founders Social Network

Founders networks provide them with access to idiosyncratic resources and information (Baker *et coll.*, 2003). It would be useful at different phases of the venture but would be particularly critical in the early onset of the firms. As such, new venture might “attempt to hire relatively senior people and to hire them quickly in order to be able to execute the operational requirements of their deals— whether these were Seed deals, or business gained after founding” (Baker *et coll.*, 2003, p. 266). Resources from the network could be working space, specific equipment or money. They could come from either the owners personal or professional network (Ostgaard *et coll.*, 1996) and it is related to the venture success. There would seem to be an evolution from personal to professional networks as the firm grows.

Founders social network can be useful at different phases. It shows its importance in how the venture is started but needs to be developed as the needs of the firm evolve (Butler *et coll.*, 1988). At the beginning of the venture, it can help obtain initial funds and industry information. Later, it can help gather resources such as employees and knowledge. Finally, it can provide access to investors throughout the venture and primarily at the later phases. As the venture grows, it will change the composition of its network and give access to different types of contacts that will effectively change what will be available to the firm.

The characteristics of a performing network can be illustrated as having “a richer, broader, and more complex network of ongoing relationships with people both within and outside the firm” (Van de Ven *et coll.*, 1984, p. 101). As such, the involvement of founders in their networks is important in the growth and survival of their venture (Mugler, 1988; Ostgaard *et coll.*, 1996). Furthermore, the size of the network plays an important role in their growth (Aldrich, H. E. *et coll.*, 1987; Cromie *et coll.*, 1992). Also, the make-up of the network holds some weight into how it can help the growth of the firm. An outsider-based professional advisor such as bankers or lawyers would be better for the venture than insider based personal relations such as friends or family. This could effectively be a disadvantage for young and new firms for two main reasons (Chell *et coll.*, 2000). First, founders of those firms lack the time necessary to gather those outsiders into their networks. They might prefer spending their time on developing their business rather than on networking. Second, these founders start ventures to obtain some independence. Some or most of them would be reluctant to engage in networking in which they need to reach out to others for help. This in turn could be perceived as a reduction of their independence. Furthermore, there could be suspicion of outside intervention, be it governmental or not.

An important effect of the outsider network is its influence on the legitimation of the new venture (Zimmerman *et coll.*, 2002). In fact, “"who you know" does indeed seem to influence judgments of the efficiency and effectiveness of a new venture” (p. 420). Additionally, this type of network is well positioned to provide the firm with salient information (Florin *et coll.*, 2003). The ties in this type of network would thus be more rational and less emotional. It would lead to a more transactional relationship that could help venture growth.

1.2.2 Institutional Partners

An institutional partner would accompany a venture in helping its growth. It could provide advice and collaboration (Robson *et coll.*, 2000). It could include consultants, business professionals, suppliers, clients and governmental institutions. More importantly are partners that have vested interest in the firms as investors or lenders. Those can be represented by VC, AI and financial institutions. Finally, some organizations work with new ventures to provide them the tools to succeed such as BI or AC.

These partners would be crucial to the venture growth because they help "fill gaps in internal staff or management expertise, for specific and one-off tasks, and to develop new internal procedures or processes" (Robson *et coll.*, 2000, p. 196). They are particularly important for the advice they provide on business strategy and staff recruitment. They play multiple roles in how they can influence growth. On the one hand, they can help increase market penetration and market share. On the other hand, they can also influence cost reduction and quality improvement.

1.2.2.1 Business Incubators (BI)

BI "nurture young firms, helping them to survive and grow during the SU period when they are most vulnerable" (Aernoudt, 2004, p. 127). Their aim is to encourage economic development through the creation of new ventures. They are beneficial to the growth of SU (Gilbert *et coll.*, 2006). BI have four usual components: low rent shared office space, shared support services, professional support service and network access (Bergek *et coll.*, 2008; Hackett *et coll.*, 2004). The proximity of the incubatees create an atmosphere where it is possible to share knowledge and experience, and to learn from each other. BI provide early support for entrepreneurs by helping their ideas hatch into full-grown companies. It has been suggested that "places of employment often act as incubators for individuals seeking to found a business" (Westhead *et coll.*, 1998, p. 180). As such, BI can be formal or informal if they foster the entrepreneurial spirit and help starting new ventures. Their goal is to help set up firms that are able to function by themselves with good financial backing, and that in a reasonable time (Grimaldi *et coll.*, 2005). A few conditions are necessary in order for that to happen: a large roster of high potential new firms, a reasonable turnover rotation, a high number of graduates and a large number of ready ventures in their pipeline (Aernoudt, 2004).

There have been many attempts to categorize BI. Brooks (1986) proposed a continuum between economic growth incubator which provides access to network and resources, and real estate incubator which provides shared offices and services. Allen *et coll.* (1990) also propose a continuum between least value-added to most value-added. They include four types: For-Profit Property Development Incubators, Non-Profit Development Corporation Incubators, Academic Incubators, and For-Profit Seed Capital Incubator. There are also taxonomies based on different criteria: the incubator's primary financial sponsorship, the origin of the incubatees (spin-offs or SU), the business focus of the incubatees and the business focus of the incubator. Grimaldi *et coll.* (2005) identify four types of BI. They classify them as Business Innovation Centres, University BI, Independent Private Incubators, and Corporate Private Incubators. Business Innovation Centres are public incubators that offer general services such as shared space as well as technical and managerial expertise. They are funded mostly with their service fees and from public funds. University BI function mainly through research and faculty spin-offs. They also offer the general services but additionally provide university-related services such as student employees and library services. On the other hand, Independent Private Incubators and Corporate Private Incubators are funded privately. Their purpose is "quickly to create new ventures and in return to take a portion of equity in the new venture as fees. They aspire to help entrepreneurs by providing Pre-seed, Seed and other early investments that have been traditionally offered by angels and early-stage VC" (Grimaldi *et coll.*, 2005, p. 113).

They not only offer the same general services but also provide further tools for IPO or trade sale such as help with the business model and concept validation. Corporate Private Incubators spawn from large corporations that seek to support new ventures within their organization. They try to promote spillover from their own projects or sometimes from generic SU with potential. On the other hand, Independent Private Incubators are run by an individual or a group of individuals. They usually help new ventures after their initial launch with capital or knowledge. Within this typology, there is a distinction about what services are provided by the BI. On one end of the continuum, with public BI, there is an offer of more tangible services such as physical assets and expertise. On the other end, with private BI, there is an offer of financial help and intangible assets such as direct access to specialized resources.

An important feature of BI is their ability to provide networks of contacts for incubatees, whether internally or externally (Aernoudt, 2004; Grimaldi *et coll.*, 2005; Theodorakopoulos *et coll.*, 2014). Internally, the network is built among incubatees as well as between incubatees and graduates. In fact, "More than 45% of the graduates reported engaging in networks with clients of the incubator. […] Well run technology incubators not only stay in contact with their alumni firms but also encourage these firms to provide advice to the current tenant" (Aernoudt, 2004, p. 130). As such, it is interesting to look at the portfolio of the BI to identify how their graduates might be able to help. The creation of those links among incubatees and with graduates can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and resources as well as creating collaboration relationship and facilitating organizational learning (Grimaldi *et coll.*, 2005).

1.2.2.2 Venture Capitalists (VC)

VC are organizations that finance the early growth of new ventures (Zacharakis *et coll.*, 1998). They are "professional investors that use institutional money to invest" (Vanacker *et coll.*, 2013, p. 1076). They bring value to entrepreneurs by creating links between investors and entrepreneurs, by making good investment decisions and by giving support. They select whom they invest in on the base of four types of information: founders' capabilities, venture attractiveness, market conditions and potential returns (Shepherd, 1999). Industry-related competence and educational capabilities would seem to be important for VC in their selection of candidates. Furthermore, there seems to be an optimal amount of information to be processed by the VC in order to evaluate and select the venture they want to invest in (Zacharakis *et coll.*, 2001). A dearth or overload of information on the venture would hinder the decision-making process of VC and might be prejudiced against the selection of those ventures. Additionally, it would seem the experience of VC also has an optimal effect on their decision-making (Shepherd *et coll.*, 2003). Those with less experience might not possess the proper mental models to judge ventures properly whereas those with a lot of experience would rely too much on heuristics and mental shortcuts. In either case, the scope of accepted ventures would be smaller and some with good potential would be rejected. In this instance, entrepreneurs should be aware of which VC they want to work with. It would thus be important for ventures looking for funding and support to research properly on their potential partners and they would need to prepare their proposal in a complete manner with the right amount of information.

1.2.2.3 Angel Investors (AI)

AI usually designate "a wealthy individual who acts as an informal VC, placing his or her own money directly into early stage new ventures. In relation to formal VC in the United States, angels invest in approximately 20 times the number of new ventures" (Wiltbank *et coll.*, 2009, p. 118). Grant *et coll.* (2019) studied AI investment in Canada between 2010 and 2016. They found that SU "received a total of CAD 490 million in investment from AI, […] helping them to generate over CAD 1.7 billion in annual revenue and to create 6,856 direct jobs" (p. 15). AI differs from VC by their level of commitment. They have a more active involvement and they have a higher desire to help entrepreneurs (Collewaert, 2012a). Because of this, a good fit between the founding team and the AI would be required. As they enter the financing relationship, each side has expectations toward the other. AI expects entrepreneurs to have characteristics such as professional background and other attributes like cognitive reasoning processes. On the other hand, entrepreneurs expect more than financial investment such as advice and support.

AI commitment to new venture means that they might be more involved in their activities. As such, they "see it as their job to probe entrepreneurs to help them find and formalize a vision, and they may not be aware of the effects this probing has on the entrepreneur's self-confidence and commitment. To this end, some AI have even developed formal planning tools" (Collewaert, 2012a, pp. 758-759). However, while they are more implicated with the venture, they also afford more flexibility. In actuality, as opposed to VC, "angel contracts are generally more entrepreneur-friendly, have weaker control rights, use less contractual provisions, and are used more from a transactional than a control point of view" (Vanacker *et coll.*, 2013, p. 1077). A reason for this is that AI do not only want potential financial return but also for other motives such as personal fun and prestige.

1.2.3 What Partners Bring to the Table

BI, AI and VC can bring a lot to new ventures. While financial resources are the main reason entrepreneurs seek those partners, it has been shown that "these investors do not necessarily provide their portfolio firms with more slack resources, but that these investors do help entrepreneurs to make the most out of the resources at hand" (Vanacker *et coll.*, 2013, p. 1092). As such, while financial capital is critical to the new venture, other resources such as human capital and social capital are also important.

1.2.3.1 Financial Capital

Financial capital plays a major role in new ventures success. It is a reason ventures that are funded through external partners achieve a higher survival rate. In this regard, "a higher level of financial capitalization is important because it buys entrepreneurs time to successfully execute strategic objectives, enables entrepreneurs to either undertake more ambitious strategies or change their course of action, and simply empowers the entrepreneurs to meet the financing demands that are required to sustain the growth being realized" (Gilbert *et coll.*, 2006, p. 932). Most importantly, financing is critical for early-stage ventures (Madill *et coll.*, 2005). Furthermore, it creates a history of ventures funding. As such, "most companies that receive venture capital had prior angel finance" (Madill *et coll.*, 2005, p. 108). AI are critical at this juncture because of the large number of investments they make. They "total more than five times the amount invested by VCs and […] fund 30 times as many firms. […] 400,000 angels provide $50 billion in capital to over 50,000 companies each year" (Morrissette, 2007, p. 53). They represent the most important source of financing for early ventures (Riding, 2008). Financial capital might not be a predictor of a favorable outcome. Florin *et coll.* (2003) indicate that "financial capital by itself is not a productive resource: having it does not ensure post-IPO commercial" (p. 377). This shows that financial capital needs to be paired with other resources in order to help the venture.

1.2.3.2 Social Capital

The partners provide a bridge between the venture and their environment (Bergek *et coll.*, 2008). They serve as an effective means to build a network and access social capital. This "contributes directly to a venture's resource base, by allowing it to better attract human and financial resources, and also contributes indirectly, through its ability to leverage the productivity of the venture's resources" (Florin *et coll.*, 2003, p. 374).

It can open the way to resources such as information, knowledge and expertise as well as influence and sponsorship that can help the venture (De Carolis *et coll.*, 2009). It may be of "particular importance in environments of incomplete information and weak economic markets, such as new and nascent industries, products, markets and technologies" (Davidsson *et coll.*, 2003, p. 310). Florin *et coll.* (2003) describe the importance of social capital to entrepreneurs:

> *The more informationally rich a venture's external social network is, and the more competent its top managers are (that is, the more valuable its human resources), the more knowledge they will be able to assimilate, value, and apply from the informationally enriched social network. This can set in motion a "virtuous cycle": The more that a venture's human resources are enhanced by external social linkages, the more attractive it becomes to other key external stakeholders, who, in turn, provide access to additional resources and expand the venture's portfolio of capabilities for exploit new opportunities. Put differently, a venture's socially complex and historically unique configuration of human and social resources can result in a set of durable, rare, and inimitable resource bundles. (pp. 376–377)*

Usually, entrepreneurs need support from more than one partner to help them grow. It is thus "common that multiple investors share the investment, i.e., they syndicate the investment. […]In syndication, investors typically divide their roles so that one investor acts as a lead investor and takes a more active monitoring and support role whereas other investors often take less active roles" (Mäkelä *et coll.*, 2008, p. 239). The social capital of the partners would be particularly important in setting up a syndicate since they would seek other partners from within their social network.

1.2.3.3 Human Capital

Human capital is normally associated with characteristics as competence, experience and education. However, human capital brought from partners could be quite different. The most strongly related to venture growth are advices such as ones on business strategy and staff recruitment (Robson *et coll.*, 2000). These advices, if incorporated by the entrepreneurial team, could add to their own human capital. It could allow "individuals to achieve tasks in a more productive or successful manner, but also provides a signal to the labor market as to their increased ability to perform required tasks (Cassar, 2006, p. 613). It allows the new venture to progress through the difference phases of their life" (Gilbert *et coll.*, 2006). There could be different ways advices are provided to the venture (Bergek *et coll.*, 2008). First, the venture could request reactive and episodic counselling based on problems they encounter. Second, a proactive and episodic counselling could be requested from the part of the partner to follow the evolution of the venture. Finally, partners can request continual and proactive counselling for reviews and intervention. While these three ways of counselling could be used by partners, it could be representative of a partner depending on how much leeway they give the venture. In addition to advice, they can also provide *institutional mediation* in which they help ventures to "understand, interpret and perhaps even influence the institutional demands introduced by regulations, laws, traditions, values, norms and cognitive rules" (Bergek *et coll.*, 2008, p. 27). Advices and *institutional mediation* are transferred into new knowledge for the venture. It is even more important because of the role it plays into the development of other resources (West *et coll.*, 2009). It could be helpful to the venture because it provides context-specific knowledge from the partners whether it be on the market or on the tasks (Unger *et coll.*, 2011).

West *et coll.* (2009) define three important knowledge important to SU: industry-specific knowledge, strategic or business approach knowledge and venture-creation knowledge. The first two represent human capital that could be transferred from a firm's partners. Unger *et coll.* (2011) explain that "acquisition is the transformation from experience to knowledge and skills. Experience should not be equated with knowledge because experience may or may not lead to increased knowledge […]. Transfer is the application of knowledge acquired in one situation to another situation" (p. 343). They argue that the transfer should be achieved properly for the firm to achieve success. In this instance, how competencies acquired and transferred from their partners affect their firm depend on the fit within those competencies and the organization. They further explain that task relatedness, or how a knowledge or competency is specific to a situation, directly affects how acquired human capital affects the success of the firm. It also helps the absorption and integration of new knowledge if it is like prior knowledge.

1.2.4 Interaction with the Partners

Partners offer different levels of support based on their type and their relationship with the firm (Bammens *et coll.*, 2014; Zacharakis *et coll.*, 2001). In a general manner, the involvement of the partner is synonymous with its investment in the firm. As such, BI would be less involved while AI would be more involved. This involvement could be reflected on the mentorship provided by the partner. The time spent advising and teaching the firms are representative of how partners support them. This could prove critical in the growth and survival of SU who are confronted with a fair amount of uncertainty.

1.2.5 Friction with the Partners

Although partners such as BI, VC and AI provide new ventures with the necessary resources for them to thrive and grow, there might be issues within their relationship. Two main problems could be identified: the partner's biases and heuristics and the level of trust between the partner and the venture.

Biases affect decision-making and might lead to decisions and judgments that are less than optimal (Zacharakis *et coll.*, 2001). It could lead to overconfidence. Two distinct effects could result from this overconfidence regarding the venture's partners. On the one hand, there could be an optimistic overconfidence that would lead to an overvalue of the good outcome. This would be in favour of the venture as its prognostic would seem more positive. On the other hand, the overestimation of one's own knowledge would lead the venture partner to rely solely on his own judgment while ignoring the plight of the venture owners. This might lead to friction between the two parties and reduce the potential of the venture. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, partners that have a lot of experience might rely heavily on their heuristics to make decisions (Shepherd *et coll.*, 2003). In this instance, those partners might not be willing to listen to the venture owners and impose their way of doing things.

Another factor that could create issues between the venture and its partners is the trust that is built between them. Although, it is beneficial in essence to improve the level of trust, it could lead to some behavioural rigidities (Bammens *et coll.*, 2014). Again, there are two possible outcomes to this improved trust if it reaches a certain level. First, it could help venture owners since it might lead to a more positive outlook by the partners. It could be that "increasing intrateam trust perceptions can be expected to have a supplemental positive influence as it engenders a more optimistic attitude toward the entrepreneur when engaging in the subjective evaluation process of seeking out, interpreting, and recalling performance-relevant factors" (Bammens *et coll.*, 2014, p. 1985). On the other hand, behavioural rigidities could also be harmful to the venture owners. This increased trust might lead them to stay on the known road, to adopt the agreed upon pattern of behaviours and fear doing anything to endanger their relationship with their partners. This in turn could "negatively affect venture performance assessments as it is precisely the entrepreneurs' readiness and eagerness to continuously experiment and engage in innovative, deviating actions that allow for the survival and growth of entrepreneurial ventures" (Bammens *et coll.*, 2014, p. 1989–1990).

1.3 Resources

Resources are critical to all firms and most particularly to SU. It is important for firms to possess the right resources and to gather and integrate outside resources. In this instance, partners providing support to SU might be an important provider of resources.

As mentioned previously, these resources would consist mainly of financial, social and human capital. The study of how those resources are gathered, organized and exploited is thus of vital importance in the field of entrepreneurship and, most particularly, the study of SU.

The RBT highlights how a unique bundle of resources provide firms with a sustainable competitive advantage. It is particularly important in the study of SU since there can be an examination of how that bundle is created and how firms accumulate those resources. Additionally, the resources acquired from partners might be particularly important since they would be very specific to the SU context.

Behavioural theories of entrepreneurship such as Effectuation and Bricolage underline how entrepreneurs gain and effectively leverage resources to build and grow their firms. It displays how the particularities of entrepreneurs require a different perspective to resources in the context of SU and young firms.

1.3.1 Resource-Based Theory (RBT)

I adopt Barney (1991)'s definition that "resources are the tangible and intangible assets that a firm owns or accesses to conceive and implement strategies." These resources must interact to provide an idiosyncratic bundle giving the firm a differential sustainable competitive advantage. I highlight two components of the RBT: resources and capabilities.

1.3.1.1 Resources within the RBT

I define three dimensions of the RBT based on the literature: materiality, tangibility and acquisition. The first dimension, ***materiality***, captures whether the resource has a physical presence or not. It is mainly related to how imitable and substitutable a resource really is. The usual representation of a material resource is infrastructure and humans.

The second dimension, ***tangibility***, is implicitly immaterial. It is therefore a subcategory of immaterial resources, although an important one. Tangible resources are mainly related to how imitable and sustainable a resource really is. Intangibility represents a resource's specificity and how it brings a uniqueness to a firm. Molloy *et coll.* (2011) also define an intangible as not depleting or deteriorating with their use. It can also be noted that intangibles are not directly reliant on other resources as a change of human or material resources does not reflect directly on the intangible resources.

The third dimension, ***acquisition***, represents what the main means of obtaining the resources are. This dimension is mainly related to how valuable and rare a resource really is. Resources that can be acquired are less rare than resources that are built over time.

1.3.1.2 Capabilities within the RBT

Maritan *et coll.* (2010) define organizational capabilities as an organization's ability to execute a sequence of tasks involving its resource bundle to obtain a certain target result. Capabilities are therefore very connected to how resources can interact, which makes resource interaction a recurrent theme in the research on capabilities (Barney, J. B. *et coll.*, 2011; Coff *et coll.*, 2011; Hart *et coll.*, 2010).

Resource capture capabilities illustrate a firm's need to attract, retain and accumulate resources. A certain emphasis is given to identifying the right resources "since luck cannot be managed, the key to pursuing superior returns is the acquisition of superior information. […] A firm should focus its attention on internal analysis to access information about itself and the resources it already controls" (Maritan *et coll.*, 2010, p. 1375). This is of additional importance in the case of human capital because the "difficulty is amplified when the focal skills are idiosyncratic to the firm and cannot be observed ex-ante. Beyond hiring employees with the right skills and potential to learn, firms must also hire employees who properly 'fit' into the organization" (Coff *et coll.*, 2011, p. 1433). Retaining a resource uniqueness depends on the resource's rarity and how idiosyncratic it is to the firm. It is again further enhanced in the case of human capital that becomes an integral part of the organization such that "the many links that employees form with other individuals and organizations in their communities lead to idiosyncratic networks that are, by their very nature, very difficult to re-create elsewhere. The more embedded employees become, the more likely they are to believe that they cannot replace these networks should they choose to leave" (Coff *et coll.*, 2011, p. 1433). The accumulation of assets is another complex task as it requires the knowledge of characteristics such as "time compression diseconomies, causal ambiguity, asset interconnectedness, and asset mass efficiencies that help sustain competitive advantage from the internally accumulated assets" (Maritan *et coll.*, 2010, p. 1376). Resource capture capabilities therefore require a sound knowledge of how resources fit within the firm and between each other.

In turn, ***resource deployment*** capabilities require the firm to make a commitment towards what it wants to achieve. Parmigiani *et coll.* (2011) » s research on the implementation of business units highlights the importance of knowing what a firm wants to achieve with their resources. They note that a firm's bundle of resources and its history have a great impact on how they are deployed. What can be denoted is that "resource management capabilities allow predictions about future values of firm resources [and] exploitation of valuable and complementary resource-capability combinations as a firm's chief strategic imperative" (Huesch, 2013, p. 1288). It is thus recognized that resource capture and resource deployment capabilities are undeniably linked. There is a strong causality link between what resources a firm needs and how it uses them so the organization would have to constantly review its resource bundle, what is available in the environment and its future needs.

The third type of capabilities, ***organizational learning***, involves an organization finding, assessing and incorporating information that will provide it with idiosyncratic knowledge. He *et coll.* (2013) focus on market orientation capabilities and defines it as "a set of processes and routines that encourage firms to generate, disseminate, and respond to information about customers, competitors, and the external environment" (p. 28). Learning is therefore seen as a focal point for the activities of the firm. The planning of how a firm learns is also an important topic. One important aspect reflected in organizational learning literature is how each firm learns differently from the same set of available information. Wernerfelt (2013) describes a firm's need to incorporate a mounting number of specialists into its resource bundle as it grows. Learning is achieved naturally but requires commitment, direction and specialization.

The final type of capability, ***organizational change***, is an important topic with a focus on dynamic capabilities. Barreto (2010) defines these capabilities as: "the firm's potential to systematically solve problems, formed by its propensity to sense opportunities and threats, to make timely and market-oriented decisions, and to change its resource base" (p. 271).

1.3.2 Resources within Entrepreneurship

RBT perceives resources as providing a competitive advantage based on their characteristics and the interaction between them. However, new ventures start with few resources and have to build them as they evolve. As such, a low-resource context might provide a perspective of how new ventures acquire and assemble resources that allow them to survive and grow. As such entrepreneurial behavioural theories such as effectuation and bricolage might provide a theoretical viewpoint on how and what type of resources entrepreneurs acquire to gain a competitive advantage.

1.3.2.1 Effectuation

Sarasvathy (2001) defines effectuation as:

> *Effectuation begins with a given set of causes, consisting of (mostly) unalterable characteristics and circumstances of the decision maker, and the focus is on choosing among alternative (desirable) effects that can be produced with the given set of means, thereby eliminating the assumption of preexistent goals. (p. 259)*

It follows four principles: affordable losses, strategic alliances, exploitation of contingencies and control of an unpredictable future.

Affordable losses focus on how much venture owners can afford to lose and how they experiment with different strategies based on their unique means. They might value options that are future oriented rather those maximizing the present.

Strategic alliances focus on the network at the onset of the venture and who can help or commit to the venture. This pre-commitment from stakeholders serves to reduce the venture's uncertainty.

Exploitation of contingencies focuses on flexibility for the new venture. It highlights how planning should not be too rigid. It might serve venture owners to exploit contingency as they emerge over time.

Control of an unpredictable future focuses on what elements the venture can control. Instead of trying to predict an uncertain future, it would serve the venture owners better to work on what is within their reach. This effectively gives them a different perspective on the concept of market. In this instance, they would define what their market is rather than being dictated what their market should be.

These four principles act as decision-making heuristics determining the behaviours of entrepreneurs. Thus, there is a recognition that the "future is contingent upon actions by willful agents seeking to reshape the current environment and fabricate new ones. The essential characteristic of the future, in this view, is uncertainty. Environments can be made stable for periods of time in certain areas" (Read *et coll.*, 2009, p. 584). As such, it would be favorable for new venture to start with more general goals and adjust after seeing the results of their decisions and actions (Chandler *et coll.*, 2011). The effectual logic would be to effectively rearrange how problems are perceived and readjust realities toward new opportunities (Dew *et coll.*, 2009).

Effectuation Within the RBT

In relation to the RBT, the effectual logic would "fabricate more ends, pay more attention to and worry more about available resources, to envisage building more partnerships, to vary more in their interpretations of the data, and to eschew predictive information" (Dew *et coll.*, 2009, p. 293). In this sense, the characteristics of effectuation would fit particularly well within the RBT framework (Dew *et coll.*, 2008).

First, the core characteristics of the entrepreneur and his context provide an idiosyncratic set of constraints on the means he possesses. This links to the bundle of resources a firm starts with and should assess how it can serve or be transformed into a sustainable competitive advantage.

Second, the possible ways those resources are used to attain general goals could be linked to the capabilities within the RBT. How resources convert into capabilities and how, in turn, those capabilities help acquire and transform resources into sustainable competitive advantages emerge from how entrepreneurs perceived the utility of their current resources.

Third, the results of entrepreneurial action bring possible outcomes that could be both positive or negative. This could be a product of the entrepreneurial environment which could be dynamic, interactive and uncertain. This would link to the processes within the RBT. The structuring, bundling and leveraging processes would be directly influenced by how resources are perceived by venture owners. This is a result of the entrepreneurial action and their perception of it.

Finally, the selection of which direction the venture should be oriented is a result of the interaction of events with a previously evaluated level of affordable loss. This would link to the interaction of resources, capabilities and processes within the RBT. In effect, this interaction has been discussed previously and shows how venture owners decision-making would be premised on their evaluation of their actual resources, on the possessed capabilities and on how their processes has performed in the past.

1.3.2.2 Bricolage

Anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1966) described bricolage as making do with what was available at hand. In their seminal paper, Baker *et coll.* (2005) described it as creating "something from nothing and that such bricolage is an engine driving the enactment of resource environments that are idiosyncratic to the firm" (p. 356). Additionally, within the bricolage framework, resource scarcity might be an advantage to the venture if it uses it as a value-creating strategy (Welter *et coll.*, 2016). It hinges on venture owners not looking for the best resources but rather on the most affordable, or even free, resources and combining them to create value. Like effectuation, pre-existing networks play a critical role in bricolage. It gives venture owners access to the resources needed (Baker *et coll.*, 2003). Where it differs from effectuation is in how those networks are used. Where effectuation requires pre-commitments from stakeholders, in bricolage, the network is used as a repository for venture owners. As such, "they turned to their existing network, whatever its limitations. Stories of borrowing office space, equipment and money from friends and prior employers were very common" (p. 267).

Bricolage Within RBT

Baker *et coll.* (2005) describe two types of bricolage: parallel and selective. On the one hand, in parallel bricolage, venture owners are locked in a pattern of behaviours that keep them into maintaining bricolage throughout the life of the venture. It would keep them at the institutional margin and give them an identity as outliers. On the other had, in selective bricolage, it is used only to achieve and end. As such, “businesses were started or radically changed using bricolage, but bricolage was rejected once the business was established or the transition completed” (p. 349). Therefore, selective bricolage consists of maintaining a toolbox within which it would be possible to combine resources when the need arises and better resources are not available. Selective bricolage would be more associated with venture growth because firms that employ parallel bricolage would be more at the edge of society and therefore less accepted.

In relation to the RBT, parallel bricolage would be directly linked to resources, capabilities and processes.

In parallel bricolage, resources hold a distinct character. Because of how resources are perceived by venture owners, they would be idiosyncratic to the firm. As such, the value would be difficult to evaluate, and it might be complex to judge on how it would influence their sustainable competitive advantage.

Capabilities in parallel bricolage are also a difficult task because of their emergent nature. Since bricolage is enacted constantly, capabilities would also constantly have changed and reflect how the ventures use their resources.

Processes are critical in parallel bricolage. Structuring, bundling and leveraging would constantly be in effect as resources would need to be evaluated throughout the life of the venture. Since venture owners would always try to use the most affordable resources and combine them, they also would need to evaluate how they fit and how to leverage them.

As opposed to parallel bricolage, selective bricolage might not be linked to capabilities and processes as much. In selective bricolage, resources would be of two distinct natures: traditional and combined. With traditional resources, their value is usually more or less recognized and accepted. On the other hand, with combined resources, the value would depend on how they are used and the specific context. By combining and transforming resources only when needed, it makes the resource bundle idiosyncratic and the evaluation of the sustainable competitive advantage difficult.

Capabilities with selective bricolage might be more stable. Since resources would be often used in a more traditional way, capabilities would be similar most of the time. However, there would need to be a focus on capabilities that can detect when resources can be used differently and how they can create values.

Processes, similarly to capabilities, would be more stable with peaks of utility. In effect, structuring, bundling and leveraging processes would consider traditional resources regularly. However, it would have to be geared toward being able to occasionally acquire, bundle and use resources in different ways.

1.3.3 Link between RBT and Effectuation and Bricolage

Table I-2 summarizes how Effectuation and Bricolage would relate to RBT. It displays how the behaviours toward resources are enacted in regard to the processes of the RBT.

This typology linking the RBT to Effectuation and Bricolage might serve as a way to identify how different behaviours are enacted within a firm. Testing it empirically could provide an interesting perspective of how resources can effectively give a sustainable advantage to SU and facilitate their growth. How entrepreneurs perceive their resources and how, in turn, it influences their behaviour could serve as an interesting finding.

Table 1-2: Links between RBT and Effectuation and Bricolage

RBT	**Structuring the resource portfolio**	**Bundling Resources to Build Capabilities**	**Leveraging Capabilities to Exploit Market Opportunities**
Effectuation	Resources are acquired in the normal everyday conduct of business. They are not necessarily accumulated for a specific reason but to increase the level of the firm-wide resource.	Resources are bundled by the firm towards a general purpose. In that instance, resource transferability could be important to how well the bundle is suited to the firm.	Resources are leveraged toward rent creation. They serve to reach a specific goal. Although the end objective can change and would be determined by the resources at hand, how they are used can be influenced by the orientation of the firm.
Bricolage	Resources can be anything within the organization. There might not be an intent on accumulating resources.	Resources are bundled in a unique matter. Transferability might not be of great importance since the firm can convert them to their needs.	Resources are leveraged toward each specific situation. It might be difficult to associate how the bundles were formed with how the resources are used. As such, the leveraging of resources could emerge from the specific context of the firm.

1.4 Literature Summary

The literature review serves to validate the research question and inform about what knowledge has already been found within the domain. In regard to the question of how SU acquire human capital and what impact it has on their evolution, the literature presented within the section above shows that SU need to build up their resources bundle in order to survive and grow. One way to achieve this is to work with partners that can provide them with much needed resources.

Much research focus has been on the financial capital provided by partners. While it has been well established that monetary investment is critical to the success of SU, it does not constitute a resource that would provide a sustainable competitive advantage. In essence, partners have to provide something more than money or they would all be similar. The description of the different partners and how they interact with the firms effectively displays how different types of capital influence their growth, more specifically social and human capital. The importance of the partner's social network has been established in the literature. The human capital perspective has not been discussed much and would provide an outlook of how resources could provide a sustainable competitive advantage to entrepreneurs.

The literature shows that the survival and growth of SU is dependent on multiple factors, both external and internal. One of the most critical contributors to their success is ecosystem partners. This reflects the importance of the current research in looking at how those partners can actually help the entrepreneurs. By looking at how the resources, mainly human capital, are transferred from the partners to the entrepreneurs, this study seeks to help understand the value these partners can bring to SU and how it affects their progress. The literature review provided a summary look at what helps the venture grow and what partners can contribute. It serves as a starting point for the investigation of how those partners can support entrepreneurs with human capital.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents how the elements of literature review are integrated together in an integrative conceptual framework that allows the baseline of the field study. A theoretical model is also developed to help understand how the interaction between the entrepreneurs and their partners can impact their resources gathering and orchestration.

In order to assess what new ventures can profit from their interaction with their partners, I propose a framework built around how resources are critical to the growth of a firm. As such, I look to integrate the RBT with Effectuation and Bricolage in order to highlight how resources are collected, organized and used by those new ventures. In employing the RBT as the underlying theoretical anchor with support from Effectuation and Bricolage, I hope here to link a macro view of the importance of resources in general to the micro view of how entrepreneurs effectively build and manage their bundle of resources.

The exchange of capabilities between SU and their partners could potentially provide firms with the unique resource bundle that would effectively give them a competitive advantage. Effectuation and Bricolage would serve as perspectives into how that uniqueness is created. Effectuation focuses on the resources entrepreneurs possess and the leverage it gives them. The emphasis on pre-commitment and the relationship with partners is an important concept of Effectuation. It highlights the importance of convincing would be partners to trust them. Additionally, both concepts of starting with your own means and leveraging contingencies are salient for SU and their bundle of resources. The mix of entrepreneurs coming in with their own resources and the flexibility to adapt to the addition of new ones would serve to provide an idiosyncratic bundle of resources. This, in turn, would give them a competitive advantage that could be difficult to replicate. As such, Effectuation focuses on how entrepreneurs blend their own resources with those that they encounter within their venture. This might help SU build legitimacy with their partners.

On the other hand, Bricolage indicates that entrepreneurs would not necessarily possess idiosyncratic resources but rather use common ones in a novel fashion. Therefore, it does not necessarily put the emphasis on the resources entrepreneurs possess from the start or ones they accumulate. From a bricolage perspective, entrepreneurs might find it difficult to gain legitimacy. Since they use resources in an unrecognized manner, they might not be able to connect with partners. As such, Bricolage focuses on how entrepreneurs diverge from the normal use of resources. This might hinder SU from building legitimacy with their partners.

Partners provide SU with access to resources that might ensure their growth. Human capital would be resources and capabilities that could be specific to this relationship. In particular, industry-specific and managerial competencies might serve as the most important unique resources acquired from partners. As such, human capital acquired from partners, most specifically industry-specific and managerial competencies, could impact the growth of SU. From an RBT perspective, human capital could consist of the most important resource for a SU. Since the resource bundle for a firm needs to be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable in order to provide a sustainable competitive advantage, there is an argument that some types of resources are more critical than others. As such, although financial and social capital are crucial to the growth of SU, they might not differentiate between the different partners. In this effect, financing would be available throughout most partners while it can be argued that a network could be built in the same manner. What might truly differentiate a partner would be specific competencies it could transfer to the SU. However, in order for these competencies to provide a truly sustainable competitive advantage and help the firm grow, there might need to be a fit between the acquired competencies and the firm.

The model presented in figure II-1 illustrates how partners could impact SU growth. It could be achieved through the transfer of human capital to the SU. Within this framework, a few factors play into how that human capital can influence the growth of the firm. An effectual behaviour would have three concepts related to the resource orchestration process. First, in starting with own means, entrepreneurs do not gather resources in order to start a venture but rather use the resources they currently own to shape their SU. In this instance, with an effectual behaviour, each SU would begin with an idiosyncratic set of resources and each venture would also be quite unique in their own way. As such, when an entrepreneur starts a firm, he would possess his own private vision of how his business would evolve and how resources contribute to it.

Second, with pre-commitments, entrepreneurs seek to build a report with potential important stakeholders. This would provide them with the potentiality of acquiring resources from these partners. This willingness to seek partnerships would give SU with a pool of resources that might help them down the line. It also highlights how working with partners could be critical to the growth of SU.

Finally, in leveraging contingencies, entrepreneurs do not resist changes and unpredictability but embrace them. By accepting that some situations might be out of their control, entrepreneurs would show a willingness to be flexible. They would thus be able to adapt how they operate with new situation and new resources. This could apply to the resources they acquire from their partners. It might play a role in their relationship with those partners and with the growth of their firm. This openness to adjust how they use their resources and integrate outside resources could be critical in building a bundle of resources that would provide them with a sustainable advantage.

On the other hand, a bricolage behaviour involves making do with resources at hand. This would both be complementary and contradictory of the *leveraging contingencies* concept of the effectual behaviour. It is complementary because of the flexibility associated with resources. It requires entrepreneurs to keep an open mind about how to use resources and how to adjust to emerging situations. It is contradictory in that entrepreneurs have to adjust the way they use their own resources to particular situations. They would not seek to integrate outside resources but rely primarily on their own while trying to find new and novel ways to use them. In this sense, it could prove more difficult, from a bricolage perspective, to work properly with partners. There could be two reasons to this. First, by using resources in a different manner, they might appear to lack legitimacy in the eyes of potential partners. Their unique perspective on their resources might serve to act as a deterrent for stakeholders that would prefer a more traditional, and thus less risky, use of resources. Second, by using resources with their own specific objective in mind, they might not be favorable to let other people dictate how and which resources they should or should not have. There might be resistance to the transfer of human capital from partners.

This model tries to fill an important gap in the literature of the RBT. As such, “the issue of how resources and resource applications are discovered (the entrepreneurial process) is bypassed in this approach and the theoretical core of the approach is fundamentally static in nature” (Foss *et coll.*, 2007, p. 750). It highlights how firms, and particularly SU, use resources in a dynamic way to survive and grow. It shows that effectual and bricolage behaviour can influence the resource orchestration process to provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage to a SU. The dynamic nature of the process reveals that the behaviour and action of the entrepreneur could effectively influence how they acquire, gather and use their resources. The growth of the firm would then depend on how resources are perceived by the entrepreneur and how they interact with their environment.

Initially, the entrepreneur would possess an initial bundle of resources that would allow not only to start the venture but also provide a road map for how the resource portfolio should be built. In doing so, the SU sets a direction toward which it wants to steer. Early on, this would be critical to the survival of the firm.

Entrepreneurs could also seek external resources. Effectuation prescribes pre-commitments as a means to involve important stakeholders and secure their support. This would provide the firm with access to potential resources. This could change how they structure their resource portfolio as they acquire resources from their environment. Additionally, the introduction of new resources would push the firm to revise how the resources are organized to help build capabilities. First, it indicates which resources the firm needs in order to strengthen their bundle. Second, it shows which resources might not be as effective and should be removed. Working with partners would therefore give the firm with a way to evaluate their resource bundle and adjust it.

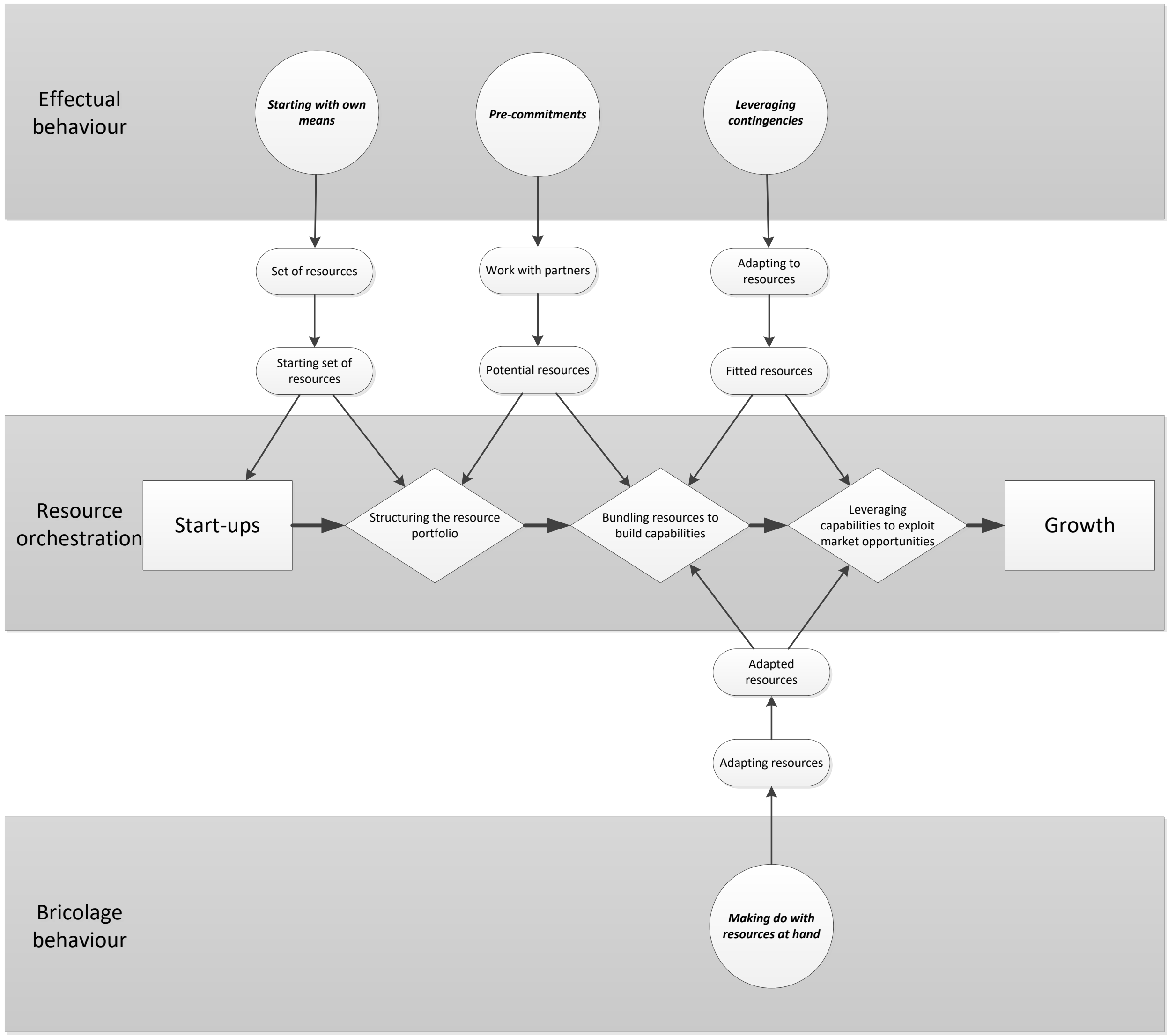


Figure 2-1: Integrated Model of the Resource Orchestration Process

Once a firm has been able to start acquiring, organizing and removing resources in order to build their internal capabilities, they would be confronted with situations that would require it to either adapt to their resources or adapt their resources. An effectual behaviour would dictate that the firm leverage contingencies. It means that the firm would be confronted with an outcome of their activities that is not intended. This consequence, whether positive or negative, would provide the entrepreneur with both opportunities and access to new resources. It would thus be advisable to adapt to the situation and to the new resources available to them. This would change how the firm bundles its resources since there might be a change on the perceived value of these resources and how they can be used. This, in turn, could change how the firm leverages its resources in order to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

On the other hand, a bricolage behaviour would dictate that, when confronted with an unintended outcome or an obstacle, the firm adapts and uses its own resources to overcome an unfavourable situation. Instead of trying to adjust to the external resources and incorporate them to get through challenges. Similar to the effectual behaviour, the bricolage behaviour would change how the firm bundles its resources because the perception of how resources can be used would change. This would thus change the perceived usefulness and value of the resources. A bricolage behaviour would then influence how the resources perform and how they can help leverage the firm capabilities to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Effectual and bricolage behaviours could be considered to be at the same time complementarity while on different ends of the resource integration spectrum. As such, the first would be more integrative and open to outside resources while the second would be more closed off, with a reliance on internal resources. Both types of behaviours would influence the resource orchestration process and how the firm effectively value and use their resources bundle.

The model in figure II-1 provides an overview of the resource orchestration process and how it contributes to the growth of SU. The integration of effectual and bricolage behaviours shows how the process applies to entrepreneurs and how it affects their resource management. In the context of their relationship with partners, there would be a specificity of interaction between effectual and bricolage behaviours. This model serves as a guide to the current research in questioning how resources are gathered and how it helps new ventures evolve. It provides the foundation to inquire about why and how entrepreneurs complete their own sets of resources with the support of their partners. The integrated model of the resource orchestration process sets up the field study in supplying the proper questions based on the context of SU. This leads to two different critical concepts to explore: how is the entrepreneur's bundle of resources built and what role do partners play in this process?

In figure II-2, the entrepreneurs' behaviours toward their partners could affect their growth. Conceptually, effectual behaviour, with leveraging contingencies, would involve working with their partners to integrate and leverage the resources they provide. The type of behaviours that could be associated with an increase in human capital could be represented in different manners. It could include actively seeking advices, incorporating resources into their organizations or changing the way they operate based on their partners' advice.

On the other hand, bricolage behaviour, with making do with resources at hand, would involve resisting attempts from their partners to dictate how to use their resources. This type of behaviour would hinge on the entrepreneur having a mindset of acting at the edge of normality and acceptability. As such, it could include refusal to integrate resources from partners, arguing with them or using resources in a manner not intended by the partners.

This suggested conceptual framework illustrates how an effectual behaviour might increase the potential of gathering outside resources from partners while a bricolage behaviour might decrease it. The arrows in the model show the process of how resources are gathered and orchestrated by SU. The process is described as resources gathered, most specifically human capital in the context of the current research, from the partners. As more resources are collected, entrepreneurs have to evaluate their fit within the venture in order to better orchestrate those organizational resources. The resulting bundle of resources will play a role in the growth and evolution of the SU. Within this framework, the entrepreneur's behaviour would influence how much human capital they receive from their partners. The arrows coming from the two different behaviours indicate how they would influence the relationship with their partners and what they receive from it. Effectual behaviours might improve the odds of receiving human capital from partners and bricolage behaviours would reduce them. This would play a role in the resource orchestration process as the total amount of human capital available to the SU would depend on how much is acquired from the partners. In turn, it would affect the composition of the resources bundle and the evolution of the new venture.

Both the model and framework serve as a guide to the empirical study. It provides the preliminary questioning and leads the inquiry. The research will focus mostly on the relationship between the entrepreneurs and their partners, how they behave and how they gather resources from these partners. The interest here is to understand what the entrepreneurs need, how the partners can answer those needs and how it fits the venture.

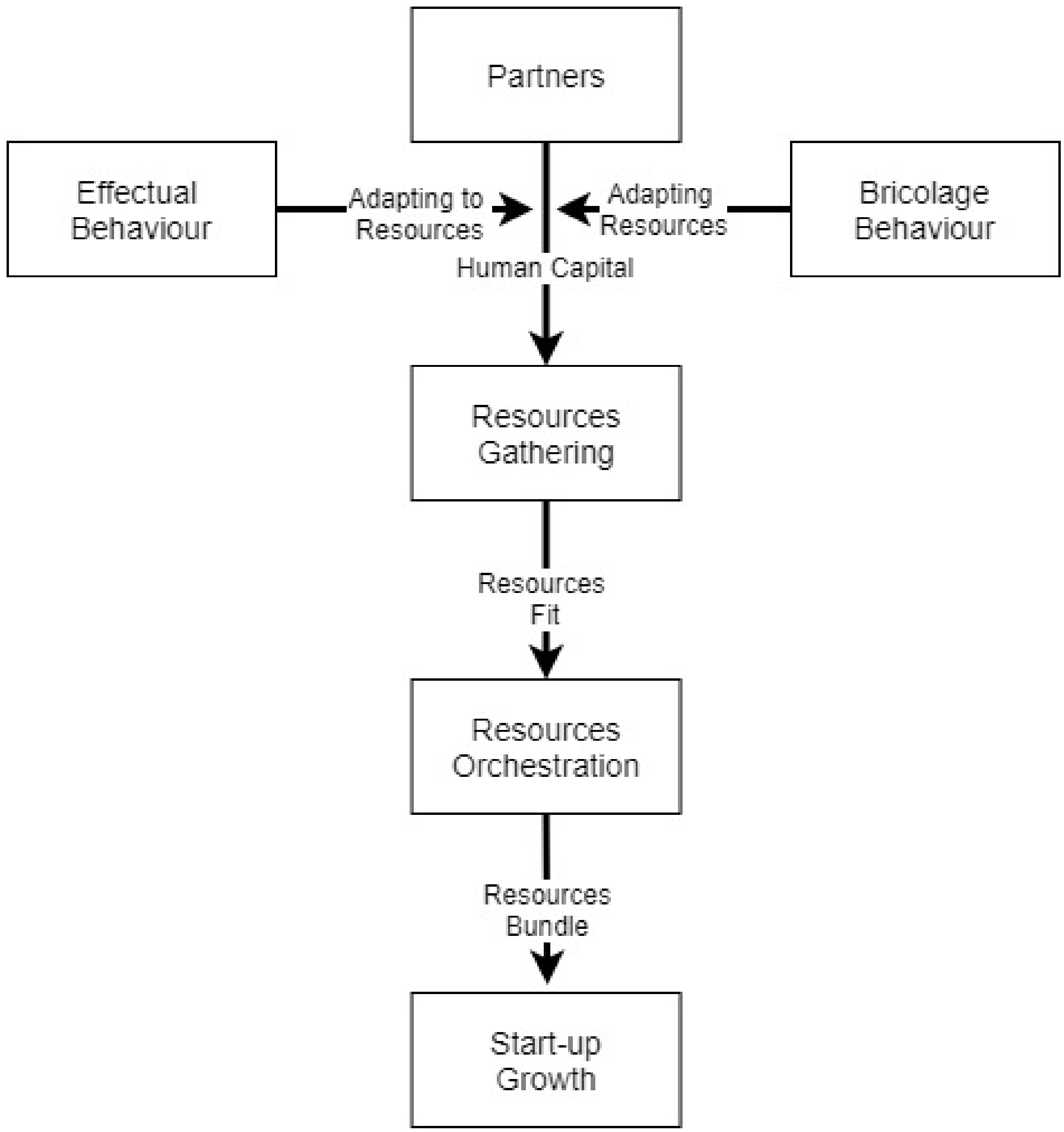


Figure 2-2: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 2: PRELIMINARY STUDY—SHARK TANK

This chapter shows the results from a preliminary study undertaken to help understand the role of a partner, an angel investor in this instance. By studying the television show “Shark tank”, the purpose is to get a glimpse of the investment process, what partners can provide and what role it might play in the start-up’s success or failure.

In order to better understand the phenomenon and importance of human capital transfer from their partners, a preliminary study is necessary. It provides an idea of what type of capital is promised and delivered by partners and, most particularly, the importance of human capital. This preliminary study is important in highlighting what partners offer and actually deliver. It is particularly useful for the research methodology in serving as a guideline of what information to look for within the field and in crafting the interview guide. It is thus quite consequential to the current research that a preliminary study provides a direction of how the field study is conducted.

This study introduces the three capitals—financial, social and human—in the context of interaction with partners. It offers the possibility of unveiling what partners can offer and how it affects the entrepreneurs. Additionally, in looking at ventures over time, it is possible to observe how the different capitals have influenced the evolution of the SU.

3.1 Research Design

This study develops a first look at what AI provides to venture owners. For the purpose of this study, I use the rhetorical structure theory (Mann and Thompson, 1987). This allows me to observe the interaction between AI and venture owners and the process of the investment. The analysis comes from two different sources: video clips and text excerpts taken from the internet.

3.2 Research Context

In order to observe the process of selection from AI, what they contribute and how their role in the survival and growth of ventures, I turn to the popular television show Shark Tank. It is described as such:

> *Shark Tank, the critically-acclaimed reality show that has reinvigorated entrepreneurship in America, has also become a culturally defining series. […] The Sharks—tough, self-made, multi-millionaire and billionaire tycoons—continue their search to invest in the best businesses and products that America has to offer. The Sharks will once again give people from all walks of life the chance to chase the American dream, and potentially secure business deals that could make them millionaires. […] The entrepreneurs who dare to enter the Tank must try to convince the Sharks to part with their own hard-earned cash and give them the funding they desperately need to turn their dreams into million dollar realities. All of the good, bad, emotional and even absurd pitches help showcase the "I wish I had thought of that" business ideas and products. But the Sharks have a goal, too—to get a return on their investment and own a piece of the next big business idea. When the Sharks hear an idea worth sinking their teeth into, they're more than ready to declare war and fight each other for a piece of it. […] Over the past 6 seasons, the Sharks have offered more than $66 million to bankroll a creative array of innovative entrepreneurs. (ABC, 2017)*

It provides an overview of what a Seed presentation might look like with AI and what they can offer to the venture owners. Also, with seven seasons, there is a portfolio of ventures to evaluate and some of them have up to six years of interaction with the AI. It serves as a good setting to observe how ventures fare after some time and what has been the effect of AI on their growth.

3.3 Sampling

In the context of this study, it makes sense to choose purposeful sampling because of the information that I was looking for (Patton, 2002). Since I am observing what AI bring to venture owners, there is a need to select the ventures that have been chosen.

Intensity sampling would seem most adequate since it consists of "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely. […] one seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 234). In this instance, there is a follow-up available with the ventures. A top nine of the most successful ventures and a top five of the least successful ventures were gathered.

3.4 Data Collection

Data is collected from two different sources: video clips and excerpts from the internet. The video clips serve to observe the interaction between AI and venture owners and what they are offering them in terms of financial, human and social capital. The internet excerpts serve to evaluate how AI contributed to the venture and to its growth. Table III-1 summarizes the 13 different ventures.

Table 3-1: Summary of Studied Shark Tank Ventures

	Venture	Description	Shark	Results
Success	ScrubDaddy	Scrubing pad	Lori	Commercial success with more than $75 million in sales
	Tipsy Elves	Christmas sweaters	Robert	Annual sales around $8 million
	Groovebook	Instant photo book app	Mark and Kevin	Acquired for $14.5 million
	Breathometer	Smartphone breathalyzer	Mark, Kevin, Lori, Daymond and Robert	Annual sales around $2 million
	Bubba Q	Boneless baby back ribs	Daymond	Annual sales around $3 million
	Ten Thirty One	Haunted hayrides	Mark	Annual sales around $4 million
	Clean bottle	Water bottle	Mark	Commercial success
	EZ VIP	Booking service for clubs	Daymond	$250,000 in revenue
	Chord buddy	Guitar learning system	Robert	Annual sales around $1 million
Failure	Show no	Beach towel	Lori	Company closed
	You smell	Luxury soap bar	Robert	The investment never went through
	Body jac	Push-up system	Barbara and Kevin	Investment lost
	HyConn	Quick-connect hydrant system	Mark	Investor backed out of the deal

3.4.1 Video Clips

The observation of the video clips allows finding out the process of venture selection by AI, how they interact and what they promise the venture owners. Based on those video clips, I evaluated how resources are acquired by ventures and how they evaluate the importance of those resources.

The 13 different selected venture pitches and their outcomes provide enough information to understand the process. By looking at nine successful ventures and four unsuccessful ventures, it is possible to observe how they were able to get selected and how it has either benefited or harmed the venture.

3.4.2 Internet Excerpts

The excerpts taken from the internet allow the evaluation of how those ventures evolved. The nine successful ventures provide an overview of how beneficial AI can be to the venture and what has resulted from their deal. On the other hand, the four unsuccessful ventures provide an overview of what might have gone wrong and whether their deal has harmed them.

Those excerpts contain interviews and recaps of how those ventures have survived or failed. It provides a picture of how the involvement of AI really affects ventures and what they were able to bring to the table.

3.5 Preliminary Results

The preliminary results from study 1 reflects what partners are willing to provide to entrepreneurs and how it might have impacted the SU. Table III-2 provides an understanding of the type of support ventured by potential partners. Its importance is reflected in what the AI believes would be critical to founders. The three different types of capital are represented based on their description in the literature review. As such, financial capital is the amount and terms offered by the AI. On the other hand, social capital hinges on whom they know and how it can be useful to the SU. Finally, human capital is represented by the expertise and knowledge that each AI can offer.

To illustrate the importance of each different capital to the partners, table III-2 presents excerpts of what they offer to the SU. As they negotiate with founders in order to convince them to work with them, they have to give them arguments of why they are the best choice. As such, it displays what the AI considers as being critical and what would help the SU the most.

The excerpts in the table show that, while entrepreneurs enter the show in order to secure financial capital, what might separate the investors is what they can provide on top of monetary investment. Both social capital and human capital are very specific to each AI. It is best summed up by Mark Cuban: “it’s about who is really going to give her the support by giving her the time that she needs, connections that she needs and access to other sources and companies”. This shows the importance of what capital is considered important to AI and to the founders. For example, in the first example of human capital, it was described that Lori was able to provide the best contribution because she was “the clear authority amongst the sharks for this type of product and business model.” The other examples within the table display what AI believe they can offer entrepreneurs and how they think it can help.

Table 3-2: Types of Capital Promised by AI from Shark tank

Human capital	Social capital	Financial capital
All eyes went to Lori, the clear authority amongst the sharks for this type of product and business model. Describing the Scrub Daddy as a hero, and not a zero, she rebuffed Daymond's offer with a stinging 'No offence Daymond, but I don't need you'. She went on to offer Aaron the full $100K in exchange for 30%, further sweetening the offer with a confident claim that she could get the product sold in stores nationwide within weeks.	Herjavec has helped secure Mendelsohn and Morton with a warehouse for Canadian orders, connected them with wholesale buyers, and provided his legal team to combat a knockoff company.	Bubba accepts Daymond's offer of a $300,000 cash investment in exchange for 30% of the business but is contingent on Bubba receiving the licensing deal with whoever Daymond intends to license out to.
$100K for only 25% of the business this time, stressing to Aaron her vast experience in the cleaning products market, and her extensive retail contacts.	Her superior contacts within retail and how she could give Scrub Daddy the best coverage and retail opportunities.	Mark and Mr. Wonderful then counter with $150K for 80% of licensing rights only.
Aaron was approached by Bed Bath & Beyond and ShopRite and he quickly secured deals with both companies. With the assistance of Lori Greiner, it wasn't long before deals had also been secured with some giants of retail, Staples and Target, with an additional deal with Ace Hardware following shortly afterwards.	Kevin then extends an offer, which is contingent that this one person Kevin would take Bubba and his De-Boned Baby Back Rib Steak to, who is one of the largest meat processors of the United States	A $100,000 investment in exchange for 10% equity in the Scrub Daddy business
Daymond remarks that he owns the ugliest sweater company in history, the company that actually makes the sweaters that Bill Cosby used to wear during the filmings of the Bill Cosby show – ones that have contrasting colors and appear big and fluffy on their wearer.	Having Mark Cuban on his side definitely helped a lot, considering the connections he has in the sports world.	Daymond also would like to enter, offering $250,000 and unlimited manufacturing for a 10% stake in Breathometer.
His background is in cyber security, so it's not like he has a huge manufacturing team," Mendelsohn says. "We never expected a lot of retail-specific guidance from him, but what's been really helpful has been a lot of the mentorship and high-level strategy." He says that Morton regularly quotes Herjavec now when discussing brand strategy.	John counter argued that he has multiple connections with retail locations such as Bed Bath & Beyond and JCPenny's	
They are providing much more than capital. "They bring a wealth of experience and connections to your business,	He threw in an A-list endorsement for the service, citing a relationship with Pitbull, a famous rapper.	
Mark Cuban states that in the big picture of things, it's not about the financial investment, it's about who is really going to give her the support by giving her the time that she needs, connections that she needs and access to other sources and companies.		

Table III-3 displays how partners contributed to the success and sometimes the failure of some of the SU. At first glance, it could be surmised that financial capital would not be critical to the success of projects since financial investment would be the same from every investor. It does not mean that financial capital is to be discounted as failure can be linked to issues in the financial investment. However, the general nature of monetary investment separates it from human and social capital. Human capital, meanwhile, plays as much a role in the success and failure of the entrepreneurial projects. It can be argued that, since human capital is so idiosyncratic to the investor and to the entrepreneur, a disconnect between the two can be disastrous to the entrepreneur. On the other hand, a synergy and a good fit could be a primary source of success for the entrepreneurial project. This table demonstrates that human capital might be critical in the success of the venture when working with AI. It shows that, in contrast with financial and social capital, it plays a role both in the success and failure of the SU. As such, it is an indication of the importance of doing further research into the transfer of human capital from the partner to the entrepreneur and its benefit.

Table 3-3: Partners' Impact on the Success or Failure of Projects on Shark Tank

Success/Failure	Human capital	Social Capital	Financial capital
Successful	Herjavec and his marketing team convinced Mendelsohn and Morton that Tipsy Elves needed to transition from a specialized company that's active only about six weeks a year to one with a variety of offerings year-round, especially since a trend like wearing a tacky holiday sweater to a party probably won't last forever.	Following his appearance on Shark tank, Aaron was approached by Bed Bath & Beyond and ShopRite and he quickly secured deals with both companies. With the assistance of Lori Greiner, it wasn't long before deals had also been secured with some giants of retail, Staples and Target, with an additional deal with Ace Hardware following shortly afterwards.	
	Greiner has also helped Krause develop new products like Scrub Daddy in colors, a lemon-scented sponge, and several new items that will be released this year.	In Canada, Herjavec has helped secure Mendelsohn and Morton with a warehouse for Canadian orders, connected them with wholesale buyers, and provided his legal team to combat a knockoff company.	
	Since leaving the Tank, they've expanded from 30 employees to an estimated 50 by the end of the year. As far as the Sharks' continued involvement, he said they are still a part of the business, especially Mark and Kevin, who aid with aspects such as partnerships, distributions, marketing, and investments.		
	Cuban is "very involved and very hands-on when we need help with something," Carbone says. "He's really accessible and really interested in getting us to the next level." Carbone tells us she speaks with Cuban an average of two or three times a week, but there have been periods where they talk every day to see something through.	She explains Mark introduced her to Live Nation, who also invested in Ten Thirty One! They now have nearly 1000 cast members for the different venues and Melissa thinks she's on the way to building the biggest "horror entertainment" company in the world.	
Unsuccesful	Once it came down to signing the deal, Mark wanted to license out the design of the quick-connect hose attachment, which would null the part of the deal where Jeff would manage the company.		I asked Cummins last week how the business was going, and what she had done with Herjavec's money. We never got the money, she said.
	From various interviews and analysis, it appears that the business simply grew too quickly. Poor management resulted from a case of "too many cooks" spoiling the broth. With multiple partners involved in the business, it was difficult for the entrepreneurs to form a coherent strategy. With partners pulling in too many directions, the business wore thin, and filed for bankruptcy.		Barbara Corcoran publicly called Body Jac one of the worst deals she's ever done and claimed Cactus Jack took all her money. In 2012, the Body Jac website was down and it appeared the product was defunct.
	The business model needs some changing from what we were doing. I would have grown more organically (i.e slower) and also found investors who were willing to go the distance." Investors weren't willing to go the distance? Did you mean Mark Cuban? "I don't think that the 'big name' investors we got really came through with what I had hoped."		

3.6 Preliminary Study Conclusion

This preliminary study serves two main purposes. First, it illustrates what type of capital is considered important by AI and how they are selling them to the founders. Second, it shows how each capital could potentially affect the success or failure of the venture. It complements the literature review in highlighting the importance of both the partner's support and the type of capital provided. By displaying what the AI offers and how they think it can help the SU, this study shows that on top of financial and social capital, human capital is equally, or perhaps even more, important to the founders in the mind of their potential partners.

On the other hand, in looking at the testimonials of the founders years after they start working with the AI, it is possible to get a glimpse on what contributed to their success or failure. The recounting of how the partner helped or harmed the venture provides a peek into the relationship between founders and AI. It also shows how each type of capital can contribute to the SU.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter addresses the way I explored the research question of how human capital acquired from ecosystem partners contribute to the start-up and the entrepreneurs. It consists of four sections. The first section presents the research context and methodological positioning. The second part shows the research design with the sampling strategy and how the interviews were accomplished. The third part offers an insight into how the data was analyzed with a focus on the coding process. The last part discusses the evolution of the research through the interviews and observations and how knowledge was built through an iterative process.

In this chapter, I discuss how I have approached the research question. The previous summary literature review reveals that there is a dearth of knowledge in the transfer of human capital to SU and how entrepreneurial learning is effectuated. First, I will discuss the research context and its ensuing methodological positioning. Second, I will present the detailed research design and its evolution. Finally, I will address data analysis and its effect on answering the research question and theory building.

4.1 Research Context and Methodological Positioning

The previous sections have shown that research on the relationship between SU and invested partners (BI, AI and VC) has primarily focused on financial and social capital. As such, there is a scarcity of work on what human capital is provided to SU and how entrepreneurs learn within their relationships with those invested partners. Since there is little to no specific literature on the topic, it makes it quite an endeavour to uncover the intricacy of the process. Furthermore, the phenomenon of fast growth SU participating in the investment process with BI, AI and VC is a particularly definite phenomenon that requires a specific perspective. While there has been prior research on each dyadic set of relationship separately (SU vs. BI, SU vs. AI and SU vs. VC), the context of this research seeks to look at them together, as part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Not only would SU interact with the three others simultaneously, but they are also interconnected among themselves. As such, a study of each of them separately would lose some depth in the knowledge that can be developed. In recognition of the nascent nature of this research, I seek to uncover the perspective from the multiple actors through an exploratory study.

To understand the research perspective, it is important to situate the researcher within the context of the study (Creswell *et al.*, 2017). First, I started this foray into resources transfer and entrepreneurial learning on the basis of my experience working as a consultant with entrepreneurs. As such, I wondered why they did not optimize the use of potential resources and, furthermore, what type of resources they acquired during the entrepreneurial process and the process by which to acquire them. Additionally, on the basis of completing my Masters in Project Management, I was also curious of how project management was enacted in SU and what tools entrepreneurs used to plan their venture. This led to a long and complex iterative process of finding a proper research context and question. I stumbled upon the interaction of high-growth SU with different types of partners while looking at the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. I was particularly attracted at invested ecosystem partners such as AC, AI and VC at the early stage because of their influence on those SU and the type of contributions they can bring to the table.

Following the context of the researcher within the study, it is important to bring forth the philosophical assumptions. They represent a purview of how the researcher views research and the direction of the research. These philosophical assumptions are the "researcher's view of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows reality (epistemology), the value stance taken by the inquirer (axiology), and the procedures used in the study (methodology)" (Creswell *et al.*, 2017, p. 18).

The researcher's ontology represents how the world is perceived, its nature and its characteristics. Multiple realities exist within the research context for the researcher as well as the individual being studied. As such, my pre-study ontology is presented in the literature review while my post-study ontology is presented in the latter part such as the discussion and the conclusion. It highlights the importance of the researcher's transformation throughout the study and how it is impacted by the interaction with the interviewee as well as the environment of the ecosystem. The studied individuals' own views of reality are represented through the analysis of the interviews. As such the nature of reality is consisted of a constructivist ontology in which each individual construct their own reality and knowledge (Patterson *et al.*, 1998). For the nature of human experience, I position myself in the narrative ontology where experience emerges from the context and the interaction with their environment. Finally, I perceive human nature as a meaning based model in which individuals construct meaning on the basis of their environment rather than simply rationally processing within it.

From an epistemological standpoint, for an exploratory study:

> *researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Therefore, subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views. This is how knowledge is known—through the subjective experiences of people. It becomes important, then, to conduct studies in the "field," where the participants live and work—these are important contexts for understanding what the participants are saying. The longer researchers stay in the field or get to know the participants, the more they "know what they know" from first-hand information. (Creswell et al., 2017, p. 21)*

The researcher's epistemology reveals how he approaches research and the purpose of the study. My epistemological approach in regard to the relationship with the observed phenomenon is a fusion of horizons within which the observer is part of the phenomenon and participates to the research as an interpreter and co-produces knowledge with the participants. Additionally, I perceive hermeneutic circle as the research process and how it influences the type of knowledge generated. It indicates that knowledge is not finite and that it is based on the context and needs to be revised constantly.

The axiological assumptions consist of the researcher's values within the study. In this instance, I follow a positivist paradigm which dictates that I seek to advance the progress of knowledge by trying to explain the phenomenon at hand, albeit through the perspective of the participants. I, therefore, recognize the "value-laden nature of the study" (Creswell *et al.*, 2017, p. 21) and that I, as well as the interviewed individuals, have biases that affect the direction of research.

Finally, the methodological assumptions indicate the process and language of research. In the context of an exploratory study, it is recommended to be "inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (Creswell *et al.*, 2017, p. 21).

Taken together, the philosophical assumptions lead to an interpretive framework. This is the paradigm and theoretical orientation brought by the researcher. My interpretive framework is postpositivist. Creswell *et al.* (2017) define it as:

> *Those who engage in qualitative research using a belief system grounded in postpositivism will take a scientific approach to research. They will employ a social science theoretical lens. We will use the term postpositivism rather than positivism to denote this approach because postpositivists do not believe in strict cause and effect but rather recognize that all cause and effect is a probability that may or may not occur. […] Postpositivist researchers view inquiry as a series of logically related steps, believe in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality, and espouse rigorous methods of qualitative data collection and analysis. They use multiple levels of data analysis for rigour, employ computer programs to assist in their analysis, encourage the use of validity approaches, and write their qualitative studies in the form of scientific reports, with a structure resembling quantitative articles (e.g., problems, questions, data collection, results, conclusions). (p. 23)*

Within this paradigm, I seek to follow a rigorous, yet flexible, methodology to research in order to co-create knowledge with the study's participants.

4.2 Research Design

On the basis of the aforementioned research context and methodological positioning, I came to the decision that grounded theory might be the most appropriate. First off, a qualitative research is appropriate because an understanding of the context and of an issue is warranted and a theory is needed to address a gap in knowledge. I seek to understand a particular phenomenon, "***what and how do SU learn from their invested partners***" and a theory explaining it would shine the light on the transfer of human capital and its importance to entrepreneurs (Creswell *et al.*, 2017). Second, a grounded theory is proper because it allows the generation of theory from the field. It originates from the data gathered from participants. It is "a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants" (Creswell *et al.*, 2017, p. 82). It is particularly salient in the context of this study because of its utility in finding out the process, including phases over time, associated to the phenomenon related to the research question. Furthermore, grounded theory generally aims at substantive theory (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011; Glaser *et al.*, 2017; Strauss *et al.*, 1994). As such, it is proper in the context of a research that looks at a very specific and situated phenomenon.

A particular feature of grounded theory is its iterative nature (Charmaz *et al.*, 2012; Charmaz *et al.*, 2011; Creswell *et al.*, 2017; Glaser *et al.*, 2017; Strauss *et al.*, 1994). For that purpose, "the grounded theory researcher is constantly comparing data gleaned from participants with ideas about the emerging theory. The process consists of going back and forth between the participants, gathering new interviews, and then returning to the evolving theory to fill in the gaps and to elaborate on how it works" (Creswell *et al.*, 2017, p. 84). This requires the researcher to adapt the interview process as knowledge emerges from the field. As the study evolves, the researcher creates categories based on the information gathered through the data collected. More and more knowledge are generated until saturation and a new theory is developed. This process is recognized as the constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell *et al.*, 2017; Glaser *et al.*, 2017; Strauss *et al.*, 1994).

Three types or forms of grounded theory are generally recognized (Charmaz *et al.*, 2012; Charmaz *et al.*, 2011; Creswell *et al.*, 2017). The original version, as introduced by Glaser *et al.* (1967), is recognized as positivist grounded theory. This requires that grounded theory is undertaken by an observer that is independent, objective and looking from outside the phenomenon. Furthermore, the researcher perceives generalizations as a goal of research. In this instance, this version of grounded theory is a structured methodology with well-defined steps and defined roles for the researcher. The second version initiated by Strauss *et al.* (1994) is known as postpositivist grounded theory. In this modified version, the authors preach for relaxed and more open methods. In essence, it recognizes the multiple perspectives of the studied participants. It also accepts that the "truth is enacted: Theories are interpretations made from given perspectives as adopted or researched by researchers" (Strauss *et al.*, 1994, p. 279). As such, the researcher's biases are integral to research and therefore the interpretations and limitations of the research play a critical part in theory building. Finally, Charmaz and colleagues (2011, 2012) developed a third version identified as constructivist grounded theory. As opposed to the previous two versions, this approach "emphasizes multiple realities, the researcher and research participants' respective positions and subjectivity, situated knowledge, and sees data as inherently partial and problematic" (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011, p. 168). While adopting the same methods, constructivist grounded theory differs by looking for an interpretive understanding of the phenomenon. As such, it views data as co-created by the researcher as well as the studied participants. The role of the researcher in this instance is as an active analyst who uses reflexivity throughout the whole research process. A fundamental difference between the constructivist grounded theory and the other two versions is its relationship with existing theoretical assumptions. In fact, they recommend avoiding "being influenced by existing theoretical assumptions and thus direct researchers not to study the extant theoretical and research literatures on their topics" (Charmaz *et al.*, 2012, p. 358) to avoid researchers' biases. On the other hand, constructivist grounded theory accepts that researchers possess their own knowledge. Instead of trying to remain neutral, it is advised to be reflexive about his (her) prior knowledge of the phenomenon and the underpinning theories. This would serve as a guide to their investigation. By explicitly showcasing that prior knowledge as well as explaining how it affects research, it can effectively guide the direction of the investigation. From a practical standpoint, constructivist grounded theory would not be purely dictated by the field data but guided by existing theories. As such, the back and forth between literature, empirical data and analysis could be the driving force behind the construction of the phenomenon theory.

The nature of the studied phenomenon and the research context would dictate the proper methodology. In the current situation, a constructivist grounded theory would allow an exploratory study of what and how high-growth entrepreneurs learn from invested partners. In that regard, the study was preamble by a preliminary literature review in order to provide an introductory understanding of the context of research. In the same vein, a preliminary study was also conducted in order to understand how some of the main concepts critical within the research such as human capital, its transfer and the interaction with some ecosystem partner. The purpose of that preliminary study was to determine the importance of human capital and validate the main study. In accordance with constructivist grounded theory, the literature review and the preliminary study serve as a means to better understand the phenomenon and are useful for the iterative building of theory.

In-depth semi-structured interviews are recommended for grounded theory (Charmaz *et al.*, 2012; Creswell *et al.*, 2017). The initial version of the questionnaire was constructed on the basis of the literature review, the conceptual framework and the preliminary study. A combination sampling strategy was used to find the participants (Miles *et al.*, 1994). First, a criterion sampling was initially employed to find participants fitting the criteria of a vested partner as highlighted by the literature (AC, AI and VA). The initial sampling strategy was to find partners and ask for a referral to the SU working with them, thus using a snowball sampling. This strategy provided the first set of interviews with two founders and one of each type of partner. This initial set of respondents helped set up an initial theoretical sampling. It means "sampling to fill out and check the properties of a tentative category, not to achieve demographic representation of those chosen for the study" (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011, p. 167). The iterative process of the grounded theory requires this type of sampling since the analysis of each interview changes the subsequent sampling strategy. At that point, in order to find the right candidates to interview fitting the theoretical sampling, a broad search was undertaken. While still using a snowball sampling, I decided to use LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) as a means to contact and recruit candidates. Based on the criteria from the theoretical sampling, I used my contacts through the website to identify potential participants. Furthermore, through one of the website's feature, where it is possible to inspect my contacts' contacts, I created a network of respondents. It was thus possible to recruit individuals with the right profile and ready to participate in the study. To complete the sampling, I also recruited participants by attending ecosystem events. During these different functions, I met with different entrepreneurs and other actors. It allowed for two things: recruit more participants and observe the interactions in the ecosystem. In accordance to theoretical sampling, the selection of candidates was dictated by the need to complement knowledge on the phenomenon. As such, different types of respondents were sought to provide a complete perspective of the ecosystem. Finally, the sampling of the individuals most related to the study was achieved with saturation. The three methods of participants' recruitment are shown in table IV-1.

Table 4-1: Participants' Recruitment

Type	Direct Referral	Online Contacts	Ecosystem events
Details	Direct contact provided by an individual	Contact created through the online professional portal "LinkedIn"	Contact created through events such as recruitment, information and networking functions
Cases	VC01→AC01 AC01→F01 AC01→F02 F02→F03 F03→AC02 AC02→AC03 AI01→AI02 AI02→F11 AI02→AI03 F30→F36	F04+F05+F06+F07+F08+F09+F12+F13+F15 F18+F20+F21+F23+F25+F26+F27+F28+F29 F30+F31+F32+F33+F34 VC02+VC03+VC04+VC05+VC06+VC07+VC08 VC10 AC06+AC09+AC10 AI04+AI05	Demo day→F10+F17+AC04+P01+P02 Recruitment cocktail→F14+F16+AC05 Information session→VC11 Conference→VC06+VC09+AC07 Networking event→F19+F22+F24+F37+AI04

It is important to note that the initial intention was to interview dyads of entrepreneurs and partners (and potentially triads and tetrads). However, it was made clear early on that it might not be possible. Reluctance to provide references and delays in organizing meetings prompted me to look for potential interviewees in parallel to waiting for formal introductions. This led to finding potential candidates through LinkedIn and participation to ecosystem events. It provided a boost in the number of interviewees. Table IV-2 shows the list of interviewees, as well as the type of organization, their role within it and the duration of the interviews. It provides an overview of the interviews undertaken for the purpose of this research. A more detailed table is available in the annex. It presents the industry within which each SU operates as well as their connections with the different partners.

Table 4-2: List of Interviewees

Interview	Type	Role	Duration (min)	Interview	Type	Role	Duration (min)	Interview	Type	Role	Duration (min)
1	VC	Partner	32	23	VC	Partner	80	44	VC	Associate	41
2	AC	Manager	29	24	VC	Associate	67	45	AC	Manager	38
3	SU	Founder	26	25	SU	Founder	33	46	AI	Angel	71
4	AI	Administrator	51	26	VC	Partner	35	47	SU	Founder	63
5	SU	Founder	53	27	PA	Administrator	48	48	SU	Founder	25
6	AI	Angel	30-80	28	AC	Manager	74	49	SU	Founder	27
7	SU	Founder	57	29	SU	Founder	50	50	AC	Manager	21
8	SU	Founder	53	30	SU	Founder	69	51	SU	Founder	73
9	SU	Founder	79	31	SU	Founder	50	52	SU	Founder	63
10	SU	Founder	30	32	SU	Founder	56	53	SU-AI	Founder-Angel	44
11	AC	Administrator	63	33	VC	Associate	59	54	SU	Founder	59
12	SU	Founder	35	34	AC	Manager	51	55	AC-SU	Mentor-Founder	33
13	SU	Founder	88	35	SU	Founder	51	56	SU	Founder	42
14	SU	Founder	77	36	SU	Founder	35	57	SU	Founder	42
15	VC	Partner	30	37	SU	Founder	57	58	SU	Founder	27
16	SU	Founder	42	38	AI	Angel	47	59	AC-SU	Manager-Founder	57
17	VC	Associate	57	39	SU	Founder	100	60	SU	Founder	33
18	SU	Founder	85	40	VC	Partner	55	61	VC	Partner	43
19	AC	Mentor	14	41	VC	Partner	51	62	SU	Founder	27
20	SU	Founder	25	42	VC	Partner	62	63	SU	Founder	20
21	PA	Lawyer	65	43	SU	Founder	29	64	PA	Consultant	26
22	SU	Founder	24								

The iterative process discussed earlier, called comparative analysis by Glaser *et al.* (1967), requires the researcher to go back and forth between analysis and data in order to refine the understanding of the phenomenon as well as adjusting the research process.

As such, after every interview, the data was surveyed, and new concepts were highlighted. The questionnaire was reviewed and modified to uncover new categories and themes. There were three initial interview guides, one each for founders, employees and invested partners. The main questions remained relatively unchanged for the most part but probes were added and modified to fit the context of the research (Creswell *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the vocabulary was adapted to the environment of the respondents and adjust to the lingo in the ecosystem. This allowed a more fluid conversation with the participants and a refinement of the understanding of the phenomenon at the same pace as its particular language is integrated. In a similar manner, the interaction with the interviewed individuals provided the opportunity to differentiate the data collection methods. Four different methods were thus implemented in addition to the interviews. First, observations were used with two different contexts (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011; Creswell *et al.*, 2017; Glaser *et al.*, 1967, 2017; Strauss *et al.*, 1994). The first context of observation was at ecosystem events such as recruitment cocktails or conferences. This provided a better understanding of the ecosystem and its main actors. The second context of observation was inside an AC. A participant gave permission to observe the inner working of the AC with the cohort at that time. It allowed a better understanding of the interaction between the SU and the AC as well as the witnessing of the process of learning by founders. The second method consists of documents analysis. Two sources were primarily used to find those documents. First, an internet search was done to discover writings by members of the organizations studied. That led to a number of blogs and guides about the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Second, a search of popular entrepreneurial websites also led to a number of informative contents on the phenomenon. Those websites are Forbes Entrepreneur (https://www.forbes.com/entrepreneurs), the Kauffman Institute (https://www.kauffman.org/), Medium (https://medium.com/) and Techcrunch (https://techcrunch.com/) among others. This document analysis provides an understanding of the ecosystem as well as the most recent development. The third method was a video analysis of pitches by founders. I was directed toward those videos during the observation at the AC. It shows the results of their practice pitch as it was possible to observe how it started during the process. Finally, the last method is an audio analysis conducted in parallel the interview. One of the interviewed organizations conducts regular interviews for a podcast. While it does not provide direct data for the study, it gives an insight into a number of SU and their internal functioning. This triangulation of methods and sources of data gives a better understanding of the phenomenon and a good path to theory-building. Figure IV-1 shows the iterative process of comparative analysis employed within this study. It starts with the literature review and conceptual framework that allow the creation of a research protocol. With that in hand, two different interview guides are prepared both for the SU and the partners. The first interviews serve as pilots to confirm that the interview guide and the interview questions were proper in the research context. While the interview guide remains stable throughout the study, the specific questions and terminology were refined after each interview but also following observations. Each iterative step provides an opportunity for subsequent analysis and refinement.

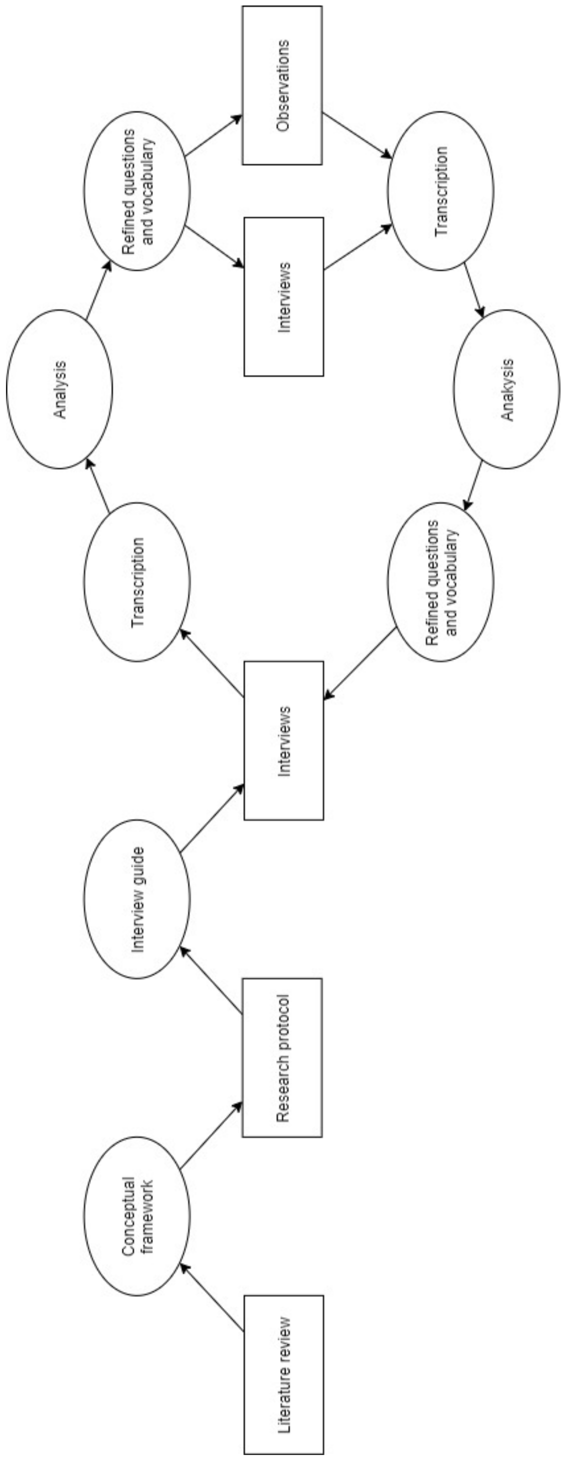


Figure 4-1: Comparative Analysis Iterative Process

4.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis in grounded theory is generally achieved through coding and memoing (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011; Miles *et al.*, 1994; Strauss *et al.*, 1994). Charmaz *et al.* (2011) recommends line-by-line coding which entails "coding each fragment of data. [A] heuristic device for becoming involved in the analysis, shedding their preconceptions, and seeing the data anew. […] grounded theorists look for what is happening in the data and, to the extent possible, label in it short, active terms" (p. 172). Coding and analysis are achieved iteratively and successively. I did three rounds of coding to dive deeper into the studied phenomenon and uncover the process. As a detachment from what is recommended from grounded theory, the first phase of code was taken from the data of the general themes of the interviews. It is tinted by the lenses of the researcher since it reflects the research question.

The second phase of coding differs somewhat from what is recommended by grounded theory. Instead of being entirely grounded in the data, it is mixed with prior theoretical assumptions. It is done so because the data is not detached from the knowledge that already exists. Since the research goal is to build a substantive theory of a fairly narrow phenomenon, it is of some importance to underpin some of the data to formal theory. I was thus able to understand the phenomenon by associating it to was is already known in the literature. It is part of the comparative analysis component of grounded theory. Therefore, this phase of code analysis requires a certain reflexivity in order to link the data to what is being known. It situates the phenomenon within the larger reality.

The third phase of coding is truly grounded to the data with most of the codes taken in vivo. An overview of the first two rounds of coding in presented in figure IV-2. The first round of coding is composed of the five meta codes of Contributions, Behaviours, Experience, Start-up and Partner. Figure IV-3 shows the full three rounds of behaviours codes. The full coding structure is presented in the annex.

Memoing is done simultaneously as coding, as suggested by grounded theory. Memo writing is achieved by writing notes to illustrate the researcher understanding and insights. The memos are usually associated to the categories and how it links to the codes. Memo writing should be done throughout the research process and helps in writing the research paper, it "engages us in sustained and successive analysis of our emerging categories" (Charmaz *et al.*, 2011, p. 166).

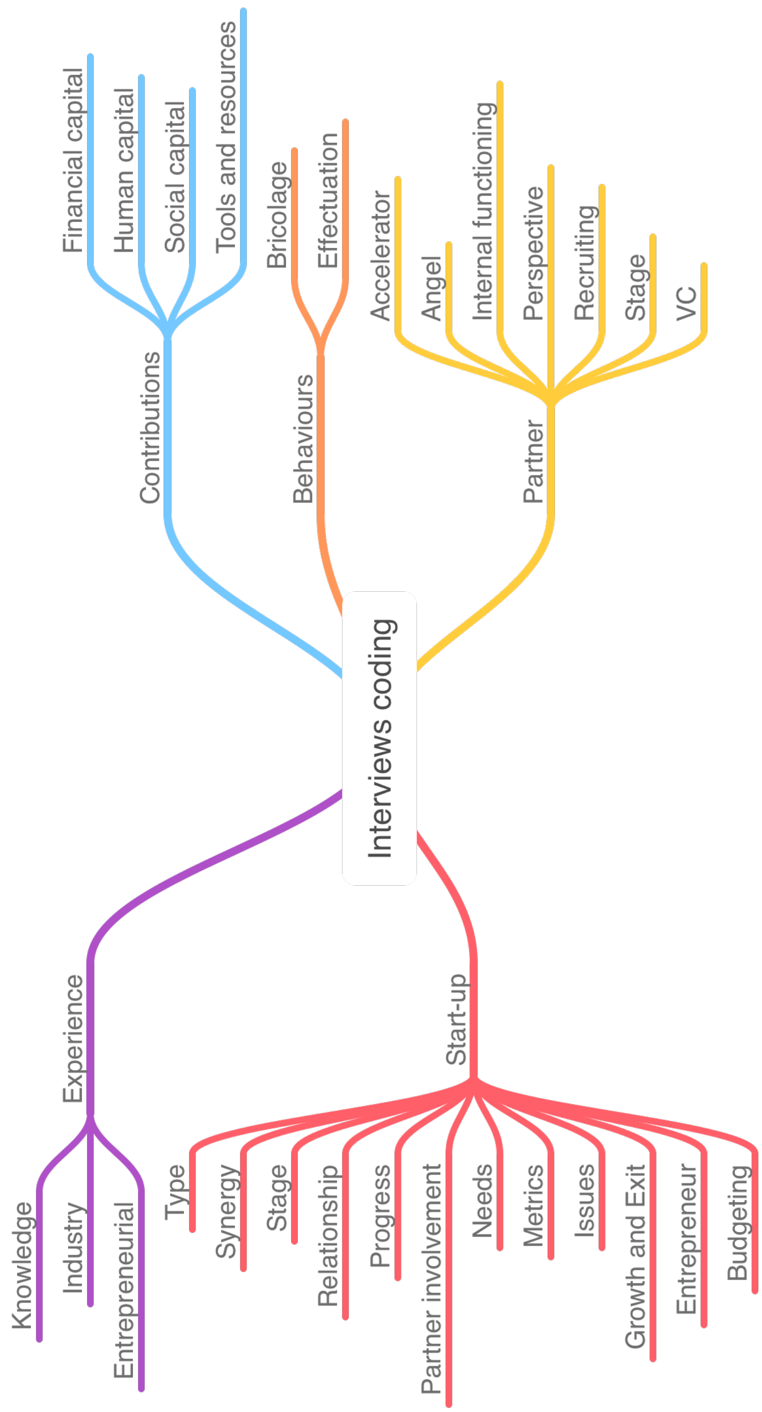


Figure 4-2: Coding Process—Overview of Two Rounds

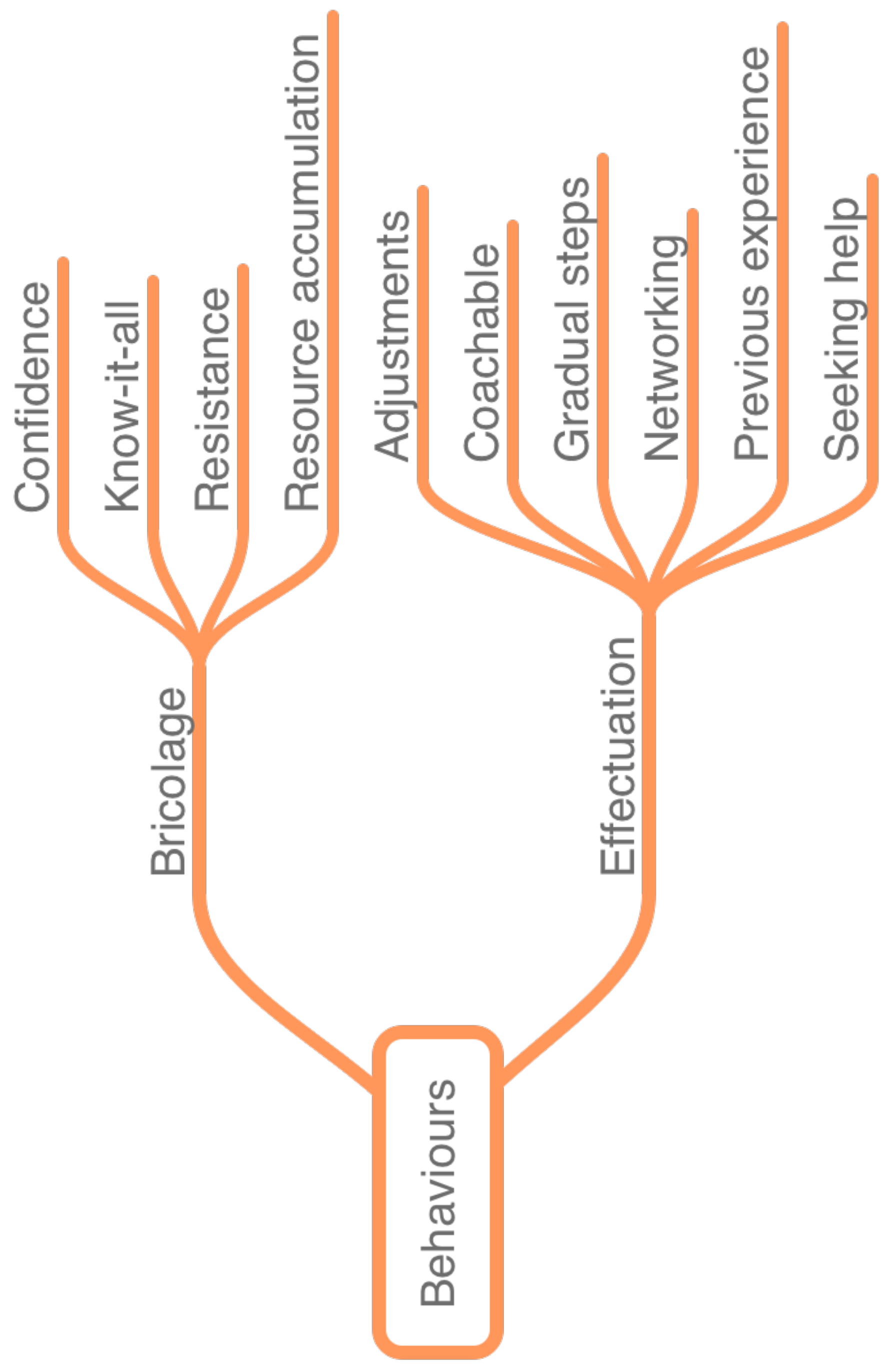


Figure 4-3: Coding—Three Rounds of Behaviours

4.4 Research Evolution

The inductive nature of a grounded theory study requires that researchers evolve as they get more and more involved with their field. As such, the interview questionnaire cannot stay static but rather change based on the interaction with the participants. As discussed in the methodological approach chapter, each interview serves as an opportunity to learn more about the phenomenon. An important benefit of adjusting after each interview is the gradual use of the proper terminology and an understanding of their reality. The comprehension of the study's transformation and of it fine-tuning leads toward a clearer picture of the direction of the research.

After initially identifying BI as a partner in the literature review, it was decided to switch the attention to AC instead. This was done because a preliminary look at the ecosystem showed that AC would fit the parameters of the research better than BI. While being a subtype of BI, AC have some particularities that are particularly salient to the research: enhance mentoring, restrained cohort size and limited in time (Wise *et al.*, 2014). As such, there would be more of a relationship built between the entrepreneurs and the AC.

As the interviews progressed, the understanding about the phenomenon increased. As such, the way interviews were conducted evolved and the vocabulary used became more specific. For instance, the first interview introduced the following terms: "Seed stage", "Serie A", "fundraising", "runway", "KPI", "board", "demo day", "narrative" and "medtech". Furthermore, the discussion allowed to showcase some concepts such as the particularities of early stage investing, the relationship between investor and entrepreneur as well as how the partner's network provides the entrepreneurs with additional knowledge. This, in turn, gave me the first insight into how to adjust my questions while allowing a more informed conversation during the following interviews. The data gathered with the first respondent were confirmed and expanded with the second respondent. While the first was a VC, the second was both a VC and an AC's administrator. From the second interview, it was possible to discern some differences between a VC and an AC. AC01 reports that acceleration "comes at an earlier stage of the company development. It's typically targeted toward less experienced founders and it happens in a very compressed period of time." It means that the relationship between the entrepreneurs and AC is more hands-on. Some of the important terms that are similar to the first respondent were "narrative" and "fundraising" while introducing terms like "feedbacks" and "milestones." The interviews thus progressed as knowledge is gathered and it progressively modified how they were conducted. The specificity of the terms used became gradually more adapted to the conversation with the interviewees. While the context of the interviews and the main questions remained the same, the use of probes and prompts. Probes are "tools you can use to invite participants to add rich details to their descriptions and explanations" (Morenberg) while prompts serve as a way to ask, "a participant to discuss a topic that's interesting to the researcher. Researchers will prompt a participant to discuss a topic if the participant hasn't touched on that topic yet" (Morenberg). (Jacob *et al.*, 2012) gives the following recommendations for using them:

> *Creating probes or prompts for each question helps keep you on track. Prompts also help to remind you of your questions while at the same time allowing for unexpected data to emerge. To use prompts effectively, you must first design a broad question that might take an interviewee in several different directions. Directly under this question, you should design bullet points that remind you of areas that have emerged from the literature or things you think will enrich your data. Using the above example of, "Tell me the ways in which people have taken advantage of you in college." You might list the following probes as bullets: academically, friendship-wise, sexually, etc. In essence, you ask the general question, let the interviewee talk in any direction, and then use your prompts to get at pre-planned specifics they did not mention.* (pp. 4–5)

Within the context of my field study, a broad question that was asked is: "what did your partner contribute." Some of the prompts used later on the interview process were: "did your partner help you with create an MVP", "have they helped you with your pitch deck" or "did they look at the terms sheet with you". This helped make the interviews more specific to the context and more relevant for the research.

As the field study progressed, many different types of participants were interviewed. In the end, there were 38 founders, 10 AC, 12 VC, 5 AI and 2 members of the ecosystems outside of those previous types. An interesting characteristic of the interviewees is that some of them had dual roles. For example, some founders were participating in AC while being AI to other SU. There were also founders working with AI and VC while acting as mentors for SU within an AC. Finally, there were people running AC who were supported and funded by VC. These configurations of individuals with such different backgrounds and experience create quite interesting perspectives that enrich the research. A general ascertainment from discussing with all those different types of ecosystem actors is the importance of the timing with which each type of partner interact with the entrepreneurs. A great number of those interviewed intervened mostly, or at least started, at the Seed stage and, as such, more data was collected from this stage. As I gathered data from interviewees, the study went into two different directions. First, I searched for analogous organizations and entrepreneurs to confirm and complete the information. Second, I looked simultaneously for contrasting ones to find complementary data. For example, I looked for entrepreneurs who were within the Seed stage as well as partners who are acting in that space in order to better understand how the Seed stage is enacted. To expand further on how they acquire their human capital, I asked the entrepreneurs to recall their experience working with partners in the Pre-seed stage. In order to extend the study's boundaries as well as gather more knowledge, I also interviewed entrepreneurs from the Pre-seed and Serie A stage. The Pre-seed SU were mainly entrepreneurs who just started their venture. At that point, they had, for the most part, only worked with a few partners and organizations and their resources fairly scarce. Most of the entrepreneurs at this stage work almost exclusively with early-stage incubators. Based on the many different natures of those incubators as well as the type of relationship with entrepreneurs, I decided that it would not be beneficial to interview them. Rather, the testimonies from the entrepreneurs provide enough clarity about the phenomenon. Furthermore, and more importantly, a few of the interviewed AC span both the Pre-seed and Seed stage. An interesting feature of these AC is that they are divided into different programs based on the evolution of the SU. As such, some AC can truly customize their contributions to the specific needs of the entrepreneurs. Interviews with both the entrepreneurs and the AC managers gave insights about the difference in the interaction between the Pre-seed and the Seed stage. Primarily, the nature of the transferred human capital evolves from the very general to more specialized. It is reflected by how the programs are set up. Pre-seed and early Seed AC consist predominantly of seminar-type classes that are akin to university classroom. It gradually changes to a more individualized and personalized type of interaction as SU develop. Interviews with Serie A entrepreneurs and partners show a progression toward one-on-one relationships.

The study started with SU and partners from the technology industry because they were well represented within the quick growth ecosystem. As data was progressively gathered, it became clear that it was an undoubtedly homogeneous process for those technology SU. At that point, I decided to expand the interview parameters to entrepreneurs in other industries to find similarities and differences. I met with 4 SU in the manufacturing, food and service industries. While only a small sample, these interviews provided with an interesting insight into the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Additionally, I interviewed two supplementary individuals in the ecosystem, a lawyer working exclusively with SU and the manager of a government program with the purpose of promoting the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Taken together, these interviews gave a rather grim perspective of the support available to SU outside of the targeted industries. The resources, most particularly the human capital, available to SU have to be specific to the industry in which they operate. As such, the human capital accessible at the Pre-seed level can be fairly easily attainable. However, its general nature supplies entrepreneurs with very little specialized knowledge that would not give them a long-term competitive advantage if they do not seek further support and human capital.

As illustrated previously, as a SU grows, it needs increasingly specific and specialized human capital. In that regard, a fit between the partners and the SU is particularly important. This is reflected by a specialization of some of the partners. For example, an AC was specialized in high technology and helped SU that fit their selection criteria. They also had different categories of high tech such as Medtech and Cleantech. Another AC only worked with SU working in artificial intelligence. The same applied for VC, one of the interviewees only invested in the fintech space. Finally, the same applied for AI but in a different manner. For individual AI, some entrepreneurs specifically search for a particular one in relation to the very specialized knowledge that they possess. As for angel groups, they form different subgroups with expertise in some domains such as real estate or health. When an entrepreneur matching that domain wants investment from the AI group, the subgroup serves as a reference for the rest of the AI to help and evaluate the SU. This indicates that the fit is critical, most importantly as the SU grows and needs more specialized human capital.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results found through the field study and the ensuing analysis. It is divided in two parts. The first part shows the contribution process and what the partners contribute in the Pre-seed, Seed and Serie A stage. The second part offers an understanding of the interactions with the partners and how entrepreneurs learn from them.

In this chapter, I present the results of the study and discuss what it means to the research question. It will be divided in four different sections. The first section describes the empirical research and the evolution of the inquiry. It is critical to understand how the field study unfolded and evolved within a grounded study in order to better understand how I reached the results I will present in the subsequent sections. In the second section, I will present the partners' contributions, most particularly in regard to human capital. I will also discuss the process of how that human capital is acquired by the entrepreneurs. The third section presents the results in regard to the relationship between the entrepreneurs and their partners. Finally, the last section compiles a synthesis of the results and presents an overview of the evolution SU within their ecosystem.

5.1 Partners Contributions

The previous section detailed the empirical study's evolution. A grounded theory study allows the researcher to follow the data from the field. As such, the research has brought forward the contributions that entrepreneurs received from their partners. In this section, I will detail those different contributions, mostly the human capital, that has emerged from the field. Following the language and process within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, it makes sense to distinguish the contributions based on the stages of growth within the research: Pre-seed, Seed and Serie A. Figure V-1 provides a quick description of the different stages.

STAGE	IDEATION	PRE-SEED	SEED	SERIES A	SERIES B	SERIES C+	IPO
CAPITAL RAISE	<$250K	$250K - $1M	$1M - $3M	$4M - $10M	$10M - $25M	$25+	
INVESTORS	Self funded, loans	Friends & family, Angels, VCs	VCs, Angels	Institutional VCs	Institutional VCs	Growth VCs, Private Equity	
TRACTION	Initial concept, identification of customers and market opportunity.	Initial prototype, beta customers in target segments, MRR $0-25k	Strong usage from early customers, POCs convert to customers. MRR $25k-100k	PMF, strong customer growth & management team. ARR $2m+, 3x Y/Y growth.	Expansion of product lines, proven channels to scale customer acquisition. ARR $6m+, 3x Y/Y	Market leading tech/platform, customer trust. Predictable, profitable. ARR $15m+, 2 Y/Y	

MRR: Monthly Recurring Revenue **ARR**: Annual Run Rate **PMF**: Product Market Fit

Figure 5-1: Characteristics of Growth Stages taken from Panache Ventures (2019)

Each stage has its own characteristics and a proper introduction is required to better understand what, how and why entrepreneurs acquire in their relationship with their partners. In the Pre-seed stage, the venture has usually not been created yet and the business model not quite chosen. Entrepreneurs need the most help from their own network and they need feedback to build their first prototype. In the Seed stage, the venture has been created and the first sales have been achieved. Entrepreneurs start looking actively for outside investors and as much support as they can. Finally, in the Serie A stage, the venture has found a mainstream audience and started to professionalize. Entrepreneurs look for partners that can help them scale and reach larger markets.

Actors within the ecosystem commonly employ “lean start-up” (LS) terminologies and the process is usually well understood and accepted. It is adequate in this instance to describe and explain how the contributions are associated to the evolution of the SU through the LS process. Two of its important concepts are Validated learning and Build-Measure-Learn. With Validated learning, SU “learn how to build a sustainable business. This learning can be validated scientifically by running frequent experiments that allow entrepreneurs to test each element of their vision.” (Ries, 2011) (loc. 199). With Build-Measure-Learn, SU should “turn ideas into products, measure how customers respond, and then learn whether to pivot or persevere. All successful SU processes should be geared to accelerate that feedback loop.” (Ries, 2011) (loc. 202). As these two concepts show, it is important within a LS process to experiment often, measure and adapt based on the results. This will be reflected in how entrepreneurs learn from their partners and how it could potentially affect their growth.

The contributions were selected on the basis of a multitude of criteria. First, entrepreneurs expressed how they required specific help at certain critical junctures of their venture. It illustrates that contributions have to be stage-specific and answer the needs of the entrepreneurs. Second, discussions with the different partners gave an insight into what they think is important for entrepreneurs to possess and know. It highlights what human capital they perceive as being crucial to SU. Third, the observations and video, audio and text analysis provide a feel for what is considered important for the growth of SU. The following contributions were chosen after the coding and analysis process. They are representative of what human capital contributions would be critical for founders at the different stages.

5.1.1 Contribution Process

In talking to SU founders and their institutional partners such as AC, angels and VCs, it was clear that they possessed a common language and a common *modus operandi*. Through the interviews, terms like MVP, product-market fit and pivots were common occurrences. This led me to investigate the context within which they operated. It pointed toward the LS concept. As such, founders are taught early the fundamentals of LS. Additionally, the evolution of the LS process is well aligned with the investment process. For example, the target for SU in the Pre-seed stage is to come up with a minimum viable product (MVP). In LS terms, this means that founders have to develop a no-frill product or service that can be commercialized in its simplest form without any additional features. This would allow the SU to reach its first set of customers, the early adopters. It helps them gather feedback from early users and adjust their venture. For the Seed phase, founders are asked to find the product-market fit. With the adjustment following the feedback from their early adopters, SU can then move to finding a larger market with mainstream customers. This allows them to find who they should target and whose needs they are answering the most as well as to whom they bring the most value. Finally, for Serie A and subsequent phases, after finding the product-market fit, SU are asked to scale their venture to reach ever-expanding markets. The difficulty for founders is to realize that a successful past might not lead to a successful future. As such a proven market might not be able to scale or an iteration of a product or service that was successful in a previous stage might not be so for the next stage. In the same sense, growth of the firm should be exponential at this stage.

The life of a SU is not easy. Entrepreneurs can never stop and have to constantly develop their firm. SU that follow the path of fast growth are specially affected by pressure. As opposed to a normal growth company, they have to build quickly and, furthermore, build legitimacy quickly. As such, in order "to be perceived as legitimate, its structures, practices, and behaviours must align with the prevailing institutions in the environment in which it operates" (Fisher *et al.*, 2016, p. 383). As discussed earlier, SU jump from stage to stage in their growth process. As they do so, they are confronted with an evolving audience with a multitude of different actors. Within this evolution of the firm, the audience diversity asks founders to adapt in order to reach a legitimacy threshold for each stage (Fisher *et al.*, 2016; Fisher *et al.*, 2017). In accordance with these thresholds, the criteria used to evaluate the legitimacy of the SU in the eyes of the audience also change and, more importantly, becomes more and more precise and demanding. For instance, at the Pre-seed stage, the SU reaches mostly toward a very small and limited circle of contacts. As such, friends and family would serve as the most logical audience. The first investors could be part of this circle. As such, the first angels could be passive investors instead of truly active angels. Founders can also join incubators and very early AC. And more critically, in this stage, SU should look for their first paying customers and users. In the Seed stage, after building their MVP, founders must adjust their venture in order to find the right market. They start looking for more institutionalized partners, such as Seed-stage AC and VCs. They could also seek out more experienced angels with a specialized knowledge and expertise. Finally, they are looking for mainstream customers. This requires them to bring a proven success to the table. They have to convince their audience that they have a solution to a large audience's problem. Finally, SU that reached Serie A and further mostly target later stage VCs, private equity and corporations. At this stage, it would be most important to show that the venture is sustainable. With a changing audience and increasing stakes, founders have to showcase what their SU can do but they also have to show what they've learned.

As founders evolve through the progress of their venture, they have to learn a multitude of things. Most critical amongst these learnings are industry knowledge, entrepreneurship knowledge and management knowledge. Furthermore, they are faced with a high level of uncertainty, mostly for first timers. As such, at the start of a venture, founders are confronted to all sorts of novel situations. As they evolve, novelty will be reduced over time (Alegre *et al.*, 2008; Carlile, 2004; Dopfer *et al.*, 2017; Harrison *et al.*, 2008; Howard *et al.*, 2019; Politis, 2005). In this instance, as the diverse novelties decrease, uncertainty would also decrease. In relation to the threshold legitimacy, the venture uncertainty must be lowered to a certain level at each stage in order to appeal to the different audiences. This is where working with a variety of partners would provide start-ups the opportunity to learn and reduce the level of novelty and, at the same time, of uncertainty. For example, at the Pre-seed stage, five different contributions are mainly provided by partners. Three of those contributions are entrepreneurship-related, challenging feedbacks, narrative & pitching and SU process. The other two are industry-related with cross-industry and domain expertise. The Seed stage is where there is the most learning needed for the SU. Just like at the Pre-seed stage, the same three entrepreneurship-related contributions are provided, challenging feedbacks, narrative & pitching and SU process. For the industry-related contributions shared and specific expertise are added to cross-industry and domain expertise. Finally, management-related contributions at this stage would be management and organization, planning and project and professional expertise. For Serie A and later, as the SU matures, entrepreneurship-related contributions are not as much needed anymore as management-related ones are more important. In this instance, there would be board and management, decision-making, fundraising, management and organization and planning and project. As for industry-related contributions, those would be the same as in the Pre-seed stage with cross-industry and domain expertise. Table V-1 combines knowledge from the literature as well as findings uncovered from the interviews to illustrate the important characteristics of the early investment period. It summarizes the contribution process and the needs of the SU based on the stages of LS. It highlights what the SU goals for each stage, what they need to attain those goals, who their target audience is and what contributions are needed.

Table 5-1: Summary of the Contribution Process Based on the Lean Start-up Stages

Stage	Preseed	Seed	Serie A
Goal	MVP	Product-Market Fit	Scalibility
Needs	Early adapters	Mainstream customers	Sustainable growth
	Baseline	Tune towards the ideal	Understanding growth
	First leap of faith	Micro changes and product optimizations	Small-batch approach
	Archetype customer	Pivot	Building of a sustainable business
Legitimacy audience	Friends and family	Accelerators	VC
	Incubators	Angels	Private equity
	Accelerators	VC	Corporations
	Angels	Mainstream customers	
	First customers		
Contributions			Board and Governance
	Challenging feedbacks	Challenging feedbacks	
	Cross-Industry	Cross-Industry	
			Decision-making
	Domain expertise	Domain expertise	Domain expertise
			Fundraising
		Management & Organization	Management & Organization
	Narrative & Pitching	Narrative & Pitching	
		Planning & Project	
		Professional expertise	
		Shared expertise	
		Specific expertise	
	Start-up processes	Start-up processes	

5.1.2 Pre-seed (In Search of MVP)

In the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs have yet to take the plunge and start their business. However, they are almost ready and only need a small boost to actually kick off their venture. At this stage, they have low resources but also low commitment and high flexibility. In a LS process, the goal to reach at this stage is to build the “Minimum Viable Product” (MVP). It is a “version of the product that enables a full turn of the Build-Measure-Learn loop with a minimum amount of effort and the least amount of development time. The minimum viable product lacks many features that may prove essential later on” (Ries, 2011) (loc. 1024). The goal at this stage is thus to start the venture and develop a first version of their product or service. SU are also encouraged to look for the first customers, also known as early adopters. In accordance with LS, these early adopters are critical since they provide the opportunity to Build-Measure-Learn through their feedbacks. Matching the offering to those early customers’ needs allow entrepreneurs to define their market. Similarly, it also allows validated learning as the nascent entrepreneur can test their business ideas and models to find a fit.

At this stage, contributions in financial and social capital are fairly limited as most investors would be friends and family. SU in Pre-seed usually do not work with VC and AI so most of the human capital would be acquired through working with incubators and AI. As mentioned earlier, the nature of an incubator made it difficult to include in this study. However, entrepreneurs who have worked with those institutions are able to recall what they’ve learned. The main contributions are Challenging Feedbacks, Narrative and Pitching, SU process, Domain and Cross-Industry expertise. Table V-2 provides an overview of the Pre-seed contributions as well as examples of how they are perceived by the entrepreneurs and their partners.

Table 5-2: Pre-seed Contributions

Needs	MVP, Early adopters
Type of contributions	**Challenging feedbacks**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	So that's why there are three mentors so they probably give 10 to 15 hours a week maybe, listening to us and giving us feedback. And it's usually based on the pitch and then they are the perfect people who help you where you need it the most, they fit.
Partner's perspective of human capital	Euh, je vais challenger les plans financiers, je vais challenger le plan stratégique euh, je vais challenger un pitch sur des sujets importants… souvent il va y avoir des questions sur les ressources humaines, quelqu'un qui ne fit pas dans l'équipe, est-ce qu'on le renvoi ? Est-ce que, euh, on recrute quelqu'un ?
Description	At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs have yet to develop a product or a business. They learn to not only seek feedbacks but also choose which ones to follow.
Type of contributions	**Narrative and Pitching**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Every pitch I did, the deck always changed and I found myself getting lost in my story even deeper, like getting too rational or I guess I was sort of thinking well just like too objective and getting lost in losing my story line. So they help me bring it back and simplify it and cut out slides.
Partner's perspective of human capital	J'étais avec un des entrepreneurs que j'ai investi dans sa compagnie et juste avant ça, bien je l'aidais à préparer ça allait être quoi le pitch pour cette soirée-là. Fait que là c'était plus un pitch verbal puis tu vois là j'étais avec lui au kiosque fait que tu sais, à une de tes premières questions du genre « comment tu peux aider concrètement les entrepreneurs » bien tu sais, accompagner un entrepreneur qui est tout seul, qui n'a pas encore de co-fondateur, la compagnie dans une soirée de pitch puis de réseautage ça vaut de l'or pour eux autres. Fait que ça, je l'avais aidé à préparer son pitch,
Description	At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs learn to explain the story behind their venture and reach investors and potential clients.
Type of contributions	**Domain expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	One of them is, you know, CEO of another company that's similar or has the similar Mission and interests and is Willing to fund the Prototype and the other one as well as a mentor and he's a you know, a kind of a more retired mentor and he's advising and also probably will be my first Angel
Description	At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs learn knowledge about their industry and how to build their venture within it.
Type of contributions	**Start-up process**

Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	It's every week night. It's a four-hours course. With kind of walking you through all the elements that you need to know starting from AB testing to business model to storytelling, creating a deck, like the baby steps. Right? And then there's find like Revenue model class and you every session, there's speakers that our founder Institute grads or just like very strategic people in the industry.
Partner's perspective of human capital	Puis ça, je pense que les entrepreneurs ont beaucoup besoin d'aide là-dessus parce qu'il faut quelqu'un qui est un peu, de un, il faut quelqu'un qui est habitué de faire la planification stratégique fait que c'est pour ça que moi, je prends ce rôle-là assez à cœur parce que c'est mon expertise puis aussi il leur faut les bons outils. Puis les outils pour une grande entreprise ne fonctionneront pas pour la petite entreprise, tu sais, moi je m'imaginais quelque chose de pas mal plus sophistiqué que ça. Je m'imaginais comme outils de reporting peut-être un, l'équivalent d'un document power point, une dizaine de pages avec euh, tu sais un overview, qu'est-ce qui est bien allé, qu'est-ce qui est moins bien allé, c'est quoi les métriques à suivre et tout ça. Mais dans les entreprises en croissance on n'est même pas là. Tu sais, on est plus à juste mettre sur papier les rôles, responsabilités, le focus de l'année puis des chiffres.
Description	At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs learn about how set up their venture and how to become entrepreneurs.
Type of contributions	**Cross-Industry Expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	We have to live together in the dorms of UofT throughout the whole program in the summer time. So having you know, 36 other people that are going through the exact same struggles as you and, you know, starting their businesses and having those close relationships being formed. That was very beneficial.
Description	At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs must gather knowledge from other industries to help build the venture within their own industry.

5.1.2.1 Challenging Feedbacks

At this stage, nascent entrepreneurs usually do not fully grasp their product and venture. It is important for them to be able to not only seek feedbacks but also acquire the ability to judge those feedbacks and making decisions on which to follow. It is even more important as the number of advices they receive will increase exponentially as their venture progresses. Acquiring the capability to manage challenging feedbacks at the Pre-seed stage is the precursor to the whole venture based on LS. Entrepreneurs should learn early on to reach out to investors, mentors and customers in order to receive those feedbacks and adjust their offering and pitch in accordance to the Build-Measure-Learn process.

Entrepreneurs learn the ability to seek and manage challenging feedbacks in two different ways. The first way is through the structure of the incubators in which they participate. For example, F24, an entrepreneur at the Pre-seed stage who just started their venture, recalls that there were “three mentors so they probably give 10 to 15 hours a week maybe, listening to us and giving us feedback. […] they are the perfect people who help you where you need it the most, they fit.” One of the interesting features of incubators is that they bring in mentors to listen to entrepreneurs’ pitch and help them adjust. Entrepreneurs have the opportunity to pitch their venture in front of a different number of mentors every week and receive advice from them. They are thus learning hands-on how to handle those feedbacks. Additionally, they are given tasks every week to help with their learning. One such task is to seek out both investors and advisors within the entrepreneurs’ industry. This forces them to begin gathering data about their industry in order to find the right candidates to contact. It is the first step for entrepreneurs to gain the ability to seek challenging feedbacks. In this instance, it is critical for entrepreneurs to understand the process of finding the proper fit with the people who can provide advices.

The second way of seeking and managing feedbacks is achieved by working with early-stage AI, for those who are able to find one. As AI03 puts it, he will "challenge the financial plans, the strategic plans and the pitch on important topics" (AI03). In this instance, the difference between an AI and an incubator's mentor is the nature of the relationship. As indicated earlier, entrepreneurs receive feedbacks from different mentors they pitch to every week. In opposition, an early-stage mentor would serve as a semi-permanent sounding board. As such, the AI does not provide a one-time feedback but rather follows through the growth of the entrepreneur and the creation of the SU. The AI has a more hands-on approach at this stage and creates a common history with the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs who are working with AI, or perhaps some sort of advisors, learn about a different way of managing feedbacks. Because of the continuous and long-term nature of the relationship between SU and AI, entrepreneurs have to be cautious about how they handle their advices. In opposition, incubators (and their mentors) usually have no long-term implications on the SU. As such, entrepreneurs have the luxury of picking and choosing which feedback they will follow.

As indicated previously, entrepreneurs learn to seek and manage feedbacks differently based on the type of partner. The two ways are complementary, and it would benefit them to gain both capabilities. While most entrepreneurs might not have access to AI, interviewees have mentioned that a good alternative at this stage is a board of advisors. This type of board is usually set up as part of incubators. Nascent entrepreneurs are encouraged to find people within their field or that have some specific knowledge that could be part of their board of advisors. This could be done on a volunteer basis or in exchange for a fee or some equity in the newly formed company. Entrepreneurs that are able to acquire the skills to seek and manage feedbacks from both multiple short-term mentors and specific long-term advisors could go a long way in developing and growing their SU. This knowledge could be critical because it is a catalyst for the entrepreneurs. It would allow them to receive more human capital contributions from other partners since they are able to reach more of them and, more importantly, choose the right ones.

5.1.2.2 Narrative and Pitching

At this stage, nascent entrepreneurs are just starting to build their venture and their story. In order to attract investors and customers, they need to acquire storytelling abilities. As SU mature, their story evolves and they have to adjust to their audience. Most importantly, since the goal at this stage is for entrepreneurs to get an MVP, they need to simultaneously build it while trying to explain what differentiates them and the benefits they provide.

From an entrepreneur's perspective, they start from almost the ground up and have to decide the direction they want to go with their storyline. As mentioned earlier, incubators help by bringing multiple mentors to listen to the entrepreneurs' pitch. As F15 mentioned, "every pitch I did, the deck always changed, and I found myself getting lost in my story even deeper […]. So, they help me bring it back and simplify it and cut out slides." By pitching so often, entrepreneurs learn to refine their narrative and adjust based on the feedback they receive. With mentors from different backgrounds, entrepreneurs can receive a variety of advices on how to build their story. They can then decide which ones to follow while and what their narrative should be. Of particular importance in this stage, entrepreneurs have to learn to keep their story both coherent and simple enough to understand.

Another way for entrepreneurs to learn Narrative and Pitching skills is with AI and advisors. In opposition to working with different mentors listening to a single instance of a pitch, entrepreneurs can practice pitching with less temporary partners. Given the history built between them, there is a better understanding of the story and, most importantly, its evolution. Instead of a snapshot of the current situation, the iterative nature of the SU creates a need for continuous tweaks to their narrative.

Entrepreneurs trying to acquire the ability to build a narrative and pitch learn two different perspectives with their partners, a snapshot one and a more evolutive one. The two are equally important for the entrepreneur. The snapshot pitch is useful when talking to one-time audience like a potential investor or customer. However, in order to give the right pitch and the right story, they have to adapt and adjust based on the evolution of their venture, or at least their business idea, before building the MVP. While the narrative and pitching capabilities are fairly low in this stage, it is critical for entrepreneurs to start acquiring those skills as their audience increases exponentially and they have to pitch to people whose impact on the venture becomes progressively more important.

5.1.2.3 SU Process

At this stage, most first-time entrepreneurs have very little knowledge and experience about the entrepreneurial process. As such, incubators provide a very narrow window for the contributions they can bestow entrepreneurs. As such, entrepreneurs with prior experience do not particularly profit from what is provided by incubators. Entrepreneurs who already had some entrepreneurial experience or are in multiple incubators simultaneously have expressed their dissatisfaction at the decreasing returns in attending the "classes". For example, F09 conveys frustration about incubators, most particularly those that are very generalists: "*ceux qui sont très généralistes, qui vont te réexpliquer parfois pour la quatrième fois que tu as déjà vu business modèle canevas, au bout d'un moment, tu es comme "bon, là littéralement je suis en train de perdre mon temps*"[1]." This SU had to send interns and other employees to attend those classes to free up time for the founders.

For the novice entrepreneurs, however, learning about the entrepreneurial process is critical at this stage since most of them have little to no experience at all. This is important because the majority of those entrepreneurs do not even know what

[1] Translation from French: who *will re-explain for the fourth time what a business model canvas is, […] where I am literally wasting my time. […] We refused to go to a class that gives us nothing.*

knowledge they need, even less how to acquire them and whom to consult. An entrepreneur describes it as “kind of walking you through all the elements that you need to know, starting from AB testing to business model to storytelling, creating a deck, like the baby steps” (F15). Baby steps is probably the best way to illustrate how entrepreneurs learn at this stage. The sheer amount of information available makes it a tall task for them to fully comprehend or master the different components of being an entrepreneur. This makes it a critical human capital contribution at this stage because of the repercussions for the evolution of the entrepreneur. Although it plays a role in the survival and growth of the firm, it truly impacts entrepreneurs themselves. As opposed to other human capital specific to the venture and its context, SU processes are more general and prepare entrepreneurs for their life as one. This knowledge probably translates the most to the entrepreneur’s subsequent ventures. In a way, because this human capital is acquired fairly early in the life of nascent entrepreneurs and the knowledge transferable to other contexts, it might not be beneficial for them to learn it again. As a matter of fact, it could be detrimental to the entrepreneur as it takes their time and focus away from other, more important matters. An example of this is provided by VC03 who is, at the same time, the founder of a new SU. While discussing with this interviewee, it was possible to ask about their background as a VC and how it affected them as a founder. The most interesting information provided was that this entrepreneur was able to fast-track through the Pre-seed stage with a combination of social and human capital possessed through their previous experience as a VC. They were able simultaneously to avoid the mistakes made by novice entrepreneurs while also take advantage of the network they built previously. With their SU process knowledge, they were able to know when to look for help and whom to consult.

5.1.2.4 Domain Expertise

At the Pre-seed stage, entrepreneurs might or might not possess prior industry knowledge. By interacting with mentors within an incubator or with a specific AI, they can get privileged and detailed information about the industry in which they operate. It would be even more important for nascent entrepreneurs that do not necessarily know the lay of the land. As they try to set up their new venture, it is important for them to gather information about the industry and how it can influence their SU. It is therefore critical for them to find the right partner that has domain expertise.

At this early stage, domain expertise is particularly important because of its influence on building the MVP. This is highlighted by F15: « one of them is, you know, CEO of another company that's similar or has the similar Mission and interests and is Willing to fund the Prototype » (F15). Someone possessing experience within the industry could help in two different ways. First, they could have a better understanding of what the entrepreneur is trying and be in a superior position to help them. Second, they possess knowledge about how the industry works and what its customers want. Taken together, it provides the entrepreneur with the necessary knowledge to take their idea and match it to the market needs in order to build the MVP.

Domain expertise being fairly specific, finding the right fit in terms of partner is particularly important. In opposition to the previous Pre-seed contributions, this human capital is more akin to pure knowledge than it is to capability. In this instance, expert entrepreneurs might not have a leg up on novices since it is quite specific to the particular context of a venture.

5.1.2.5 Cross-industry Expertise

At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs would have a focused view on the industry in which they think they belong. While it is helping in increasing their own domain expertise, they might miss innovations from other industries that could help them. Incubators provide them with the opportunity to interact with entrepreneurs from different industries. With an environment favourable to exchanges, entrepreneurs can discuss about each other's ventures particularly the difficulties encountered and the particularities from their industry.

As previously described, there is a large variety of incubators and they each have their own way of doing things. One particular type of incubator requires that incubatees live in close proximity and spend time together. An interviewee described how the closeness created within the incubator can help entrepreneurs: "we have to live together in the dorms of UofT throughout the whole program in the summertime. So having you know, 36 other people that are going through the exact same struggles as you and, you know, starting their businesses and having those close relationships being formed » (F17). One great benefit of incubators is the large and diversified number of entrepreneurs participating in it. This leads to a situation where cofounders find each other in the program. As expressed by F14, their SU co-founders came from different industries and "met through the selection process for that program. [They] kind of created [the company] together. […] And then the ideas came from our teamwork » (F14). Coming from different spaces, they had their own perspectives of a particular problem. By connecting through the incubator program, they were able to combine their different experience and expertise to create a product or service that would not be unidimensional.

Just like domain expertise, cross-industry expertise is contextually driven and is more knowledge than capability in terms of human capital. However, it is really dependent on the particular composition of each specific incubator's cohort. Because of that, it is hard to predict the possible contributions in terms of Cross-industry expertise in the Pre-seed stage.

5.1.2.6 Synthesis of the Pre-seed Stage Contributions

At the Pre-seed stage, most entrepreneurs are in a nascent phase. For the most part, it is their first attempt at a being an entrepreneur and they have close to no knowledge of what it requires. For that reason, it is difficult for them to have partners other than friends and family. As such, most of their interactions occur with incubators. The five human capital contributions discussed in this section have some commonalities. First, they served as the starting point to prepare for the venture ahead. For example, Challenging feedbacks, Narrative and Pitching, and SU process provide entrepreneurs with the required tools to build an MVP and create their venture. On the other hand, Cross-industry and Domain expertise are the necessary knowledge for entrepreneurs to design the MVP and understand their market's needs.

Second, there is an interaction between them, creating a synergistic effect that could help SU leap through the Pre-seed stage. This interactivity might be the precursor to entrepreneurs building the MVP. This interplay is illustrated through the progress of the entrepreneur in their relationship with their partners. At the start of the process, Challenging feedbacks would give the entrepreneurs the capability to seek out and evaluate advices. This allows them to look for different other types of contributions. The first of which is Narrative and Pitching. The feedbacks they receive from mentors and advisors concerning their venture help them work and refine their story and how they present it. Following this, a feedback loop creates a virtuous cycle in which their improved Narrative and Pitching skills might gain them a bigger audience. In turn, feedbacks from new stakeholders could aid in enhancing the Narrative and Pitching capabilities, and so on. SU process could also be integrated into this cycle. As entrepreneurs learn about how to build their venture, getting feedback from stakeholders would help them receive more advices about that process. As the entrepreneur learns through this triad of human capital, they improve their capability to build their venture at an amplified rate. The other two human capital, domain and cross-industry expertise, might act as moderator in the process of building the MVP and the venture. As the interaction between the previous triad is enacted, the knowledge gained from the domain and cross-industry expertise dyad could help boost the gains from the interaction with the different stakeholders. For example, as more domain expertise is absorbed, entrepreneurs would receive two different benefits. First, they might learn about the important actors of the industry in which they want to position themselves. This would provide them with potential mentors or advisors they could seek advice from and pitch to. Second, their increased knowledge of the market could help them build their narrative, thus helping them pitch. The same could be said about Cross-industry expertise. As entrepreneurs learn about other industries, they can find mentors or advisors that have a specific expertise outside of their own domain. Additionally, they can find practices from other industries that could help their own venture. As such, a chain reaction starts as entrepreneurs learn to seek and manage feedback, build their narrative and improve their pitch, and acquire entrepreneurial skills. This allows entrepreneurs to acquire domain and cross-industry expertise through the learning process. It, in turn, enhances the process as their general level knowledge increases.

Finally, the last commonality among those five types of human capital is the fact that they continue to be critical at the Seed stage. As will be seen in the next section, while the way they are enacted is different, they are still very much relevant. This indicates the importance these human capital have in the early stage and how they can help shape the venture later on.

5.1.3 Seed (Finding the Product-Market Fit)

In the Seed stage, entrepreneurs have built their first working prototype and started their venture. The goal of the Pre-seed stage was to build the MVP and find the early adopters. It evolves in the Seed stage to find the product-market-fit and mainstream customers. Entrepreneurs need further help in terms of human, financial and social capital. Most particularly, human capital at this stage is especially varied and critical. They still have low resources since they only just started their venture. However, because they now have their first customers and some investments in the SU already, there is increased commitment and lowered flexibility. At this stage, entrepreneurs seek to build a sustainable business. Because the goal of the Pre-seed stage was to build the first prototype and a very niche customer base of early adopters. As such, it is far from a finished product and might actually be fairly flawed. At the Seed stage, entrepreneurs need to move “from the horrible baseline established by the MVP and converge to something like the ideal one established in the business plan. A SU that fails to do so will see that ideal recede ever farther into the distance” (Ries, 2011) (loc. 1613). In order to transition from a very preliminary product or service to a more sophisticated one that is adapted to a larger audience, entrepreneurs are required to learn many things in a short period of time.

A critical difference between the Seed and the Pre-seed stage is the number of stakeholders and partners entrepreneurs work with. The most important of are AC, AI and early-stage VC. In addition, the level of commitment is greatly increased from these partners. For example, an AC program offers a much more hands-on approach than an incubator program. AI and VC also provide entrepreneurs with on-demand support.

The Seed stage represents the busy period in which entrepreneurs just started their venture, built their product or service and began interacting with their customers. This is reflected by the important number of human capital contributions as opposed to the Pre-seed stage. In addition to the five contributions from the previous stage, Challenging Feedbacks, Narrative and Pitching, SU process, Domain and Cross-Industry expertise, five other human capital contributions are important at this stage. These are Management and Organization, Planning and Project, Professional expertise, Shared expertise, and Specific expertise. Table V-3 provides an overview of the Seed contributions as well as examples of how they are perceived by the entrepreneurs and their partners.

Table 5-3: Seed Contributions

Needs	**Product-Market fit, Mainstream customers**
Type of contributions	**Challenging feedbacks**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Un petit peu à challenger dans le fond certaines hypothèses. C'est comment —, on veut pivoter dans telle direction, ça a été des moments où on s'est fait challenger beaucoup. Fait que ça a été positif. Mais par la suite ça a vraiment été comme je disais des appels ponctuels avec certains individus pour valider certaines hypothèses ou demander de l'aide, des ressources… fait que, oui. Voilà.
Partners perspective of human capital	Core questions to the business and depending on who's giving the advice and who the founder is that's where most of the sort of pushback will happen because, you know, One Mentor or us because remember we're bringing in, you know, 80 or so people to give advice to the founders as well.
Description	At the seed stage, founders have to adapt their venture to an emergent marketplace. In the face of an expanding audience, entrepreneurs have to rely even further on their feedback and need to learn how to prioritize and how to incorporate advices.
Type of contributions	**Narrative and Pitching**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	And so they teach us on how to tell a story that is going compelling and impactful. And thanks to them, we know how to better pitch. Which is great and they showed us in front of investors in front of the community and that is having a tremendous impact on our visibility.
Partners perspective of human capital	One of the first things is really nailing your story. We call it the founder narrative. And if you don't have a really great founder narrative, it's almost the underpinning of everything you do. It's the way you're going to attract your investors, it's the way you're going to attract your co-founder, it's the way you're gonna get early customers to believe "OK, that sounds interesting, I know you're still a young company but I'm willing to take a risk because" or the next recruit, the head of engineering, the head of sales, whatever it is.
Description	At the seed stage, founders have to adjust their message and their story to an expanding audience. They learn to fine-tune their storytelling to have a bigger impact.
Type of contributions	**Start-up process**

Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Value of [AC] is what they call their entrepreneur in Residence. They, basically during their acceleration program which are the three first months we spent there. They are teaching us what it is to be an entrepreneur, what it is to grow company and what it takes and they are challenging us so that we are prepared for this Challenge and when we get into the propulsion program so they are revamping it and I would actually advise you to talk with a new company of [AC] in the next six months to have their point of view of their new program compared to what I had.
Partners perspective of human capital	Investors they may not be experts in what you're building but they're experts in overall building companies and they've seen a lot in the end. There are certain patterns that repeat themselves. And if you warn the entrepreneur and they don't take it. Every time, they've come back and said "well, we're in this shithole now" and we're like "well, we've kind of told you six months ago," and it's very, very difficult.
Description	At the seed stage, founders develop their venture further and build it into a legitimate business. Entrepreneurs need the knowledge to understand both the process of how to grow their start-up as well as the different business functions required to survive.
Type of contributions	**Domain expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	I wanted people that could bring something to the table. I was looking for more specifically for partners that had contact in the dental industry and the lead investor, the president of that firm had an exit in the dental industry, more specifically in the implant industry, which is heavily related to what we're doing. So, for us that was a big plus so that's why we went with them even though the terms weren't the best. And the other partner was mainly because of the accelerator and all the experience in the medical devices commercialization and then in the states as well.
Partners perspective of human capital	A very structured three-month program, mentored-driven as well. There's another aspect, we're bringing in mentors, who got specific domain knowledge or an advisory board, to again widen the network and add to the insights.
Description	At the seed stage, founders delve deeper into their industry and domain experts help better understand the marketplace.
Type of contributions	**Cross-Industry Expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Well, the best outcome of all that is just the network and the meeting with different entrepreneurs that are not necessarily in the same space, but the sharing of all the information and the sharing of all the common issues we have is where we get the most value out of all that, it's just a discussion with other funders and partners.

Partners perspective of human capital	Taking what we've seen in other industries that are more advanced in their adoption of technology and business models and apply that to industries that are you know, like agriculture in Quebec City, it's large agriculture farming, larger than takes place in second, Third World countries that don't have the super infrastructure slightly slower in the adoption of tech and are completely ininstrumented where you bring SAAS model, cloud computing, IOT, optics, computer vision learning. One breakthrough technology from an industry that somebody can bring amazing efficiency to gains but also has to be done in a way that is, you know, with a super user-friendly interface, maybe more iconic than menu driven.
Description	At the seed stage, founders would want to take the knowledge from other industries to adjust their venture and evolve their own process to fit their industry.
Type of contributions	**Management and Organization**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	They've taught us about methodology that can help us really improve and they've been doing followups and in particular [VC1] and [VC2] are very thorough with their followup which gives us a constraint is that we need to follow up on our own structures that we established with their help.
Partners perspective of human capital	The early stage VC will be good to help you, the day-to-day stuff, structure your team, set up your employee agreement, stuff like that, you know, the basics but when you get to like series B, series C, the big boys league and you get experience, expertise from like experience execs who have scaled companies, who have brought companies, you know, to an exit, to an IPO so it becomes much more about overall execution and management of the firm and packaging everything towards that end goal of exit or IPO.
Description	At the seed stage, founders start structuring their firm and organizing the internal process to become a more efficient venture.
Type of contributions	**Planning and Project**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	They helped us introduce OKR. And we had a follow-up session with [AC] every week about OKR. And that was the most challenging 30 minutes every week. But really helping for the growth of the company, growth in terms of maturity where we do things organizationally. The big impact on that has been that simple, we have had better productivity since then.
Partners perspective of human capital	What we try to help them do is identify the core value drivers. So there's always going to be three to four metrics in every business that actually matter that you need to track on a daily or weekly basis and we try to help the company have Simplicity and focus on the metrics that matter that they need to be tracking to adjust how they run their business.

Description	At the seed stage, founders start implementing a planning and reporting structure. It helps communication with investors and partners. It helps to start implementing project management processes.
Type of contributions	**Professional expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	En plus, il nous donnait un certain nombre de formations, quatre à cinq formations dans l'année avec leur partenaire. Il y avait des banques, des avocats, des entreprises consultations en entrepreneuriat. Il y avait aussi trois jours l'école entrepreneuriat de Beauce pour la passer un peu plus de temps avec toute la cohorte.
Partners perspective of human capital	We have what we call acceleration practices which are, we have four or five of them? So there's Talent, sales and marketing, exit preparedness, finance and growth and Venture debt. And so each of those practice leaders, the acceleration practices can help the company with those initiatives. For example, our head of talent can help with executive recruitment, can help with interviews, can help with structuring an employee Compensation Program. So there's kind of a lot of different things, our head of Finance and growth can help create your data room, help create a board deck, help review your financial model.
Description	At the seed stage, founders learn about the professional services they need. They receive advice about what is required and who they should seek.
Type of contributions	**Shared expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	The value just having like really smart connected people who just go "I've worked with a lot of startups. I mean, frankly, just listening to what your problem is and suggesting new ideas, of things that you should be thinking about or different options" and then making those introductions I would say that is some of the biggest help and I think people undervalue what a, even more so than the classes. I think that's something that materially moves the company forward, is having really good management, who are very well connected in their local ecosystem, who can listen to you, hear what your problems are and then think whom they can connect you with to kind of help you over whatever little natural humps that you have the beginning of every startup.
Partners perspective of human capital	We try to create a program, a system, it's also trying to harmonize, you know, we have many partners in the firm, to kinda get the best practices out of all of us. It's kind of a learning experience for us putting together the content for such a boot camp.
Description	At the seed stage. Founders work with other entrepreneurs and seasoned partners to receive knowledge about their prior experience and avoid pitfalls.

Type of contributions	**Specific expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Why were we able to get a huge maturity in our product line very fast, because it all happened within three months, is because we certainly had access to senior electrical engineer, senior mechanical engineer, senior marketing. So all these altogether being able to access senior and experienced people suddenly has a huge injection of experience in the company. We grew very fast in maturity that translated in better products, better documentation, better visual impact.
Partners perspective of human capital	Une des compagnies développe du logiciel. Comme je travaille en marketing numérique, j'ai un point de vue assez fort sur le logiciel autant sur le développement de fonctionnalité que sur le user expérience, sur le design aussi. Puis tu sais, sur le design je vais jusqu'à, donner des exemples précis, exemple récemment j'ai fait un review d'une nouvelle version du logiciel puis je donnais mon avis sur ça devrait être quoi les libellés, les boutons sur le logiciel, l'architecture d'information… c'est pas moi qui va le faire jusqu'au bout, mais je vais être impliqué dans les product reviews.
Description	At the seed stage. Founders seek very specific, technical knowledge to improve their venture. Partners and industry specialists provide their expertise on very specific topics.

5.1.3.1 Challenging Feedbacks

At this stage, entrepreneurs are confronted with the task of trying to adjust their venture to reach a larger audience. In continuation of the Pre-seed stage, entrepreneurs seek feedback to calibrate their offering. One of the main differences between the two stages is the size of the audience available to SU. For example, some AC have a "mentor madness" in which they bring in a large number of mentors during a week-long event. Entrepreneurs have a short meeting with each mentors in which they answer "core questions to the business and depending on who's giving the advice and who the founder is that's where most of the sort of pushback will happen because, […] we're bringing in, you know, 80 or so people to give advice to the founders as well" (AC1). Entrepreneurs have thus to learn quickly to take feedback from different people with different backgrounds. This leads entrepreneurs to ask themselves "what do I do with these two, you know, totally countervailing ideas and then like what is the game plan based off of these two very different inputs" (F16). By putting them in a situation where they have to listen to so many perspectives, entrepreneurs learn to filter what is useful for them. Another important learning in association with "mentor madness" is that entrepreneurs have to be "more open the kind of like "okay, I'm going to legitimately listen to your feedback even if I don't necessarily think you're as much of an expert or whatnot and I'm going to take it to heart and I'm gonna like, See what I can do about that" (F16). Entrepreneurs would learn to be more receptive and be willing to listen to the advice of others.

Another way for entrepreneurs to learn to seek advice is from a one-on-one perspective. It is achieved in two different ways. First, AC have office hours every week in which they are available to answer questions and provide coaching. While not mandatory, entrepreneurs are strongly recommended to participate. For AI and VC, they have scheduled monthly and quarterly meetings with the entrepreneurs. From these meetings, entrepreneurs learn to prepare questions to ask their mentors or investors. They have to be ready and open to adjust and implement the suggestions they receive. It can help entrepreneurs ‘read the tea leaves kind of thing […]. Able to just talk it through with somebody else, like you might even already have the idea but you just get so confused because you have so many signals coming in” (F16). These meetings would allow a more focused look than the quick advice they receive. A second way for entrepreneurs to learn from one-on-one meetings is by setting up a system in which they can access feedback on-demand. As one VC puts it:

> *There's no unique answer. It really depends on the founder. I have experience with Founders who are always looking for help and anything they can delegate, they'll delegate so that you have to manage it in every structured way because you could get overflown with requests, right? So we need to watch out for that. Then you have founders that are very good at just pull you in when they need you there. They set the expectations and then as "I need you for this, this, this for now and that will evolve over time", right? Those entrepreneurs I found are rare but they're the most effective ones and then entrepreneurs that just, honestly, do not take feedback, right? (VC07)*

This indicates that entrepreneurs can adopt a multitude of behaviours when it comes to seeking advice. It would seem that the preferred type of entrepreneurs would be those who have a clear vision of what they want to do and need advice and help on some very specific topics. For example, some entrepreneurs are in contact with their partners “on a daily basis. I text them, you know, what do you think about this? Can I get an intro to them? Could you read redo this email” (VC03)? This interviewee is particular in that they were a VC who started a new venture. In that instance, with their experience, they are able to adopt a type of behaviour that would be most conducive to success. They request help when they need them and keep a constant line of communication open with their partners. It would be important for entrepreneurs to acquire the ability to judge when and what type of help they need from their partners. Since they walk a thin line of asking too much and not enough help, entrepreneurs have to understand when it is proper to ask for support.

There is a complementarity between a "mentor madness" and one-on-one mentoring. When confronted with a multitude of mentors, entrepreneurs can gather a large number of suggestions and ideas. Afterwards, they have to decide which ones are most beneficial. One-on-one meetings would serve to help them make that decision and implement the required changes. In one-on-one meetings, the partners usually know more about the history of the venture and have a more holistic view.

5.1.3.2 Narrative and Pitching

At the Seed stage, narrative and pitching skills are particularly important. Since SU seek to find a larger audience and more funding, it is critical for them to refine their story and practice their pitch.

From a partner's perspective, its importance is highlighted here:

> *One of the first things is really nailing your story. We call it the founder narrative. And if you don't have a really great founder narrative, it's almost the underpinning of everything you do. It's the way you're going to attract your investors, it's the way you're going to attract your co-founder, it's the way you're gonna get early customers to believe "OK, that sounds interesting, I know you're still a young company but I'm willing to take a risk because" or the next recruit, the head of engineering, the head of sales, whatever it is. (VC01)*

It is clear that building a narrative is critical at the Seed stage. This is why most AC devote up to a third of their program working on this aspect, with often a demo day at the end. During this event, SU of the same AC cohort pitch to a room of investors. Some AC also prepare a roadshow in which they travel to a number of cities with their entrepreneurs to meet with investors.

From the entrepreneurs' perspective, it is much more intense at the Seed stage than at the Pre-seed stage. Where they used to pitch once a week, they would now practice their pitch every day and work on their narrative for up to two weeks. As one founder puts it:

> *by doing such practice and deck reviews, making sure that the deck and the pitch are geared towards each individual audience and the purpose of each pitch. So, for example, like giving a pitch during a demo day is very different from giving a pitch during a coffee chat, which is very different from giving a pitch during an in-person meeting, which is very different from sending a deck across in a cold email versus a deck across in a warm email versus sending a deck across after somebody has asked for additional information. So they've helped me refine what it is that you were likely to want to get out of each of those interactions and making sure that the deck and the picture are tailored accordingly. (F37)*

They learn to identify their audience and how to adjust their pitch and their story to them. The intricacies of what and how to pitch could only be acquired by spending time refining their narrative and interacting with their stakeholders.

The way entrepreneurs learn from their partners depends on the type. As mentioned before, AC spend about a third of their program on narrative and pitching. This is usually achieved through a workshop format. There would usually be a classroom-like presentation on a topic and the entrepreneurs would spend time working on it afterwards. This is radically different from how VC and AI help. They usually make a "*pitch au conseil, de nous montrer, on travaille le deck ensemble. Autrement dit eux autres ils font le deck, nous le montrent, on donne notre feedback et puis les changements sont faits ou sont améliorés et puis même des fois on leur demande de faire un pitch au board*[2]" (AI03). Since both the VC and AI would usually be on the board of Seed stage SU, they can provide most of their help on narrative during board meetings. Entrepreneurs learn to build narrative and create a pitch through the two complementary ways presented previously. At the AC level, they learn through a structured setting and continuous practice. On the other hand, working with AI and VC

[2] Translated from French: *a pitch to the board, they show us, we work on the deck together. In other words, they build the deck, we give our feedbacks and changes are made or improved upon and, sometimes, we ask them to make a pitch to the board.*

provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to interact with their mentors within constrained parameters whether during a board or on demand. Taken together, it allows entrepreneurs to improve progressively their skills in building a narrative and pitching their venture.

5.1.3.3 SU Process

At the Seed stage, founders have started gaining some experience as entrepreneurs. They've learned the basics and are ready for additional knowledge. It might be critical for entrepreneurs to build their venture. Its value is described as such:

> *[The] value of [AC] is what they call their entrepreneur in Residence. They, basically during their acceleration program which are the three first months we spent there. They are teaching us what it is to be an entrepreneur, what it is to grow company and what it takes and they are challenging us so that we are prepared for this Challenge. […] For example, they were helping us deal with sleep disorder that could generate from the stress. They were helping us, teaching how we could communicate more effectively with our employees, with our co-founder. How are you going to manage, for example, when you have when you feel anger? How do you manage this with your, you know, your co-founder, you still need to have a constructive discussion, that's not going to hurt the company while you were feeling pissed off. And so that they helped us, that helped us know ourselves better. But also triggering discussions with our co-founders and also we have our employees because at some point, I remember the psychologist asking us a quick question was: Who talked about their holidays policy with their employees. We're so early stage startup. Nobody thought about holidays. We have so much work and we were like, we forgot that and that's super important discussions you have with your employees and is having massive impact on the company culture and so on. (F02)*

A special feature of a lot of AC is, as described in the previous quotation, the entrepreneur in residence. This particular mentor is an entrepreneur who has enjoyed great prior success. Their purpose within the AC is to provide advice and to share their experience with founders. They counsel them on the steps of the entrepreneurial process and what to look for. AC provide entrepreneurs with a few contributions in terms of SU process but two are particularly important, the psychological impact of being an entrepreneur and giving templates and benchmark on what can potentially happen in SU.

Both founders and AC mentioned the importance of the readiness for the entrepreneurial venture. It is achieved through two means. First, with "les groupes de soutiens psychologiques qu'on appelle le programme centré, la, c'est plus entré justement sur la psychologie, de l'individu[3]" (AC02). It gives entrepreneurs the psychological tools to deal with the stress of starting a venture. The second manner in which AC help with getting founders "ready" is by "faire en sorte que les entrepreneurs valident avec leur entourage l'aventure entrepreneuriale. Donc, la première semaine est passée exclusivement sur les individus. On leur rapporte du soutien au niveau de la gestion du changement avec des experts et du soutien psychologique[4]" (AC03). Not only do AC prepare entrepreneurs psychologically but they also want to make sure that they have their family and friends support. This allows the entrepreneur to have the necessary tools to withstand the hardship of the entrepreneurial life.

In a manner similar to the entrepreneur in residence, VC and AI also share their experience, entrepreneurial and others, with founders. For example, as one VC puts it:

> *I've seen the mistakes other entrepreneurs have made. I know, you know, how to present myself, how to act. I also know what documentation and what kind of milestones to set. It's hard, if you don't know where you're going and you don't know how to do it, you know, what's the first step? Whereas, I've actually seen what steps are required to get to point A to point B Point C. So, at least, I have some kind of guideline. (VC03)*

In this instance, and this could be true for a number of VC, the experience is not through their own entrepreneurial venture but rather through the SU they've helped. By

---

[3] Translated from French: *Groups of psychological support that we call the centered program, it's more focused on psychology, on the individual*

[4] Translated from French: *Making sure that entrepreneurs validate their entrepreneurial venture with their friends and family. So the first week is spent exclusively on the individuals. We provide them with expert support on change management and psychological support.*

witnessing the good as well as the bad, they can serve as a guide to the founders they support. On the other hand, most AI are current or former entrepreneurs. They provide help based on their own experience but also of those founders in which they've invested. Their support in terms of entrepreneurial process is adjusted to the specific needs of the founder. As AI02 mentioned:

> *Mettons que j'ai un entrepreneur qui est fort dans le secteur à technologique, un ingénieur, puis j'ai un entrepreneur de l'autre côté qui est fort en commercialisation. Naturellement, mon support ne sera pas le même. Dans un cas, je vais lui montrer comment gérer son entreprise, comment monter un plan d'affaires. Dans l'autre cas, ça va être des enjeux différents.*[5]

This highlights the importance of the partner's experience and the fit with the entrepreneur. The value of the partner is reflected on how well they adapt to the needs of the founders rather than a one-size-fits all process.

5.1.3.4 Domain Expertise

At the Seed stage, founders have gathered some knowledge from the Pre-seed stage and the start of their venture. However, as F10 puts it:

> *We've gotten mentorship from people in the industry more specifically, but we weren't necessarily looking for the investors to be really directed in that field. I think partly because you know, we were so young as a company that there was there's always this idea that we may pivot, you know. And whether that pivot is really away from education, I don't know, but it could take different types of expertise.*

It denotes how Domain expertise maintains its importance throughout the stages. Most importantly, the mention of pivot is critical. Since SU remain fairly fluid at this point, transitioning from an MVP to a product-market-fit, the industry in which the SU

[5] Translated from French: *Let's say I have an entrepreneur who is strong in the technological sector, an engineer, and I have another who is strong in marketing. Naturally, my support is not the same. In one case, I will show him how to manage his business, how to build a business plan. In the other case, it's going to be different stakes.*

operates could be evolving. There would be a lot of trials and errors as well as back and forth between the founders and their stakeholders. If a major change is required, the SU would undergo a pivot, a sharp turn of their strategy. This process is described by Ries (2011):

> *If the company is making good progress toward the ideal, that means it's learning appropriately and using that learning effectively, in which case it makes sense to continue. If not, the management team eventually must conclude that its current product strategy is flawed and needs a serious change. When a company pivots, it starts the process all over again, reestablishing a new baseline and then tuning the engine from there. The sign of a successful pivot is that these engine-tuning activities are more productive after the pivot than before.* (loc. 1582)

In this way, a SU can adjust its product, service or target audience if its original assumptions are not met. Domain expertise thus remains critical since founders always need to remain up to date with the knowledge from their current and future industries.

AC have a large range of specialization, from the general to the very specific. For example, one AC linked to a university worked with founders from a wide range of "tracks" related to its different faculties. On the other hand, another AC was highly specialized in Artificial Intelligence SU. Because of this variance, founders could either lack specific help or lack a different perspective. This would put the entrepreneur in a situation where what the domain expertise and cross-industry expertise they acquire can counterbalance each other. There lies the importance of choosing an AC carefully. A very specialized one could lead to tunnel vision while a general program could lack the technical expertise to help founders make the right decision. For example, as a specialized AC denotes

> *Une grosse partie du pool de mentor qui en effet ce sont des gens qui eux-mêmes dirigent une SU en intelligence artificielle, on a plusieurs mentors qui viennent d'Element AI. On en a qui vienne de Google Deep Mind, Google cloud, les produits reliés aux machines Learning. On a plusieurs SU comme Algolux, Automat, Keytext, on va chercher des gens qui sont soient des fondateurs, des marketings ou ventes, des leads de recherche et d'ingénierie d'entreprise AI parce que quand tu veux opérationnaliser un modèle AI et en faire un produit*

> *et non pas juste faire projet de recherche, il y a des défis uniques qui sont différents qu'un SAAS standard. (AC05)*[6]

This highly specific and unique knowledge can only be achieved with a deep understanding of the industry.

Domain expertise is certainly as important if not more by VC and AI. Since they are working in a more long-term relationship than AC, these types of partners understand the evolution of the SU at a deeper level. Also, because entrepreneurs work more exclusively with those partners, they particularly rely on their domain expertise. For example, F06 declares that if "you go with [VC firm], [VC] is the real one, the pro in terms of travel industry. She'd been on a lot of company." On the other hand, F25 complains that "the person I'm dealing with that is managing the investment has no experience in the med tech. It's only the president of the fund. So that VC investment I'm dealing with doesn't understand what we're trying to do here. So it's hard to make her understand what's going on and why. So sometimes, I start to bypass and go straight to the president." It illustrates a double-edge sword of the relation with a partner that has a specific domain expertise or not. If the right partner is selected, it could lead to a treasure trove of knowledge. However, the choice of a partner could backfire if the founder is not able to work directly with the person who has the expertise.

In a similar manner to AC, AI and VC also have a range of specialization from general to specific. VC08 describes their firm as being "thesis-driven and what that means is that we focus on an area. Get to know it very deeply. And we figure out where the opportunities are." This means that they invest in very specific SU and can provide them the most support since it is an industry they understand. As for AI, it depends on how they operate. Those who are part of Angels Groups are more organized. They have

[6] Translated from French: *A large part of the pool of mentors are themselves managers in artificial intelligence SU, we have many mentors from Element AI. We have some from Google Deep Mind, Google cloud, products related to machine learning. We have many SU like Algolux, Automat, Keytext, we look for people who are either founders, in marketing or in sales, research leads or engineers in AI companies because we want to operationalize an AI model and make it a product and not just a research project, these are unique challenges that are different from a standard SAAS.*

meetings and events in which they hear founders pitch. One such group also has investment divisions that specialize in specific industry such as real estate and technology. They also have some reference people who have incommensurable experience that give their opinion on the ventures. Having the opportunity to have such individuals with domain expertise to share is a valuable resource to entrepreneurs.

Domain expertise is a major contribution for founders. However, it requires them to make the right choice in whom to work with. A partner with a more general disposition could be better for a venture that is on the fence and that is not too deeply connected to an industry. On the other hand, a SU that has works with a very technical and advanced technology such as Artificial Intelligence or Machine Learning might require the support of people within the industry who possess the requisite knowledge and understanding.

5.1.3.5 Cross-industry Expertise

At the Seed stage, founders work to expand their network, participating in AC and meeting as many AI and VC as they can. Through all that interacting, they meet with people from their industry but also from different industries that can bring something to the table. F25 claims that "meeting with different entrepreneurs that are not necessarily in the same space, but the sharing of all the information and the sharing of all the common issues we have is where we get the most value out of all that, it's just a discussion with other founders and partners." As was previously discussed in the Pre-seed stage, the interaction with other entrepreneurs in a favorable sharing environment can really help. Consequently, in the Seed stage, it is even more beneficial. As opposed to nascent entrepreneurs, the conversations are now between founders who have built an MVP, encountered issues and have matured their reflection on their venture. Also, as mentioned in domain expertise, the level of specialization of the partner plays a particular role. A more general AC would allow for more cross-industry expertise sharing while a specialized one would focus on more domain expertise.

VC and AI bring cross-industry expertise differently than AC and in two different ways. First, they can introduce companies in their portfolio to each other if they have complementary knowledge. For example, VC02 mention that there is a company in their database that does "l'analyse de crédit réinventé, de l'analyse de base criminelle réinventée. […] Cet outil-là est probablement valide pour d'autres compagnies dans notre portfolio. On met ensemble ces compagnies-là[7]." Second, by working with SU from a variety of industries, they know what is being done elsewhere and have a benchmark to share with their entrepreneurs. VC01 describes it as:

> *Taking what we've seen in other industries that are more advanced in their adoption of technology and business models and apply that to industries that are you know, like agriculture in Quebec City, it's large agriculture farming, larger than takes place in second, Third World countries that don't have the super infrastructure, slightly slower in the adoption of tech and are completely ininstrumented where you bring SAAS model, cloud computing, IOT, optics, computer vision learning. One breakthrough technology from an industry that somebody can bring amazing efficiency to gains but also has to be done in a way that is, you know, with a super user-friendly interface, maybe more iconic than menu driven.*

In this way, founders can receive information from other industries that could give them an edge. The two sources of knowledge, partners and fellow founders, serve as a hub of potential innovation. While the AI and VC do not possess the knowledge themselves, their real contribution is in their ability to understand what their portfolio companies do and make the connection between them. It is thus quite important for the founders to find the right partner.

As mentioned in the Domain expertise section, a choice between a generalized partner or a specialized one should be carefully pondered. This would be the same, if slightly

---

[7] Translated from French: *Credit analysis reinvented, criminal database analyse reinvented. […] This tool can probably be used for other companies in our portfolio. We get those companies together.*

opposite, for Cross-industry expertise. A partner with a diversified portfolio would provide more opportunities for Cross-industry expertise while one with a more focused portfolio might afford more domain expertise. A good solution for founders is to pick more than one partner and to make sure that they have different types of portfolio, at least one general and one specialized.

5.1.3.6 Management and Organization

A major difference between the Pre-seed and the Seed stage is the actual creation of the firm. Founders now have to worry about the structure of their SU as well as how to manage them. Novice entrepreneurs who have never started and run a venture would be particularly ill prepared and need addition support. As F02 says, "[AC] helped us organize internally, structure the company better. Which made us a more VC backable business." And for those that are already organized, it only enhances that important facet of their business as highlighted by F37: "I always had like a to-do list, but I think just putting it into a much more refined structure and the structure that helps to keep you more accountable." Contributions in terms of Management and Organization human capital are particularly critical at this juncture because, as illustrated in the previous two quotations, it is a reflection of the SU's legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders. The words "backable" and "accountable" would seem to be the major reasons why founders would need to acquire this skill for the potential growth of their firm.

While AC provide classroom-like theory and advice on Management and Organization, the real contributions would seem to come from AI and VC. As AI are mostly current or past entrepreneurs, they have firm building experience that can translate into valuable Management and Organization contributions to the entrepreneurs. They would know how to be accountable to their stakeholders, it would be to "mettre des paramètres en place pour s'assurer de guider l'entrepreneur ou l'entreprise dans une direction qui est décidée par le conseil d'administration. […] on a mis des objectifs, on a établi des buts d'équipe, des buts de compagnie[8]" (AI03). An AI would be a source of tremendous support early on if they get themselves involved deeply within the venture. This underlines a choice AI have to make, how involved they want to get with their portfolio founders. Discussing with AI, they mostly claim that it is not their duty to run the business for the entrepreneur and that they are there primarily to provide highly level advice and feedback. However, as AI03 expresses, "moi, le moins possible, je ne veux pas m'impliquer au jour le jour, mais, d'un autre côté, je suis tout le temps là aussi pour les aider, que ce soit moralement ou que ce soit en termes de façon de penser ou de prendre des décisions[9]." This shows how difficult it is for AI to stay at arm's length. While it is preferable to them to do, spending more time with founders could increase their success rate. In this instance, entrepreneurs benefit most from an involved partner who provide their expertise on how to build and manage their organization.

In a manner similar to AI, VC also provide valuable Management and Organization contributions. While AI profit from their extensive entrepreneurial experience, VC, who may or may not have the same experience, rely on their history of building ventures with their portfolio partners. VC, being investment professionals, have an expertise in building up and helping manage SU. They can help with "the day-to-day stuff, structure [your] team, set up [your] employee agreement, stuff like that, you know, the basics" (VC3). The level of experience of the VC as well as that of the VC firm could affect how much they can help founders. A more experienced VC or firm would witness first-hand how to build successful Seed firms and how it helps them reach a Serie A. There would be a continuum of expertise based on the VC and the VC firm experience, as presented in figure V-2. As such, the VC would not act as a sole individual when

[8] Translated from French: *Put parameters in place to make sure we guide the entrepreneur or the company in a direction decided by the board. […] We put in place the objectives, we set team and company goals.*
[9] Translated from French: *Me, I want to get involved as little as possible, not the day-to-day, but, on the other hand, I am always there to help them, whether it is morally or in how I think or make decisions.*

helping founders but has the weight of their firm behind them. When seeking funding from a VC, this would play a role in choosing the adequate partner. A novice VC in a young firm might possess less knowledge and comparables compared to an experienced VC in an older firm. A look at the portfolio history of the VC and of the VC firm would be indicative of their potential in building a SU.

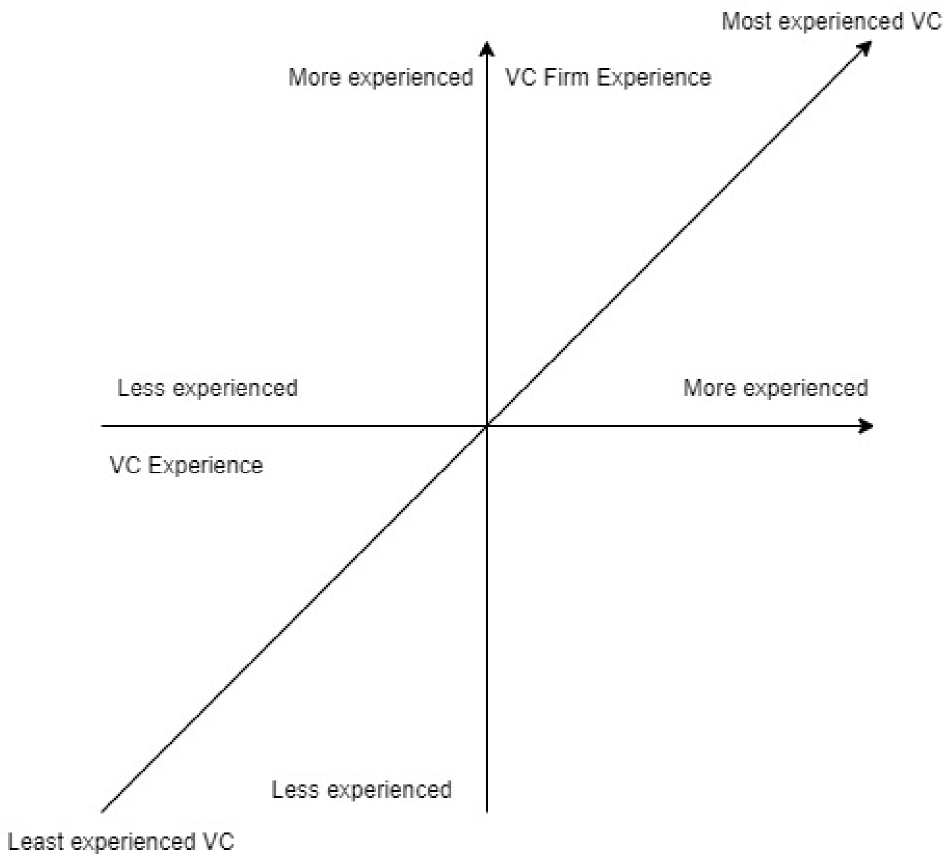


Figure 5-2: VC Experience

As previously mentioned, Management and Organization skills are particularly important at the Seed stage where founders only start to build their venture. This type of human capital would serve as a catalyst to legitimizing the SU as well as acquiring other capitals. It is thus quite critical for entrepreneurs to seek such knowledge and for their partners to share them.

5.1.3.7 Planning and Project

A characteristic of Seed firm is that they enter a process in which there are fast iterations and multiple evaluations of the venture. As such, it is of some importance for them to acquire and improve their planning skills. Confronted with fast growth and increasing demands, founders need all the help they can get. F02 describes it as partners helping "introduce OKR [Objectives and Key Results]. And we had a follow-up session with [AC] every week about OKR. And that was the most challenging 30 minutes every week. But really helping for the growth of the company, growth in terms of maturity where we do things organizationally. The big impact on that has been that simple, we have had better productivity since then." The terms "maturity", "growth" and "productivity" are representative of how this type of human capital can contribute to the success and growth of SU. Additionally, more mature Seed firms might need different metrics and help with implementing them as F37 mentioned: "help with how to do strategic goal setting, how to set up metrics in order to show investors that your company is growing week by week." As such, they start setting up:

> *KPI [Key Performance Indicators]. Je sais que ça a changé un peu notre travail, notre façon de fonctionner. Aussi, comment une SU, ça a toujours plein de projets qu'on aimerait faire. Comment identifier le projet principal ? Comment définir les priorités d'entreprise ? Puis essayer de venir qui chiffrer le potentiel, pas en termes d'argent, mais en termes d'impact et de priorité, le potentiel de différents projets pour venir s'attaquer à une chose à la fois.*[10] *(F04)*

It is demonstrated here that founders need support in not only determining what type of metrics are needed but also how and when they are required. As such, it would seem that depending on the maturity and progress of the SU, the way those metrics are collected and analyzed will evolve. Early on, those firms have few clients and sales,

[10] Translated from French: *KPI (Key Performance Indicators]. I know it changed our work a little, how we function. Also, how a SU has plenty of projects we want to do. How to identify the primary project? How to define our companies' priorities. And then try to quantify the potential, not so much in terms of money but in impact and priority, the potential of different projects so we can take care of one thing at a time.*

thus do not have much need for advanced metrics. As such, early Seed firms are better off with simpler ones such as OKR which is a “framework for defining and tracking objectives and their results. Its main goal is to define the ‘goals’ of the company and the team, and to define the measurable ‘key results’ of each goal implementation” (Hao *et al.*, 2018). Founders would learn to set achievable goals and how to measure them. As the venture grows and the number of their stakeholders and revenue increases, they require more sophisticated metrics. This is when KPI becomes critical for SU. Those “metrics used in performance dashboards are typically named key performance indicators because they measure how well the organization or individual performs against predefined goals and targets. KPIs focus employees’ attention on the tasks and processes that executives deem most critical to the success of the business” (Hao *et al.*, 2018). While OKR would be associated mainly to personal goals, KPI would reflect business goals.

As AC07 puts it:

> *We care a lot about metrics and that’s a big part of our program, is helping them think through what are the metrics they should be measuring, you know, at least a key metric not like 50 metrics. The one, two or three key metrics they should be measuring to really track how their business is going. So we do spend a lot of time on that.*

AC provide early Seed firms with the opportunity to learn OKR metrics collection and analysis skills. Early on in the AC program, a process is set up to teach founders about OKR. They are also required to set their own objectives every week and discuss openly about whether they reached them or not and what obstacles they have encountered. As such, they learn both from theory and from practice by having to set and track their metrics. AC working with late Seed firms would start helping them implement KPI tracking. At the later Seed stage, however, the interaction is more personalized, as AC05 states: “chaque compagnie est responsable de définir son KPI d’une semaine à l’autre. Oui, on va travailler ensemble pour les définir. Si moi je pense qu’il met en place un KPI qui est inutile à suivre, c’est un genre de feed-back qu’on n’hésitera pas à donner[11].” It would be the founders’ responsibility to set and track KPI metrics. The importance of the AC contributions to the SU Planning and Organization human capital cannot be understated.

In a different manner, VC and AI contributes to founders by setting up a reporting system. Like later stage Seed AC, those partners help with setting up the proper metrics, but their help is more prevalent in their evaluations of the SU’s milestones. In that matter, VC11 help founders “identify the core value drivers. So there’s always going to be three to four metrics in every business that actually matter that you need to track on a daily or weekly basis and we try to help the company have Simplicity and focus on the metrics that matter that they need to be tracking to adjust how they run their business.” VC help founders by following them throughout the round, evaluate their performance and provide them the tools to reach their milestones.

AI, like VC, offer help in suggestions for objectives prioritization as well as evaluation of their progress. However, as opposed to VC, AI have a broader spectrum of interaction with their founders. As AI04 mentions :

> *Cette année, l’objectif, c’est ça, c’est ça nos trois ou quatre priorités, pour chacune des priorités c’est ça qu’on essaie de faire, fait qu’on peut se revoir dans trois mois puis voir comment on a progressé là-dessus. Puis ça, je pense que les entrepreneurs ont beaucoup besoin d’aide là-dessus parce qu’il faut quelqu’un qui est un peu, de un, il faut quelqu’un qui est habitué de faire la planification stratégique fait que c’est pour ça que moi, je prends ce rôle-là assez à cœur parce que c’est mon expertise puis aussi il leur faut les bons outils. Puis les outils pour une grande entreprise ne fonctionneront pas pour la petite entreprise*[12].

[11] Translated from French: *Each company is responsible to define their KPI from week to week. Yes, we will work together to define them. If I think they are setting a useless KPI, it’s the kind of feedback I won’t hesitate to give.*

[12] Translated from French: *This year, this it the goal, those are our three or four priorities, for each priority, this is what we are trying to do, so we can meet each other in three months to see how it progressed. And that, I think entrepreneurs need a lot of help on that because they need someone who is used to strategic planning, so me, I take that role at heart because it’s my expertise and they need the right tools. And the tools for a large company do not work for small companies.*

By being more involved with the SU, some AI understand better what the firms they support need and can help them setting up the right objectives and better prioritize.

Planning and Project skills are critical at this stage because of the short time to roll out projects as well as the importance of showing progress to their stakeholders. This human capital would thus serve as a fulcrum for the evolution of the firm through the Seed stage and subsequent stages.

5.1.3.8 Professional Expertise

At the Seed stage, founders have access to very little professional knowledge and possess few resources. As such, Professional expertise would serve as an important human capital. This human capital can be separated in two distinct categories. There is Professional expertise provided directly to the founders and there is advice about professional expertise. First, in their interaction with their partners, they can receive support either directly from them or from mentors working with them. For example, F09 mentions "groupes de soutiens psychologiques qu'on appelle le programme centré, là, c'est plus entré justement sur la psychologie, de l'individu[13]" while F12 refers to "séances de mentorat avec un mentor qui était comptable du centre poly UDM. C'était bimensuel comme rencontre. C'était sur l'aide à la rédaction d'un plan d'affaires[14]." Second, they are able to refer to professionals or give advice on which professionals to use. For example, F28 mentions a "program […], which is a sort of like a bank of 400 hours you can use with professional organizations, right, at a very low cost or no cost in the beginning and very low cost." While the direct help provides a template of how

[13] Translated from French: *Groups of psychological support that we call the centered program, it's more focused on psychology, on the individual.*
[14] Translated from French: *Mentoring sessions with a mentor that is an accountant from the poly center at UDM. It was a meeting every other month. It was help to write our business plan.*

to build their venture, the indirect support provides a roadmap of whom founders would work with and what they can gain.

AC offer founders direct help in two different ways. First, they can bring in outside mentors, as mentioned by AC09: “if we were bringing in a marketing expert from London that week well then everybody was going to get the marketing expert from London that week […]. Okay this week, it’s a marketing Mentor next week, it’s a finance Mentor.” In this way, founders would learn through punctual workshops or classroom-type lessons. Second, some AC programs have some in-house professionals, as described by AC09:

> *We had like in-house gurus. […] and then on my team, I had an executive producer, I had a business intelligence person, I had a UX person and I had a marketing Communications person. And these were all, you know, really high-end expert level people that were my staff but, what they did, was worked with all of the portfolio companies on marketing, BI, production, you know their areas of expertise. […] during the day the BI Guru was sitting down with you to work on your BI plan specifically and then maybe team 2 was too early and they’re not even doing a BI plan at this day so she’s not even spending any time with them, you know, so that’s with the gurus as an in-house resource. That’s where the custom, very specific targeted feedback and support came from. […] So one of our gurus was an executive producer which […] just means […] your project manager and so the role of the executive producer is to coach you in your own project management and planning and so he would, you know, spar with you during your budgeting, during your scheduling, you know, he might come and sort of assist in a couple of your scrum meetings and sort of answer questions about, you know, if you had a certain roadblock or didn’t know how to handle certain things.*

This highlights how in-house experts can provide support in some specialized fields. Having those gurus can help tremendously since they offer continual and invaluable input. However, AC09 warns that having such resources comes at a price and maintaining them on the payroll might not be possible in the long run. In addition to the direct help through outside mentors and in-house gurus, they can also offer indirect help in the form of either a network of professionals or advice about which professionals to work with. As such, AC03 has an “entente avec Deloitte pour les crédits d’impôt, mais qui n'a pas l'exclusivité. La seule chose que leur dit, c'est "si vous voulez que vos crédits d'impôt fonctionnent à long terme, vous devez les faire faire par une grande firme"[15]". So while some AC programs have partnerships and exclusivity with professional firms, they do not require their portfolio firms to work with those firms. However, they offer guidelines on which types of professionals founders should work with and how to choose them. For example, AC05 recommends that if "leur avocat n'a aucune idée des termes typiques, on va essayer de leur faire comprendre que, un, ça va leur coûter beaucoup plus cher au bout du compte et qu'il va y avoir des erreurs majeures qui vont difficile à découdre plus tard[16]." In this way, they provide SU with the best practice of how to work with professionals.

VC provide Professional expertise in a different manner than AC because there is no classroom or workshop. Instead, support can be punctual during board meeting or on-demand based on the entrepreneurs' needs. However, some VC would also have available resources for their portfolio firms in a manner similar to AC09's in-house gurus. VC11 defines it as "acceleration practices which are, we have four or five of them? So there's Talent, sales and marketing, exit preparedness, finance and growth and Venture debt. And so each of those practice leaders, the acceleration practices can help the company with those initiatives." Depending on the specific needs, the practice leaders can help with "executive recruitment, […] interviews […] structuring an employee Compensation Program. […] our head of Finance and growth can help create your data room, help create a board deck, help review your financial model." In that manner, the support provided by VC can be quite variable and founders should inquire about what each VC can supply.

[15] Translated from French: *Agreement with Deloitte for tax credits but with no exclusivity. The only thing we tell them is "if you want your tax credits to work in the long run, you have to do it with a large firm.*

[16] Translated from French: *Their lawyer has no idea what the typical terms are, we will try to make them understand that it will cost them a lot more in the and that there will be major mistakes that will be difficult to solve later.*

The nature of the support that AI can provide is really dependent on each AI. For example, AI03 is a digital marketing professional and can provide more help on that specialty. In the same manner, F03 mentions how they specifically targeted AI that had specific expertise such as Communications, Sales and Law. They were able to consult individually with each of those AI when a certain topic became salient. It is, however, quite difficult for founders to do this. This could be due to the fact that F03 founders were more experienced with "expérience avant de 15 ou 20 ans dans d'autres univers[17]." In order to find the proper AI with the right Professional expertise might require time, efforts and knowledge that most novice entrepreneurs do not possess.

Professional expertise is a human capital that could fly under the radar for most founders because they might not constitute immediate needs in their eyes. But, as it has been demonstrated by multiple interviewees, a mistake at the Seed stage could end up costing much more later on whether in terms of accounting, investment, subsidies or other. As such, it is quite critical for founders to understand which professionals they should work with and how to choose them.

5.1.3.9 Shared Expertise

Shared expertise would seem to be complementary to cross-industry knowledge. As the latter one provides founders with knowledge about what is done in other industries, the former would provide founders more specifically with experience from other founders. As F16 expressed: "the value just having like really smart connected people who just go 'I've worked with a lot of SU. I mean, frankly, just listening to what your problem is and suggesting new ideas, of things that you should be thinking about or different options." In the same manner, F28 discusses how they were put "in touch with hundreds of VCs and companies and depends on what stage you're at in the company's. I made

[17] Translated from French: *15 or 20 years of experience in other domains.*

friends there and they're successful, I can still knock on their door." The particularity of this human capital contribution is its unpredictable character. Founders cannot expect to learn specific skills and abilities through the interaction with other founders and ecosystem partners. In this instance, the wider the social capital of a partner, the more founders can potentially learn.

AC build programs that can help large numbers of SU in a short amount of the time. The benefits of Shared Benefits with AC could be threefold. First, some AC create an advisory board for the founders. For example, AC02 assigns advisors "à six niveaux. Quelqu'un de fort en finance, quelqu'un qui connaît bien les produits du secteur, quelqu'un qui connaît des dimensions plus légales, un ex-CEO. C'est qu'on customize un groupe de comité aviseur.[18]" The multidisciplinary nature of the advisory group provides founders with various contributions through their experience and their specific skill set. The second way AC help founders with Shared Expertise is through the intervention of mentors. AC05 brings mentors that are "gens qui sont soient des fondateurs, des marketings ou ventes, des leads de recherche et d'ingénierie d'entreprise AI[19]." Those mentors each bring specific contributions to the founders that might not be previously defined and an interaction is required to understand what founders can learn from each mentor. Finally, the third way is through the interaction of the SU that are within the AC program or even their alumni. For example, AC06 "put [the founders] in touch with an emerging tech company that we have in our portfolio in one of our programs." In a similar manner, F16 "met another team that does sensors through the [AC] Network […] kind of like a way to tag team. I mean that's only because they have such a massive network that like that kind of connection exists." Shared Expertise would represent an important, if not critical, contribution of AC. AC programs with a

---

[18] Translated from French: *On six levels. Somebody strong on finance, someone that knows well the market, someone that understands the legal aspec, an ex-CEO. We customize the advisory board.*

[19] Translated from French: W*e look for people who are either founders, in marketing or in sales, research leads or engineers in AI companies*

longer history, sizeable cohorts and a larger network of alumni would be most beneficial to founders.

For AI, Shared Expertise is based primarily on the AI herself or himself. It is grounded in both the AI's experience and expertise, and their portfolio. For instance, as AI02 expressed: "je peux dire "parle à telle personne, il a eu tel problème, il a trouvé telle affaire". C'est beaucoup sur la base de collaboration[20]." As such, the AI would decide who the founders should meet and learn from, so the results of the Shared Expertise contributions would be based on their judgment. It also relates to the other SU in their portfolio or their own companies. AI03 explains that there is a "dynamique des certaines synergies entre mes différentes compagnies. […] Donc lorsque je vais voir des SU qui sont impliqués soit dans la musique, soit dans le sport qui peut aider ma compagnie[21]." It can be taken from this that Shared Expertise associated with AI might be lower and less effective because of the reduced network. It might be particularly important in this case to select the right AI if founders want to gain from Shared Expertise.

VC provide Shared Expertise contributions in a manner similar to AI. However, the structure of a VC firm greatly enhances the founders' learnings. As opposed to AI, VC do not act individually but rely on the expertise of everyone in the firm. As VC01 explains it, VC "try to create a program, a system, it's also trying to harmonize […] to kinda get the best practices out of all of us. […] the bigger our portfolio, the more experience we have within our family, things we can benchmark against." The collective experience and knowledge of the firm allow VC to make decisions conjointly and profit from the specific expertise of each partner and associate in the VC firm. The choice of who to bring in to help the founders and whom to refer them to is thus not the result of a single individual but from a collective. The same is true of the firm's portfolio versus an AI's portfolio. In this instance, founders could potentially have access to a

[20] Translated from French: *I can say "speak to this person, they had this problem, they found this solution". It's on the basis of collaboration.*

[21] Translated from French: *Dynamic of synergy between my different companies. So, if I see SU that are involved in music or sports that can help my company.*

much larger source of Shared Expertise with other founders and VC partners. While founders have to look specifically at the AI's specific expertise and portfolio, they might need to look at a VC firm's structure and entire portfolio. Founders would be better served to choose a VC firm with diversified expertise from their partners and associates and a diversified portfolio while working more specifically with a VC that has experience in their industry.

Shared Expertise might be a critical human capital contribution that would need further reflexion from founders. The choice of working with a partner might require an analysis of not only the expertise and experience of the organization but also the past and current portfolio of companies with them and what and how many SU might join later on. This would demand more time and effort from founders than they might otherwise invest.

5.1.3.10 Specific Expertise

In a manner similar to Domain Expertise, Specific Expertise provides founders with particular skills and knowledge that can help them greatly with their venture. However, as opposed to industry knowledge, it would be related more to technical skills. For example, F02 explains that:

> *We were able to get a huge maturity in our product line very fast, […] we certainly had access to senior electrical engineer, senior mechanical engineer, senior marketing. So all these altogether being able to access senior and experienced people suddenly has a huge injection of experience in the company. We grew very fast in maturity that translated in better products, better documentation, better visual impact.*

It helps greatly in terms of product design and manufacturing. However, Specific Expertise does not help only on the technical side of the venture but also on the business side. It is represented by F07 who has an AI that is an intellectual property lawyer. He expresses how he would :

> *Insister pour faire que nous, on ne sait même pas qu'il fallait faire. On a quand même travaillé avec des avocats aussi. Il y a des choses que lui voulait absolument faire qui s'appelle un freedom to operate, on cherche pratiquement voir s'il n'y a pas des brevets. Ça, c'est quelque chose qui voulait absolument faire. Ça s'est révélé très positif. Sur la propriété intellectuelle, c'était assez collaboratif. Je reconnais son expertise.*[22]

In this instance, the partner has a very specific skill set that would greatly benefit the SU.

AC might no provide much Specific Expertise, except those within very specific industries. For example, AC05 has a "pool de mentor qui en effet ce sont des gens qui eux-mêmes dirigent une SU en intelligence artificielle[23]." Those mentors would have specific technical and business expertise since they are working within the same space. A lot of the mentors are founders who are perhaps a few months or years more advanced than the SU in the AC program. As such, they would understand the technology and what it would take for the founders to evolve their venture. Depending on the type of venture, it might benefit founders to choose an AC program that would provide enough support in terms of Specific Expertise such high technology or particular business models.

AI can provide very specialized Specific Expertise based on their experience and expertise. For example, AI04 explains that:

> *Une des compagnies développe du logiciel. Comme je travaille en marketing numérique, j'ai un point de vue assez fort sur le logiciel autant sur le développement de fonctionnalité que sur le user expérience, sur le design aussi. Puis tu sais, sur le design je vais jusqu'à, donner des exemples précis, exemple récemment j'ai fait un review d'une nouvelle version du logiciel puis je donnais*

---

[22] Translated from French: *They insisted to do things that we did not even know we had to do. We also worked with lawyers. He absolutely wanted to do something called a "freedom to operate", we are searching for patents. It was something they absolutely wanted to do. It proved to be very positive. On intellectual properties, it was rather collaborative. I recognize their expertise.*

[23] Translated from French: *A large part of the pool of mentors are themselves managers in artificial intelligence SU*

> *mon avis sur ça devrait être quoi les libellés, les boutons sur le logiciel, l'architecture d'information.*[24]

It also depends on the type of AI. Some operate at arm's length while others like to get more involved. In order to fully profit from Specific Expertise from AI, two different mechanisms could be in order. First, founders would need to be really proactive in seeking help and counselling from their AI, particularly if they are not deeply involved. Alternatively, they could seek an AI that is willing to invest time in supporting the SU. This human capital contribution is where AI could play a most defining role. They have to decide if it is worth their time to get involved or if they would rather stay a more passive investor. Discussions with experienced AI indicate that most AI would rather leave the building of the venture to the founders and only intervene when necessary or when asked. However, discussions with founders reveal that at this stage, they appreciate an AI that gets involved and can provide them with support before critical moments happen. This displays a contradictory perspective of the AI's involvement and how they can contribute in terms of Specific Expertise.

VC contribute to Specific Expertise in a manner similar to AI with the partners and associates personal experience and experience as well as their portfolio companies. Where they differ would be on the organization's professionalization level. While this really depends on each VC firm specifically, a certain level of Specific Expertise is provided to founders. VC firms that are very theme-oriented would provide better support to their portfolio SU. For example, a VC firm that specializes in FinTech would have both developed the technical skills and the business development skills within the sector. As previously reviewed, VC11 has "acceleration practices which […] can help the company with talent, sales and marketing, exit preparedness, finance and growth and venture debt initiatives." Most importantly, the practice leaders can help with "with

[24] Translated from French: *One of them develops a software. Since I work in digital marketing, I have a strong opinion on software, as much on functionality development as on user experience, on the design also. And you know, on the design, I can even give them specific examples, for example, I reviewed a new version of the software and I gave my opinion on what the tabs should be, the buttons on the software, the data architecture.*

interviews, […] with structuring an employee Compensation Program, […] create your data room, help create a board deck, help review your financial model.” In discussing with VC, it would seem that, particularly at the Seed stage, there is a large variety of VC firms on a continuum from minimum involvement to highly involved. The more theme-oriented the VC firm is and the more structured they are, the more they would be able to provide in terms of Specific Expertise contributions.

Specific Expertise is a difficult human capital to assess since it is very particular to the specific organization SU work with. Because of the particular technical and business of each SU, founders might need to seriously consider three different factors when targeting their partners. First, the size and type of their SU portfolio and mentors would be important as it would tell them what they expect in terms of technical support they could receive. Second, the experience and expertise of the people inside the organization would provide an idea of how helpful they would be in supporting the evolution of the venture. Finally, the structure of an organization should be assessed in order to determine if they already have the system in place to support the SU growth.

5.1.3.11 Synthesis of the Seed Stage Contributions

At the Seed stage, entrepreneurs have started their venture and are in the midst of expanding their initial offering. At this point, the ecosystem offers a wide range of potential partners, each offering more or less the same human contributions in a different manner. With such a large variety of potential partners available, the challenge is to find the one that would optimize the founders’ learning or the mix of partners that would prove to be the most efficient. As opposed to the contributions at the Pre-seed stage, there is much more variation.

The five human capital contributions similar to the Pre-seed stage, Challenging Feedbacks, Narrative and Pitching, SU process, Domain and Cross-Industry expertise, would serve the same way. Founders that have worked with partners at the Pre-seed stage would pick up right where they left off while those that only started at this stage might face challenges in order to catch up in terms of the knowledge required.

A particularity of the human capital contributions at this stage is that it starts to show a clear demarcation of two distinct types: knowledge and skills. The knowledge contributions, Domain expertise, Cross-industry expertise, Professional expertise, Shared expertise and Specific expertise, consist of information and data that the entrepreneurs can gather and collect. On the other hand, skills might allow them to gain the necessary expertise to build the venture. It would seem that skills are specific to the entrepreneur while knowledge would be more linked to the SU.

The contributions at this stage should give all the basic tools for the founders to not only build their venture but prepare them for the later rounds of investment. As previously discussed, there is a synergistic effect to the contributions that serves as a catalyst to the entrepreneurs learning later on. Once again, challenging feedbacks is important in this manner because of how they help in acquiring the other human capital within this stage. As the founders learn and evolve through the entrepreneurial process, they are better equipped to work with the different ecosystem partners and learn.

5.1.4 Serie A (Scaling the Venture)

In the Serie A stage, entrepreneurs have successfully found a mainstream audience and started selling to a larger audience. The goal of Seed stage was to find the product-market fit. It evolves in the Serie A to find a way to scale the SU from a local to a regional or national market. Those who are able to reach this stage have already gone through a process of learning about how to become entrepreneur, how to build up their business and the intricacy of their particular market. As such, most founders at the Serie A stage would have acquired at least some basics of human capital necessary to sustain and grow their venture. One of the objectives at this stage is to professionalize the SU and standardize its practices. Because of that, the types and variety of human capital contributions and what the founders need to learn also becomes much more standardized. This might be explained by the narrowing of the gap between novice and expert entrepreneurs. Since the pool of founders at the Pre-seed and Seed stage is so vast and they could be situated anywhere in the continuum from novice to expert, human capital learnings would need to cover a full spectrum. As founders advance through that stage and acquire more human capital, their needs would start to become similar to other founders. In addition, at this stage, partner involvement is mostly reduced to VC as AC and AI are primarily involved in the early stages. Serie A and later VC gradually prepare SU for acquisition or the stock market in the form of the Initial Public Offering (IPO). In order to do so, they continually prepare founders for financial and organizing skillsets.

At this stage, founders have to find their engine of growth. Ries (2011) explains it as:

> *The engine of growth is the mechanism that SU use to achieve sustainable growth. I use the word sustainable to exclude all one-time activities that generate a surge of customers but have no long-term impact, such as a single advertisement or a publicity stunt that might be used to jump-start growth but could not sustain that growth for the long term. Sustainable growth is characterized by one simple rule: New customers come from the actions of past customers. (Loc. 2772)*

VC try to find the right proposition of value. They also guide founders towards the right process of attracting both customers and investors. In order to accelerate their growth, "Lean SU need a process that provides a natural feedback loop. When you're going too fast, you cause more problems. Adaptive processes force you to slow down and invest in preventing the kinds of problems that are currently wasting time. As those preventive efforts pay off, you naturally speed up again" (Ries, 2011) (loc. 3064). From a financial point of view, VC help keep the founders grounded and understand how much money they require, how long it is going to last them and when to look for additional funding. From a business point of view, their inputs are mostly surrounding changes surrounding the business models. They help founders make decisions either on the minor adjustments that need to be made or the major pivots that are required in order to survive and thrive.

The human capital contributions at the Serie A stage truly reflect the needs of the SU in terms of the two perspectives previously discussed, financial and business. One contribution that has been important since the Pre-seed stage is Domain expertise. It is important for founders to understand the critical knowledge required to grow their venture and reach out to their market. Additionally, one contribution that was also in the Seed stage, Management and Organisation, is still important because of the crucial part it plays in the development of the SU. Finally, three new vital human capital contributions are particularly pivotal at the Serie Stage, Board & Governance, Fundraising and Decision-making. These are directly related to what is required at this stage financially and business development-wise. Table V-4 provides an overview of the Serie A contributions as well as examples of how they are perceived by the entrepreneurs and their partners.

Table 5-4: Serie A Contributions

Needs	**Scalability, Larger customer base**
Type of contributions	**Board and Governance**
Entrepreneurs perspective of human capital	Ça nous oblige à être plus rigoureux. On a, tu sais, on se dit rigoureux, mais tu sais il y a plein d'informations souvent qu'on garde plus dans le ressenti, mais qu'on couche pas sur papier par le biais (?? 44:19) ou autre. Donc ça, globalement, en fait ce que ça fait c'est que ça a un effet double dans le sens que dans l'équipe interne, ça nous oblige à avoir un discours commun sur la réalité des choses donc vraiment des impacts positifs à l'interne, mais aussi à l'externe, comment on communique ces choses-là ?
Partners perspectives of human capital	C'est souvent des raisons où le management est plus faible que ce qu'on avait prévu, ou escompté, ou évalué, euh à ce moment-là, l'entreprise a des difficultés à gérer ses investisseurs, gérer son conseil d'administration, utiliser son conseil d'administration adéquatement, a des difficultés à bien communiquer et établir des objectifs et faire son reporting face à ces objectifs là parce qu'ils sont mal établis.
Description	At the Serie A stage, founders start setting up boards with investors as members. This would set the firm up manage their firm later as well as starting governance processes.
Type of contributions	**Fundraising**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Les VC sont des professionnels de l'investissement de type capital de risque, le réseau de gens autour duquel il gravite, on dirait que les attentes, les modes et les objectifs, l'agenda de capital de risque est ultra clair.
Partner's perspective of human capital	Du côté de la structure financière de l'entreprise, au niveau du reporting, au niveau du management, d'essayer d'accoter, un management très solide qui va mettre en confiance les marchés pour pouvoir lever une ronde IPO… évidemment d'opérer avec un modèle d'affaires dans un marché qui supporte bien puis après ça, bien évidemment d'aider le management à structurer de façon à pouvoir avoir des chiffres qui vont permettre des marges, des niveaux de croissance qui vont attirer les investisseurs publics. Donc ça, ça dépend du cas par cas.
Description	At the Serie A stage, founders start seeking larger investment and plan for the later stages. They look for lead investors that can help plan for future cashflow needs and a network that can bring funds when needed.
Type of contributions	**Domain expertise**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	So let's say you go with [VC], [VC] is the real one the pro in terms of travel industry. She'd been on a lot of company, but once you know who's going to be there, you have some Freedom about like was going to be the independent person.

Partner's perspective of human capital	Un gestionnaire de fonds à Paris qui a lancé un nouveau fonds à ce moment-là avec Orange Publicis, comme investisseurs majeurs qui avaient mis chacun 75 millions dans son nouveau fonds. On a une compagnie qui œuvre, qui développe quelque chose dans le monde de la pub, le gestionnaire de fonds qui est ici on lui dit « parle donc à tel gars chez tel fonds, il va pouvoir te parler très intelligemment de ça ». […] « écoute, ça a l'air intéressant, mais je ne suis pas assez intelligent dans ton secteur, macro ça fait du sens, mais j'ai pas la vraie intelligence pour porter un jugement là-dessus, est-ce que tu connais tel gars ? »
Description	At the Serie A stage, founders work with increasingly specialized partners. Their domain expertise help understand the intricacies of the industry.
Type of contributions	**Decision-making**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	[VC] recently helped us with a management decision that we had to make and, full confidentiality, they were able to support us and give us the right advice to be able to move forward and based on the feedback from their own portfolio companies. There are other ones that help us with kind of the valuation comparables and where we stand so, yeah, almost any investor that I talked to and meet with and, maybe it's a specific to me, maybe it's just specific to the industry, but they're all extremely open and willing to help him, willing to spend their own time making us a better company.
Partners perspective of human capital	You need to try to make money or you know, the company's going to die. So that's where you know, I hit them with the hard reality and say, "look, you have a product but the way you're approaching the market is wrong. So, you know, it could be a B2B or b2c difference or they say, "we're going B to C." And I just said, "no, you need to go B2B" and we just shift the business, the revenue model in that sense. So that's an example that happens very often.
Description	At the Serie A stage, founders are confronted with further complexities and information overload. Entrepreneurs learn to make quick decision based on the information available from their environment.
Type of contributions	**Management and Organization**
Entrepreneur's perspective of human capital	Investors do, they create better accountability, better reporting because you kind of have to report to the LPs so they bring in discipline. So that I would say is that, unless you're going with an angel investor, any VC firm will bring in a level of accountability and discipline.
Partner's perspective of human capital	Une compréhension meilleure que le management parce qu'on a passé énormément de temps dans les six à neuf derniers mois à disséquer le fonctionnement de cette entreprise-là sur une base affaires, sur une base revenu, modèle d'affaires. Puis cette compréhension là maintenant on l'a, puis on éduque maintenant le management sur leur propre entreprise, sur comment, c'est quoi la physique de leur business. Donc là oui, on est en train de remonter les KPI, mais souvent en late-stage, les KPI sont connus.

5.1.4.1 Domain Expertise

In the Serie A stage, most SU have already some experience with their business and their market. There have already been adjustments and pivots. As such, they already possess a fair amount of knowledge about their industry. They would thus look for a VC that has extensive experience and has worked with multiple companies within the same industry. As F06 expresses, if 'you go with [VC firm], [VC] is the real one, the pro in terms of travel industry. She'd been on a lot of company.' The term pro would seem to be adequate for the type of support required from the VC at this stage. In the same sense, the discussion with F27 provided a good perspective of working with a VC at the Serie A stage. The founder has worked with a renowned early stage AC and one of the most renowned AC. They also worked with AI and VC both in Montreal and Silicon Valley. Their SU is in full expansion in Canada and the United States and they serve as mentors for other founders. Their description of how and why to choose a VC seems to be most representative at this stage:

> *Pick investors who have domain expertise, who have invested and had good outcomes in your space is really important and because, you know, often, entrepreneurs ask the question, "why is my VC not adding value to me?" Well, my answer usually is "did you do your homework and research?" So, pick the right investors, all investors or VCs, many agnostic, but several of them have a thesis and it's all about aligning with their thesis.*

This shows the importance of being more selective on choosing a VC at this stage based on their experience and expertise in order to acquire Domain Expertise skills and knowledge.

5.1.4.2 Management & Organization

At the Serie A stage, founders have to start structuring and professionalizing their SU. As F27 reveals, VC 'create better accountability, better reporting because you kind of have to report to the LPs so they bring in discipline. […] any VC firm will bring in a level of accountability and discipline.' Two of the most important contributions would seem to be learning to be accountable and disciplined. It is critical in two different ways. First, it will help set the organizational structure that will ensure their long-term success. Second, it serves as a signal to investors that the SU is well managed and built on strong foundations. F27 also some of the more specific contributions from partners at this stage are that they "professionalized and taught us what, you know, signal- to-noise, how to build growth, how to understand different kinds, of like, you know, paths of growth of different companies and what matters and what doesn't."

From a VC perspective, they have seen many companies go through this stage and understand what it takes in terms of structure and management to make it work. VC04 is a late-stage VC that invest in Serie A but also Series B and C until the IPO. They describe what they require from their founders and what type of contributions they can provide:

> *De bien comprendre son entreprise, de bien la disséquer, de bien gérer l'entreprise, de structurer le conseil d'administration puis de structurer leur écosystème, leur environnement d'investisseur, de pouvoir avoir les investisseurs, un syndicat d'investisseur qui peut les supporter jusque-là. Je veux dire, il y a différents, mais le gros c'est de bâtir une entreprise qui est bien solide avec des fondations bien solides.*[25]

At this stage, they want to make sure that their investment in the SU are going to profit and that there will be subsequent rounds of investment leading to acquisition or IPO.

---

[25] Translated from French: *To properly understand their business, to properly dissect it, to properly manage the company, to structure the board and the ecosystem, their investors' environment, to have investors, a syndicate of investor that can support them until then. I mean, there a different, but the biggest one is to build a strong company with strong foundations.*

VC04 expresses it in saying that founders should understand their company in terms of "structure, au niveau juste du côté de la structure financière de l'entreprise, au niveau du reporting, au niveau du management, d'essayer d'accoter, un management très solide qui va mettre en confiance les marchés pour pouvoir lever une ronde IPO[26]."

5.1.4.3 Board & Governance

At the Serie A stage, the structuration and professionalization require that SU prepare for executive boards and understanding how reporting works. As F20 conveys it, VC 'helped me put in place the right reporting metrics and kind of, I learn best practices from doing this, which is important in how you send financial update, how you send quarterly updates, how to put up reporting material. […] and I think I learned best practices for reporting.' At this stage, it would be critical for founders to acquire the discipline to prepare financial and operational updates of their ventures as well as the necessary skills to deal with board members at board meetings. It is expressed by F21 that the management team needs to be more rigorous. Although they think they are :

> *Il y a plein d'informations souvent qu'on garde plus dans le ressenti, mais qu'on ne couche pas sur papier par le biais ou autre. […] ça a un effet double dans le sens que dans l'équipe interne, ça nous oblige à avoir un discours commun sur la réalité des choses donc vraiment des impacts positifs à l'interne, mais aussi à l'externe, comment on communique ces choses-là.*[27]

It is particularly vital at the Serie A stage to understand the board and governing mechanism since it would only become more and more prominent in later stages.

[26] Translated from French: *Structure, the company's financial structure, at the reporting level, at the management level, trying to build a strong management that can give the market confidence in order to raise an IPO round.*

[27] Translated from French: *There are plenty of information that we have a feeling but that we don't set on paper because of one bias or another. It has a double effect that, internally, it makes us have a common discourse on the truth of things, so really positive impacts internally but also to the outside, how we communicate those things.*

VC are in a delicate situation when it comes to their contributions in Board & Governance. On the one hand, they act as a guide for the founders with their vast experience on SU boards. On the other hand, they cannot afford to provide as much support as would be optimal. First, the VC spend their time guiding a large number of SU and have to divide their attention amongst all of them while also needing to raise funds for themselves and reporting to their own investors. Second, they are not managing the companies themselves and have to leave that responsibility to the founders. As VC04 indicates:

> *Le conseil d'administration va accepter ou refuser un plan proposé par l'équipe de gestion. Certains membres du conseil ou certains investisseurs peuvent ou non avoir un rôle plus ou moins actif dans la définition de ce plan-là, mais le contrôle reste toujours dans les mains de l'équipe de gestion parce que c'est eux qui montent le plan qu'ils vont proposer au conseil. C'est pas le travail du conseil de développer un plan puis ensuite de l'approuver… ça n'aurait aucun sens. Maintenant oui, il y a certains investisseurs qui peuvent être très actifs à aider le management à monter un plan. Nous on a travaillé dans une des sociétés à problèmes, on a épaulé largement le CFO pour monter tout son pro forma, modèle d'affaires au niveau financier parce qu'il manquait un peu de capacité de ce côté-là. Donc on l'a assisté à le faire, mais en bout de ligne, c'est le CFO qui a présenté le pro, le plan financier au conseil. Ce n'est pas nous. Évidemment nous on était d'accord parce qu'on a travaillé avec lui.*[28]

It really shows the peculiar position a VC, or other board members, are in. While they do not wish to be deeply involved in the management of the SU, highly active investors actually increase their success rate.

---

[28] Translated from French: *The board will accept or refuse the plan suggested by the management team. Some board members or some investors might have a more or less active role in building that plan but control stays within the hands of the management team because they are ultimately the ones that will suggest it to the board. It is not the board's duty to create a plan and then to approve it.. It would not make sense. So now, there are some investors that can be very active in helping management build the plan. We worked with a company that had a lot of issues, we helped the CFO create their pro forma. So, we helped them with it but, in the end, the CFO presented the financial plan to the board. It is not us. Evidently, we agreed because we worked on it with them.*

5.1.4.4 Fundraising

At the Serie A stage, SU are in the middle of their cycle of fundraising. They must thus acquire the required skills to understand how to raise the funds required for this round and subsequent rounds. They need support from VC who are "des professionnels de l'investissement de type capital de risque, le réseau de gens autour duquel il gravite, on dirait que les attentes, les modes et les objectifs, l'agenda de capital de risque est ultra clair[29]" (F11). VC understand how the fundraising process works and what is required from the founders. They can guide them through the process and provide them with the skills required to build their financial projections and look for potential investors. F20 explains that VC help when they 'give us a valuation comparable document, […] industry benchmarks of where we should be. They helped us from the actual term sheet, […] manage the cap table as well in professional way. […] very helpful in the fundraising.' Fundraising contributions could be amongst the most important ones in the Serie A stage because of how critical financial capital is at this point in time in the SU's life.

The VC experience in the financial side of venture building makes them invaluable at this stage and beyond. VC04 discusses what they can provide to founders by "d'aider le management à structurer de façon à pouvoir avoir des chiffres qui vont permettre des marges, des niveaux de croissance qui vont attirer les investisseurs publics. Donc ça, ça dépend du cas par cas[30]." It illustrates that there would be a fit to what the founders need. It was mentioned by multiple founders and partners that the long-term goals play a huge part in the fundraising strategy. There is quite a difference between objectives

---

[29] Translated from French: *Investment professionals of the venture capital type, the network in which they navigate, it seems that the expectations, the types and objectives, the venture capital schedule is clear.*

[30] Translated from French: *To help management structure in order to have number that can have margin, levels of growth that can attract public investors. So, it's on case by case.*

between founders with an acquisition strategy and an IPO strategy. The type of investors and the way the cap table is built will reflect the chosen strategy.

5.1.4.5 Decision-making

At the Serie A stage, founders are faced with increasing demand of decisions to be made. The numbers of decisions they are faced with every day would be exponentially higher than in the previous stages. VC can help in different ways, one of which is in helping founders make quick decisions. Another way would be to provide support when they are faced with critical decision such as pivoting or staying the course. F11 determines the quality of a partner by asking, “est-ce qu’il m’aide à prendre des décisions plus rapidement ? […] Quand je regardais les conseils qu’on se faisait donner par [AC] et [VC], c’était très dans l’aide de prise de décision rapide[31].” VC help with their vast experience and that of their portfolio companies as expressed by F20: “[VC] recently helped us with a management decision that we had to make and, full confidentiality, they were able to support us and give us the right advice to be able to move forward and based on the feedback from their own portfolio companies.”

5.1.4.6 Synthesis of the Serie A Stage Contributions

At the Serie A stage, SU start transitioning from a small, entrepreneur run company to a larger, manager run one. As such, the contributions in this stage would serve as tools to cross that threshold. They are mainly skills-related contributions. Those would help the SU organize and structure itself in a manner that would support its sustained growth. All the human capital within this stage therefore aims at helping the business scale.

[31] Translated from French: *Are they helping me make decisions faster? When I looked at advice from AC and VC, it was to help with quick decision-making.*

5.2 Interactions with Partners

In the last section about partners contributions, it was possible to ascertain that the interactions with their ecosystem partners play a role in what, how and how much entrepreneurs learn from them. It signals two different important elements. First, the relationship with each type of partner produces a different effect and should be taken into consideration by entrepreneurs as they choose to work with these partners. As such, the interaction with AC, AI and VC will vastly be different. Second, how each individual founder reacts specifically to each partner is worth an inquiry. In this regard, each type of partner can display a multitude of behaviours and attitude.

In this section, I will look at how entrepreneurs interact with their partners and what influences it has on the entrepreneurial learning.

5.2.1 Interactions With AC

A characteristic of AC has been how different each one of them is. The way the program is built, who mentors, how big the networks is and who are accepted into the program are a few of the contrasting features.

5.2.1.1 Different Types of AC

The empirical study provided a perspective of the many types of AC, how they operate and what they bring to entrepreneurs. It is important to understand how each type impacts SU. Additionally, some AC could have more than one type, thus increasing the complexity of trying to understand them. Finally, because of the nature of AC, the types might not be related to each other. For example, an academic AC might not have any visible link to a technological AC.

Academic AC are linked to academic institutions, mostly universities. Then can either be located on campus or off campus. Some of them are exclusively for students and alumni while others are open to all entrepreneurs. A particularity of this type of AC is its access to resources and faculty from the university. This is represented in many ways. First, some AC would have professors and researchers from the university serve as mentors to the founders. Second, SU could receive support in terms of student interns. For a short period of time, a student is assigned to the SU to help with their operation. This, as reported by some founders, is of great assistance since there usually is a shortage of human resources. Third, founders have access to the university's facility such as laboratories and library. This could be invaluable to technological SU who would need to equipment. Finally, there is access to professors and researchers from the university. This would give founders a source of knowledge that they might not otherwise be able to get. Academic AC usually have a different way of evaluating SU. While potential and performance are still assessed, founders learning and raising the university's reputation are also considered. In this manner, they might choose to help SU that are not as highly rated by other AC.

VC-linked AC are AC programs that are created or run by a VC firm. They profit from the expertise and knowledge of the partners and associates from the VC firm. For example, partners can act as the program administrators or mentors. This type of AC could have more influence since they can profit from the VC reputation and network. They can also use the VC's facilities for work or meetings. A particularity of this type of AC is the founder's access to the VC. Since the VC follow the evolution of the founders within the program, they are better able to judge their potential and progression. This could facilitate the VC's investment in the SU.

General AC have a program designed for most if not all SU. This type of AC prepare founders to become entrepreneurs. It might, however, not be able to help founders specifically and lacks technical support. While they might accept more candidates into the program, they might not be able to provide as much help in terms of human capital contributions. Furthermore, the fact that the knowledge provided is general in nature, it might not be useful to founders that already possess them. In that instance, attendance to the program could be lowered. General AC could benefit first-time founders best. It might not provide the necessary human capital necessary for non-novice entrepreneurs as well as very specialized or technological SU.

Specialized AC, such as technological ones or focused on fintech or cleantech. In addition to a general curriculum, these AC have specialists within the industry as mentors and have specific industry-related courses. The recruitment process would be more selective as only the candidates within the right industry would be selected. Knowledge, tools and equipment within this type of AC might be more specialized and be particularly useful to SU. Specialized AC might not be well adapted for early ventures since they might not profit best from the resources and expertise provided by the AC.

Equity and non-equity AC are two types of AC that are differentiated by one characteristic: whether there is an investment in exchange for a small part of the company. This distinction could play into the AC's commitment into the SU. With a vested interest, equity AC follow the evolution of the SU even after the program ends. Therefore, they might provide better support for subsequent rounds of investment. Equity AC might be better suited for SU that are further along in their development since they have to be attractive enough for the investment.

5.2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Learning Process with AC

Most AC offer a fairly similar type of program. There would be classrooms, workshops, mentors and a "Demo day" at the end of the program. What differs would be the interaction within each program. The type of entrepreneur, the type of AC and the personality of the people running the program could influence the learning process.

It is important for founders to consider that their actions could affect their future investors. Depending on the type of AC, there could be more or less influence on the SU ecosystem. For example, a VC-related AC could have a more direct effect on a SU's investment than an academic AC. Additionally, how a program ends should be taken into consideration. Most AC have a demo day at the end of their program where they present to a panel of investors. Those founders who did not participate fully might not be able to pitch properly. Similarly, some AC go on a roadshow after the end of the program where they travel to a few select cities. There, the participating founders will pitch to the local investors. Thus, a SU that has not fully taking part in the AC program might not be invited to the roadshow. Testimonies from both AC and founders have shown that most participants in the programs were completely invested. An interesting outcome from the discussion is that the founders with the most difficulties were the more experienced ones with more developed ventures. It would seem that because the nature of AC is to help emerging SU and novice entrepreneurs, those who are set in their ways or that are unwilling to change their business model would not be able to profit thoroughly from their participation in the program.

Entrepreneurs learn in their interactions with AC with participation in classes, workshops and completing the tasks they are given. The AC process is limited in duration but very intensive and time-consuming. As such, what the pace of learning is fairly hectic. Founders that are not totally invested might not be able to follow the tempo and affect how much they actually learn from the AC.

The size of an AC cohort plays a role in the relationship between the founders and the AC. Smaller cohorts promote better communication and a tighter oversight of the SU. In this regard, it would seem that specialized AC were smaller than general AC since they are usually more selective. In addition, specialized AC might want to keep a closer eye on their founders, providing them with technical expertise. An altered form employed by one of the AC seems to effectively combine the general and specialized types. They built a dual-stage program that spanned from general to specific. The first stage consists of a three-month program that focuses more on training the founders into entrepreneurs. The following stage lasts up to two years. While there are still classes and workshops, they are no longer mandatory. They are separated into thematic and industry-related topics. As such, founders can choose which ones to attend and can concentrate on building their venture. The selection of candidates for the second stage is much discerning than at the first stage, with a focus on the growth and potential of the SU as opposed to the potential of the founding team. In addition, while they have an advantage because the AC managers possess information on them, acceptance of SU from the first stage is not automatic. Additionally, SU that did not participate in the first stage could be accepted in the second stage. Another AC also had a similar multi-stage program with lesser structure and a more diversified portfolio of activities. For example, their first stage is more akin to a BI with focus on education. One of the other stages is an entrepreneurial context in which each SU is coached and evaluated. These different forms of AC give founders more options and requires that they spend some time in making the decision of which AC to choose.

In summary, the fact that AC have many forms has a great influence on how entrepreneurs learn. The more general the AC, the more it would profit to novice entrepreneurs. A multistage AC can be great for entrepreneurial learning since it evolves from general to specialized.

5.2.2 Interactions with AI

As opposed to AC and VC, AI provide support to entrepreneurs mainly on the basis of their experience and expertise. Since AI are usually less professionalized than the other types of partners, there could be a large variety of them. In that regard, the entrepreneurial learning process could also be fairly divergent based on which AI entrepreneurs work with.

5.2.2.1 Different Types of AI

A feature of AI is that they invest their own money into SU. This means that the amount of money, the magnitude of their support and the human capital they contribute is different for each of them. Their specific involvement as well as expertise has a great influence on what entrepreneurs can learn. In the early stages, mostly Pre-seed and Seed, AI would be more present than VC. Earlier AI might provide fewer contributions than later ones. Because AI are all so different, it might not be easily classified into types. In that regard, the types of AI presented are useful in understand the phenomenon, but it might not be able to explain AI in practice.

Friends and Family (FF) are a special type of AI. They would be the first investors into a venture. They might or might not be professional investors. The investment would not be based on the potential of the SU or the potential profit but rather on helping the founders. In that instance, founders often do not have the luxury of choosing this type of AI. The nature of this relationship means that the potential contributions would vary widely for each different AI.

Individual AI invest on their own and support the founders with their own expertise and knowledge. Within the context of the study, the individual AI were usually novice investors who were either investing in their first SU or were approached by the founders. This type of AI might provide very specific contributions based on their expertise rather than general entrepreneurial advice. This could be related to the fact that they would not be the most experienced AI and therefore not possess as much venture-building knowledge.

AI groups are organizations that build a structure around angel investing. While each still invest their own money, they can invest together and use the power of the mass to evaluate the ventures and do their due diligence. Some AI groups would even have a staff to help with logistics and vetting the candidates for investment. This form could be beneficial to founders as they do not meet one investor at a time but pitch their venture in front of a room full of AI. Multiple AI could then invest simultaneously, providing potentially a wide variety of expertise and knowledge.

Super Angel Funds are a particular type of AI group. They are a mix between AI and VC. Like AI, the individuals invest their own money and pool it together and, like VC, there is a structure where professional investors would use these funds to finance SU. Founders could benefit both from the knowledge and network of the VC and of the AI. However, there is further distance with the Super Angel as compared to normal since founders might not have direct access to them but would need to use the VC as intermediary.

Passive AI are investors that do not get overly involved in the activities of the SU. They would stay at arm's length and interact with the founders only at board meetings or on request. They rarely make suggestions on their own without prompting. It would seem that most AI would be of this type since they usually can't afford the time to support SU further.

Active AI are investors that spend considerable time involved in the venture's operations. On top on their own expertise, they also provide the founders with general business-building knowledge. They take the initiative in supporting the SU and are proactive with their advice and feedback. From the interviews, it seems that novice AI are more inclined to be active because they might have less SU to help and also because they might intervene more at a tactical level than a strategical level. They can provide founders with more human capital contributions.

5.2.2.2 Entrepreneurial Learning from AI

Since there are so many different AI, learning with AI covers a full spectrum. FF offer the first funding for the SU but usually offer very little in terms of human capital contributions. This is, however, not always true, depending on the founders. For example, a novice entrepreneur that has extensive experience in an industry might possess a strong network within that industry. If their SU is within that industry, the support they receive from their FF might be more helpful since some of their investors would be within the industry. In a similar manner, individual AI should be selected on the basis of what potential human capital they can contribute. Some of the more experienced entrepreneurs interviewed, such as F03, suggested that much work is required to research, analyze and choose which AI to partner with. This, indeed, could be a major difference between novice and more experienced entrepreneurs. Novice entrepreneurs would not only seek but accept investment from anyone. Their energy would be exerted in different manners. The novice might try to pitch to everyone while the experienced entrepreneur might spend more time and effort doing research to find the right investor and the right way to pitch to them. In that manner, individual AI can provide very specific human capital to founders. If selected properly, founders can access specialized knowledge and skills from individual AI that can really help them. On the other hand, if they are not handpicked carefully, they might not afford much more than general support. The way founders learn might differ on the basis of the relationship. In the case of a specialized individual AI, founders usually understand when their help is required. F03 expresses that “ils nous donnent la possibilité de les appeler quand on souhaite. Donc, on les appelle quand on en a besoin et pas autrement. Le but du jeu, c’est d’optimiser leur temps et le nôtre. On les appelle quand on a un besoin spécifique[32]”. On the other hand, individual AI that are not specialized might only help during punctual events such as board meetings. For example, AI05 meets their founders every month for lunch while having “un CA à tous les trimestres qui permet justement de réviser les choses plus formelles, de voir toute l’équipe de fondateurs, mais sinon après ça est-ce qu’il y a des rencontres encore plus comme aviseur sur des sujets

[32] Translated from French: *They give us the possibility to call them when we want to. So, we call them when we need it and not otherwise. The purpose is to optimize their time and ours. We call them when we have a specific need.*

pointus sur la stratégie plus fréquemment ? Oui [33]». The difference here would really be between how the entrepreneurs interact with the AI. An experienced entrepreneur would be more proactive and seek very specific advice and support while a more novice one would be passive and wait for meetings with the AI to discuss their needs.

The interaction with an AI group is a particular one. While founders usually deal with one or two AI as lead investors, they pitch and interact with multiple AI at the same time. They might not be able to choose which AI to work with. In this instance, there is an element of luck whether the AI can provide specific human contributions. The interaction and learning would thus depend on the AI in their investors' group. The more specialized and specific to the SU's industry, the more support and help they can provide. It would really be up to the AI. For example, AI03 "cherche des synergies […]. Donc lorsque je vais voir des SU qui sont impliqués soit dans la musique, soit dans le sport qui peut aider ma compagnie […], je vais être porté à vouloir écouter ce qu'ils ont à dire, voir s'il y a une possibilité[34]." In this instance, the AI looks for SU that are complementary to their own. In a manner similar to individual AI, each AI from a group AI would interact differently with the founders. More involved AI would be more proactive while less involved AI would be more passive. However, the dynamics might be a bit different. Since the AI would invest within a structure decided by the group, there might be less freedom in the relationship with single AI since the investment is linked for all participating AI and there are investment and control mechanism in place.

Just like for the AC, the responsibility of learning lie within the entrepreneurs. Since there are so many possible AI within the ecosystem, they have to investigate who they

[33] Translated from French: *A board meeting every trimester that allows the revision of more formal things, to meet the entire founding team but, are there other meetings where we are advisors with specific topics on strategy more frequently? Yes.*
[34] Translated from French: *Look for synergies. So, when I see SU that are involved in music or sports that can help my company, I will be more inclined to hear what they have to say, to see if there is a possbility.*

want to partner with. Furthermore they have to learn to be proactive in seeking help rather than sit back and wait for their partners' feedback and suggestions.

5.2.3 Interactions with VC

The interaction with VC depends on a multitude of factors. First, the type and philosophy of VC firm play a major role into the relationship with entrepreneurs. Second, who the founders primarily deal with in the VC firm could impact how they interact. Finally, how the cap table is built and where the VC is situated within the investor's syndicate might dictate how much support each VC can provide.

5.2.3.1 Different Types of VC

There is a multitude of possibilities when it comes to the types of VC. Because of the many stages in which VC can operate as well as the different financial structure available to them, it is quite important for founders to gauge the different VC.

General VC firms have varied portfolios and no specific industry they aim for. This VC would usually invest indiscriminately in founders based on the founders and venture potential rather than seek within a particular parameter. This type of VC might not possess any distinctive knowledge or expertise but would be more tailored for business building.

Theme-specific VC firms concentrate on SU from a certain industry whether Cleantech, Medtech, Fintech or others. They usually possess specialized industry knowledge, tools and technology. They would be more selective on which SU they invest in. They generally offer more support to their portfolio companies because they possess a better understanding of the market and of their needs.

Early stage VC firms would invest solely on very early ventures such as Pre-seed, Seed and a few Serie A. These VC would bet on the potential of the founders as much as that of the venture. Because they enter so early, they usually would offer a wider range of contributions to entrepreneurs. This type of VC focuses on making sure that founders build a venture that has market potential and that can appeal to investors.

Late stage VC firms invest in Serie A and later. They enter after the venture has shown its potential and gained enough traction. In a way, they are a specific type of VC that concentrate on the professionalization of SU. Each subsequent round of investing would bring a larger scale and higher valuation. This type of VC would help mainly with these elements and provide more specific support as the venture grows.

Full-deck VC firms invest in early stage as well as late stage. They possess a special internal structure that can subdivide specialized investment teams. In this instance, the early stage team would possess the necessary knowledge and skill to help new venture gain the human capital necessary for their early growth. On the other hand, the late stage team is better suited to help scale and finance ventures that already gained traction. This type of VC would be able to follow SU throughout a long period and understand their needs.

Self-funded VC firms doe not have investors they need to report to. As such, they are not required to report to a board. While it gives them freedom to operate, it also means that they might be more restricted in terms of funds. Because of such restriction, they would invest in less SU. This might, however, allow them to spend more time with the founders they invest in.

Limited partner (LP)-backed VC firms have investors of their own. They are stuck in the middle of an investment process where they have to answer to their investors while supporting SU in their portfolio. LP-backed VC have to spend time securing funds and they are restrained by how long they have to invest them. Therefore, LP-backed VC follow a cycle of investment that might dictate how to invest and how to support their founders.

While maybe not being a real type in itself, it might be important to mention the “spray and pray” VC. This has been mentioned by a few interviewees and might prove invaluable in understanding human capital contributions from VC. This subtype is associated with VC trying to maximize the odds of finding a “unicorn”, a SU with great potential, by investing in a large number of SU. This indicates two important elements. First, this subtype would not be the lead investor because they do not want to spend too much time with 1 SU, rather spreading it into all their investment. The second element is a direct result of the first one. Since they do not spend much time with each SU, they do not provide much support unless specifically asked by founders. They also do not participate much in board meetings, thus not providing human capital this way either. Founders working with this type of VC has to understand the mechanism. They have to request help instead of waiting for proactive advice and feedback, and they have to comprehend how to build a cap table to include different types of VC.

A particular form of VC is the foundry model. Within this form, the venture is either started by the VC or co-created with the entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs would thus join from the beginning or early on. The VC thus has the luxury to choose the founding team. In this instance, the SU would receive a boost from inception and it chance of success increased. The VC would provide enhanced support and be more involved with the SU. They would keep a tighter contact with the founding team until later rounds.

5.2.3.2 Entrepreneurial Learning from VC

Entrepreneurial learning when working with VC would be highly related to the type of VC. Founders would have to understand the mechanisms in order to gain the most from their relationship. A general VC would not provide as much specialized human capital as a theme-specific VC. Meanwhile, a late-stage VC does not provide the same knowledge as an early-stage VC. This seems to be fairly clear to most interviewees as they understand that VC usually stay within their space.

Learning with VC follows three different patterns. First, they learn by reaching out to them when they have questions or need help. Founders would need to be proactive and understand that support comes from asking. Most VC interviewed have expressed that their door is always open and that they give advice or reference to those who can help. However, they intimated that they are wary about entrepreneurs who are on both extremes of the proactive spectrum. Entrepreneurs who ask for too much help show that they are not independent and take a lot of time from their partner. On the other hand, those who never ask for help actually irritate their partner. VC08 conveys it best: "it frustrates me, it pisses me off. I find it so self-defeating. […] Why somebody would not want to [seek help] is beyond me." This highlights the importance of finding the right balance in seeking advice.

The second pattern of learning is through executive boards. There, entrepreneurs give an update of the last trimester and report on what they have achieved and what problems they have. VC can provide contributions during these boards by giving advices and feedback. The more involved VC would read the reports beforehand and research on how to best help the founders. With the VC's guidance, the entrepreneurs would set objectives and implement changes for the next board meeting. It would be their responsibility to incorporate the learning during the meetings and follow up with the VC for more elaboration.

The final pattern of learning is through the structure of the VC firm. Some of them have specialists that can provide specific support to the founders. VC11 mentions, "acceleration practices [on] talent, sales and marketing, exit preparedness, finance and growth and Venture debt." With this type of support, it is the entrepreneur's responsibility to seek help. This could be invaluable to the founders as they learn about very specific skills and knowledge. It would serve them best to fully utilize the available service. Having the expertise of the practice leaders could provide them answers to most of their questions.

VC contribute human capital in a structured way. Whether through a system of direct feedback, during board meetings or with specialists, entrepreneurs are able to learn through an organized interaction.

5.2.4 Synthesis of the Interaction with Partners

The interaction with partners is an iterative and evolutive process. Founders who enter it early on might find it easier to manage their relationships with other partners later on. It becomes more and more professionalized and, at the same time, personalized.

At the early stage, working primarily with AC and early AI, the relationship truly reflects a mentor/mentoree type. The majority of the interaction would be unidirectional. With AC, the interface would be mostly composed of classrooms and workshops in which the entrepreneurs are given lessons and tasks. There are coaching sessions and work with mentors but the majority of the time spent within the AC is focused towards providing a large amount of human capital within a restrained time.

Early AI, on the other hand, would focus on sharing their experience and knowledge. Since the venture is in its infancy, there might not be much the AI can help in terms of technical or market support. They can, however, provide general business building and entrepreneurship skills advice. While it could be prompted by the founders, it would generally be volunteered by the AI in the form of stories, either their own or of which they witnessed.

As SU transition to later stages, the relationship starts transforming into a two-way exchange between the founders and their partners, mainly VC and later AI. For the AI, particularly if they have a particular expertise, the founders can request help, generally on specific topics. This is also represented during board meetings where entrepreneurs can request help based on their reports and problems they are facing. However, AI can volunteer their support if they either discern something in the report or if they notice a pattern that they recognize from their own experience.

The relationship with VC would be fairly similar. Early VC would help build the venture as well as prepare the founders to the entrepreneurial life. As such, they act as a mentor ready to listen to their needs and worries. However, VC usually have a much larger portfolio than AI. They can't give as much attention to the founders as might be required. As was mentioned previously, a "spray and pray" strategy is exercised by a number of early VC because of the large number of ventures starting and the difficulty to distinguish, the "unicorn" from the rest of the herd. Because of this phenomenon, unless the VC is thesis-driven hands-on, they would not be actively involved unless explicitly requested.

At the later stage, as the SU has become more professionalized and structured, the relationship also would come back to being one-dimensional. At this point, the founders would slowly transition into managers and CEO. They would lack the time for structured classroom and workshops types of support. Also, they are bombarded with constant needs for attention and decisions. In this instance, most of the support would be upon request from the entrepreneurs. With the human capital acquired within the early phases, SU should be able to navigate through the operational and tactical waters of the later rounds. What they might require is specific spot help when a situation arises and being able to receive immediate help from their partners.

As entrepreneurs evolve through their phases of growth and financing, it would be critical for them to understand how the interaction with their partners also evolve. A clear grasp of how to steer through those different relationships would facilitate the growth of SU.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter integrates the different topics considered within this thesis in conjunction with the results found in chapter V. It is divided in two sections. The first section revisits the integrative model of start-up resource orchestration. By encompassing the results from the study into the model, it offers a brand new perspective of how the process is enacted for entrepreneurs within the ecosystem. The second section presents how the conceptual framework can be perceived with the results and findings unearthed from the study.

The purpose of the current research is to understand how entrepreneurs interact with partners in the ecosystem and how it allows them to acquire human capital. The findings from the results section provides the elements necessary to explain how learning is achieved through their interactions with their partners.

The results chapter served as a description of what was observed in the field study. In this present chapter, I make suggestions based on those findings. I use the classifications from the previous chapter and create links and continuity between them in order to incorporate temporality into the learning mechanisms within the ecosystem. In order to do so, I present two different important processes that would allow entrepreneurs to build rapports with important ecosystem partners as well as the gradual gathering of critical human capital.

6.1 Integrative Model of Start-up Resource Orchestration

Figure II-1 presented an integrated model of the resource orchestration process. It suggested how entrepreneurs would be able to build their bundle of resources that might promote their growth and evolution. The grounded theory study provided the opportunity to observe how that would be enacted within the context of SU. The partners contributions presented in section 5.1 illustrated the evolutive and iterative nature of new ventures. As the entrepreneurs evolve from the ideation stage to later stages, they gradually acquire different and specific human capital. Table V-1 highlights the progression of Pre-seed to Seed and Serie A. It reflects how resources are accumulated, integrated and utilized by entrepreneurs throughout the progress of their venture.

On the basis of the study's results, it is possible to observe how the resources orchestration process is enacted through the relation with the partners. I will now present how each step of this process was observed in the field.

6.1.1 Structuring the Start-up Resources Portfolio

In the discussions with both founders and partners, the concept of novice vs. repeat entrepreneurs was explored. AI02 explains the perceived differences between the two of them:

> *Les bons entrepreneurs vont le savoir. Une des caractéristiques des mauvais entrepreneurs, c'est qu'ils vont essayer de te faire croire qui sont bons dans tout. Un entrepreneur qui est bon est plus mature. Donc, qu'est-ce qu'il va faire, en général, il va être capable de te dire « écoute, moi dans ça, je dois avouer que mon expérience est limitée alors donc j'ai besoin d'être supporté d'une façon particulière ».*[35]

---

[35] Translated from French: *The good entrepreneurs will know. A characteristic of bad entrepreneurs is that they will try to convince you that they are good at everything. A good entrepreneur is more mature.*

It illustrates that the experience an entrepreneur possesses at the start of the venture influences not only on the resources they bring to the table but also their ability to gather new resources. It also applies to founders that have prior experience working in AC, VC firms or AI organizations. For example, VC3 was an associate at a VC firm for a number of years and had started their own venture. They explain how it has helped:

> *It's the small details. I mean, I've seen the mistakes other entrepreneurs have made. I know, you know, how to present myself, how to act. I know also what documentation and what kind of milestones to set. It's hard if you don't know where you're going and you don't know how to do it, you know, what's the first step? Whereas, I've actually seen what steps are required to get to point A to point B Point C. So, at least, I have some kind of guideline. So I'd say yeah, maybe I've always kept, you know, two, three months of not knowing where I'm going, which was really helpful.*

This shows the importance of the SU's starting set of resources. The previous quote suggests that experienced entrepreneurs would be able to speed up learning through the Pre-seed stage. It highlights that skills such as Challenging feedbacks and Narrative & Pitching can be transferred from venture to venture while knowledge such as Start-up processes can also be carried over. This is consistent with the Starting with own means principle from Effectuation. Figure VI-1 illustrates the Structuring the resource portfolio process as observed within the field. As a reminder, the diamond represents the resource structuring process and it highlights how entrepreneurs' set of resources is built. From a SU perspective, entrepreneurs with prior experience would have two main advantages. First, they possess an understanding of what needs to be achieved and what they need to learn. This would effectively reduce how the venture starts. It would lead to less inaction and hesitation at the beginning. The SU starts learning and develop their business faster. This is expressed by VC11: "the experienced entrepreneurs that have run a business before, they do this already. So that's part of what they learned in their

---

So, what they will do, in general, they will tell you "listen, in this, I have to confess that my experience is limited so I need support in a particular way".

first go as an entrepreneur. First time Founders, it’s difficult. First time founders have a tough time moving at that speed.”

The second advantage repeat entrepreneurs have over novice entrepreneurs is the fact that their prior set of resources serves as a catalyst for acquiring new human capital. They develop a capacity to understand what they need to learn and also how critical it is for them to accumulate them. It accelerates both the learning process and how quickly the venture evolves.

This results in two potential outcomes. First, the bundle of resources from the experienced entrepreneur would be larger and better suited to their growth. Second, they would learn faster and might be able to reach the next stage faster. It would allow the SU to structure the resource portfolio better and faster.

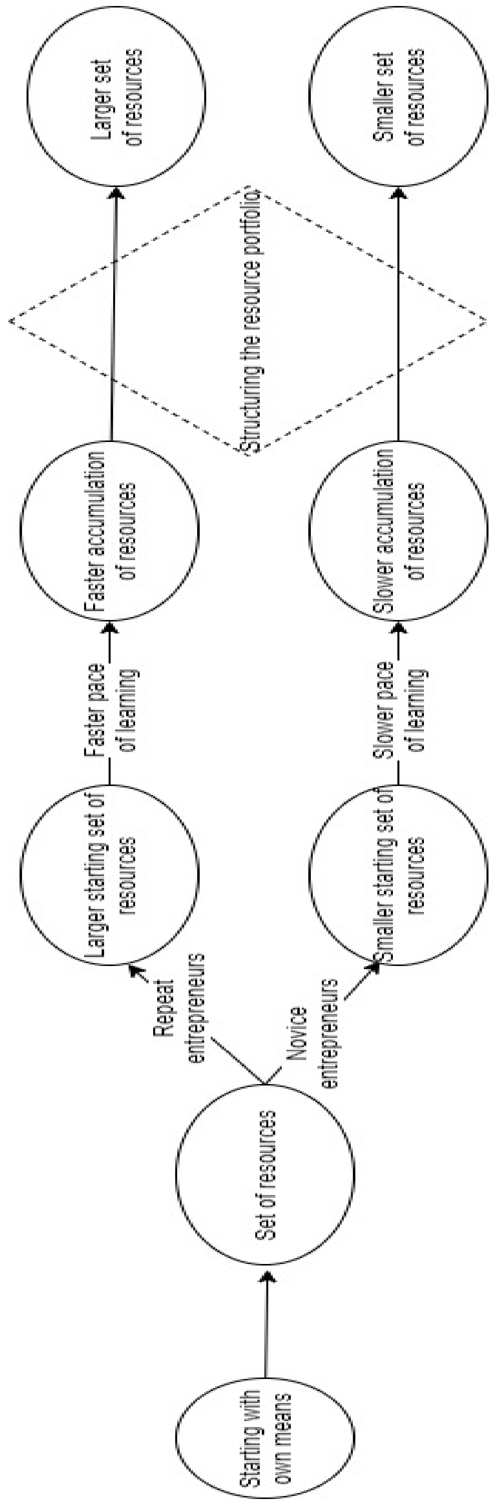


Figure 6-1: Structuring the Resource Portfolio Process for Start-ups

6.1.2 Bundling the Start-up Resources to Build Capabilities

The entrepreneur's previous experience plays a role on their starting set of resources and the pace at which they can learn. Additionally, it also plays a role in how they build their organizational capabilities. The way entrepreneurs behave could play a role in the potential pool of resources available to them. As such, an effectual behaviour that promotes partnership and seeking support might indicate more potential resources available to the entrepreneurs. On the other hand, a bricolage behaviour that promotes self-dependency and resources flexibility might affect negatively how much they can profit from working with their partners. In turn, it would affect their ability to build organizational capabilities. In this instance, effectual behaviours might afford higher capabilities while bricolage behaviours would result in lower capabilities. This is represented in figure VI-2. As a reminder, the diamond represents the capabilities building process in which resources are converted to capabilities.

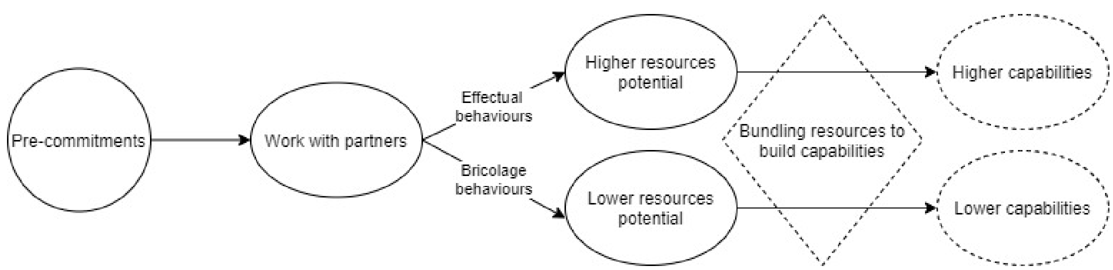


Figure 60-2: Bundling the Start-up Resources to Build Capabilities

F2 describes how an active behaviour, representative of Effectuation, affects their evolution and provides them with the tools to succeed:

> *I've been seeking a lot of help by asking questions around to the entrepreneur in residence. I've been asking if they could get me connections through their network. I've been asking if they could refer me to experts that could directly coach me and that has translated in various mitigated successes and failures in this whole process because nothing was structured. It was only me going toward them. They've been, of course, I'm lying when I said that because [AC], for example, put in front of us a sales expert that taught us how to, for*

> *example, do cold callings, how to do customer research and that has been a fantastic help because we have this expert that explained to us that cold calling is not dead. It's actually a great way to sell but you need to know how to do it because 99% of the people just don't know how to do it. So they become scared of it and everybody says cold calling is dead so yeah, that has been helpful, but that is not enough. We needed so much more help and my belief is that because a start-up doesn't have a proposition value that is clear from day one. The help with sales. Yes, you can teach techniques one time but the help with sales to you know, really well define your sales process and really make sure that you have everything you need to close sales faster better and higher revenue. That's how that should come over time. Because we're navigating dark waters. Like we don't know where we're going at first.*

This demonstrates that entrepreneurs who reach out and seek support are better positioned to acquire the capabilities their SU are lacking. By being proactive both in searching for partners and asking for help, they effectively increase the pool of potential resources available to them. It also seems that, in order to ask for the right type of help, having an idea of what they need is important. This is where having a lot of commitment from partners can play a critical part. They can provide not only the required resources, but also the knowledge about which ones they should acquire. With this understanding and valuable resources available to them, the SU can work on building the capabilities necessary to their progress.

On the other hand, a bricolage behaviour might hamper the access to resources. By focusing more on their internal resources and less reliance on partners, their pool of potential resources is more restrained. In turn, they might gain fewer capabilities and be less prepared for success. AC1 explains how this type of behaviour influences the progress of the SU:

> *So some people are like "why are we spending so much time on this?" because they might perceive it as just a short-term goal as opposed to really trying to figure out who they are as a company and being able to convey that so, yeah, I would say that's sometimes a place where people push back because they see it as, they don't get the big picture of why it's important.*

The importance of the partners resides in their understanding of the whole process of business building. It enables them to provide the right capital to the entrepreneurs in order to build the right combination of capabilities necessary to their long-term success. An unfounded resistance to such assistance might impede on their development if it is part of their usual way of dealing with their partners.

6.1.3 Leveraging Start-up Capabilities to Exploit Market Opportunities

As SU build their capabilities up and progress through their evolution, they are faced with challenges and opportunities. The mechanisms they have in place to both take advantage of opportunities and also turn challenges into opportunities would play an important role into how well they would be able to progress. As such, figure VI-3 presents how the organizational capabilities would help the venture grow and evolves. As a reminder, the diamond represents the capabilities leveraging process that would allow SU to exploit opportunities to grow and evolve. It shows that both types of behaviours, effectuation with leveraging contingencies and bricolage with making do with resources at hand, could affect the SU progress.

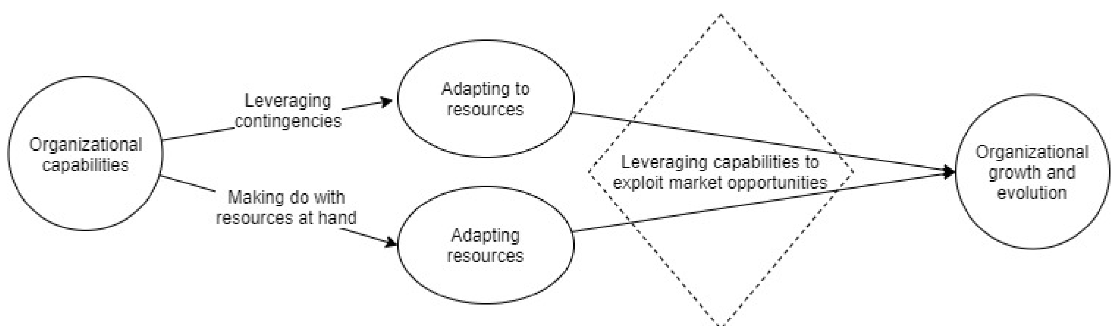


Figure 6-3: Leveraging Start-up Capabilities to Exploit Market Opportunities

AC02 details what they like from the founders in their portfolio:

> *S'il y a un comportement qu'on veut voir chez nos entrepreneurs, c'est l'exécution, de passer à l'action. De ne pas juste réfléchir, à moment donné, c'est d'aller là, de s'auto challenger. Il y a plein de mondes qui ont des bonnes idées, mais la bonne idée ce n'est pas celle qui va se rendre au marché. C'est celui qui exécute bien. Il va y avoir une marge d'erreur, il va se tromper, ce n'est pas grave, se tromper, reprends ça. Mais il y a action. Un entrepreneur*

est en action. C'est lui qui provoque le mouvement. Des fois, ils sont trop en mouvements. Des fois, il faut les ralentir. Parce que là, un moment donné, il brûle des ponts parce qu'ils font trop de choses trop vite. Des fois, il faut le remettre le focus et s'assurer qu'ils ont des bons plans de match. Mais il vaut mieux ce que quelqu'un qu'il faut pousser constamment.[36]

This highlights how partners prefer entrepreneurs that are anchored in action. As such, both effectuation and bricolage type behaviours would be proper in inducing movement for SU.

From an effectuation perspective, VC09 discusses how leveraging contingencies could be achieved by founders:

On espère que non. Puis des fois, la définition de pivot n'est pas toujours, elle est assez floue, tu sais des fois c'est plus une évolution qu'un pivot. Normalement un pivot c'est parce que tu te rends compte que ça ne fonctionne pas fait que, soit que tu décides de changer l'approche de produit, ou que tu décides de changer de marché complètement. Nous on n'aime pas trop voir ça parce que tu sais normalement nous on investit sur un plan puis on donne des liquidités pour 18 à 24 mois pour que tu exécutes ton plan. Si après deux mois t'es obligé de pivoter ça veut dire qu'on n'a pas fait un bon travail à identifier que le plan était bon, mais en même temps on aime mieux voir des entrepreneurs qui sont assez humbles et qui sont assez allumés pour se rendre compte qu'ils n'ont pas le choix de s'ajuster. Puis des fois ça peut être parce que le marché a changé, ça peut être parce qu'il y a un nouveau compétiteur qui est arrivé, qu'on ne connaissait pas, ça peut être pour toutes sortes de raisons. Une loi qui change. Ça peut être —, donc des fois le pivot est un peu forcé. Puis tu sais, on essaie d'accompagner nos entrepreneurs là-dedans, mais c'est sûr qu'on n'aime pas ça. Ce n'est jamais un bon signal quand une compagnie est obligée de pivoter dans la première année de notre investissement, ce n'est pas bon signe.[37]

---

[36] Translated from French: *If there is a behaviour we want to see from our entrepreneurs, it's execution, to take action. To not only think, but to do it, to challenge themselves. A lot of people have good ideas but the good idea is not the one going to market. It's the one that execute well. There will be a margin of error, they will make mistakes, it's not an issue, make a mistake, try again. But there is action. An entrepreneur is in action. They are the ones creating movement. Sometimes, they are too much in movement. Sometimes, you have to slow them down. Because, at some point, they are burning bridges because they are doing things too quickly. Sometimes, you need to refocus them and make sure they have the right gameplan. But it's better if if it's someone that pushes constantly.*

[37] Translated from French: *We hope not. But sometimes, the definition of a pivot is blurry, sometines it's more an evolution than a pivot. Normally, a pivot is because you realize that it's not working so you decide to change the product or the market. We don't like to see that because we invest on a plan and we*

It illustrates how pivots are perceived by the partner. While they are not overly enthusiast with SU making big changes to their venture, they are favourable to founders being flexible and open enough to perceive new opportunities or adapt to challenges from a changing environment. This is also expressed by F16:

> *Interestingly, in that regard, from what I saw even in my own experience on it, the ones that did the best were the ones that were like the group that kind of did a little bit of a pivot and were more open the kind of like "okay, I'm going to legitimately listen to your feedback even if I don't necessarily think you're as much of an expert or whatnot and I'm going to take it to heart and I'm gonna like, See what I can do about that."*

As such, entrepreneurs would receive benefits from keeping an open mind and adjust to unfolding situations. As they receive resources from their partners, they can fine-tune their ventures both to the context and their capabilities. In fact, younger firms would be better off making subtle changes and adjusting often to fit or find their market.

On the other hand, bricolage behaviours display a complementary way to confront challenges and opportunities. While effectual behaviours promote an adjustment to the resources and capabilities acquired from partners in order to adjust to the changing context, bricolage would rely on what the entrepreneur already possesses and fit them into their environment. It reflects a certain confidence on the SU internal capabilities and could be critical to entrepreneurs confronted with difficult situations. This is expressed by F24:

> *Bien ça, c'est par l'expérience passée parce qu'on en a donné plein des conseils, mais je vais te dire franchement j'ai réalisé en adulte pas tous les conseils sont bons à suivre, tu sais ? Et il faut que tu apprennes à te faire confiance à quelque part puis pas dériver de, tu sais quand tu dis tu connais*

---

give liquidity for 18 to 24 months so you can execute your plan. If you have to change your plans after two months, it means that we did not do a good job to identify that it was a proper plan but, at the same time, we would rather see entrepreneurs that are humble enough and bright enough to realize they don't have a choice but to adjust. And sometimes, it can be because the market changed or maybe there's a new competitor that we did not know, it can be many reasons. A law that changes. It can be—sometimes pivots can be forced. And, you know, we try to accompany our entrepreneurs in that, but we don't like it for sure. It's never a good signal when a company has to pivot in the first year of our investment, it's not a good sign.

> *toi, toi-même ? Bien là c'est notre projet, c'est la vision, il y a moyen d'avoir une vision sur quelque chose et se dire « ah OK on va la moduler, on va l'orienter, on va l'arranger pour que ça fonctionne dans le but de la faire démarrer comme il faut », tu sais ? Mais ça en est un autre que de se trahir puis dire « là, c'est plus ça pantoute qu'on fait, c'est une autre affaire ». Fais que je pense que c'est ça là, que j'ai vraiment appris, savoir plus m'écouter et dire « non, là vous ne vous en allez pas à la bonne place avec ça, les conseils que tu nous donnes, je ne les prends pas ». Fait que c'est correct de laisser passer un conseil, c'est ça que je me suis rendu compte aussi. Pas tous les conseils sont applicables.*[38]

It illustrates how it sometimes serves the SU better to rely more on their own capabilities and their own vision. It is important for founders not to blindly follow all the instructions and advice provided by their partners. However, they have to be aware that their behaviours might dictate who are better suited to work with them. This is expressed by AI02 who claims that this type of entrepreneur would attract another type of investor because "ils peuvent intéresser des investisseurs qui ne veulent pas s'investir. Donc, ils regardent l'entrepreneur et se disent qu'il semble parfait, qu'il semble connaître ça, il semble qu'il a réponse à tout, donc, je lui fais confiance[39]." It highlights the importance of the fit between the entrepreneurs and their partners and how it affects their resources and capabilities acquisition.

---

[38] Translated from French: *And that, it's with our past experience because we received plenty of advice, and frankly, I realized that not all advice should be followed, you know? And you have to learn to trust yourself at some point and not deviate from, you know when you know youself? So this is our project, our vision. There is a way to have a vision about something and to say "OK, we will modifie, we will orient it, we will arrange it so it works for the purpose of starting it properly", you know? but it's another thing to betray yourself and say "this is not at all what we do, it's a totally different thing". So, what I've really learned to is listen to myself and say "no, you are not going in the right direction, the advice you are giving us, I'm not taking them". So it's alright to ignore some advice, it's what I realized. Not all the advice are good to take.*

[39] Translated from French: *They can be of interest to investors who do not want to get involved. So, they look at the entrepreneur and think that they look perfect, that they seem to understand, that they seem to have an answer to everything, so I trust them.*

6.1.3.1 Fit Between Entrepreneurs and Partners

There are multiple factors playing into the relationship between entrepreneurs and their partners. The most important one would seem to be the partner's portfolio. A partner that deals with a large number of SU might not be able to actively provide support. The type of partner also plays an influence. An academic type of partner would invest more time trying to teach founders while a purely profit-based one would "bet on the winners." Partners that follow the "spray and pray" strategy would thus only invest their time on the SU that are doing better. Similarly, the financial structure and governance of a partner might play a large role in the type of relationship and support they can provide. A partner that has outside investors might not be able to afford as much time to support founders because they also spend time seeking funds themselves and dealing with their own investors.

Another factor playing into the relationship would be the partner's experience. The interviews showed that less experienced partners would actually spend more time with their entrepreneurs. There could be two main reasons to this. First, more experienced partners might have larger portfolio and, as such, would have less time to invest in each of the SU. The second reason would be the partner's understanding of the venture-building process. Experienced partners comprehend that founders have to build their own company. The partner would be there to lend a hand only when needed and not to be involved too deeply in the operations. Less experienced partners have a tendency to engage with the venture at a larger extent.

An interesting observation from the field is the fit between the partner and the entrepreneur. When the fit is not adequate, inefficiencies appear within the relationship. For example, F02 has expressed a preference about working with VC because they spend less time explaining their venture than they do for AI. On the other hand, it is the opposite for F03. They prefer working with AI because they can provide them more specific and specialized support while spending less time trying to convince them of the potential of the business. These are two very different perspective on the relationships with AI and VC. It should, however, be noted that F03 is a more experienced entrepreneur with extensive experience within the investment industry. In that regard, mature entrepreneurs understand better what type of support they need and who could provide it best for them. Even within the same type of partners, some differences may arise that could influence how entrepreneurs perceive the support they receive. Both F28 and F36 are at the Seed stage and both participate in the same two AC program. However, while F28 prefers the first program, F36 preferred the second one. Both entrepreneurs have extensive experience and would not be considered novice entrepreneurs. What differentiates the two AC is in how they are conducted. The first one has a more hands-on approach with mandatory participation, classrooms and workshops whereas the second one privileges a more passive approach within which the participants are provided a shared working space and an "à la carte" type of support. What attracted F28 to the first AC repelled F36 and vice versa for the second AC. The attitude and behaviours of the entrepreneurs would dictate which partner would fit them best.

The two types of entrepreneurs would be situated within a continuum of behaviours with effectuation on one side and bricolage on the other. The first type would participate in all the activities suggested by their partner, listen to their advice and use reflexivity to judge which feedback to follow. On the other hand, the second type would be more stand-offish and do things at their own pace and their own way. A term that has come constantly from the partners that might serve to distinguish the two types is "**coachable**". VC01 defines it as such:

> *I think it's the people who, Just in general, the way they work with feedback, whether it's our feedback or the mentor's feedback where you know, the people who are, who do push back sometime, who, who ask why and who question things. It's a good thing. But if that's all they do and they can never just kind of*

> *subject themselves to the, to the program or the advice when it's appropriate. That's not a good thing.*

It is thus important to understand that coachable does not mean to listen to all the advice and follow everything they are told. This idea is pressed further by AC02 in that they want to "challenger sur une chose et de mettre dans l'équation une question ou quelque chose à regarder qui semble important. Mais s'il décide de ni t'écouter ni m'écouter, qu'il nous démontre qu'il avait raison.[40]" In this regard, what seems important to partners is that entrepreneurs seek advices and act upon the ones they deem most proper. How coachable an entrepreneur is could be determined by their willingness to listen to their partners and mentors as well as how willing they would be to reflect upon their own situation and be open about making changes.

Within the context of the research, it would seem that coachable is a quality that would be representative of effectual behaviours while bricolage behaviours would be less coachable. As such, entrepreneurs would be situated within a continuum of coachability. On the effectuation side of the continuum would be entrepreneurs that are open to all the suggestions from their partners while the bricolage side would be closed off to guidance.

On the other side of the equation, the partner also behaves in a certain way that can affect the relationship. It would revolve around how involved they would be with the entrepreneurs. On one end of the continuum are partners that are totally hands-off while those that are totally hands-on would be at the other end.

Figure VI-4 illustrates this relationship between entrepreneurs and their partners and how the fit is enacted. The fit is represented by how active or passive each side would be toward the other. As such, the figure would be consisted of four quadrants with the following components: active entrepreneur vs. active partner, active entrepreneur vs.

---

[40] Translated from French: *Challenge on something and to put a question in the equation or something to look at that seems important. But if they refuse to listem, they have to show us that they were right.*

passive partner, passive entrepreneur vs. passive partner and passive entrepreneur vs. active partner.

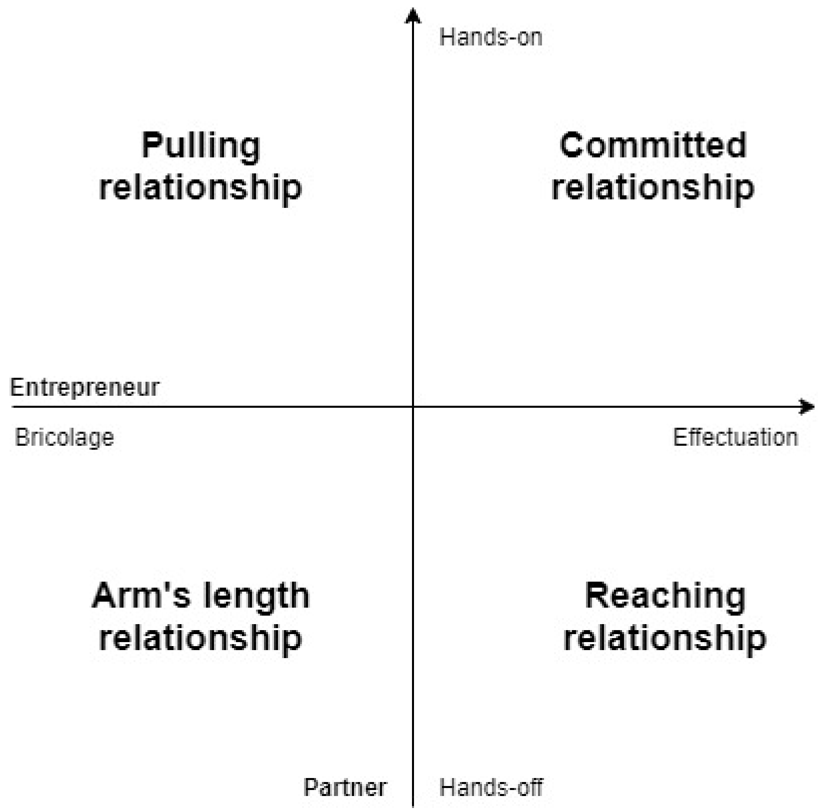


Figure 6-4: Entrepreneurs-Partners Relationships

A combination of effectual/hands-on and bricolage/hands-off would create the least amount of friction in the relationship. In the first quadrant of bricolage/hands-off relationship, or **Arm's length** relationship, both parties are content with fewer interactions and more freedom to the entrepreneurs. This might work best in the case of mature entrepreneurs that do not need much support. While the relationship would run smoothly, the potential human capital contributions available to entrepreneurs might be lower since there is not much interaction.

In the third quadrant of effectual/hands-on, or **Committed** relationship, both parties understand that it is important for the growth of the SU that they receive support from their partners. The entrepreneurs within this quadrant would not only welcome advices and feedback but also seek them. The partners, for their part, would be readily available to support the entrepreneurs. However, partners in a committed relationship would go above and beyond to help, either by helping with the tactical and operational side of the business or by actively looking for ways to improve the venture. This type of relationship, while providing the most potential of human capital contributions, would be an outlier because it is usually against the character of partners to be too involved in the operations of the SU they support.

In the second quadrant of effectuation/hands-off, or **Reaching** relationship, the entrepreneurs are seeking support and actively reaching out to their partners. However, those partners prefer to stay more passive, involving themselves when requested by the entrepreneurs. This would seem to be the preferred relationship within the ecosystem as most partners favour not getting heavily involved. There is, however, a delicate balance in the interactions. An entrepreneur that requires and seeks a lot of support might grow frustrated if they perceive that they do not receive it from their partner. In the long run, it may create a rift between them. In this relationship, entrepreneurs are given more freedom to operate at the cost of reduced support. In order for this relationship to work for entrepreneurs, they need to be particularly proactive and reach out whenever needed.

In the fourth and last quadrant of bricolage/hands-on, or **Pulling** relationship, the entrepreneurs have a passive approach while the partner wants to be deeply involved. This relationship could be rare since most entrepreneurs within the investment process are fairly active and most partners are usually passive. Interviewed partners have expressed extreme frustration when this situation arises. A particular characteristic of this relationship is that it should not be a long-lasting one. If a partner does not feel that an entrepreneur is not fully invested in the venture, the usual response would be to "abandon", or invest less time in trying to support them. Because most partners would possess a portfolio with a large number of SU, they would rather concentrate their effort on the better-performing ventures and the more coachable entrepreneurs. An exception might be novice partners. Since they have fewer companies in their portfolio and they are willing to be heavily involved, they could last longer within this relationship.

These types of relationships would be fairly consistent for the duration of the interaction between the entrepreneur and their partners. The behaviours and attitude would be difficult to change in the short-term and, bearing something major, could be representative of how the association between them would work. AI02 describes the difficulty of working with an entrepreneur that is not only passive but also resistant to listening:

> *On a un dossier dans lequel on a une personne, c'est l'enfer, elle n'écoute rien. Là, aujourd'hui, mon membre m'a dit « maintenant, elle écoute. » Je n'en revenais pas. Ça, ce sont des caractéristiques personnelles. La personnalité, ça ne change pas facilement, la personnalité des gens. Mais, elle, son entreprise était sur le point de fermer. Vraiment sur le point de fermer. Elle n'écoute personne et là, il me dit « elle était tellement sur le bord de tout perdre, non seulement son entreprise, mais elle avait des endossements, donc sa maison et tout ça alors maintenant elle écoute. » Mais, honnêtement, je ne le crois pas, parce que changer ça comme personnalité, c'est très rare.*[41]

Because the relationship between an entrepreneur and a partner is usually short in nature, if a change does happen, it might not happen in time to salvage a tumultuous association.

6.1.4 The Interaction with Partners and the Resource Orchestration Process

The observations made during the grounded study of the entrepreneurs and their ecosystem partners has provided a perspective of how it affects the resource

[41] Translated from French: *We have a case in which we have some, it's hell, they don't listen to anything. Today, an investor told me "now, they listen" I couldn't believe it. It's something personal. Someone's personality does not change easily, people's personalities. But, their company was on the verge of closing. Really close to closing. They don't listen to anyone and now, they tell me "they were on the verge to lose everything, not only their business but they had collaterals, so their house and everything, so now they listen". But honestly, I don't believe it, because changing your personality like this is very rare.*

orchestration process. The description of the interactions from the Pre-seed to the Serie A is described in the following sections.

6.1.4.1 Pre-seed or The Nascent Entrepreneur

At the Pre-seed stage, nascent entrepreneurs seek to build their first relationships in relation to their emerging ventures. Mature entrepreneurs have an advantage over novice ones since they probably already possess a network and know whom to seek help.

Nascent entrepreneurs start building relationships by attending ecosystem events such as demo days, networking cocktails, conferences, talks as well as partner recruitment and information meetings. While mostly informal, relationships built there serve as the foundation for most of the ones they will establish later on. These early interactions could provide the entrepreneurs with the roots to the other critical interactions at this stage: BI and early AI.

Nascent entrepreneurs would seek to work with BI for a number of reasons. They can offer knowledge, office space, mentorship and a network. Another important reason for working with BI is the creation of relationships with the other nascent entrepreneurs within the BI. Because of the passive nature of most BI, entrepreneurs would need to particularly proactive in seeking support to fully profit from their interaction with BI. This would be most representative of a Reaching relationship. Entrepreneurs would try to gain as much as possible from the interaction with the BI. Within the BI, the relationship between the entrepreneurs would be of the committed kind. The SU within the BI could mutually profit from each other. As such, while participating in a BI, an effectual behaviour would promote the nurturing of the business idea and the creation of the venture.

Another type of relationship built during the Pre-seed stage is with AI. There could be two types: FF and early-stage AI. The mechanism for the interaction is fairly similar with slight differences. For FF, it would primarily be an Arm's length relationship since the AI would not usually be providing much more than financial capital. In that instance, there might be very little interaction between the entrepreneur and the partner. On the other hand, early-stage AI provide minimal contributions since the entrepreneur is so early in its development of the venture. This would be representative of a Pulling relationship. Since the entrepreneur does not yet know what they need from the AI, the responsibility falls upon the partner to make suggestions and give advice. Working with AI at this stage would represent a learning step for the entrepreneurs as they start engaging with investors.

At the Pre-seed stage, the interaction should primarily be with BI because of the resources they provide and their role in helping entrepreneurs create ventures. Early-stage AI would be quite rare and might not provide as much support as they would once the venture is created and matures.

6.1.4.2 Seed or The Emerging Entrepreneur

At the Seed stage, emerging entrepreneurs seek to add to the relationships they built in the Pre-seed stage. With the venture freshly created, they need to gather as many resources and relationships as they can. Mature entrepreneurs still possess an advantage here since they already possess resources and, based on their experience, have an understanding of the roadmap necessary to grow their company.

Similarly to the Pre-seed stage, ecosystem events are important for the new SU. There, they not only meet partners that can give them support but they can also start showcasing their venture. By working with BI and early-stage AI at the Pre-seed stage, emerging entrepreneurs have started building relationships and establishing links to future partners. Those partners would mostly be AC, AI and early-stage VC.

The relationship with AC would be the logical evolution from previously working with BI. With AC being a specific type of BI, they share some of the same features and structure. As such, the relationship would also be similar. As opposed to the interaction at the Pre-seed stage, the AC commitment can go in two different directions based on the type. On one side, general AC would act like the BI at the Pre-seed stage. As such, the relationship would be a Reaching one in which the emerging entrepreneur seeks support that is provided upon request by the AC. By opposition, theme-specific AC would be more involved, trying proactively to support the entrepreneurs. This would be representative of a Committed relationship. An entrepreneur should consider a theme-specific AC first because of the specialized resources and expertise. However, the size of these cohorts are usually smaller and the selection process more arduous.

The relationship with AI at the Seed stage would be quite different from that at the Pre-seed stage. Since emerging entrepreneurs understand their venture better, they are better positioned to ask AI for support. Here again, depending on the type of AI, the relationship could be quite different. As mentioned earlier, mature AI usually prefer to remain passive, only providing support when requested. In this regard, the relationship would be a reversal from the one from the Pre-seed stage, with a Reaching type. Novice AI, on the other hand, might get more involved and proactively support the entrepreneurs. This would be representative of a Committed relationship.

The relationships with early-stage VC would be fairly similar to the ones with AI, Committed and Reaching. Which type of relationship would depend on the structure and system set by the VC. Most VC would be of the Reaching type since they usually invest simultaneously on a large number of SU and give support only when requested. Committed relationships would be representative of VC who create a structure or system or both. A structured support consists of a VC setting up specialized resources in order to provide the right support when an entrepreneur would need it. These experts provide professional help to SU. Systemized support, on the other hand, could be representative of very theme-oriented VC firms. Because they are domain experts, they understand the specificities on an industry and can give advices and feedback before problems arise. As such, a committed relationship with VC should be the preferred option for emerging partners.

Within the Seed stage, emerging entrepreneurs should be particularly proactive and seek out as much support as possible. An effectual behaviour is exceptionally warranted since there is an exceedingly large number of potential partners. The preferred type of partner should be hands-on and committed relationships would serve the entrepreneurs best.

A characteristic of investment rounds is that there are usually a number of investors with a mix of some AC, AI and VC. Not all the investors within a round are as active and the concept of lead investor becomes important. The lead investor is the one that deals primarily with the SU, gives them the most support and helps them recruit the other investors. At the Seed stage, it would usually be an AI or a VC. The entrepreneur should understand how to balance the different relationships.

6.1.4.3 Serie A or The Professionalizing Entrepreneur

At the Serie A, professionalizing entrepreneur expand the relationship they already possess. Starting from this round, they can have investors that reinvest through the rounds. What stands out is that the role of these partners can change over time. A lead investor in a Seed round can decide to reinvest in a Serie A round but as passive investor. This can be explained by the fact that a Seed investor might not possess the expertise and experience necessary to properly lead a Serie A and later round. An important element to consider is the composition of the executive board. As new investors enter the cap table, they also replace previous investors on the board. Again, this could be related to the expertise needed as they go through the investment rounds. The new board members would possess better knowledge that could help the entrepreneurs at their current stage.

AI usually do not lead at this round since it is usually out of their depth. It is also rare that they it would be their first investment. If AI invest at this stage, it would usually be a reinvestment and they would usually be more passive. There seems to be a personal element linked to AI investment at this stage. As opposed to VC, AI invest their own money and sometimes have an emotional attachment to the venture and the founding team. As such, they reinvest at later rounds not just because of the potential profit but also because they care about the SU's success. This creates a situation where AI would go out of their way to support the venture. This would be representative of a Committed relationship as the entrepreneurs know to reach out when needed and the AI proactively support them.

The relationship with VC is fairly similar to the Seed stage. Both Committed and Reaching relationships would be representative of this stage. However, as the SU becomes more professionalized over time, they would require less systematic support and more a case-by-case help as situations unfold. In that regard, professionalizing entrepreneurs would require less support because a lot can be handled by their new management team. This would emphasize how critical each request for support from the entrepreneur is.

From the Serie A on, the relationship would seem to be a bit more formal with board assembly and scheduled meetings. Since SU should now have hired their first specialized managers, most questions could be answered internally. As they now have most business development and domain expertise within the organization, outside support would be less required.

6.1.4.4 Roadmap to The Interaction with Partners

In the previous sections, different types of relationships were suggested based on the phase and type of partners. From the interviews and field observations, I was able to discern a general evolution of the SU and how they progress from partner to partner.

Figure VI-5 presents the general roadmap conjectured from the observations and discussions with the different ecosystem actors. It highlights a pathway novice entrepreneurs could follow to thrive within the ecosystem and evolve their venture.

Nascent entrepreneurs would start by talking to their close friends and relatives in order to gather the initial feedback of their business idea. This could give them a first inclination of the potential of their future venture as well as possibly their first investors.

The second step would be to attend networking and information events within the ecosystem. After gathering feedback from people they know, entrepreneurs could start seeking strangers' opinion. Attending those events serves two purposes. First, they can start pitching their project and gauge its potential. Second, they can build a rapport with the ecosystem actors, particularly future potential partners and investors. Knowing who are in the ecosystem can help them later on.

As they attend those events, they could also inquire about the different BI within the ecosystem. It would be important to distinguish each of them to understand how they can help. The preferred choice would be a BI that offers classes, workshops and mentoring in addition to all the other services. A large number of participants is an important criterion for choosing a BI. Because they are a gathering of nascent entrepreneurs who want to start a venture, it is a great opportunity to find cofounders.

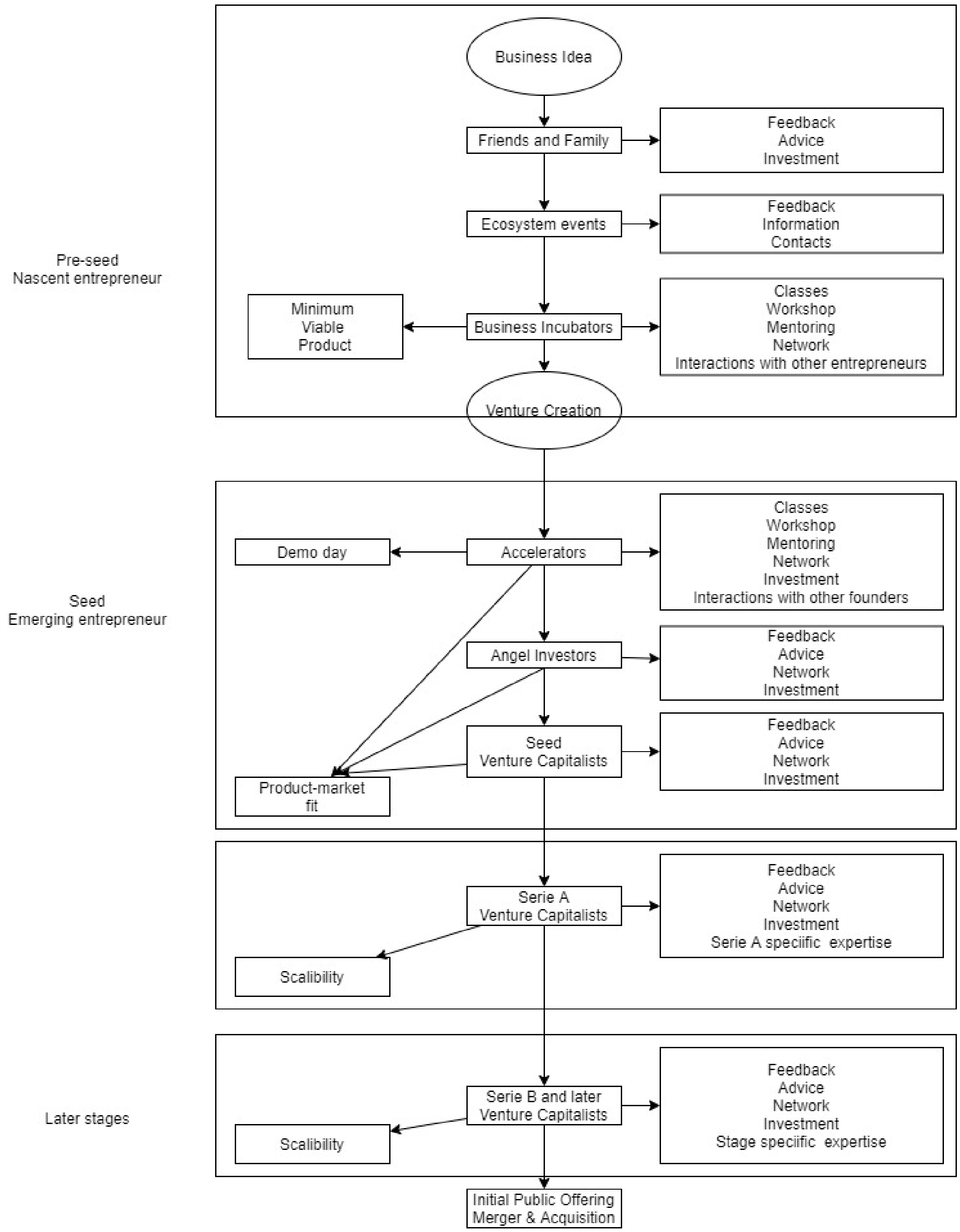


Figure 6-5: The Interaction Process with Ecosystem Partners

Since most enter the BI with various degrees of refinement of their business ideas, some would abandon them in favour of others and work with other entrepreneurs they meet in the BI. They can also look for complementarity in their skill sets and/or complete a team with expertise they are lacking. Founders usually create their venture during the BI program or right after. They also would have designed their MVP at this point.

After graduating from the BI and creating their venture, entrepreneurs could try to find investors or apply for an AC program. Some would enter another BI program. It does not seem to be the recommended choice to do so as many interviewees have expressed that they have not profited much from doing so. At this point, most SU would not be ready for AI and VC, thus, entering an AC program might be the best option. This would allow them to refine their MVP into more refined prototypes. The increased support compared to BI gives the entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn and evolve. Being within the AC would not only help the entrepreneurs gather human capital but also build their social capital as most AC programs have a network of mentors and ecosystem actors. The most important events would be the mentor meetings and the demo day to meet and pitch. There are many AC choices for the entrepreneurs. The best ones would be very theme-specific and specialized in a particular industry. While being the best option, those AC would also be the most selective and difficult to join. Another criterion to look at is the AC's network. For example, some AC are branches of a connected AC organization that spans regionally, nationally or internationally. Participants in this type of AC have access to all the resources and network of mentors and alumni. Finally, a third important criteria for choosing an AC is the size of their portfolio. There is a compromise to be made here as larger cohorts provide more social capital while smaller cohorts usually assure a closer support. The choice of the right AC is important at this point because it could ultimately lead to the success or failure of the SU.

Both AI and VC usually are in close contact with some AC and attend their end of cohort demo days. While there could be investment, particularly if the AC is a VC-linked program. However, entrepreneurs are usually asked to further develop their venture before they would be investment-ready. There would therefore be a period between the end of an AC program and the beginning of the Seed round of financing in which the entrepreneurs need to build their venture and gain traction.

Once there is enough traction and the entrepreneurs have some track record, they could seriously look at finding investors for their Seed round. Between AI and VC, AI would usually be more accessible and easier to secure funds from. If an angel group is available, it would be the faster path to partnering with AI. With a structured angel group, the entrepreneurs would apply, just like they did with BI and AC, through a filtering protocol. If their application seems interesting and the venture has potential, they would go through a multi-step selection process. First, they would meet with a recruiting agent from the group that would interview them. The second step would be a meeting with a selected AI that has a domain expertise close to the SU. If this AI is interested, they could become the lead AI and look for support from other AI within the group. The third step consists of a pitch meeting within the AI's office. During this large gathering of AI, a few of the selected SU pitch their project and answer questions. Interest is garnered from the AI and those that might be willing to invest are invited to another meeting. During this fourth step, the AI had time previously to investigate the venture and the numbers presented. They would ask further questions and delve deeper into the SU. Those that are still interested would move forward toward the last step, the due diligence. The angel group has the tools and resources to check the numbers and the market to ensure that what the entrepreneurs pitched was true. This whole process can take some time. For individual AI, the process would be a bit different. It would require more effort and preparation from the entrepreneurs to research and attend events in which they can meet with the AI that could interest them. While more difficult, this could be better for the venture as specific individual AI might provide more specialized support.

Investment from a VC requires more traction from the SU. In a similar manner to AI, entrepreneurs would look for a lead VC. They could aim at the VC firm that offers the best fit but also the individual VC that has the expertise and experience they require.

The selection process is also fairly similar to the one from AI groups. It would, however, be shorter. The entrepreneurs would pitch the first VC that could become their lead VC who, in turn, would then pitch to the VC board. If an investment is made, the lead VC would be in charge of the SU for the duration of the relationship.

The lead investor, whether it is an AI or a VC, would serve as the link between the SU and the other investors. They would help with introduction and with the pitch to other VC and AI. The entrepreneurs would keep the tightest relationship with their lead investor. One of their main tasks is to make sure the venture has enough funds to last the current round and prepare the entrepreneurs for the next round.

After the SU completes the Seed round, they build their venture and make sure that they adjust to find the product-market fit. They usually have between 18 and 24 months before they need the next round of financing. However, it could take from three to six months to prepare for the round.

The next round and subsequent ones would be quite different from the Seed round. First, AI usually are not as involved and would not be lead investor even when involved. Second, there is an increasingly specialized VC firms and private equity (PE) investing in SU. As the venture grows and scale to larger sizes, they need support to gradually expand their market, from local to regional to national to international. There is less unknown at this point as the lead investor should be able to guide the entrepreneurs toward their next logical destination.

6.1.5 The Model Revisited

The purpose of the integrated model of the resource orchestration process presented in chapter II was to illustrate how founders built up their organizational capabilities with the resources they acquire from their environment. Following the grounded theory study, it is possible to adapt this model to what has been observed in the previous four subsections. As the conceptualization of the model unfolded, the question about how learning was achieved throughout the process emerged. Understanding the entrepreneurial learning process allows a better comprehension of how entrepreneurs acquire resources and capabilities in order to evolve their organization.

It is critical for entrepreneurs to gather as much human capital as possible as they build their venture. There are many reasons why this is necessary. The main reason, obviously, is that it is critical in promoting the growth of the SU. Second, there is a chain reaction in entrepreneurial learning. The first human capital entrepreneurs acquire would serve as a catalyst to acquire further resources down the line. Learning would grow exponentially. Finally, human capital serves to showcase the entrepreneurs' potential and knowledge to investors and other partners. As the venture progresses, it has to demonstrate that it possesses the required abilities and skill sets to effectively grow and acquire market shares.

Because the quick growth SU is so fast paced with investment rounds every 18 to 24 months and exit horizons as early as eight years, they have to learn fast and learn well. They have to quickly understand what to learn and how to do it in an efficient manner.

6.1.5.1 Knowledge Creation

In order for SU to strive, entrepreneurs need to create internal organization knowledge. Early on within the venture's life, this is achieved mostly through knowledge sharing from the ecosystem partners. This process is described by Paulin *et al.* (2015) in different ways:

> *1. The exchange of knowledge between and among individuals, and within and among teams, organizational units, and organizations. This exchange may be focused or unfocused, but it usually does not have a clear a priori objective.*
>
> *2. An exchange of knowledge between two individuals: one who communicates knowledge and one who assimilates it. In knowledge sharing, the focus is on human capital and the interaction of individuals. Strictly speaking, knowledge*

> *can never be shared. Because it exists in a context; the receiver interprets it in the light of his or her own background.*
>
> *3. It includes a variety of interactions between individuals and groups; within, between, and across groups; and from groups to the organization. The focused, unidirectional communication of knowledge between individuals, groups, or organizations such that the recipient of knowledge (a) has a cognitive understanding, (b) has the ability to apply the knowledge, or (c) applies the knowledge. (p. 752)*

Organizational knowledge creation could thus be the results of four main factors: the transmitter, the receiver, the characteristics of the knowledge and the context (Szulanski, 1996). In this instance, entrepreneurs learn and create their organizational human capital by interacting with partners within the ecosystem. For this process to be successful and profitable to the SU, it needs to be efficient. Efficiency is described as "the extent to which knowledge is actually accepted and adopted by employees. […] the recipient unit must incorporate the transferred knowledge into its operations" (Secchi *et al.*, 2016, p. 63). It is thus important that the transmitter understand how this process works and also what is important for the venture. A good partner to the SU would be one that provides the right human capital at the right time.

A critical factor for entrepreneurial learning is absorptive capacity (Cohen *et al.*, 1990). This represents the receiver's ability to assimilate the knowledge they gather. It is "largely a function of their preexisting stock of knowledge and it becomes manifest in their ability to value, assimilate and apply new knowledge successfully to commercial ends" (Szulanski, 1996, p. 31). In this regard, what entrepreneurs learn early on plays a major role in what, how and how much they can learn later. It is thus important that entrepreneurs gather the right human capital to provide them a boost and act as a catalyst to collecting more resources. The iterative and self-enhancing process of entrepreneurial learning dictates that once entrepreneurs enter it, they would learn in a constant and exponential manner.

With such a quick pace of acquiring human capital, entrepreneurial learning is akin to the spiral of knowledge creation (Nonaka *et al.*, 1995; Nonaka *et al.*, 2015). The

Socialization-Externalization-Combination-Internalization (SECI) model indicates that the interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge allows organizations to learn and integrate knowledge. It consists of four mechanisms of knowledge creation and transfer: Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization. The learning process is presented in figure VI-6.

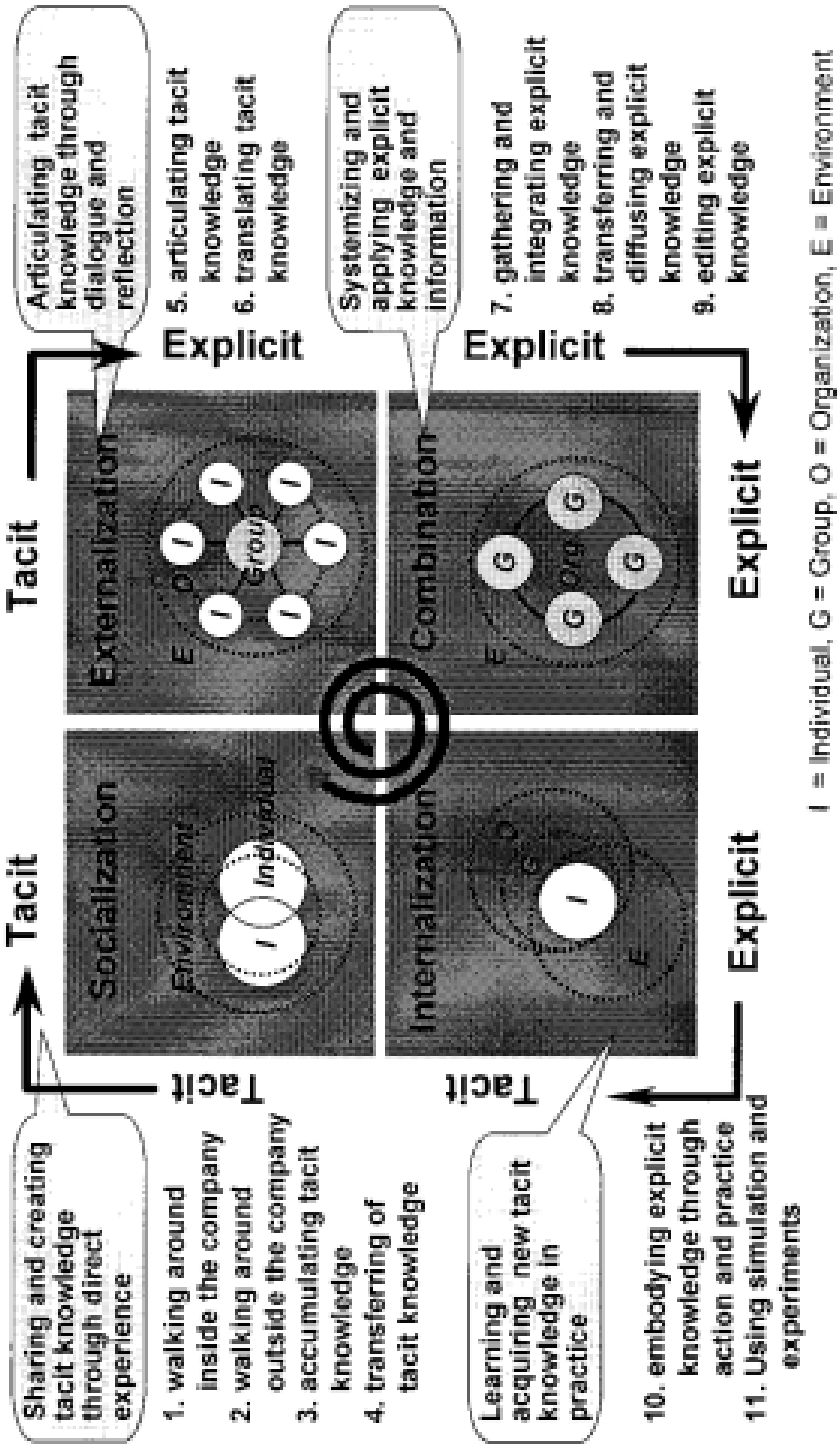


Figure 6-6: The SECI Knowledge Creation Process taken from Nonaka, I. and Toyama, R. (2015)

Socialization is the process of "converting new tacit knowledge through shared experiences in day-to-day social interaction" (Nonaka *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). It consists of a conversion of tacit knowledge from the source to tacit knowledge for the receiver.

In Externalization, "tacit knowledge is made explicit so that it can be shared by others to become the basis of new knowledge such as concepts, images, and written documents" (Nonaka *et al.*, 2015, p. 5). It consists on displaying knowledge in a form others can comprehend and gather. In order for individuals to learn and acquire knowledge,

"Explicit knowledge is collected from inside or outside the organization and then combined, edited, or processed to form more complex and systematic explicit knowledge through the Combination process" (Nonaka *et al.*, 2015, p. 5). This new Explicit knowledge then becomes available to members of the organization and makes it possible for them to potentially learn.

The actual assimilation of knowledge is achieved through internalization, in which "knowledge is applied and used in practical situations and becomes the base for new routines. Thus, explicit knowledge […] has to be actualized through action, practice, and reflection so that it can really become knowledge of one's own" (Nonaka *et al.*, 2015, p. 5). Explicit knowledge is converted to Tacit knowledge by enacting what they interpret and polish new practices.

The SECI process, also known as the spiral of knowledge creation, is continuous and would explain how organizations and individuals are able to acquire knowledge in order to improve their venture.

6.1.5.2 Legitimacy Threshold

As briefly introduced in the literature review chapter, legitimacy is important to SU because it represents how the environment perceives them. It is defined as a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Most salient in the current research is the work of Fisher and colleagues (Fisher *et al.*, 2016; Fisher *et al.*, 2017; Kuratko *et al.*, 2017). Because a SU usually starts from nothing, it must build its legitimacy from scratch and it also must adjust how it is perceived by different stakeholders. Entrepreneurs must present the venture in a different manner for each distinct audience. Therefore, "if the nature of the resource provider assessing the legitimacy of an entrepreneurial venture changes, then the norms and beliefs by which the venture is assessed also change" (Fisher *et al.*, 2016, p. 384).

It is further enhanced within a LS context. Since it is an iterative process in which the result from one stage can dramatically differ from another stage, the stakeholders could also be quite different. For example, the result at the Pre-seed stage should be an MVP. It is a very basic prototype aimed at a very niche audience. There is evidently a lot of changes required when transitioning to the Seed stage. At that point, founders have to find the product-market fit, with the goal of finding a mainstream audience. This could be two very contrasting set of stakeholders. They have to distinguish between their first customers and their most profitable ones. The same would be true for their partners. They pitch a business idea to them and, if it changes, they might have to get them on board. This is why late-stage partners have expressed a dislike for pivots. While it is recommended early on, major changes beyond the Serie A bring a lot of uncertainty and new audiences. As Fisher *et al.* (2016) contends, "ventures with high levels of legitimacy in one organizational life cycle stage will confront challenges related to venture-identity embeddedness as they transition to the next stage" (p. 384). This would be representative of SU in the Pre-seed and Seed stage that have built a cult following with a loyal audience. In the Serie A stage and later, the SU needs to scale to an increasingly larger audience as their venture becomes more attuned to the general public. This could lead to backlash from their original audience who might feel "betrayed." If not dealt with appropriately, these loyal customers could transform into the worst critic. It is thus important for entrepreneurs to learn how to deal with the situation as well as understand their market and stakeholders.

Ultimately, no stakeholders would hold more importance than investors since they provide most capital for early ventures. Just like any other stakeholders, they look at different things depending on the stage in which they operate. For example, at the Pre-seed, since the venture is generally not even created yet, the potential of the entrepreneurs is often the only criteria for supporting or investing. Meanwhile, at the Seed stage, while there is an MVP and the venture has started, there is usually very little revenue and traction. As such, the emphasis is still given to the founders but there is some consideration given to the business idea. Starting at the Serie A, the potential of the venture starts to become more important and as SU progress through the different investment rounds, revenue, market shares and traction start to become the main focus.

As entrepreneurs navigate through the early stages and pitch to investors and partners, one of the primary ways to build up their legitimacy would be to show what they have learned and the human capital they possess. Each new partner would want to make sure that the entrepreneurs have enough knowledge about both the entrepreneurial process and their venture in particular. The further along they go, the more they should prove that they know and understand their market.

6.1.5.3 The Evolution of Partners interaction

The evolution of the entrepreneurs and their venture goes through multiple phases. Nascent entrepreneurs at the Pre-seed stage possess the least amount of resources, mostly human capital, but also has the most flexibility. They should not yet be locked into a definite product and market. They also have the freedom to choose how they want to grow their business and who they want to work with. It is an important element to consider at this stage since its impact could be perceived only much later. A SU that decides to grow organically might not want or require the same type of partner as one that aims for high growth. Similarly, a bootstrap venture has very different needs than an investment-led one. Founders have to quickly decide which track they want to follow as the path is quite different and the tools and resources could be incompatible.

Once the venture has been established and founders start building the business, flexibility is slightly reduced since preliminary choices have been made. The MVP is the result of those choices. The initial offering, business model and market are a result. While these usually change over time, it still puts the SU toward one way instead of another. It also starts eliminating certain types of partners while favouring others. As entrepreneurs learn more about their market, they are directed towards some specific partners that are experts within their field. Changes at this stage are recommended since the SU is not yet fully invested in the market or product. Most partners at this stage should be willing to help the founders in finding the best fit and making those changes. This stage might have the largest pool of potential partners to choose from. There are BI that span from Pre-seed to Seed as well as AC that usually cover the whole Seed period. AI generally invest during this phase. Finally, early-stage VC are also active. This creates a situation in which a lot of resources are available. While it would be beneficial to entrepreneurs, it also generates an overload of information. Many entrepreneurs would get all the help they can get only to regret it later. Since time is one of their most crucial resources at this juncture, they cannot afford to use it inefficiently.

For example, some founders participate in multiple BI and AC only to find that there are a lot of overlapping resources and knowledge. Similarly, some entrepreneurs that want to grow organically participate in AC that are geared towards high growth realize that the classes and resources they are given do not fit their needs. This would harm the venture rather than help it since it would sap away the energy that is required to build the business. There is a dramatic drop in the number of ventures that make it from the Seed stage to the Serie A stage. This shows how critical this period is for entrepreneurs.

Once SU reach the Serie A stage, there would be fewer choices to be made. After finding their product-market-fit, they might follow a certain path dependency in how their venture progress. At this point, if they are not fully satisfied with their progress, small changes might not work anymore. They might be confronted with pivots which require a lot of work. The choice of partners would also be more limited since most of the partners from the Seed stage would not be active anymore. While investors from early on are still contributing, they might not possess the expertise and knowledge to help. In a way, starting with the Serie A, entrepreneurs are caught in the gears in which only a few potential partners are available at each subsequent stage. Each partner would provide support specific to their stage. For example, a Serie A partner would possess a local and regional network and toolset that would help scale to that extent while Serie B and C might have the same but nationally and transnationally, respectively. Once SU enter this track, there would not be much variation to how they progress. At this point, the path they follow might be based on how they perceive the evolution of the venture, whether they go public or they get acquired.

6.1.5.4 Entrepreneurial Learning

An important feature of entrepreneurs learning from their interactions with their ecosystem partners is the exponential increase in the amount of knowledge as they evolve within the cycle of knowledge acquisition. The type of human capital acquired previously would play an important role on which and how other human capitals are gained. For example, two human capital would seem to be critical for novice entrepreneurs to acquire early on, Challenging Feedbacks and SU Process. With Challenging Feedbacks, entrepreneurs learn a few different skills. First they learn the importance of seeking out advice and feedback. Second, they start to understand who they get advice from and, most importantly, why their feedback matter. Finally, they comprehend that there will be an overwhelming amount of information coming from the ecosystem and that they have to know how to filter them. As such, if acquired early on, this human capital can greatly impact how subsequent human capital could be gathered. In a similar manner, SU Process would allow entrepreneurs to understand the roadmap of what they would go through as they go along their journey. This would provide them with a clearer idea of the human capital they might need as they evolve. Those two human capitals are critical to entrepreneurs and they could acquire them as they naturally progress through their venture or they could greatly benefit from working with partners.

The process of learning with entrepreneurial ecosystem partners is one in which entrepreneurs go through a variety of ways to acquire knowledge. The four processes of the spiral of knowledge creation are enacted at all time within the relationship with partners. First, founders that work with BI or AC would usually attend mandatory university-like courses in a classroom format. This is representative of both Externalization and Combination. In this regard, the partner converts their own personal experience and tacit knowledge into an explicit form, either oral or written. They then diffuse and communicate it to an audience of founders who, in turn, gather as much knowledge from their partners as possible. For example, during the first month of an AC program, entrepreneurs are instructed about how to build their narrative and the fundraising process.

Following the classes, entrepreneurs participate in workshops and are given tasks to achieve. This learning in practice reflects the internalization process by transforming explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through simulation and experiments. For example, they are given workshops on the product roadmap and must work on understanding how to build their venture and reach their audience. They also have tasks such as writing the story of their SU or prepare a descriptive list of potential investors or mentors.

Finally, the last process, Socialization, is enacted in different ways. First, they share their achievements with fellow entrepreneurs during daily meetings. Second, they have weekly meetings with AC mentors through office hours. These are allotted time in which entrepreneurs can get personalized coaching and mentoring. Finally, they participate in events such as “mentor madness” to discuss with mentors and get their feedback. During these events, they can meet up to 80 mentors who listen to their pitch and give them advice. The learning process for BI and AC is illustrated in figure VI-7.

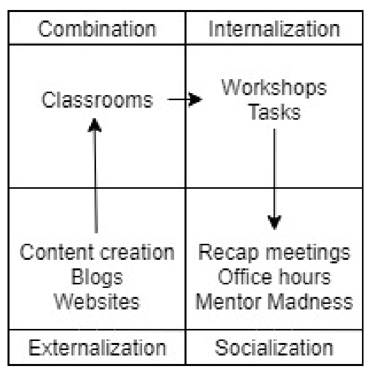


Figure 6-7: Learning Process for BI and AC

As the entrepreneurs advance through the program, they go through a progression of the spiral of knowledge creation in which they acquire more and more knowledge that serves as a catalyst for gaining further knowledge later on during the cycle. As such, as entrepreneurs process through the stages, from Pre-seed to Seed to Serie A and later, the spiral of knowledge creation becomes faster and the pace of learning quicker. It could be linked in part with the type of relationship. In the early stages, the partner’s investment is minimal and they can afford to allow entrepreneurs time to learn. Later on, the investment is magnified and there is less time to learn and more focus on performance. This is reflected by how AI and VC contribute human capital to the entrepreneurs. There are no more classroom, workshop or tasks given. The focus here would be on Combination and Socialization. Combination is achieved through the experience and expertise of the partner. In opposition to earlier partners who enact Externalization through the preparation of a program for the entrepreneurs. Later partners usually do not create their own materials but rather direct entrepreneurs to content or to people they know will be useful to them. Socialization, in turn, is achieved in two different ways. First, during board meetings, entrepreneurs exchange with their board members and receive advice and feedback from them. They exercise Externalization by preparing reports of what they have achieved and learned during the last trimester. Second, they also learn during one-on-one meetings with their partners. These meetings are usually prompted by the entrepreneur as they need very specific help. The learning process for AC and VC is displayed in figure VI-8.

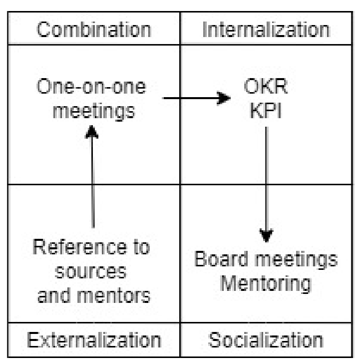


Figure 6-8: Learning Process for AC and VC

The entrepreneurial learning process is not linear. Entrepreneurs do not need to start from step one and go from there. However, as mentioned previously, efficiency plays an important role in how they learn. As such, the more efficient way would be for the entrepreneurs to follow a pattern that allows them to gather human capital quickly while raising their legitimacy to the eyes of their stakeholders. It also helps them improve their absorptive capacity since the process aims at gathering knowledge efficiently and, ultimately, help assimilate and apply new knowledge further down the line. In a way, some AC programs are built to promote learning within the SECI model. They understand that the first thing entrepreneurs need to learn is how to learn efficiently and how to convert what they learn into organizational knowledge.

6.1.5.5 Start-up Resource Orchestration Process

In order to better understand the phenomenon of resource orchestration in SU, the results from the grounded theory study are combined with the model presented in chapter 3 to create an integrative model. Langley (1999) identifies the biggest challenge with process data: "moving from a shapeless data spaghetti toward some kind of theoretical understanding that does not betray the richness, dynamism, and complexity of the data but that is understandable and potentially useful to others" (p. 694). She describes seven strategies of process data sensemaking: narrative, quantification, alternate templates, grounded theory, visual mapping, temporal bracketing and synthetic. In relation to the current study, synthetic strategy would seem to be the most adequate:

> *With the sensemaking strategy that we have termed synthetic, the researcher takes the process as a whole as a unit of analysis and attempts to construct global measures from the detailed event data to describe it. The researcher then uses these measures to compare different processes and to identify regularities that will form the basis of a predictive theory relating holistic process characteristics to other variables (e.g., outcomes and contexts). [...] When this strategy is used, the original process data are transformed from stories composed of "events" to "variables" that synthesize their critical components. (p.704)*

This strategy would help understand how the resource orchestration process is enacted as a whole. Additionally, I use the visual mapping strategy because "it [allows] the presentation of large quantities of information in relatively little space, and [can] be useful tools for the development and verification of theoretical ideas." As such, I describe the updated model of resource orchestration process in figures VI-8, VI-9 and VI-10 through visual mapping. The whole process has been divided in three subprocesses for two main reasons. First, each of them covers a specific phase in the life of the SU. Second, it is for clarity purposes since they would not have been able to fit properly on a single page.

Figure VI-9 illustrates the first part of the model, associated with the Pre-seed stage. At the start, the entrepreneur or the founding team enters the venture with their own set of resources, network and experience. Those who have more experience would possess a larger set of resources when compared to novice entrepreneurs. From there, they seek support and financing from their FF and join incubators. They acquire human capital through the SECI process with work documents, classrooms, workshops and meetings. Through all that, they build up their organizational capabilities, allowing them to create their MVP. During the learning process, effectual behaviours can give access to a larger pool of potential capabilities compared to bricolage behaviours. However, both types of behaviours could help leverage the capabilities to take advantage of opportunities.

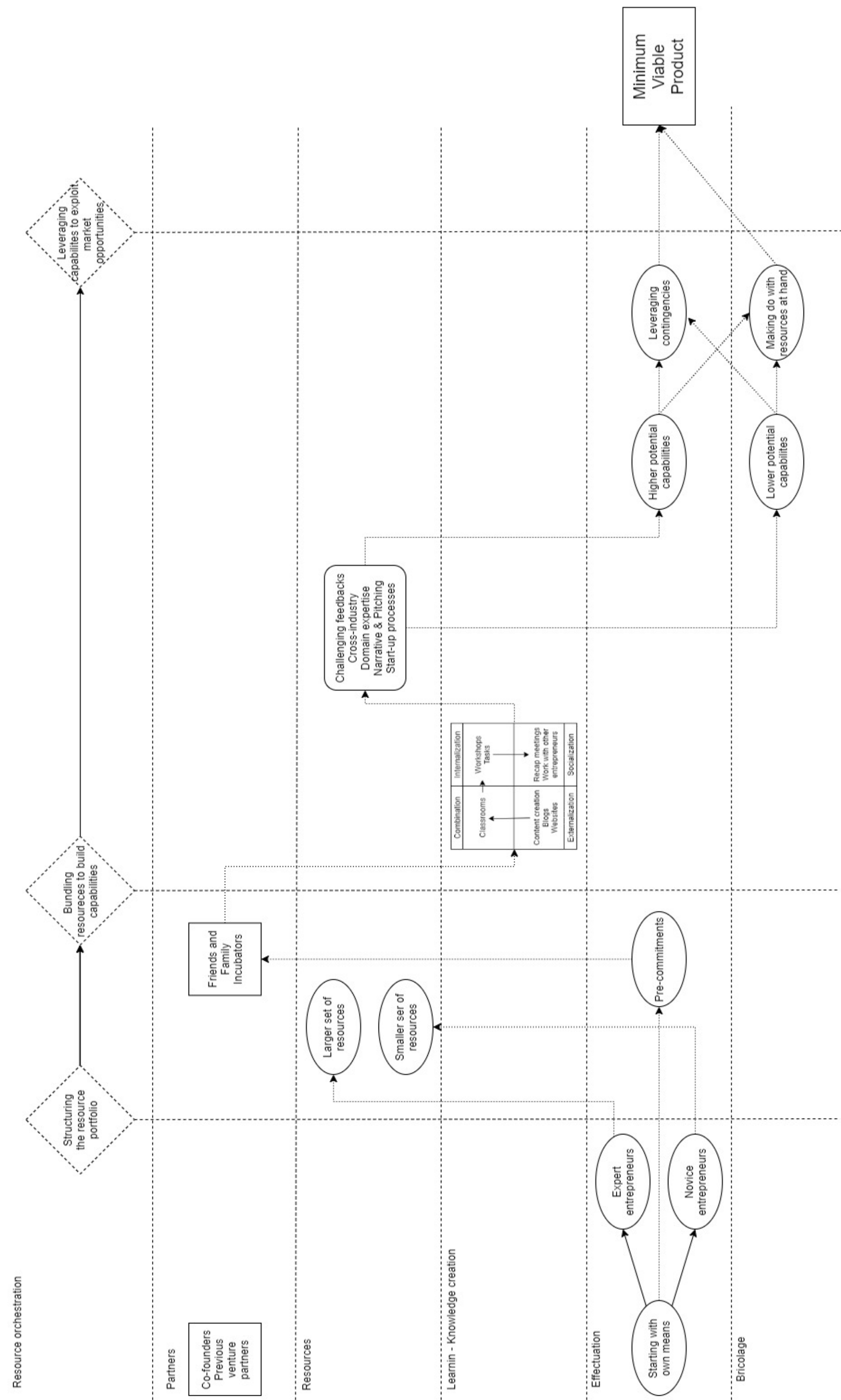


Figure 6-9: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Pre-seed Stage

Figure VI-10 shows the second part of the model with the Seed stage. They would have the resources and capabilities acquired from the previous stage. In a way similar to the Pre-seed stage, more experienced entrepreneurs would possess more resources in their portfolio. In seeking partnerships, they would first work with accelerators at this stage. The learning is achieved in a similar manner than at the Pre-seed stage, achieved mostly through a classroom format. The major difference would be the amount of human capital transferred from the partners. Not only are there substantially more but the pace of learning is also quite faster. In a similar fashion to the interaction with incubators at the Seed stage, effectuation behaviours would favour learning and offer a larger pool of potential capabilities while bricolage behaviours would hamper the knowledge creation process and lower the available organizational capabilities. Subsequently, both behaviours can help use those capabilities to take advantages of opportunities. Effectual behaviours would allow the SU to recognize challenges and opportunities, and adapt based on the resources they possess. On the other hand, bricolage behaviours serve to adapt what resources and capabilities the SU possesses to exploit emerging opportunities.

After graduating from accelerators, SU would seek investors, mostly early stage VC and AI at the Seed stage. The mechanism for acquiring human capital would be fairly similar for both types of investors. It would start with the portfolio of previously acquired resources. The SECI process of knowledge creation would be on a more individual and customized level than with AC and BI. It would consist of personal meetings, metrics, reporting and mentoring. Also, while the way it is achieved differs, the acquired human capital is similar. Capabilities building and leveraging are achieved in a similar manner than with BI and AC but with the caveat that investors have less patience and are more averse to changes in the venture. The objective at the end of the Seed stage would be to find a product-market fit.

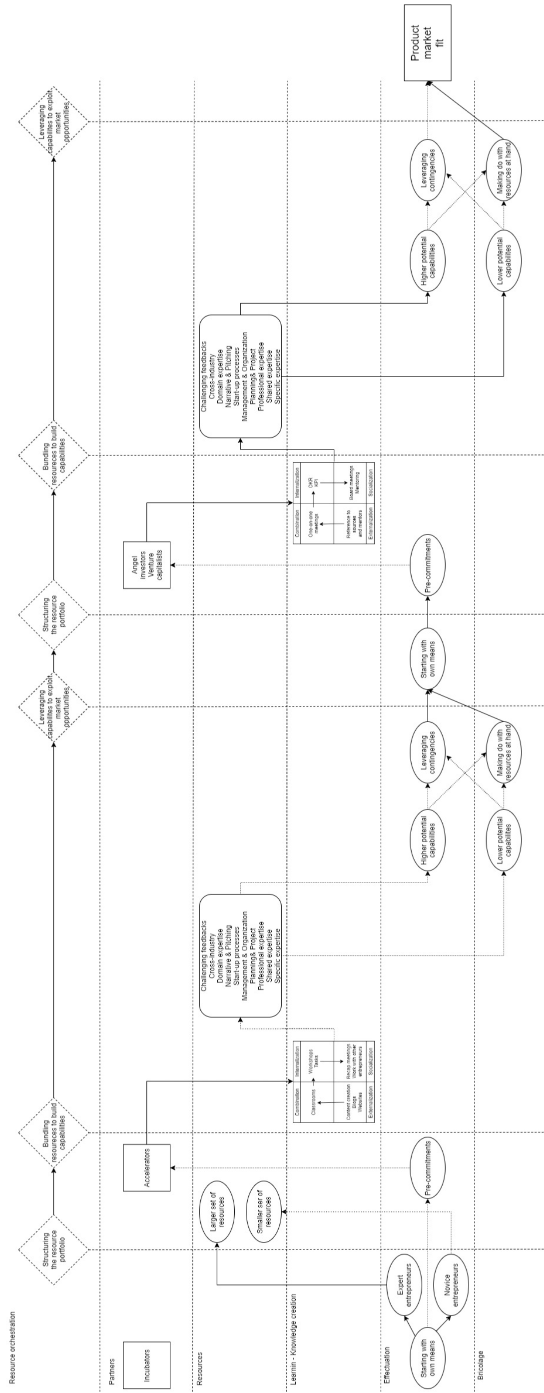


Figure 6-10: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Seed Stage

Finally, figure VI-11 illustrates the third part of the model at the Serie A stage. It is more or less a continuation of the seed stage, with about the same mechanism. Starting at this stage, SU would work mostly with VC with few AI investments. The difference between novice and expert entrepreneurs would become narrower as beginners would be able to accumulate resources and capabilities at the Pre-seed and Seed stage. As such, if they are able to reach the Serie A stage, the pace of learning would be less influenced by their entrepreneurial expertise. While the learning mechanism remains similar to investors in the Seed stage, the human capital acquired would be much more specific and attuned to the SU. The resources and capabilities acquired at this stage would help the venture to scale to larger markets.

This model shows that human capital acquisition is iterative, accumulative and exponential. From stage to stage as well as from partner to partner, learning is intensified at an accelerating pace. Most particularly, the Seed stage represents an exceptional stage because of the massive amount of capital that SU need to acquire as well as the important progress required from the venture. It could be one of the reasons so many SU fail to reach the Serie A stage.

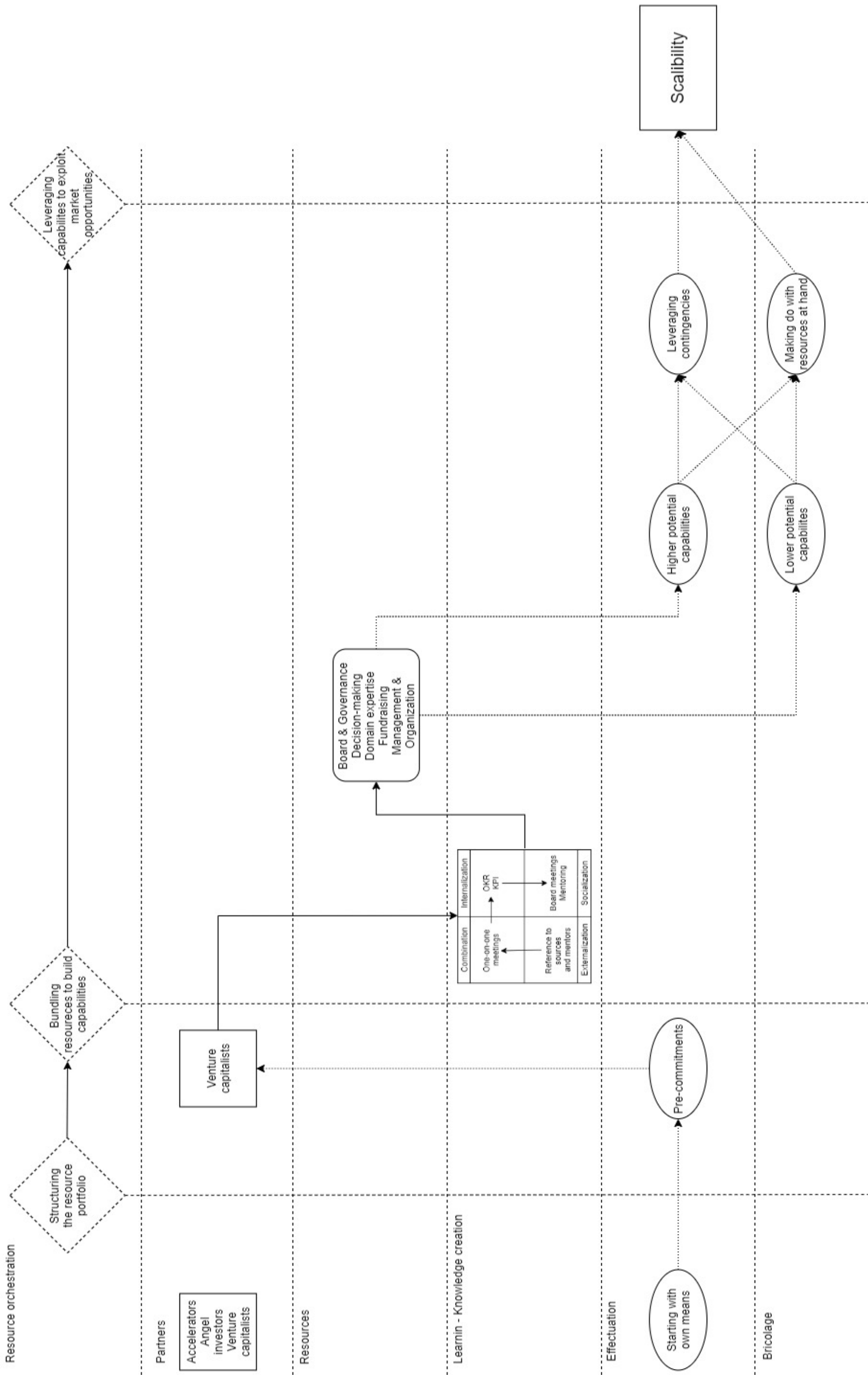


Figure 6-11: Start-up Resource Orchestration Process at the Serie A Stage

6.2 The Conceptual Framework Revisited

The conceptual framework presented in figure II-1 served as a guide to understand the context of the research and prepare the interview guide. With the results of the grounded theory study, it is possible to revisit this framework and discuss the relationships conceptualized. I will now scrutinize each of these separate connections as well as review the framework holistically.

6.2.1 The Connection Between Partners and Resources Gathering

The results presented in chapter V highlight the importance of the transfer of human capital from partners to the entrepreneurs. The 13 different contributions presented show that there is a large variety extended throughout the different stages. Testimonials both from the entrepreneurs and their partners reveal that the partners' contributions in human capital is important, if not critical, to the progress of the SU. As ventures progress, they would enter a virtuous cycle of iterative and catalyst learning. It would increase exponentially the resources gathered and shortens the time available for the entrepreneurs to learn. In this regard, they might have to put in place mechanisms to help them gather those resources.

6.2.2 Effectual Behaviours in Resources Gathering

Behaviours representative of effectuation in resources gathering would be depicted by leveraging contingencies. It requires the entrepreneurs to be flexible and open to making the necessary changes when opportunities or challenges present themselves. As such, entrepreneurs would make small and numerous adjustments based both on the resources they acquire and the evolving context. This is expressed by VC11:

> *So the best type of founder is one that is able to take in a lot of information and respectfully listen to what you're telling them and then have an instinct for their market and for their company that they can throw out a lot of that information that they disagree with and take some of it that works for them. So, you don't want a founder that just listens to everything you say because really what, the founder should be much smarter in their Market than I am. The founder spends 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in that market. I don't, I spend an hour or two a week talking to them, so they should know their Market much better than me.*

This demonstrates that entrepreneurs operate on a fine line between new information from their environment and new resources from their partners. As the venture evolves and the founders gather more knowledge about both their SU and about their market, they are able to make better choices about how to navigate. However, as they progress and evolve, there is less flexibility and manoeuvrability available to the entrepreneurs. Thus, effectuation behaviours would serve entrepreneurs better in the early instances but could not be as useful once the venture enters a more determined pathway. With fewer possible choices and new market information, pivots are more difficult to execute.

6.2.3 Bricolage Behaviour in Resources Gathering

Behaviours representative of bricolage in resources gathering would be portrayed by making do with resources at hand. It requires the entrepreneurs to have confidence in their ability to adapt to an evolving context. As opposed to effectuation behaviours, entrepreneurs do not use external resources when confronted with opportunities. Rather, they are able to understand that the resources they have accumulated over time can be modified and adjusted to allow the SU to take advantage of a favourable situation or to overcome obstacles.

When working with partners, bricolage behaviours are better perceived early while it would be avoided later on. VC09 expresses it in this manner:

> *Des fois, tu en as des entrepreneurs qui pensent avoir la science infuse, ou ils pensent, ils ont une lecture du marché, ils ont une lecture, une vision de la*

> *réalité qui est la leur et ils ont une personnalité forte puis peu importe ce que tu leur amènes comme argument, ou qui leur amène comme argument, ils continuent à foncer dans une direction puis des fois ils ont raison.*[42]

In this instance, the confidence to blindly move forward would benefit the entrepreneurs early because it allows the SU to jump through the first hurdles. They can use their internal resources in order to navigate across their first difficulties and prove to their future partners that they possess the required abilities to make the venture a success. However, as shown in the previous quote, too much reliance on one's own resources and capabilities could be a deterrent to potential partners. It is associated to strong personalities and unwilling to listen. It could thus be detrimental to the SU because they could be perceived as difficult to work with. In a similar fashion to effectuation behaviours, bricolage behaviours would be less useful for the entrepreneurs as the venture evolves. With the professionalization of the SU as well as increased reliance to external stakeholders such as partners, clients and suppliers. This type of behaviour could hinder the SU's ability to properly connect with them in the long run.

6.2.4 The Connection Between Resources Fit and Growth

Resources gathered from partners play a role in the progress of the SU if they are the right ones for the firm. Growth could be defined as progressing from an investment stage to another. As such, growth might be a reflection of the SU readiness for their next round of investment and that would be decided by their market and their potential partners. VC01describes how that process is enacted and how partners provide their support:

> *Here's the path about how to get there, where the first step is pretty well defined. And that's where you know, you're always thinking "how am I going to get to," if you have a big goal and you are going down the venture capital*

[42] Translated from French: *Sometimes, you have entrepreneurs who think they are omniscient, or they think they have an understanding of the market, they have an understanding, a vision of reality that are their own and they have a strong personality and not matter argument you bring them, they will keep advancing in one direction and sometimes, they are right.*

> *path, there's an assumption it's going to take several rounds of financing to get there. So, it's kinda like a mount Everest kinda story, here's the summit but right now actually, all I want to do is to get the resources and the team together to get to Basecamp. So you define where's Basecamp, OK, here's the GPS location, here's something I need and that's how you do project KPIs, the reverse engineering for that next milestone. And then, that's so specific to, you know, the vertical you're in, whether you're in healthtec or in agriculture, or SAAS business, wellness or whatever. Then you start to define and start to speak with, what would you expect me to accomplish, you know, in an accelerator for 3 months or spread your seed around for the next 18 months?*

From round to round, the SU follows a pathway to accumulate resources and traction until it is ready to search for investment and new partners. In the process, they will find a larger audience and a bigger market. Entrepreneurs might be required to specifically learn the right resources for each different round of investment. This is illustrated by the classification of human capital in the results chapter. It shows how some types of human capital were more critical at certain stages but, more importantly, why. It also reveals that it is important for entrepreneurs to seek out the right partner based on the stage, on the context of their market and on their specific needs. It would thus be in their best interest to be selective when selecting their investors and building an investment syndicate.

CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSION

Alvarez *et al.* (2001) argue that firms are a “bundle of commitments to technology, human resources, and processes all blanketed by knowledge that is specific to the firm. It is this bundle, and how the entrepreneur coordinates this bundle, that allow firms to be heterogeneous and thus these firms cannot be easily altered or imitated” (p. 761). It highlights the importance of learning and knowledge in the entrepreneurial process (Hayek, 1945). With the current research, I looked at how entrepreneurs gain those resources from partners within their ecosystem and build this bundle that can help them survive and evolve.

I asked the following research question: how does human capital acquired from ecosystem partners contribute to the SU and the entrepreneurs? The results from the grounded theory study demonstrated that some human capital would be critical to entrepreneurs at certain stages in the life of the SU. There exists a general pattern of learning and evolution for quick growth SU entering the process of investment rounds. Partners with experience understand what is required from to thrive and grow. As such, they can transfer the most critical human capital to the entrepreneurs.

While interviewing the participants, most particularly the partners, it was clear that the industry conditions played a critical role in what and how entrepreneurs learn as well as the investment process. The type of market as well as the different interactions within it requires different types of resources and a distinct path to investment. Section 7.1 discusses those differences.

A field validation was undertaken with some of the people previously interviewed to substantiate the results and get their approval on the different contributions. A summary of those discussions as well as how it can potentially change some of the results presented is introduced in section 7.2.

Possible future research is suggested in section 7.3. The results from this current study provide a novel and interesting perspective on the study of entrepreneurship. It could lead to some fascinating works in the future. For instance, the study introduced some different investment models that are particularly interesting but that are outside the perimeters of the current research. I briefly discuss these models in section 7.3.1 and how the entrepreneurial learning process would differ in those models. In section 7.3.2, I elaborate on some insights gathered from observing the entrepreneurial ecosystem, most particularly regarding governance and accountability. The observations and commentaries from the different actors in the ecosystems show that the way a partner's organization is set up plays a large role in how and how much help they can provide.

Section 7.4 highlights the contributions to the entrepreneurship literature as well as to the different actors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It underlines the importance of the research and how it serves the purpose of advancing knowledge.

Finally, section 7.5 shows some of the research limitations and how it could be improved upon.

7.1 Industry Context

The context of the current study has been SU in the technology entrepreneurial ecosystem. This was prompted by the fact that the technology industry provided the largest number of potential SU and partners. It is also the most dynamic industry in terms of investment within the local ecosystem. However, SU from other industries were also interviewed during the study to compare with the technology industry. Entrepreneurs within the food industry and the manufacturing industry were interviewed to understand how the investment process unfolded for them and what type of support they received from their partners.

The main takeaway from discussing with those entrepreneurs is in how different they perceive the investment process as well as the support partners can provide. They were much more self-funded then they technological counterpart. As such, the investment rounds lasted much longer and their whole growth much slower. There could be two explanations to this. First, there are much fewer partners and, consequently, much less investment money. Second, their type of industry might not be compatible with fast growth. One of the patterns observed for the technologies SU was the quick acquisition of customers through the money they receive from their investors. This is not always possible for non-technology companies as they have to grow their customers organically and progress at a much slower, but safer, pace.

Because of the dearth of partners, the founders often have to either join a general BI or AC or get an investment from a VC or AI that might not possess the domain or technical expertise to truly support the entrepreneurs. This has been mentioned by entrepreneurs who feel like the ecosystem currently provides expertise and funding mostly to limited types of SU such as ones operating in artificial intelligence or machine learning. F18 expresses their frustration in that matter:

> *C'est long de monter une entreprise, surtout dans l'industrie dans laquelle je suis parce que je ne suis pas dans une industrie en technologie, donc ce n'est pas une entreprise qui est scale-up d'un coup. Ce n'est pas une entreprise qui va, dont les revenus vont augmenter et les dépenses vont stagner. Ce n'est pas du tout comme ça que ça fonctionne, on est dans une industrie, on est dans le design, dans le développement durable, dans une industrie qui extrêmement vieille et pas sexy. Donc, on n'attire pas des VC, on n'attire pas des investisseurs parce que l'objectif d'un investisseur, c'est d'avoir son argent rapidement en retour. Nous, l'entreprise, la structure de l'entreprise et son industrie n'apportent pas ça, et moi, je ne veux pas avoir de gens comme ça avec moi. Ça a pris du temps à monter et comme on fait du B2B, c'est aussi de bâtir de la crédibilité de l'entreprise. Donc ça prend du temps à monter ces choses-là et c'est long de faire du B2B. C'est long, parce que je partais de réseau que je ne connaissais pas où je ne connaissais personne. Donc, j'ai galéré pendant huit mois à savoir ce que je faisais, pourquoi je le faisais et essayé de taper à des portes. […] Le problème que ça a créé, c'est que les*

> *produits ne sont pas vendables à l'entreprise. Donc, ça m'a pris du temps à comprendre ça.*[43]

It demonstrates how difficult it was for the entrepreneur who had to learn by themselves and had little support. With no programs or investors with the proper expertise to help, it takes much longer for this type of SU to first develop an MVP and then find an adequate product-market fit. While some are able to find investors in the Seed or Serie A later on, it might take about twice or even three times longer.

The effect of niches also plays a role into the investment process as well as the type of support. For example, one of the VC interviewed operates in the FinTech industry. They noted how the process was much faster for the SU in their portfolio because of the relative ease of customer acquisition at the Seed level. As such, they receive investment at an earlier time. Also, knowledge would be easier to access since there are more people with this type of expertise in the ecosystem. This would be quite different for a SU in the Medtech industry. With more regulations and research required, the development of the companies would take longer, and customer acquisition would not be as fast. Expertise would also be sparser and, thus, be more difficult for entrepreneurs to access. This would illustrate how two companies in technology would face different challenges on the basis of the niche they operate in.

---

[43] Translated from French: *It takes a long time to build a company, particularly in my industry because we are not a technology industry, so we are not a company that can quickly scale-up. It is not a company that will, that the revenue will increase and the expenses will stagnate. It is not at all how it works, we are in the design industry, in sustainable development, in an old industry that is not very sexy. So, we don't attract VC, we don't attract investors because their goal is quickly have a return on investment. Our company, its structure and industry are not favourable to that and me, I don't want to work with people like that. It took a while to build and since we are B2B, it's also difficult to build our legitimacy. So, it takes time to build these things and it takes time to do B2B. It's long because I started from a network that I didn't know and in which I knew no one. So, it was hard for eight months to know what I was doing, why I was doing them and why I was knocking at doors. […] The problem it created is that our products could not be sold to companies. So, it took me a while to understand that.*

7.2 Field Validation

To validate the study, I went back to the field after the analysis of the data with the results in hand. The goal was to discuss them with three founders and one of each type of partner. However, based on the discussion with the first five participants, it was decided that there was enough validation. As such, the field validation was accomplished with three founders, one AI and one VC. In fact, saturation had been reached by the time of the discussion with the fifth participant. They agreed with most of the results and findings in the study. Also, they acknowledged that the high growth investment process is well understood, and the findings are both useful for the entrepreneurs and the partners.

Three important elements are highlighted from the field validation. First, in the discussion with the entrepreneurs, some clarifications were provided. It was reiterated that Challenging feedbacks, Narrative and Pitching, and Start-up process are truly important for entrepreneurs in the early on. However, cross-industry and shared expertise contributions might not be as important as initially thought. To be clear, they all agree that those types of human capital are critical to the SU, but it might not be a result of direct involvement by the partners. In fact, they criticize the fact that they would appreciate more introductions to entrepreneurs that could help them advance their SU but that the introductions are too shallow and not geared enough towards their real needs. What really happens, in their perspective, is that they have to push for specific introduction and that most of the shared expertise is initiated by themselves, not by their partners. This needs to be kept in mind but should not influence the results presented in chapter V because the resulting acquisition of human capital can be traced back to the structure built by the partner. Their portfolio and learning structure allow them to provide the entrepreneurs with the opportunity to gain those human capital. It is thus the entrepreneurs' responsibility to take advantage of those opportunities to gather resources.

The second element highlighted by the participants is in relation to the interaction process with ecosystem partners presented in figure VI-5. The three entrepreneurs agreed that the interaction process reflects what they had lived through and witnessed. However, they all concur that there has been a shift in how it is enacted. To them, there has been an acceleration on the requirements from the ecosystem. It mostly starts at the Seed stage in which the product-market-fit is demanded before the first investment would be made. As such, entrepreneurs would have to have found it after the acceleration program and have some traction before even entertaining the Seed investment round. This in turn creates a snowball effect that results in an overall acceleration of the whole process as some scalability is asked after the Seed stage. Another noted consequence is the amount of money available to invest. The quickened pace creates a situation where the invested money in the Seed stage is multiple times what it once was. While the interviewed partners agree with this assessment, they provide some perspectives on the matter. They both agree that there has been an acceleration on the investment process but argue that it is a phenomenon linked to particular industries. As such, the interviewed VC noticed how it is amplified in their specific niche of FinTech. Some of their portfolio firms were able to raise Seed rounds at much higher valuation than deals from some of the earlier venture. The interaction and investments process would thus be very dependent on the industry in which they operate. A noteworthy comment from the interviewed AI concerning the interaction process is how its very start is enacted. They suggested that everybody has a business idea but that a real venture starts with a founding team. While I agree with this assessment, I, however, have to argue that this is true of experienced entrepreneurs that have previously built SU and already possess a network and resources. For those entrepreneurs, it would be easier to put a founding team in place for a new venture. They might not even need the assistance of FF as well as participating in a BI program. The suggested process might be most relevant for novice entrepreneurs that do not have the required network and experience to have a founding team in place when they come up with a business idea. In their case, the support of FF as well as the participation in

BI can not only help them develop their idea but also start providing their first resources and building their network as well as giving them the opportunity to meet with potential co-founders.

A third element is related to the human capital contributions classification presented in chapter V. It pertains mostly to Board & Governance and Fundraising. Both the AI and the VC raised some concerns that those skills are not only critical at the Serie A stage but also necessary at the Seed stage. They argue that, depending on the industry, those skills are required much earlier in the life of a SU. This could be linked to element two, as some industries, or rather niches, have seen an accelerated pace. However, they also agree that the mechanisms of learning for both those skills are different from stage to stage. As such, they recognize that Challenging feedbacks and Narrative & Pitching could serve as similar skills at the Seed stage. For this reason, the classification was kept as such. However, there should be cautions as the importance of some contributions by stage might be different depending on the industry.

7.3 Future Research

To my knowledge, the current research is the first of its kind to look at the phenomenon of entrepreneurial resource gathering from ecosystem partners. It is achieved through interviews with founders, AC, AI and VC, and with observations at an AC. It allowed to understand what is perceived as being important human capital for early stage SU as well as how they are transferred to the entrepreneurs.

While there have been some interesting findings to the grounded theory study, it is barely the tip of the iceberg on the understanding of what entrepreneurs learn, how it is achieved and what impact it could have on the potential success and growth of SU. The nature of the current study allowed only a limited snapshot look at the relation between the entrepreneurs and their partners as well as what and how human capital is transferred from the latter to the former. As such, a longitudinal study of the relationship between would be important for the advancement of the entrepreneurship literature. It could provide more insight into how the relationship evolves and how it influences the resources gathering and orchestration process. It would also produce some understanding of how it would affect the success of the SU. By following entrepreneurs from the Pre-seed to their exit, there could be some richness unearthed. It could also provide a further look into the nuance of the different partners and how they interact in a distinct manner with the entrepreneurs. A study spanning multiple investment rounds could also show how the shifting of the partners' influence is enacted from one stage to the next one. With every round, a different lead investor with a different syndicate of investors get involved. As it happens, the board composition also evolves. It would thus be interesting to see how it influences the resources gathering process and how progressing from one stage to the other influences how entrepreneurs interact with their partners.

A second interesting research would be a focus on later stage partners and what resources they can provide. The current study looks at the early stage up to the Serie A because of the larger pool of entrepreneurs and more types of partners. However, it would be interesting to investigate different types of partners such as late stage VC and private corporations. It might provide some fascinating findings to differentiate what resources are transferred and how it is enacted at later stage in opposition to early stage.

In the following two subsections, I present two research streams that could be both interesting and impactful for the entrepreneurship literature. They emerged from the discussion with the different interviewees but were outside of the parameters of the current research: alternative investment models and partners governance.

7.3.1 Alternative Investment Models

In the discussion with the different participants, some different models of investment emerged. It is important to acknowledge them because of the role it could play in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and its effects on entrepreneurs. The way they operate influence the mechanisms of resource acquisition and orchestration. In this section, I present three of those models: foundry, search fund and equity crowdfunding.

In a foundry, the SU is either created by a VC or co-founded by a VC and an entrepreneur. In the instance where the new venture is initiated solely by a VC, it would usually be one that is highly thesis oriented. In having a deep knowledge of their industry and having multiple investments in it, they understand what the market needs and what solutions to provide. How the founding process differs depending on each VC firm. However, there seems to be a general pattern. First, the idea and parameters for the new venture are brainstormed and designed internally. Second, the SU is founded either by the VC alone or a founding team is integrated first. The founding team would be thoroughly researched, either through the VC network or from the portfolio of entrepreneurs in which they had previously invested. What would matter most is their expertise and experience within the specific niche. Repeat entrepreneurs would be preferred. As such, the SU would be accelerated through the Pre-seed stage. They might already possess the required resources to build the MVP. In terms of investment, the SU would be mainly financed by the foundry VC in the Pre-seed while they would serve as the lead investor during the Seed round. The support to the entrepreneurs is enhanced in the foundry model because of the increased involvement of the partner as well as a more vested interest. The support structure varies for each organization. For example, one foundry VC firm had a designated department of specialist available to help their portfolio company. They provide help with topics such as human resources and accounting while also providing office space. Starting at the Seed stage, the process becomes closer to other SU.

The co-created model differs slightly from the VC founded one. It functions in a manner similar to BI and AC. Entrepreneurs are accepted into programs in which they work on their business idea. The foundry provides the resources and setting to develop an MVP and build the SU. The Pre-seed stage would be mostly spent within the foundry. In both types of foundry, the VC firm gets an equity stake usually varying from 10 to 40 percent depending on their involvement and how much resources they are providing the founders.

The search fund investment is a "pool of capital raised to support the efforts of an entrepreneur or a pair of entrepreneurs in locating and acquiring a privately held company for the purpose of operating and expanding it" (Morrissette *et al.*, 2015, p. 21). It usually involves four stages: fundraising, search and acquisition, operation, and exit. During the fundraising stage, the entrepreneurial team is looking for investors. They propose an investment thesis and structure and look within their network for either individuals or organizations with interest in investing in a venture. The second stage of search and acquisition requires the team to research potential candidates for buyouts and evaluate the current owner's interest in selling. Once they find the right company to acquire, they go through a purchase process that includes "performing due diligence on the target company, negotiating the terms of the acquisition, raising debt and/or equity capital, and closing the deal" (Morrissette *et al.*, 2015, p. 21). Once the company is acquired, the entrepreneurial starts working in developing the venture, first learning its business then optimize and grow it during the operation stage. After an average of six years, the team would enter the exit stage in which they would try to liquidate the company with a profit for both the investors and the team. This model is interesting because it is both very different but also very similar to the traditional SU investment model. Since the investment is generally achieved either at the fundraising or the acquisition stage, there is no traction or metrics in which the investors can rely on to evaluate the value of the investment. As such, the investment criterion is quite different. Morrissette *et al.* (2015) list the following attributes for a successful search fund, in decreasing importance: honesty/ethics, sales skills, partner, personality/people skills, investment thesis/clarity of focus, operational experience, overall flexibility, geography, track record of success, and grit/persistence. This is akin to how investments are made during the Pre-seed and Seed stages in which the evaluation of the entrepreneurial team is as, or even more, important than the potential of the venture. There is a slight contradiction between the profile of the entrepreneurs and the criterion for success. Morrissette *et al.* (2015) describes the entrepreneurs as being fairly young and inexperienced as "49% had graduated from an MBA program within a year of raising their fund, and 84% were under 36 years old" (p. 22). However, with operational experience and track record of success being two of the most importance attributes of successful funds, it would seem that experienced entrepreneurs would be better suited for this investment model but are not the usual search team. Finally, the investors supply the entrepreneurs with not only an investment but also human capital. Most particularly, they are providing negotiations and operations skills and their "time commitments vary from passive investment to filling a seat on the board. […] An investor can differentiate himself by providing valuable advisory services to the entrepreneur" (Morrissette *et al.*, 2015, p. 28). In a fashion similar to the partner's contributions presented in this study, investors can provide critical human capital to the search team that could lead to a successful exit.

One of the participants in the interviews described a different type of search fund model in which they participated. Instead of the entrepreneurial team exploring their own network for investors, in this instance, a group of investors gather and look for search teams that fit their criteria. They then invest in that team. A stark difference would be the wealth of the investor's group as opposed to that of the team's network. Also, the members of the group are experienced managers and entrepreneurs with a rich history of investments. They offer a larger and more varied set of skills to offer the search team. This type of search fund could prove to be more successful because of the additional support it can provide the entrepreneurs.

A few of the entrepreneurs interviewed discussed how they missed traditional investors with equity crowdfunding. It is "a form of financing in which entrepreneurs make an open call to sell a specified amount of equity or bond-like shares in a company on the Internet, hoping to attract a large group of investors" (Ahlers *et al.*, 2015, p. 955). In this investment model, the SU is pitching to a general population instead of specific investors. In this instance, there are a larger number of investors (or backers) with much lower amounts invested (Vulkan *et al.*, 2016). The main goal of equity crowdfunding would be financial capital since the SU might not be able to choose who they want as investors. However, as one interviewee expressed, human capital can be naturally provided by having investors with a varied background. They were able to receive marketing and sales support from some investors who had expertise and experience in those specific skills. With such a large array of potential investors, the entrepreneurs can highly profit from their feedback. The trade-off would the lack of choice on which investors they can choose. Also, the backers would not possess as much entrepreneurial and management experience as institutional investors.

The three alternative models presented are outside of this current research parameters. However, they show that there are multiple ways for entrepreneurs to achieve a high growth and for the venture to succeed. It also indicates that, even though each model involves partners in a different manner, they still can provide critical human capital to the SU.

7.3.2 Partners Governance

As discussed in chapter 6, partners have differing orders of autonomy. AC can be independent or linked to institutions such as VC, universities or government. VC, on their end, could also be independent or have their own investors such as LP. Finally, angels usually have more freedom to operate as they are investing their own money. However, if they are part of an angel group, they might have to follow the group's decision-making and operating structure. As such, there could be less freedom to choose the companies in which they want to invest as well as how much time and support they are able to give to the entrepreneurs.

VC are typical of the difference in the partners' independence. For example, self-funded VC can decide in whom they want to invest and when. They are also able to choose the size of their portfolio. This dictates how much support they can provide to the entrepreneurs. On the other hand, VC with LP have different responsibilities. In addition to being in charge of investing and supporting their portfolio companies, they also have to answer to their own investors. They have to divest some of their firm's resources to seek financing as well as reporting to them. There are some consequences associated to this. First, they are bonded to the LP's investment schedule. They have rounds of financing that last around four to seven years. They have to invest within that timespan and show good results to their investors. As such, they are time-restrained in when they can invest and might not invest in high potential candidates if they are outside of their timeframe. In a similar manner, the most important LP, in Canada, would be the government. They invest on the basis of government policy and is dictated by what they believe for their population. This leads to investment mandates to the VC that might force their hands on how to build their portfolio. For example, there has been a government decree to build up expertise in artificial intelligence. The direct result has been an increased investment in artificial intelligence SU. As a consequence, there is more money and expertise diverted toward these companies. Therefore, VC would not possess as much freedom to choose the SU they want to invest in since they have to follow their LP's instructions. In the end, having LP could limit their portfolio in terms of who they can invest in and when they can invest in them.

7.6 Research Contributions

This research aims to provide knowledge about what human capital is acquired by entrepreneurs from their ecosystem partners as well as how it can be achieved. The research questions serve to better understand the studied phenomenon. I give some answers to those questions with the results from the study. To the first sub-question of what human capital is acquired by the entrepreneurs, the answer is supplied in chapter V. The taxonomy presented suggests that entrepreneurs needs evolve from stage to stage and, as such, the human capital they need to acquire also change.

To the second sub-question of how human capital is transferred from the partners to the entrepreneurs, an answer is given in chapter VI, with figures VI-6, VI-7 and VI-8. Based on the interviews and observations as well as the SECI model of knowledge creation, two different learning mechanisms are suggested. The first one is characteristic of BI and AC which function in a classroom-type setting. Entrepreneurs would learn by attending classes, workshops, and meetings. On the other hand, the second learning mechanism would be more typical of AI and VC. It would be enacted through a more individualized setting such as board meetings and coaching sessions. Learning is much more specific and attuned to the entrepreneurs' particular needs.

To the third sub-question of how does the acquired human capital change the way SU operate, the answer again resides in chapter VI, mostly with figures VI-5, VI-9, VI-10 and VI-11. They demonstrate that, as entrepreneurs gather those resources, they have a better understanding of both how to build a business and, most importantly, how to build their business. In order to progress from stage to stage, SU have to attain a number of objectives. This is achieved with the help of the human capital they acquire from their partners.

Finally, to the fourth sub-question of how the interaction with partners influence the way entrepreneurs gather resources, the answer lies both in chapters V and VI. Section 5.2.1 describes how the interactions with those partners are enacted while section 6.1.3.1 describes how the fit between them influences how resources are gathered. This illustrates the importance of finding the right partners as well as the harm the wrong partner could potentially bring.

Finding elements of answers to the four previous sub-questions serve to bring clarity to the main research question of how human capital acquired from ecosystem partners contribute to the SU and the entrepreneurs. The results from the study show that they do have a major impact in the progress of SU, mostly by serving as a template for entrepreneurs to follow as well as a source of critical knowledge. Additionally, what the entrepreneurs need to learn evolves with their progress. It is thus important for entrepreneurs to seek the proper partners for every different stage to be able to learn as efficiently as possible.

The results and findings from the current research provide some interesting contributions for both academia and to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. For entrepreneurship scholars, it helps advance the literature in a few different ways. First, it provides a taxonomy of critical human capital for the early stage. It gives future scholars the opportunity to focus on those resources to evaluate the role they play in helping the SU on their progress. Second, the suggested interaction process with ecosystem partners could serve as a guide map for researchers to better understand how the SU evolve and how it advances from one partner to the other or from one stage to the other. Third, the entrepreneurial learning process introduced in figures VI-6 to VI-11 might be a considerable contribution to the literature. It shines a spotlight on an interesting topic to study. This learning process could highlight how human capital can be acquired and integrated by entrepreneurs, and how, in turn, it would be used by the SU to help them in facing their market challenges and opportunities. Finally, this research suggests a way of studying Effectuation and Bricolage. It proposed to look at specific moments or patterns of behaviours and how they influence the learning process, whether they encourage or hamper the transfer of human capital.

In regard to contributions to the entrepreneurial ecosystem, it can be divided between the entrepreneurs and their partners. For the entrepreneurs, it helps them have a better understanding of how the high growth investment process. It could assist them in their quest to build a sustainable business. They are also given a list of human capital that can serve as a guide of resources they should be seeking and acquiring. In the same vein, it could provide them with an idea of how to interact with the different partners and how it can help them gather resources from them. Finally, the learning process could assist them in understanding how to optimize learning with each different partner and how they can behave accordingly to enhance their success chance.

For the partners, there are a few contributions. First, it highlights what human capital they should be able to provide to the entrepreneurs they work with. It enables them to be sure to have the proper expertise to be able to properly support the SU. Second, understanding both the entrepreneurial learning process and the interaction process would give the partners a guideline of how to build their program or structure to back the entrepreneurs as well as possible. Finally, it might influence them to put more focus on acquiring the required resources to optimize their own contributions to the entrepreneurs instead of emphasizing solely on financial capital or other less critical resources.

7.7 Research Limitations

Like any other research, there are some limitations to this research. First, the conditions of the study might be too specific to its context. With the study being conducted in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, most participants interviewed are somewhat constrained to the local ecosystem. Further studies would be required in order to compare with the results found in this research. As such, it is not generalizable to all ecosystems and all SU.

Second, there is a survivor bias since the majority of the people interviewed were still operating their venture. The only exception had a successful exit. I was not able to discuss with entrepreneurs of failed SU. The only examples given were from the partners who had witnessed unsuccessful venture and not from entrepreneurs who either lived through it or were failing at the time. It would be interesting to have their point of view.

Finally, the research only provided a snapshot at a certain point in time. It could not as effectively perceive the changes in the SU as they progress through the investment and learning process. This requires to be present both at the time when the entrepreneurs acquire their human capital and later on when they use what they learn in order to face challenges and opportunities. An ethnography spanning from the ideation to the exit would be the best method to achieve this.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

UQÀM | CERPE
Comité d'éthique de la recherche pour les projets étudiants impliquant des êtres humains
Université du Québec à Montréal

Information and consent form

IDENTIFICATION

Name of the project :	The role and impact of partners on the growth process of start-ups
Student-researcher in charge of the project:	Ba Anh Khoa Dao
Curriculum:	PhD in Management
Email address :	Dao.ba_anh_khoa@uqam.ca
Phone :	514-691-1884

GENERAL GOAL OF THE PROJECT AND DIRECTION

You are invited to participate in this project to determine the impact of capital transfer from their partners on the growth process of start-ups. More specifically, its aim is to understand how human capital influences these firms, how this human capital is transferred, and what specific types of human capital affect the business. This project is carried out as part of a doctoral thesis performed under the supervision of Mr. Jocelyn Desroches and Mr. Yvan Petit, professors at the department of management and technology of the Faculty of Management (ESG). They can be reached respectively at (514) 987-300 extension 8420 and 1258 or by email at: desroches.jocelyn@uqam.ca and petit.yvan@uqam.ca.

PROCEDURE REQUESTED FROM PARTICIPANT

Your participation consists of answering questions during an individual interview in which you will be asked to describe the relationship between start-ups and their partners. These questions are intended to determine the contribution of these partners in the growth process of start-ups. This interview is digitally recorded with your permission and will take about 30 to 60 minutes of your time. The transcription on computer support which will follow will not make it possible to identify you.

BENEFITS and RISKS

Your participation will contribute to help identify how partners can help entrepreneurs and, thereby, improve the performance of their investment. In addition, research could identify how their behaviours may affect their relationship with entrepreneurs. This should allow them to better identify what they can do to improve their relationship with their partner as well as what could potentially help them improve their performance. This research involves minimal risk. It mostly involves the difficulty of preserving complete anonymity given the fact that we ask respondents to refer to other participants. To this end, it is still possible for a participant to know the identity of another participant depending on the circumstances. However, please remain reassured that we are taking all steps to protect your identity. First, all identities will be encoded, and interview data will be stored in an encrypted hard drive. You remain free not to answer a question that you feel is embarrassing or to withdraw at any time without having to justify yourself. An appropriate help resource may be available if you wish to discuss your situation. It is the researcher's responsibility to suspend or terminate the interview if he feels that your well-being is under threat.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is understood that the information collected during the interview is confidential and that only, the researcher and his supervisors, Mr. Jocelyn Desroches and Mr. Yvan Petit, will have access to your recording and content of its transcription. The research material (digital recording and coded transcription) as well as your consent form will be kept separately under lock and key by the student researcher in charge the project for the total duration of the project. The data and consent forms will be destroyed ten years after the final filing of the research work. These data could be used later for another study completing this study.

VOLUNTARY INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this project is voluntary. This means that you agree to participate in the project without any external constraint or pressure, and that otherwise you are free to terminate your participation at any time during this research. In this case, information about you will be destroyed. Your agreement to participate also implies that you agree that the researcher may use for the purposes of this research (articles, dissertation, essay or thesis, conferences and scientific papers) the information collected on condition that no personally identifiable information will not be disclosed publicly except with your explicit consent.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Your participation in this project is offered free of charge. A summary of the research results will be sent to you at the end of the project.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT OR YOUR RIGHTS?

You can contact the student researcher at 514-691-1884 for additional questions about the project. You can also discuss with the research supervisors about the conditions under which your participation takes place and your rights as a research participant.

The project in which you will participate was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Humans. For any questions that cannot be addressed by the researcher or his supervisors, or to make a complaint or comments, you can contact the President of the Research Ethics Committee for Students (CERPE1), through its secretariat at 514-987-3000 ext. 7754 or by email at: mainard.karine@uqam.ca.

THANKS

Your cooperation is important to the realization of this project and we would like to thank you for it.

SIGNATURES

I acknowledge that I have read this consent form and voluntarily consent to participate in this research project. I also recognize that the researcher has answered my questions satisfactorily and I prepared enough time to reflect on my decision to participate. I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary and that I can terminate it at any time, without penalty of any form or justification to give. I just have to inform the researcher.

Signature of the participant ______________________ Dated ________________

Name (printed letters) and coordinates:

____

____

____

I declare that I have explained the purpose, nature, benefits, risks of the project and have answered to the best of my knowledge to the questions asked.

Signature of the student-researcher ______________________ Dated ________________

Name (printed letters) and coordinates:

Ba Anh Khoa Dao

514-691-1884

Dao.ba_anh_khoa@uqam.ca

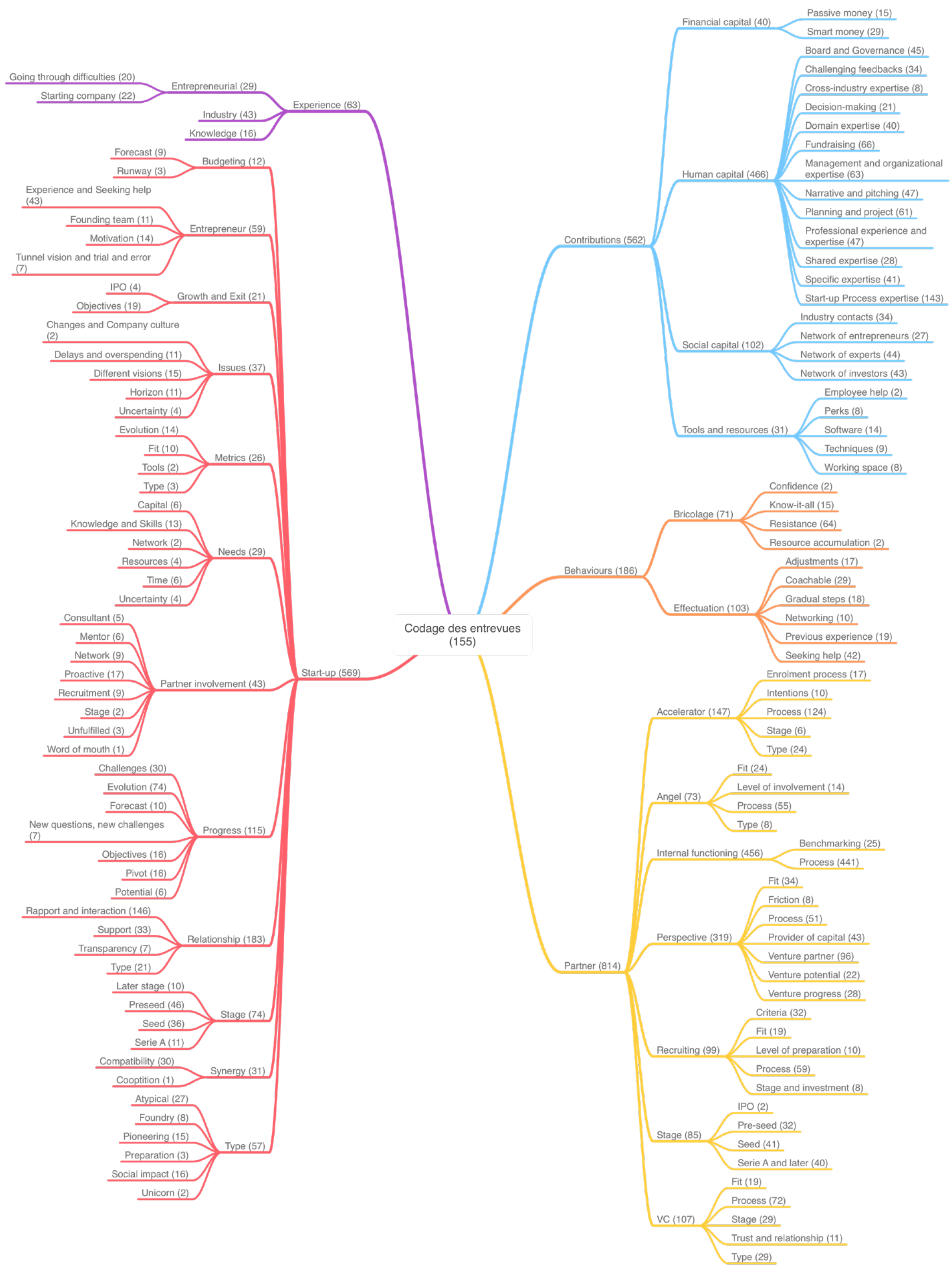
Interview with entrepreneur

1. Could you describe what your company does?
    a. Could you describe your personal experience?
2. How do you compare yourself to others in your market?
3. Could you describe your growth in your own words?
4. Could you describe how you got involved with your partners?
    a. How did you select this partner?
5. Could you describe your partner's contribution?
    a. How adjusted to your needs are the partner's contribution?
6. Could you provide some examples of how you interact with your partners?
7. What have you learned from your partners?
8. How has working with your partners influence the way you organize your work or the way you plan your projects?
9. How do you see your company evolving in the future?
10. Would you comment on the growth process of your company and the influence by your partners?

Interview with partner

1. Could you describe what your company does?
    a. Could you describe your personal work/entrepreneurial experience?
2. What are your criteria for choosing startups you work with or in which you invest?
3. Could you describe your general contributions to entrepreneurs?
    a. Do you have examples of specific contributions to some startups?
4. Could you describe your interactions with the entrepreneurs?
5. Have there been difficulties in your relationship with entrepreneurs?
6. What type of behaviours by the entrepreneurs do you approve or disapprove?
7. How do you discuss the long-term objectives of the startups and how does it affect what contributions you can provide them?
8. How do you interact with co-investors in ensuring the success of startups?

APPENDIX B: CODING STRUCTURE



Code	Comment
Behaviours	
Behaviours—Bricolage	7/18/2019 1:53 PM 2 × 2 matrix of Bricolage internality vs. externality and positive vs. negative
Behaviours—Bricolage—Confidence	
Behaviours—Bricolage—Know-it-all	
Behaviours—Bricolage—Resistance	
Behaviours—Bricolage—Resource accumulation	
Behaviours—Effectuation	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Adjustments	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Coachable	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Gradual steps	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Networking	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Previous experience	
Behaviours—Effectuation—Seeking help	
Contributions	
Contributions—Financial Capital	
Contributions—Financial Capital—Passive Money	
Contributions—Financial Capital—Smart money	
Contributions—Human Capital	7/19/2019 2:50 PM Tactical and operational contributions in the beginning Strategic contributions later.
Contributions—Human Capital—Board and Governance	
Contributions—Human Capital—Challenging Feedbacks	7/20/2019 6:09 PM Pattern matching
Contributions—Human Capital—Cross-Industry expertise	
Contributions—Human Capital—Decision making	
Contributions—Human Capital—Domain expertise	
Contributions—Human Capital—Fundraising	
Contributions—Human Capital—Management and organization expertise	7/20/2019 11:21 AM Organizational structure
Contributions—Human Capital—Narrative and Pitching	
Contributions—Human Capital—Planning and project	

Contributions—Human Capital—Professional experience and expertise	
Contributions—Human Capital—Shared Expertise	
Contributions—Human Capital—Specific Expertise	
Contributions—Human Capital—Start-up Process expertise	
Contributions—Social Capital	
Contributions—Social Capital—Industry contacts	
Contributions—Social Capital—Network of entrepreneurs	
Contributions—Social Capital—Network of experts	
Contributions—Social Capital—Network of investors	
Contributions—Tools and Resources	
Contributions—Tools and Resources—Employee help	
Contributions—Tools and Resources—Perks	
Contributions—Tools and Resources—Software	
Contributions — Tools and Resources — Techniques	
Contributions—Tools and Resources—Working space	
Experience	
Experience—Entrepreneurial	
Experience—Entrepreneurial—Going through difficulties	
Experience—Entrepreneurial—Starting company	
Experience—Industry	
Experience—Knowledge	
Partner	
Partner—Accelerator	
Partner—Accelerator—Enrollment process	
Partner—Accelerator—Intentions	
Partner—Accelerator—Process	
Partner—Accelerator—Stage	
Partner—Accelerator—Type	
Partner—Angel	
Partner—Angel—Fit	
Partner—Angel—Level of involvement	
Partner—Angel—Process	
Partner—Angel—Type	
Partner—Internal functioning	

Partner—Internal functioning—Benchmarking	
Partner—Internal functioning—Process	
Partner—Perspective	
Partner—Perspective—Fit	
Partner—Perspective—Friction	
Partner—Perspective—Process	
Partner—Perspective—Provider of capital	
Partner—Perspective—Venture partner	
Partner—Perspective—Venture potential	
Partner—Perspective—Venture progress	
Partner—Recruiting	
Partner—Recruiting—Criteria	
Partner—Recruiting—Fit	
Partner—Recruiting—Level of preparation	
Partner—Recruiting—Process	
Partner—Recruiting—Stage and investment	
Partner—Stage	
Partner—Stage—IPO	
Partner—Stage—Pre-seed	
Partner—Stage—Seed	
Partner—Stage—Serie A and later	
Partner—VC	
Partner—VC—Fit	
Partner—VC—Process	
Partner—VC—Stage	
Partner—VC—Trust and Relationship	
Partner—VC—Type	
Start-up	
Start-up—Budgeting	
Start-up—Budgeting—Forecast	
Start-up—Budgeting—Runway	
Start-up—Entrepreneur	
Start-up—Entrepreneur—Experience and Seeking help	
Start-up—Entrepreneur—Founding team	
Start-up—Entrepreneur—Motivation	
Start-up—Entrepreneur—Tunnel vision and trial and error	
Start-up—Growth and Exit	
Start-up—Growth and Exit—IPO	

Start-up—Growth and Exit—Objectives	
Start-up—Issues	
Start-up—Issues—Changes and Company culture	
Start-up—Issues—Delays and Overspending	
Start-up—Issues—Different visions	
Start-up—Issues—Horizon	
Start-up—Issues—Uncertainty	
Start-up—Metrics	
Start-up—Metrics—Evolution	
Start-up—Metrics—Fit	
Start-up—Metrics—Tools	
Start-up—Metrics—Type	
Start-up—Needs	
Start-up—Needs—Capital	
Start-up—Needs—Knowledge and Skills	
Start-up—Needs—Network	
Start-up—Needs—Resources	
Start-up—Needs—Time	
Start-up—Needs—Uncertainty	
Start-up—Partner involvement	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Consultant	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Mentor	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Network	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Proactive	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Recruitment	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Stage	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Unfulfilled	
Start-up—Partner involvement—Word of mouth	
Start-up—Progress	
Start-up—Progress—Challenges	
Start-up—Progress—Evolution	
Start-up—Progress—Forecast	
Start-up—Progress—New questions New challenges	
Start-up—Progress—Objectives	
Start-up—Progress—Pivot	
Start-up—Progress—Potential	
Start-up—Relationship	
Start-up—Relationship—Rapport and Interaction	
Start-up—Relationship—Support	

Start-up—Relationship—Transparency	
Start-up—Relationship—Type	
Start-up—Stage	
Start-up—Stage—Later stage	
Start-up—Stage—Pre-seed	
Start-up—Stage—Seed	
Start-up—Stage—Serie A	
Start-up—Synergy	
Start-up—Synergy—Compatibility	
Start-up—Synergy—Coopetition	
Start-up—Type	
Start-up—Type—Atypical	
Start-up—Type—Foundry	
Start-up—Type—Pioneering	
Start-up—Type—Preparation	
Start-up—Type—Social impact	
Start-up—Type—Unicorn	

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CERTIFICATE

UQÀM | Comités d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains

No. de certificat: 2438

Certificat émis le: 10-04-2018

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche pour les projets étudiants impliquant des êtres humains (CERPE 1: sciences de la gestion) a examiné le projet de recherche suivant et le juge conforme aux pratiques habituelles ainsi qu'aux normes établies par la *Politique No 54 sur l'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains* (Janvier 2016) de l'UQAM.

Titre du projet:	Le rôle et l'impact des partenaires sur le processus de croissance des start-up
Nom de l'étudiant:	Ba Anh Khoa DAO
Programme d'études:	Doctorat en administration
Direction de recherche:	Jocelyn DESROCHES
Codirection:	Yvan PETIT

Modalités d'application

Toute modification au protocole de recherche en cours de même que tout événement ou renseignement pouvant affecter l'intégrité de la recherche doivent être communiqués rapidement au comité.

La suspension ou la cessation du protocole, temporaire ou définitive, doit être communiquée au comité dans les meilleurs délais.

Le présent certificat est valide pour une durée d'un an à partir de la date d'émission. Au terme de ce délai, un rapport d'avancement de projet doit être soumis au comité, en guise de rapport final si le projet est réalisé en moins d'un an, et en guise de rapport annuel pour le projet se poursuivant sur plus d'une année. Dans ce dernier cas, le rapport annuel permettra au comité de se prononcer sur le renouvellement du certificat d'approbation éthique.

Raoul Graf
Président du CERPE 1 : École des sciences de la gestion
Professeur, Département de marketing

REFERENCES

Aernoudt, R. (2004). Incubators: tool for entrepreneurship? *Small business economics*, *23*(2), 127–135.

Ahlers, G. K., Cumming, D., Günther, C. and Schweizer, D. (2015). Signaling in equity crowdfunding. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, *39*(4), 955–980.

Alchian, A. A. and Demsetz, H. (1972). Production, information costs, and economic organization. *The American economic review*, *62*(5), 777–795.

Aldrich, H. (1999). *Organizations evolving* Sage.

Aldrich, H. E. and Fiol, C. M. (1994). Fools rush in? The institutional context of industry creation. *Academy of management review*, *19*(4), 645–670.

Aldrich, H. E., Rosen, B. and Woodward, B. (1987). The impact of social networks on business foundings and profit: a longitudinal study. *Frontiers of entrepreneurship research*, 154–168.

Alegre, J. and Chiva, R. (2008). Assessing the impact of organizational learning capability on product innovation performance: An empirical test. *Technovation*, *28*(6), 315–326.

Allen, D. N. and McCluskey, R. (1990). Structure, Policy, Services, and Performance in the Business Incubator Industry. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, *15*(2), 61–77.

Alvarez, S. A. and Busenitz, L. W. (2001). The entrepreneurship of resource-based theory. *Journal of management*, *27*(6), 755–775.

Baker, T. (2007). Resources in play: Bricolage in the Toy Store (y). *Journal of Business Venturing*, *22*(5), 694–711.

Baker, T., Miner, A. S. and Eesley, D. T. (2003). Improvising firms: Bricolage, account giving and improvisational competencies in the founding process. *Research policy*, *32*(2), 255–276.

Baker, T. and Nelson, R. E. (2005). Creating something from nothing: Resource construction through entrepreneurial bricolage. *Administrative science quarterly*, *50*(3), 329–366.

Bammens, Y. and Collewaert, V. (2014). Trust between entrepreneurs and angel investors: Exploring positive and negative implications for venture performance assessments. *Journal of Management*, *40*(7), 1980–2008.

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of management*, *17*(1), 99–120.

Barney, J. B., Ketchen, D. J. and Wright, M. (2011). The future of resource-based theory revitalization or decline? *Journal of management*, *37*(5), 1299–1315.

Barreto, I. (2010). Dynamic capabilities: A review of past research and an agenda for the future. *Journal of Management*, *36*(1), 256–280.

Baum, J. R. and Locke, E. A. (2004). The relationship of entrepreneurial traits, skill, and motivation to subsequent venture growth. *Journal of applied psychology*, *89*(4), 587.

Baum, J. R., Locke, E. A. and Kirkpatrick, S. A. (1998). A longitudinal study of the relation of vision and vision communication to venture growth in entrepreneurial firms. *Journal of applied psychology*, *83*(1), 43.

Baum, J. R., Locke, E. A. and Smith, K. G. (2001). A multidimensional model of venture growth. *Academy of management journal*, *44*(2), 292–303.

Bergek, A. and Norrman, C. (2008). Incubator best practice: A framework. *Technovation*, *28* (1–2), 20–28.

Birley, S. and Westhead, P. (1994). A taxonomy of business start-up reasons and their impact on firm growth and size. *Journal of business venturing*, *9*(1), 7–31.

Brettel, M., Mauer, R., Engelen, A. and Küpper, D. (2012). Corporate effectuation: Entrepreneurial action and its impact on R&D project performance. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *27*(2), 167–184.

Brooks, O. (1986). Economic development through entrepreneurship: incubators and the incubation process. *Economic Development Review*, *4*(2), 24–29.

Brüderl, J. and Preisendörfer, P. (1998). Network support and the success of newly founded business. *Small business economics*, *10*(3), 213–225.

Brüderl, J., Preisendörfer, P. and Ziegler, R. (1992). Survival chances of newly founded business organizations. *American sociological review*, 227–242.

Bruderl, J. and Schussler, R. (1990). Organizational mortality: The liabilities of newness and adolescence. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 530–547.

Butler, J. E. and Hansen, G. S. (1988). Managing social network evolution and entrepreneurial benefits. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*, 403–404.

Carlile, P. R. (2004). Transferring, translating, and transforming: An integrative framework for managing knowledge across boundaries. *Organization science*, *15*(5), 555–568.

Cassar, G. (2006). Entrepreneur opportunity costs and intended venture growth. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *21*(5), 610–632.

Chandler, G. N., DeTienne, D. R., McKelvie, A. and Mumford, T. V. (2011). Causation and effectuation processes: A validation study. *Journal of business venturing*, *26*(3), 375–390.

Charmaz, K. and Belgrave, L. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*, *2*, 347–365.

Charmaz, K. and McMullen, L. M. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry* Guilford Press.

Chell, E. and Baines, S. (2000). Networking, entrepreneurship and microbusiness behaviour. *Entrepreneurship & regional development*, *12*(3), 195–215.

Coff, R. and Kryscynski, D. (2011). Drilling for micro-foundations of human capital—based competitive advantages. *Journal of Management*, 0149206310397772.

Cohen, W. M. and Levinthal, D. A. (1990). Absorptive capacity: A new perspective on learning and innovation. *Administrative science quarterly*, 128–152.

Collewaert, V. (2012a). Angel investors' and entrepreneurs' intentions to exit their ventures: A conflict perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *36*(4), 753–779.

Collewaert, V. (2012b). Angel investors' and entrepreneurs' intentions to exit their ventures: A conflict perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *36*(4), 753–779.

Creswell, J. W. and Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* Sage publications.

Cromie, S. and Birley, S. (1992). Networking by female business owners in Northern Ireland. *Journal of business Venturing*, *7*(3), 237–251.

Davidsson, P. and Honig, B. (2003). The role of social and human capital among nascent entrepreneurs. *Journal of business venturing*, *18*(3), 301–331.

De Carolis, D. M., Litzky, B. E. and Eddleston, K. A. (2009). Why networks enhance the progress of new venture creation: The influence of social capital and cognition. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, *33*(2), 527–545.

Dew, N., Read, S., Sarasvathy, S. D. and Wiltbank, R. (2008). Outlines of a behavioral theory of the entrepreneurial firm. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *66*(1), 37–59.

Dew, N., Read, S., Sarasvathy, S. D. and Wiltbank, R. (2009). Effectual versus predictive logics in entrepreneurial decision-making: Differences between experts and novices. *Journal of business venturing*, *24*(4), 287–309.

Dopfer, M., Fallahi, S., Kirchberger, M. and Gassmann, O. (2017). Adapt and strive: How ventures under resource constraints create value through business model adaptations. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, *26*(3), 233–246.

Fisher, G., Kotha, S. and Lahiri, A. (2016). Changing with the times: An integrated view of identity, legitimacy, and new venture life cycles. *Academy of Management Review*, *41*(3), 383–409.

Fisher, G., Kuratko, D. F., Bloodgood, J. M. and Hornsby, J. S. (2017). Legitimate to whom? The challenge of audience diversity and new venture legitimacy. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *32*(1), 52–71.

Florin, J., Lubatkin, M. and Schulze, W. (2003). A social capital model of high-growth ventures. *Academy of Management Journal*, *46*(3), 374–384.

Foss, N. J. and Ishikawa, I. (2007). Towards a dynamic resource-based view: Insights from Austrian capital and entrepreneurship theory. *Organization Studies*, *28*(5), 749–772.

Foss, N. J. and Klein, P. G. (2010). Alertness, action, and the antecedents of entrepreneurship. *Journal of Private Enterprise*, *25*(2), 145–164.

Foss, N. J., Klein, P. G., Kor, Y. Y. and Mahoney, J. T. (2008). Entrepreneurship, subjectivism, and the resource-based view: Toward a new synthesis. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *2*(1), 73–94.

Freeman, J., Carroll, G. R. and Hannan, M. T. (1983). The liability of newness: Age dependence in organizational death rates. *American sociological review*, 692–710.

George, G. (2005). Slack resources and the performance of privately held firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, *48*(4), 661–676.

Gilbert, B. A., McDougall, P. P. and Audretsch, D. B. (2006). New venture growth: A review and extension. *Journal of management*, *32*(6), 926–950.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (2017). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* Routledge.

Grant, K. A., Croteau, M. and Aziz, O. (2019). The Survival Rate of Startups Funded by Angel Investors.

Grimaldi, R. and Grandi, A. (2005). Business incubators and new venture creation: an assessment of incubating models. *Technovation*, *25*(2), 111–121.

Hackett, S. M. and Dilts, D. M. (2004). A systematic review of business incubation research. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, *29*(1), 55–82.

Hao, Z. and Yu-Ling, H. (2018). Comparative Study of OKR and KPI. *DEStech Transactions on Economics, Business and Management*, (eced).

Harrison, R. and Leitch, C. M. (2008). *Entrepreneurial learning: conceptual frameworks and applications* Routledge.

Hart, S. L. and Dowell, G. (2010). A natural-resource-based view of the firm: Fifteen years after. *Journal of Management*, 0149206310390219.

Hayek, F. A. (1945). The use of knowledge in society. *The American economic review*, *35*(4), 519–530.

He, X., Brouthers, K. D. and Filatotchev, I. (2013). Resource-based and institutional perspectives on export channel selection and export performance. *Journal of Management*, *39*(1), 27–47.

Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Camp, S. M. and Sexton, D. L. (2001). Strategic entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurial strategies for wealth creation. *Strategic management journal*, *22* (6-7), 479–491.

Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Sirmon, D. G. and Trahms, C. A. (2011). Strategic entrepreneurship: creating value for individuals, organizations, and society. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, *25*(2), 57–75.

Howard, M. D., Boeker, W. and Andrus, J. L. (2019). The Spawning of Ecosystems: How Cohort Effects Benefit New Ventures. *Academy of Management Journal*, *62*(4), 1163–1193.

Huesch, M. D. (2013). Are there always synergies between productive resources and resource deployment capabilities? *Strategic Management Journal*, *34*(11), 1288–1313.

Jacob, S. A. and Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, *17*, 6.

Kellermanns, F., Walter, J., Crook, T. R., Kemmerer, B. and Narayanan, V. (2016). The Resource-Based View in Entrepreneurship: A Content-Analytical Comparison of Researchers' and Entrepreneurs' Views. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *54*(1), 26–48.

Kuratko, D. F., Fisher, G., Bloodgood, J. M. and Hornsby, J. S. (2017). The paradox of new venture legitimation within an entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Small Business Economics*, *49*(1), 119–140.

Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management review*, *24*(4), 691–710.

Lee, D. Y. and Tsang, E. W. (2001). The effects of entrepreneurial personality, background and network activities on venture growth. *Journal of management studies*, *38*(4), 583–602.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966). *The savage mind* University of Chicago Press.

Lounsbury, M. and Glynn, M. A. (2001). Cultural entrepreneurship: Stories, legitimacy, and the acquisition of resources. *Strategic management journal*, *22* (6-7), 545–564.

Madill, J. J., Haines, J., George H and RIding, A. L. (2005). The role of angels in technology SMEs: A link to venture capital. *Venture Capital*, *7*(2), 107–129.

Mäkelä, M. M. and Maula, M. V. (2008). Attracting cross-border venture capital: the role of a local investor. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *20*(3), 237–257.

Maritan, C. A. and Peteraf, M. A. (2010). Building a bridge between resource acquisition and resource accumulation. *Journal of Management*, 0149206310387675.

Marvel, M. R., Davis, J. L. and Sproul, C. R. (2016). Human capital and entrepreneurship research: A critical review and future directions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *40*(3), 599–626.

McArthur, A. W. and Nystrom, P. C. (1991). Environmental dynamism, complexity, and munificence as moderators of strategy-performance relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, *23*(4), 349–361.

McMullen, J. S. and Shepherd, D. A. (2006). Entrepreneurial action and the role of uncertainty in the theory of the entrepreneur. *Academy of Management review*, *31*(1), 132–152.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* Sage.

Molloy, J. C., Chadwick, C., Ployhart, R. E. and Golden, S. J. (2011). Making Intangibles "Tangible" in Tests of Resource-Based Theory A Multidisciplinary Construct Validation Approach. *Journal of Management*, *37*(5), 1496–1518.

Morenberg, A. *9 Useful Probes For Getting The Most Value From User Interview Questions (With Examples)*. Récupéré de https://morenberg.com/useful-probes-user-interview-questions/

Morrissette, S. G. (2007). A profile of angel investors. *The Journal of Private Equity*, *10*(3), 52–66.

Morrissette, S. G. and Hines, S. (2015). An investor's guide to search funds. *The Journal of Private Equity*, *18*(3), 21–40.

Mugler, J. (1988). *The development of new firms: an international perspective*

Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation* Oxford university press.

Nonaka, I. and Toyama, R. (2015). The knowledge-creating theory revisited: knowledge creation as a synthesizing process. Dans *The essentials of knowledge management* (p. 95–110). Springer.

Ostgaard, T. A. and Birley, S. (1996). New venture growth and personal networks. *Journal of Business Research*, *36*(1), 37–50.

Parmigiani, A. and Holloway, S. S. (2011). Actions speak louder than modes: antecedents and implications of parent implementation capabilities on business unit performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, *32*(5), 457–485.

Patterson, M. E. and Williams, D. R. (1998). Paradigms and problems: The practice of social science in natural resource management.

Paulin, D. and Suneson, K. (2015). Knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing and knowledge barriers—three blurry terms in KM. *Leading Issues in Knowledge Management*, *2*(2), 73.

Penrose, E. T. (1959). Theory of the growth of the firm, The.

Politis, D. (2005). The process of entrepreneurial learning: A conceptual framework. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, *29*(4), 399–424.

Read, S., Dew, N., Sarasvathy, S. D., Song, M. and Wiltbank, R. (2009). Marketing under uncertainty: The logic of an effectual approach. *Journal of marketing*, *73*(3), 1–18.

Riding, A. L. (2008). Business angels and love money investors: segments of the informal market for risk capital. *Venture Capital*, *10*(4), 355–369.

Ries, E. (2011). *The lean startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses* Crown Books.

Robson, P. J. and Bennett, R. J. (2000). SME growth: The relationship with business advice and external collaboration. *Small business economics*, *15*(3), 193–208.

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *Academy of management Review*, *26*(2), 243–263.

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2009). *Effectuation: Elements of entrepreneurial expertise* Edward Elgar Publishing.

Secchi, R. and Camuffo, A. (2016). Rolling out lean production systems: a knowledge-based perspective. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *36*(1), 61–85.

Shepherd, D. A. (1999). Venture capitalists' assessment of new venture survival. *Management science*, *45*(5), 621–632.

Shepherd, D. A., Zacharakis, A. and Baron, R. A. (2003). VCs' decision processes: Evidence suggesting more experience may not always be better. *Journal of Business venturing*, *18*(3), 381–401.

Stevenson, H. H. and Sahlman, W. A. (1989). The entrepreneurial process. *Small business and entrepreneurship*, 94–157.

Stinchcombe, A. L. and March, J. (1965). Social structure and organizations. *Advances in Strategic Management*, *17*, 229–259.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *17*, 273–285.

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of management review*, *20*(3), 571–610.

Suddaby, R. and Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical strategies of legitimacy. *Administrative science quarterly*, *50*(1), 35–67.

Szulanski, G. (1996). Exploring internal stickiness: Impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm. *Strategic management journal*, *17* (S2), 27–43.

Theodorakopoulos, N., K. Kakabadse, N. and McGowan, C. (2014). What matters in business incubation? A literature review and a suggestion for situated theorising. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *21*(4), 602–622.

Ucbasaran, D., Lockett, A., Wright, M. and Westhead, P. (2003). Entrepreneurial founder teams: Factors associated with member entry and exit. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *28*(2), 107–128.

Unger, J. M., Rauch, A., Frese, M. and Rosenbusch, N. (2011). Human capital and entrepreneurial success: A meta-analytical review. *Journal of business venturing*, *26*(3), 341–358.

Van de Ven, A. H., Hudson, R. and Schroeder, D. M. (1984). Designing new business startups: Entrepreneurial, organizational, and ecological considerations. *Journal of management*, *10*(1), 87–108.

Vanacker, T., Collewaert, V. and Paeleman, I. (2013). The relationship between slack resources and the performance of entrepreneurial firms: The role of venture capital and angel investors. *Journal of Management Studies*, *50*(6), 1070–1096.

Vulkan, N., Åstebro, T. and Sierra, M. F. (2016). Equity crowdfunding: A new phenomena. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, *5*, 37–49.

Wang, H. and Li, J. (2008). Untangling the effects of overexploration and overexploitation on organizational performance: The moderating role of environmental dynamism. *Journal of Management*, *34*(5), 925–951.

Welter, C., Mauer, R. and Wuebker, R. J. (2016). Bridging behavioral models and theoretical concepts: effectuation and bricolage in the opportunity creation framework. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *10*(1), 5–20.

Wernerfelt, B. (2013). Small forces and large firms: foundations of the RBV. *Strategic Management Journal*, *34*(6), 635–643.

West, G. P. and Noel, T. W. (2009). The impact of knowledge resources on new venture performance. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *47*(1), 1–22.

Westhead, P. and Wright, M. (1998). Novice, portfolio, and serial founders: are they different? *Journal of business venturing*, *13*(3), 173–204.

Wiltbank, R., Read, S., Dew, N. and Sarasvathy, S. D. (2009). Prediction and control under uncertainty: Outcomes in angel investing. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *24*(2), 116–133.

Wise, S. and Valliere, D. (2014). The impact on management experience on the performance of start-ups within accelerators. *The Journal of Private Equity*, *18*(1), 9–19.

Witt, P. (2004). Entrepreneurs' networks and the success of start-ups. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *16*(5), 391–412.

Zacharakis, A. L. and Meyer, G. D. (1998). A lack of insight: do venture capitalists really understand their own decision process? *Journal of business venturing*, *13*(1), 57–76.

Zacharakis, A. L. and Shepherd, D. A. (2001). The nature of information and overconfidence on venture capitalists' decision making. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *16*(4), 311–332.

Zimmerman, M. A. and Zeitz, G. J. (2002). Beyond survival: Achieving new venture growth by building legitimacy. *Academy of Management Review*, *27*(3), 414–431.

Zott, C. and Huy, Q. N. (2007). How entrepreneurs use symbolic management to acquire resources. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *52*(1), 70–105.