

Indigenous Insights on Regenerative Entrepreneurship: Boundaries, Mindful Microfoundations, and Cultural Technologies of Support

Entrepreneurship has long been celebrated for its capacity to create innovation, jobs, and growth. Canonical theories have equated entrepreneurial activity with firm performance and macroeconomic development, while support infrastructures, such as accelerators, incubators, and policy programs, have been designed around scalability, speed, and growth as default evaluative horizons. Yet mounting sustainability challenges expose the limitations of these assumptions. In an era defined by climate crises and inequities, entrepreneurship research risks narrowing its relevance if it continues to treat growth as the unquestioned telos. This paper responds to this tension by reconceptualizing entrepreneurship as regenerative value creation within ecological and social boundaries, advancing a framework that foregrounds cultural–spiritual microfoundations, and the designability of support infrastructures.

Indigenous organizing traditions are particularly generative for unsettling growth-centric assumptions and expanding theoretical horizons. Rather than treating Indigenous communities as marginal stakeholders requiring accommodation, recent work positions Indigenous worldviews as offering alternative ontologies of value, time, and relationship. These traditions embed economic activity within community, spirituality, and ecology, foregrounding care and responsibility to future generations. They resonate with sustainability scholarship that emphasizes a “safe and just space” for humanity, while also extending literatures on entrepreneurial motivation, values, and spirituality that remain underdeveloped in mainstream entrepreneurship theory. By bringing Indigenous organizing into dialogue with sustainability research, this paper asks: What new conceptual horizons for entrepreneurship emerge when Indigenous organizing traditions are brought into dialogue with sustainability scholarship?

The study is based on a year-long ethnography in Victoria, Australia, a context marked by reconciliation processes and active debates about sustainability and innovation. Data were generated through archival research, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs, policymakers, and support actors. The research design was abductive and social-constructivist, allowing iterative movement between field insights and theory. Reflexive journaling and consultation with Indigenous collaborators were integral for ensuring sensitivity to positionality and cultural appropriateness.

The analysis yielded three interrelated insights. First, entrepreneurship was consistently articulated as legitimate only when pursued within *ecological and social boundaries*. Participants emphasized cyclical, regenerative logics that contrast with dominant narratives of perpetual growth. Opportunities were seen as admissible to pursue only when they respected intergenerational accountability and community resilience. This re-specifies entrepreneurship’s telos: growth becomes a contingent by-product rather than its defining purpose, while the central aim shifts to sustaining ecological integrity and collective wellbeing.

Second, the study theorizes *mindful entrepreneuring* as a cultural–spiritual microfoundation of entrepreneurial action. Spiritual orientations, often overlooked in entrepreneurship research, emerged as constitutive forces shaping attention, framing, and judgment under constraint. Practices of care and belonging lengthened temporal horizons and enabled entrepreneurs to navigate paradoxes—such as tradition versus innovation—without collapsing them into simple trade-offs. Rather than treating

“mindset” as a vague trait, mindful entrepreneuring specifies how awareness-based orientations organize entrepreneurial agency within ecological and social limits.

Third, the study reframes *entrepreneurship support as a cultural technology*. Far from being neutral enablers, infrastructures such as accelerators, incubators, and policy programs were shown to script what counts as legitimate ventures and successful trajectories. Participants highlighted how selection criteria, pacing, pedagogy, finance, and evaluation practices embed particular logics of entrepreneurship, often reinforcing growth-centric models. The analysis proposes design principles that align these infrastructures with regenerative purposes: selecting ventures based on ecological and social thresholds, structuring pacing around cycles of exploration and rest, embedding practices of community care, providing access to patient and purpose-aligned capital, and evaluating outcomes through intergenerational metrics alongside financial indicators.

Taken together, these insights make three contributions to entrepreneurship scholarship. First, they re-specify the purpose of entrepreneurship around regeneration, advancing sustainability debates by clarifying the conditions under which opportunities are deemed legitimate to pursue. Second, they extend microfoundations research by integrating cultural–spiritual orientations as constitutive infrastructures of entrepreneurial judgment and action. Third, they reconceptualize support systems as cultural technologies, opening a new line of inquiry into the designability of infrastructures that scaffold entrepreneurial practice. Beyond theory, the study also outlines implications for educators, practitioners, and policymakers, showing how entrepreneurship programs and policies might embed regenerative logics, spiritual–relational orientations, and intergenerational accountability into their design.

The timeliness of this research lies in its response to urgent ecological and social crises and the resurgence of Indigenous perspectives in organizational and sustainability scholarship. By reframing entrepreneurship around regeneration, theorizing mindful entrepreneuring as a cultural–spiritual microfoundation, and reconceptualizing support as cultural technology, the paper offers a framework that aims to be both analytically robust and practically relevant. It invites dialogue on how entrepreneurship research and practice can be re-oriented to align with global sustainability agendas and to learn from Indigenous knowledge systems in shaping our futures.