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Entrepreneurial storytelling:

Winepreneurs as crafters of regional identity stories

Magdalena Markowska & Henry Lopez-Vega

ABSTRACT

Context and entrepreneurship are intertwined. In some contexts, the ability to craft a compelling regional identity story may become crucial for enacting entrepreneurial action. Building on an in-depth case study of the recent revival of a Spanish wine region, we analyze the interaction between regional context (i.e., regional identity) and entrepreneurial behavior. We find that to facilitate the creation of conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurs craft regional identity stories. We show that stories both reflect and possess agency and propose that storytelling is a process of constructing new identity stories. Specifically, we identify three different types of narratives and observe that the local winepreneurs actively engage in storytelling—that is, contextualizing the story to their needs.

Keywords: identity stories; entrepreneurial action, narratives, winemaking; case study

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Introduction

Context and entrepreneurship are intertwined (Welter, 2011), and the interaction between them creates, enables, and constrains particular forms of behavior (Zahra, Wright, & Abdelgawad, 2014). Previous research has shown that context shapes the opportunities available to entrepreneurs and impacts its unfolding dynamics (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Autio, Kenney, Mustar, Siegel, & Wright, 2014). However, this view assumes context is static and exogenous to entrepreneurial activity. Recently, McKeever, Jack, and Anderson (2015) asserted that entrepreneurs engage in crafting a context conducive to their entrepreneurial activities, one that enables them to translate their ideas into new products and services. Also, Garud, Gehman, and Giuliani (2014) suggested that context is constitutive of entrepreneurial agency. Hence, researchers have argued that entrepreneurial action should be analyzed not only as influenced by context but also as influencing context (McKeever et al., 2015) and have recommended exploring context as constitutive of entrepreneurial agency (Garud & Giuliani, 2013). In other words, to study context as “part of the story being told” by entrepreneurs, a dynamic view on how such stories emerge and change over time is relevant for enacting entrepreneurial action in context (Zahra et al., 2014).

In entrepreneurship, the relationship between context and story is of particular relevance at the *regional level*. To our knowledge, previous studies have only studied how regional context shapes individual behavior, decisions, and performance (Fritsch & Storey, 2014). However, understanding how entrepreneurs engage with their contexts requires further investigation (McKeever et al., 2015). Moreover, research on entrepreneurial action has been dominated by individual-level and dispositional approaches (Garud et al., 2014) that treat context as a static and

exogenous factor or control variable. To extend theoretical knowledge, it is necessary to include multi-level designs (Kim, Wennberg, & Croidieu, 2016) as well as adopt a narrative perspective that sees context as part of the story being co-created (Garud & Giuliani, 2013).

The multiplicity of contextual layers combined with the possibility to ascribe different attributes to a specific context result in different initial conditions and possibilities for entrepreneurs (Garud et al., 2014). While some contexts are seen as attractive, others are considered obstacles to entrepreneurial action (Klapper, Biga-Diambeidou, & Lahti, 2016; Raagmaa, 2002). Therefore, certain contexts characterized by distinct sets of resources and identities could be a driver of or a barrier to subsequent entrepreneurial action (Newbery, Siwale, & Henley, 2017; Semian & Chromý, 2014). Until now, relatively little attention has been paid to the role played by entrepreneurs in the process of regional identity change (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Building on the arguments above, we adopt a narrative approach (Garud & Giuliani, 2013) and investigate how the interplay between regional context and entrepreneurial behavior occurs. Our research questions are as follows: (1) how does a group of entrepreneurs engage in crafting an identity story to influence conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action and (2) how does a group of entrepreneurs co-create context to enable their own entrepreneurial actions?

To address these research questions, we apply an in-depth case study method to the Priorat wine region in Spain. The wine setting (Simpson, 2005) is characterized by strong institutional and industry norms, making it particularly suited to our study. Moreover, the Priorat region's regional identity recently changed, thus making it an appropriate object of observation. We analyze the stories of the stakeholders involved—winepreneurs, policymakers, and regional associations—and discuss the roles they played and the identity stories they created during the revival of the wine region.

The analysis of regional identity stories provides insights into the links between entrepreneurial agency (i.e., subsequent entrepreneurial actions) and its consequences (i.e., changes in the regional context, particularly in the regional identity). We identify entrepreneurial storying as a mechanism helping facilitate the creation of conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action. These conducive elements show that the choice of narrative reflects the type of entrepreneurial action and the importance of entrepreneurial storying. In doing so, we contribute (1) to the context literature by showing how context changes, (2) to the entrepreneurship literature by showing the performative power of entrepreneurs, and (3) to the literature on stories by extending it to storying.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: First, we review the literature on stories and storytelling as well as regional identity. Second, we discuss the research method. We then present our findings followed by discussion of the stories and the storying process and their role in regional revival. The paper ends by summarizing the main conclusions of this paper.

Literature review

The role of stories

Stories are individual or group narratives that (1) involve motives, emotions, and moralities (Watson, 2009) and (2) depict sequences of events that unfold over time (Bruner, 1991; Pentland, 1999). For example, Ricoeur (1984: 150) noted the following:

A story describes a sequence of actions or experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people. . . . These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament, which calls for thought, action, or both.

To convey the motivated action of an intentional agent, a story requires four elements: theme, actor, plot, and setting (McAdams, 2001). A story constitutes a set of identifiable *themes*, which weave together to construct the plot line, which is projected onto one or more characters embedded in a particular social and cultural setting. A theme is an idea that is central to the narrative and is exemplified by the actions, utterances, and/or thoughts of the focal characters. It represents the goal-directed sequence of actions pursued by the character in the course of his or her story; theme conveys motivation or the character's needs and wants (McAdams 2006). A story can include a number of themes.

Stories also involve intentional *actors*—at least a protagonist and often also an antagonist (Pentland, 1999)—as well as other types of characters, such as agents, victims, and/or beneficiaries of the narrated sequence of events (Bruner, 1991). These characters are not always individuals; they can be groups or whole organizations (Pentland 1999). Since the characters in a story both cause the events and suffer their consequences, the verbs used in a story refer to what characters did or what happened to them.

The actions performed by the characters contribute to the *plot*. The plot is the thread that weaves a sequence of events into a pattern of cause-effect relationships and provides the reason for the story. The plot allows the storyteller to infuse meaning into a seemingly random sequence of

events and allows the audience to understand the significance of these events (i.e., to make sense of the story). The plot achieves this through the use of *poetic tropes*, which are mechanisms aimed at linking the events of a story and imbuing them with meaning. Examples of such mechanisms are attribution of causal connections, agency, responsibility, motives, and/or emotions (Gabriel, 2004). These mechanisms are the cement that anchors the story's building blocks, yet plots can also change or be revised.

Finally, the *setting* is the focal actors' environment and background (e.g., culture, historical moment in time, geographic location). The setting provides both a backdrop to the characters' actions and an essential part of the narrative's mood and emotional impact; it captures the contextual dependencies between time, place, situation, and participants. Careful portrayal of the setting can convey meaning, values, and norms inherent to the focal actors' socio-cultural context. For example, cultural norms offer a frame of reference regarding accepted behaviors (Wry, Lounsbury, & Glynn, 2011).

Thus, stories allow individuals to imbue events with meaning (Gabriel, 2004). Stories play a crucial role in the construction of reality at the societal level, the negotiation of order at the group level, and the shaping of provisional self-identities at the individual level (Watson & Watson, 2012). Stories are suited to conveying the mechanisms and motifs of a conscious and intention-driven human agent and are created with that purpose in mind (Ricoeur, 1984). They can be employed to produce entrepreneurial advantage (Anderson & Warren, 2011) or gain access to resources and legitimacy (Wry et al., 2011). Consequently, stories act as functional tools for individuals, particularly entrepreneurs.

Storytelling and individuals' role in the process

Storytelling is a way of making sense of experience (McAdams, 2001), a process in which individuals play an important part. The ability to tell a convincing and coherent story requires the storyteller to decide which elements to include and which to exclude from the story (McAdams 2006) and to choose interpretive tools, which either clarify or connect the story's elements (Gabriel 2004). For example, an actor can acquire agency through his or her motivation and intentionality, and a chronological sequence can be transformed into a causal chain through the attribution of causality to certain actions. In other words, through storytelling, the storyteller can contribute to achieving a certain aim by telling the story in the desired way.

An important aspect of storytelling is embedding the story in cultural and historical contexts (McAdams, 2006). Social and historical contexts have a strong influence on and shape the crafting and subsequent evolution of stories (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The storyteller needs to combine “internal strivings” with “external prescriptions” (Ybema et al., 2009) to ensure the desired image corresponds to accepted cultural values and norms. An understanding of the interaction between structure and individual agency explains why stories include some aspects, for example, activities and routines, and exclude others. Anderson (2000) showed how the ability to reformulate and reinterpret the meaning of local values (e.g. traditions) has the power to change local perception of value and contribute to new value creation.

The ability to use stories is a requirement for becoming a successful entrepreneur (Rao 1994). Storytelling allows enterprising individuals to shape their interpretations of the nature and potential of required resources in such a way that others are attracted to helping them. Creating and telling a convincing story allows the entrepreneur to present him- or herself in the most positive way, validate the his or her claims, and differentiate the entrepreneur from others (McMahon & Watson, 2013; Wry et al., 2011). Telling stories can also help transform a non-

productive situation into a favorable one, which makes stories and storytelling valuable resources for enterprising individuals. How entrepreneurs use stories and storytelling to produce entrepreneurial advantage requires further exploration.

Stories and storytelling in relation to regional identity

Regions can be viewed as processes, artifacts, and discourses organized around regional identities (Vainikka, 2012). The concept of regional identity is a provisional discursive construct, where meaning is negotiated through interaction with various actors. Seen from this perspective, regional identity is a socially constructed collective identity (Paasi, 1991) that consists of different discourses, symbols, and institutional practices (Paasi, 2003).

These elements are not only embedded in the region but are also represented by multiple identity-relevant narratives (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brown, 2006). Identity-relevant narratives are “temporal, discursive constructions” used for individual or group meaning making (e.g., values, goals, and norms attached to collective) (Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016: 496) that enable the distinction between “us” and “them” (Ybema, Vroemisse, & van Marrewijk, 2012). The collective nature of narratives emerges from feelings of belonging, collective voice, and action that are in line with local social norms, the informal institutional setup, narratives, and stories.

As individuals are *homo fabulans* who create stories to present themselves and their context in a desirable way (Boje, 2001), narratives allow entrepreneurs to contextualize their own entrepreneurial action through the stories they tell (Markowska & Welter, 2018). When experiences are imbued with meaning, both context and the entrepreneur emerge together; they become co-created (Garud & Giuliani, 2013). The adoption of a narrative perspective presumes that entrepreneurs’ performative efforts create contexts (Garud et al., 2014; Vaara et al., 2016).

Research Method

Research setting

The study of regional identity in a highly institutionalized and traditional sector like the wine industry is appropriate for the study of context and entrepreneurship. On the one hand, the Mediterranean wine industry has undergone large transformations in terms of its market characteristics, government intervention, the wine production process, and cultivation methods (Archibugi, 2007; Simpson, 2005). On the other hand, wine making is considered an art as much as a cultural product that requires a sincere story using context as reference (Beverland, 2005; Moodysson & Sack, 2016).

In this paper, we focus on regional identity as a factor facilitating regional development—that is, better quality wine, new customers, increased migration. We chose the Priorat region because of its interesting heritage in Catalonia, which is considered the most enterprising region in Spain (Alvarez, Urbano, Coduras, & Ruiz-Navarro, 2011). The Priorat is represented by different stakeholders (individual actors, local authorities, and local government) and characterized by some unique and attractive features. Also, despite the relatively small size and difficult cultivation conditions, since 2003, Priorat has a “Designation of Origin”¹ (DOC) quality. We study changes in this area’s regional identity to promote regional development and international recognition.

Data collection

¹ “Designation of Origin” (DOC) originally indicated a category of wines whose production is bounded to a particular area and a particular grape variety, that is exclusive, to ensure a high quality. 2010 European law changed removing DOC and introducing the PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) brand.

To address our research questions, we collected primary and secondary data. We conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with different actors in the region, including five pioneering wine makers, local government representatives, and faculty members at the regional university in Roviri i Virgili (see Table 1). The interviews lasted between 70 and 150 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. To get a better understanding of the region and its development, both of the authors spent time observing life and developments in the villages of Falset, Porrera, Poboleda, and Gratallops, where we talked informally to the local inhabitants. This material, combined with our field notes, provided a good overall understanding of the various interactions, critical events, and key actors involved in the process. These data were complemented by archival data (e.g., press, wine magazines, YouTube clips, other non-management journal articles).

Table 1 here

Data analysis

Following Kim, Wennberg, and Croidieu (2016), we adopted a multi-level model to explain the role of enterprising individuals and stories in the process of crafting a new regional identity. We investigated this process, first, by analyzing the content of regional identity stories and, second, by analyzing the role of entrepreneurial actors in this process. This approach allowed for a focus on and consideration of regional identity, stories, and individual actions and provided a bigger picture of the process. It allowed for both combining and unravelling the relations between regional identity, stories, and enterprising individuals.

Because narrative perspective gives prominence to human agency and imagination (Bruner, 1991) as well as offers a distinct constitutive (creational) approach embedded in relational ontology (Garud & Giuliani, 2013), it is suitable for analyzing the creation of regional identity stories. Crafting a narrative requires everyday experiences to be transformed into meaningful stories that shape and infuse a “reality” with meaning (Gabriel, 2004). This creational aspect means that narratives have both performative power (i.e., narratives are constitutive acts) and agency (i.e., narratives may either promote or resist change) (Vaara et al., 2016).

We began our analysis by reconstructing the story of the Priorat region over the last 38 years, starting in 1979. Following Goffman’s (1959) assertion that individuals engage actively in presenting themselves and their actions as they wish them to be seen, our story of Priorat is comprised initially of 19 independent stories told by our interviewees. The stories were narrated within a temporal and spatial context and describe past events (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). We compared these stories and adopted a narrative approach to their analysis. Following Lauritzen and Jaeger (1997), we compared how the setting, characters, and actions directed toward goals (plot) were presented in the stories. By selecting incidents and details, arranging times and sequences, and employing a variety of the codes and conventions within a culture, the storyteller can give meaning to events, actions, and objects. This method also allowed us to see how the narratives were constructed and how the informants rhetorically structured these narratives to highlight particular points.

Two researchers coded the data using Nvivo 11 by exploiting both a priori codes and codes that emerged from the data (e.g., storying, the collectors, the growers). The results were compared, and coding differences were discussed. Figure 1 depicts the translation of first-order categories (interview quotes) into second-order themes and includes the theoretical dimensions.

Figure 1 here

Findings

This section is divided into three parts. The first part provides a short overview of the changes in Priorat and does not include the entrepreneurs' stories, the second part presents the master story, and the third part presents narrative variations to the story.

The Priorat region

Winemaking in Priorat began in the 12th century. Seven centuries later, the phylloxera epidemic destroyed the region's wine production and led to depopulation in the region as well as the cultivation of olive trees and traditional nuts. The Priorat changed from 5,000 hectares of vineyards to less than 600 in 1950. As a result, winegrowers' knowledge about wine production disappeared. Only few of the remaining winegrowers continued to cultivate grapes to sell to other regions, (e.g., Penedés), or they used them to produce "rough" cheap wine.

Since the actions of the Closes had the initial effect on the revitalization of the Priorat region, the production of higher-quality wines and European Union funding had a great impact on the area's regional development. From 2003, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provided subsidies for conservation agriculture. The CAP policy attracted investors to the Priorat and led to transformation of old plantations and abandoned lands into new vineyards.

Consequently, three farming systems co-exist in the region: (1) traditional farms; (2) transition farms; and (3) new farms (Martínez-Casasnovas, Ramos, & Cots-Folch, 2010). Moreover, the

subsidies allowed some winegrowers to change from traditional vineyard to modern farming systems (e.g., terracing systems and supported irrigation).

Currently, the Priorat region is an internationally recognized wine designation comprising seven villages and 20,000 hectares of land, of which 2,000 hectares are grapes (see Appendix 1 for details on the development of the region; see Appendix 2 for key milestones). In Priorat, wine production is more complex than in other regions due to the soil (terroir) and small number of grapes grown. However, its vineyards produce the best wine in the world according to the wine taster Robert Parker².

The master story

Individuals purposefully create collective identity stories to facilitate venture emergence, capital acquisition, and wealth creation (Glynn & Lounsbury, 2001). In Priorat, René Barbier is unanimously considered the ignition and the motor of the region's revival. He understood from the beginning that the resource characteristics of the Priorat region—its llicorella-rich soil—and the microclimate caused grapes to be small and few but with an intense taste, and he saw potential in the wine. However, creating a collective identity story was not the first thing on his mind when he moved to the region. René quickly realized that low-scale wine production was not a problem, but the challenge would be to convince local people to support high-quality production. Locals were skeptical at first because they did not see the potential of the vineyards that Barbier saw³. At that point, Barbier understood that he would not be able to achieve any

² <https://www.robertparker.com/>

³ “When Rene, Alvaro, Jose Luis, and Daphne arrived, locals did not understand and were disoriented [asking] why do these strangers engage with a product that has not been working in 100 years without really knowing where it would take them; that is not the way how things are done” (Salustia Alvarez, personal communication).

success alone; he needed other people with him. He mentioned that what was needed was “a unique and different vision that allowed other internal people to understand the Priorat.” He believed that “being few is better than being alone.” He called on his close friends to join him in exploring the potential of the wine and the region. This is how the idea of collective action emerged.

The Closes⁴ (as Barbier and his four friends were called) also understood that to be able to sell wine abroad required bringing Priorat back onto the world wine map. With a few years of experience working in sales and commercial dealings for Palacios Winery in Rioja, Spain, Barbier knew that even the best wine needs to be well packaged and have an accompanying story about it. Priorat had an interesting history, but although wine has been produced in Priorat for centuries, the region had no strong collective identity and no distinguishable story until early 1980s. Additionally, the business model—namely, local cooperatives selling Priorat wines in bulk cheaply—presented a challenge to the idea of selling fine wine at high prices because “how can you sell a bottle for 3,000 pesetas [approx. 20 EUR] if everyone sells bulk for 100 [approx. 1 EUR]?”⁵ This situation required the Closes to create conditions that would enable them to market and sell high-quality wine in Spain and (primarily) abroad. The Closes needed legitimacy from an acclaimed wine critic to convince international customers about the value, intensity, and uniqueness of Priorat wine, but they also needed regional support, for example, infrastructure and access to required practical knowledge (oenology) to be able to produce consistently high-quality wine. Finally, local people’s identification with the region and its unique features was particularly important (Paasi, 2003). This identification would make the wine more recognizable among

⁴ The word “clos” means “vineyard” in French; here it means “owner of the vineyard.”

⁵ Personal communication with Rene Barbier Jr.

customers and would better distinguish Priorat wine from other wines in Spain. This is what triggered the purposeful creation of a collective identity story.

The setting of the story. Two local wine grapes dominate the region of Priorat: Garnacha and Cariñena. These varieties grow well in the shiny rocky substrate of the area, which is high in mineral content and forces the vine roots to dig deep in search of water. However, by 1975, only 250 hectares of land were devoted to wine production in Priorat and most of the production was sold to cooperatives that were then re-selling raw wine to cellars in nearby regions (e.g., Penedés). This was partly due to the demographic situation: the region remained depopulated, younger generations migrated to nearby cities to find new jobs (e.g., Reus, Barcelona), and those who remained were old and few. At the beginning of the 1990s, although the situation seemed economically promising, most wine cellars in Priorat did not have the young workforce, practical and technical wine-production expertise, or international commercialization channels necessary to produce and sell wine with international standards.

The characters of the story. While most wine region stories focus on the superiority of the terroir and the type of grapes grown, the story of Priorat focuses on the entrepreneurial agency of the local people. For example, Daphne Glorian started her story by saying, “We started in really difficult conditions. We started with an old tractor, which we were fixing with essentially paper clips and shoelace. Alvaro sold his motorbike. I sold my car.” Also, Alvaro Palacios emphasized the agency and personal drive:

I wanted to push my dreams of making a great Spanish wine. . . . To start in Priorat you need character. We were a group of crazy romantics, because making wines in Priorat is difficult; it is not for profit. . . . We formed our image. We considered Priorat much more important than our individual capacity to make great wine!

In general, there was consensus among the community of the region that without Barbier and his four companions, the change would not have happened. The fact that they were strangers to the region did not create a lot of commotion, as noted by Marc Ripoll: “the moment people realized that these people came because of the soil, that their primary interest was in good wine and not exploiting the locals and the soil, they accepted them.”

The plot of the story. What drove René Barbier and his friends to Priorat was their intention to make good wine and make a difference in the industry. Aware of the specificity and high potential of the soil, they were not discouraged by the region’s poverty, lack of resources (e.g., infrastructure, winemaking knowledge), low or negative national recognition, or low morale among the local population. They wanted to create and appropriate value in a region that, at the time of their arrival, was all but entrepreneurial. In this process, through their agency and goal-oriented action, the Closos overcame these challenges by balancing the need for belonging and distinguishing from others.

The process of creating conducive conditions forms the plot of the identity story. First, this process continuously encouraged local viticulturists to learn new ways of making wine by demonstrating that high-quality wine can be commercialized on international markets at high prices. Second, the process aimed to facilitate the transformation of local cultivators from harvesters of vineyards to producers of high-quality wine. This involved increasing the prices for grapes, which allowed local cultivators to invest part of their earnings in wine production. Finally, the challenge of identifying and acquiring resources, particularly financial resources, for the production of wine became a concern. Due to the recession in the region, local cultivators did not have enough financial resources to build new cellars or buy new machinery, and necessary

human capital was difficult to find in the region. Here, the Closes shared their knowledge of how to minimize financial costs (e.g. sharing cellars and collaborating in the commercialization process). They advocated for the adoption of new wine production processes using a wider range of skills and knowledge from oenologists and viticulturists that were educated at Roviri i Virgili University (a regional university with new educational programs dedicated to winemaking in Priorat). This new way of producing and commercializing the wine initially disorientated local cultivators and viticulturists. However, during this transition phase, both the number of native and non-native actors interested in cultivating vineyards and making wine increased in the Priorat region.

The themes of the story. Three common themes were identified in the collective identity story of Priorat: building legitimacy in the highly institutionalized industry, building the feeling of belonging to the wine industry, and building distinctiveness within and outside of the region (see Table 2). More specifically, the decision of which events to include or exclude from the content of a collective identity story is fundamental to the final content of any story (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). First, the Closes sought to be recognized as professional in their wine production both within the region and outside. They realized that wine making was “a sector like all and [that you] have to be professional and you have to know what you do and that you know how to sell.” For example, they recognized their technical experience in wine production, product commercialization, and familial heritage as instruments helping them validate their expertise in high-quality wine production. Glynn and Lounsbury (2001) argued that newcomers recurrently use instruments to shape and create collective stories. The collective identity story of Priorat emphasized the technical and market expertise of the Closes and referred to the quality and size of their business network. Here is where the story seeks to share Priorat’s characteristics with the

international winemaking industry to increase the region's legitimacy in winemaking. Adding these elements to the collective identity story increases the value of the story and the region.

Table 2 here

Second, during the early stages of creating Priorat's collective story, the Closes paid careful attention to include the local cultural and historical values from the region. These were designed to reflect the local specificity and create a feeling of unity with local winemakers and other actors within Priorat. For example, the Closes made an active effort to refer to the centuries' long tradition of wine making in the region and its unique grape-growing process (on the steep slopes of the mountain).

Third, the story focused much more on the distinctiveness of the grapes from the region. This was particularly important as the grapes from Priorat have very distinctive and unique characteristics, and the wine tastes very different from other well-known wines (e.g., Rioja, Bordeaux). For example, initially the Closes wanted a distinction from Rioja, so they emphasized the specificity of the Priorat soil and grapes. Over time, however, the discourse also emphasized differences between the Closes' winemaking process and that of other winemakers within the Priorat region (e.g., the Scala Dei group).

Summing up, the collective identity story of the region's rejuvenation could be summarized as the appearance of a group of friends passionate about and committed to jointly initiating and leading the effort to develop a new way of producing wine in the Priorat region. They played a

fundamental role in changing the perceptions and ambitions of local and regional people by teaching them that they could also produce high-quality wine. To foster their entrepreneurial action, they collaborated and shared resources (i.e., wine production), used bootstrapping (i.e., informally presented wine to critics and distributors as they did not have money to rent a booth), and commercialized their wine early in different international markets and under different names. Although the alliance among the Closes dissolved after their initial success, they continued their engagement in Priorat but following their own market strategies. This resulted in the region's revival, an increased number of wine cellars, and more entrepreneurial actors in the region. For example, in early 1990s there were approximately 5 cellars, by 1998 there were already 20 cellars and currently close to 80. Consequently, what used to be a depopulated and a little forgotten region has changed into buzzing entrepreneurial region on its rise.

Narrative variations to the story

While the initial identity story is very coherent and was told by various actors in the same way repeatedly, we observed that the region's current identity story is being told differently by different farmers. More specifically, we identified three dominant narratives: those of *the collectors*, *the growers* and *the opportunists*. These three divergent narratives reflect the different goals of the people telling the stories. Table 3 compares the three different narratives and the original master story.

Table 3 here

Interestingly, the master story and the three variations of the current regional identity story differ in all four key story elements: plot, characters, setting, and themes. Not surprisingly, the master story and the story of collectors are very alike, but the growers' story and the opportunists' story differ substantially. While the original plot conveys a message of the importance of enjoying life, the ability to make good wine, and the influence the wine industry, the plot of the opportunists' story centers on the need to make the most of existing business opportunities, and the plot of the growers' story urges the audience to see the bigger picture and focuses on regional growth and infrastructure development. The opportunists have their own interests at heart, whereas both collectors and growers transmit concern for the maintenance and growth of the region, respectively. The most interesting difference between the stories is the interplay between how the farmers of the particular stories see their belonging with and their distinctiveness from others. More specifically, the master story emphasizes variation from other wine regions, collectors set themselves apart from those only focused on making money, growers diverge from the past, and opportunists separate themselves from the high-end wine segment that was the core of Priorat until they came along.

Consequently, our data show that the winemakers employ the regional identity story of Priorat to motivate and explain their entrepreneurial action in the region. More specifically, the manner in which they use the story varies: whereas some simply retell the story, others engage in storying—that is, they purposefully contextualize the story to fit their agenda. Consequently, we identified three distinct ways winemakers employed the regional identity story in their narratives. Table 4 provides an overview.

Insert Table 4 about here

The collectors

The first type of narrative that we found was adopted mostly by individuals concerned with the region's survival and sustaining its characteristics. These stories emphasize the importance and the uniqueness of the local terroir and grapes as well as the heritage of the region. We call them *collectors* due to their preoccupation with the quality and image of the product, making sure that the "collection" they possess retains its value. For example, collectors mentioned the following:

We have a common idea how to preserve the nature, the vineyards and how to protect the types of production, so that the region can survive and sustain its characteristics. (RB)

What matters is the image, the product that you have with its historical heritage reflected in the bottles. In our cellars we keep a number of bottles from every vintage from 1989 until today; it seems we may be the only winery that keeps all of its vintages. (CP)

The individuals who started their winemaking adventure together or shortly after Rene Barbier mostly use this type of narrative. Interestingly, even though these individuals were very concerned with introducing new production methods in the initial stages of the region's revival, their current efforts are directed toward maintaining quality and creating a variety of classic products known for their consistency, as seen in the following statements:

We are not interested in a company solely focused on making money; we want our business to be artisanal. We do not have integrated automatic bottling and labelling; we do it ourselves to keep the handicraft. (PR)

For me there is a danger in people who think solely about business. The market verifies quickly, one year it is and the other not. It is important to work with oenologists. It is important to maintain the quality. (MN)

Consequently, the collectors engage in less experimentation than before but instead focus their efforts on remaining attractive to their customers with their value proposition: highly complex and unique high-quality wine.

The growers

The second type of narrative the Priorat actors employ today is related to a more holistic view of entrepreneurial action with its interdependencies in the spatial context. Compared to the two other narrative types, this form emphasizes the need for developing the individual businesses and the whole region to foster the region's prosperity. We refer to individuals using this narrative as *growers* because these individuals are very concerned with the region's welfare and development as well as their role in this process. This view is illustrated well in the following statements:

So, if you have beautiful flour for bread, why would you make mediocre bread? No? Try to do better than you are doing right now. . . . You need to put your love into this place, into what you do and care for it; then you will be triumphant. If you don't, you will not fail, but it would be just one of many. (PR)

The region needs to offer more than it does now; what we need is a better infrastructure for tourism. We recently opened our restaurant with a unique concept. Now there are four restaurants offering comparable experience, but couple years back there was no place where visitors could enjoy a meal. (RBJr)

We found that the winemakers who employ this narrative are often locals who have grown up in the region and have seen older generations' efforts to revive the region. Summing up, growers engage in new market creation by introducing new revenue streams that improve the region's attractiveness, for example vineyard and winery visits, wine tasting, restaurants, lodging, etc.

The opportunists

The third type of narrative that the winemakers engage stresses their realization of an opportunity. Typically, this form of narrative emphasizes filling a void and/or delivering a new

product to the market. We label this type as *opportunists* because it appears that the primary motive for these storytellers' entrepreneurial action was the possibility of creating value by making their product more accessible to customers not currently served without being concerned for the long-term well-being and image of the region. The following statement highlights this motive:

The Priorat wines were good wines, but very pricy. My idea was to [make] wine for everyone, a wine that everyone can afford to buy. Of course producing here involves higher costs, so we cannot produce wine for 1 EUR, but still it is possible to offer wine at lower prices. To me it seemed that the market of expensive wines was saturated; competing there did not make any sense. Instead I saw other opportunities: producing higher volume at lower price. (XB)

Winemakers adopting this narrative emphasize that it would not have been commercially rational to avoid this market given what others were offering. For example, one winemaker noted the following:

These new wines that Carlos Pastrana, René Barbier and these people were [making] were receiving very positive reception; people started to talk about them as the best wines in the world. I wanted to be part of it. (XB)

Overall, individuals telling an opportunist narrative seem to focus their actions on efficiency increases, modeling others rather than creating new products and new markets. In other words, they search for alternative paths to offer similar products or services at a lower price.

Discussion

Research often assumes that context is taken for granted and stable (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994). However, this paper shows that context is dynamic and malleable (McKeever et al., 2015), and the interplay between entrepreneurs' agency and context underlies these changes. The present paper adds to this discussion by discussing (1) how a group of entrepreneurs engage in crafting an identity story to influence conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action and (2) how does a

group of entrepreneurs co-create context to enable their own entrepreneurial actions. Below, we first present our model and then discuss our findings and respond to our research questions in light of extant literature.

The model of entrepreneurial storying

Existing regional context and identity are a starting point for many individuals in their consideration of whether to engage in entrepreneurial action or not. Individuals who perceive the current conditions as unattractive are likely to engage in crafting a new context, one that they perceive as conducive to action. In this process, new stories and new narratives are purposefully created to enable the construction of a new regional context and identity. We call the process of constructing a new identity through narrative *entrepreneurial storying*. Entrepreneurial storying is a mechanism used to facilitate the emergence of conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action, which involves entrepreneurs engage in legitimizing the new context by repeatedly retelling their new identity stories. Once these conditions are created, the new context becomes an existing context and the process repeats itself (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 here

Entrepreneurial storying is distinct from storytelling because storytelling is the process of retelling an existing story. Extant literature (cf. Jensen & Leijon, 1999) often conflates storying with storytelling, arguing that storytelling may also involve creative processes. We suggest that

the two processes should be viewed separately to really understand how the legitimization of the story and internalization of an identity take place.

The role of individual's agency in regional revival

First, similar to Anderson's (2000) findings, the revival of the Priorat region was initiated by outsiders. They were the ones who saw potential and value in the region's resources (e.g., its vineyards, soil, etc.) and decided to engage in entrepreneurial action. We show how individuals' perceptions of the context, as transmitted in existing narratives, induces entrepreneurs to actively engage in changing the regional discourse and create a new identity story and how this new changed identity story contributes to attracting new entrepreneurs in the region. Moreover, we illustrate how the attractiveness of a context (e.g., new entrepreneurs and investments) increases as a new regional identity gains acceptance (Mellander, Florida, & Stolarick, 2011).

Second, the extant literature posits that storytelling "presumes a story which is prepared to fit a plot which already exists" (Johansson 2004, 284) and focuses on a culturally appropriate story—that is, a story transmitting values deemed appropriate in a given community. However, we observed that a group of entrepreneurs engaged in a different process, one of story creation that introduced new actions and added/removed norms and values. We call this process storying. Simply put, storying is about devising a story and plot that do not necessarily conform to extant norms and expectations. Engaging in storying presumes the intentional agency of individuals. We argue that storying was instrumental in the development of the Priorat region because it enabled enterprising individuals to create the conditions conducive to their entrepreneurial action and to become embedded in and part of the region and its legacy.

We suggest that storying is an important mechanism of regional identity transformation that reflects the intentional actions of enterprising individuals. Therefore, it is not a passive ascription of qualities or personal attributes but is an active storyline enacting an identity production. The changes introduced to the stories over time suggest that the studied winepreneurs purposefully shape the plots and introduce new themes to rationalize and legitimize their own activity. As such, we show that storying is strategic, purposeful, and ongoing, and to be successful, it requires convincing others about the coherence and authenticity of the story. This finding shows that the ability to engage in storying—that is, purposeful elaboration of stories to achieve desired outcomes—is important for entrepreneurial action.

Context co-creation

Based on the existing literature, we studied how entrepreneurs' actions toward the co-creation of their context (i.e., crafting new regional identity stories) impacted the process of entrepreneurial action in the region. We found that entrepreneurs actively co-create their contexts by engaging in entrepreneurial storying. Entrepreneurial storying may help create conducive conditions for individuals' entrepreneurial action and the development of a region.

Identity stories reflect regional culture—that is, the values and beliefs important in the region. Regional culture has been shown to influence new firm formation rates and, thus, regional development (Davidsson & Wiklund, 1997). In our analysis, while it is clear that the actions of the winepreneurs were the initial driver of the changes in the region, the identity story that was created gave the locals the incentive to engage in different entrepreneurial actions.

The emergence of the story resulted in growing acceptance of and legitimacy for the actions of the Closes. Legitimacy was built by the inclusion of references to achievements in the story

(Brown, 2006), which attracted new winemakers to the region (Mellander et al., 2011). This legitimization contributed to changing the regional identity, values, and norms (e.g., culture). Receiving positive feedback from acclaimed critics and being considered a mainstream winemaker was important (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003). Moreover, the search for alternative product trajectories (Moodysson and Sack, 2016) allowed the Priorat winemakers to claim distinctiveness (Beverland, 2005).

Consequently, we show how creating individual and group stories contributes to building a new regional story and how this story helps to change the regional identity. The entrepreneurs' stories influenced local people's perceptions of the region's vitality and their propensity for entrepreneurial behavior (Davies & Mason-Jones, 2017; Liñán, Urbano, & Guerrero, 2011). By retelling the story, the locals legitimized new entrepreneurial values and strengthened their own regional conscientiousness. Hence, the experience of developing a collective regional identity story was important for changing the values and norms of the region as well as increasing motivation and propensity for entrepreneurialism. Simply put, stories not only portray actors' agency but also provide a vehicle for change.

Conclusions, limitations, and further research

In this paper, we took a multilevel approach to analyze the interaction between context (i.e., regional identity) and entrepreneurial behavior. We found that to facilitate the creation of conducive conditions for entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurs engage in crafting regional identity stories. We labeled this process entrepreneurial storytelling. Further, we found that how entrepreneurs within a region use a story influences the manner in which they approach value creation.

In this paper, we identified three distinct narratives: the collectors, the growers, and the opportunists. Whereas the collectors focus on maintaining the quality of the status quo of the current value proposition, the growers search for new means-ends combinations to create new value propositions, and the opportunists like to focus on finding ways to extract more value from currently available opportunities. All in all, regional identity stories and entrepreneurial action contributed to the development of the Priorat region. We showed how including the meso-level (i.e., identity stories) permitted us to identify a mechanism of reciprocal interaction between context and entrepreneurial action. Our findings support previous research arguing that appropriate conditions are particularly relevant for new entrants in highly institutionalized contexts (e.g., winemaking) (Croidieu & Monin, 2010) or haute cuisine (Rao et al., 2003) as well as in underdeveloped, often peripheral, regions (Anderson, 2000; Benneworth, 2004; Gorbuntsova, Dobson, & Palmer).

One of the benefits of using a single case study is the richness of the data and the resulting in-depth understanding of the relationships and processes between different variables. However, a limitation of using it is that the findings relate to the specific case at hand and may not extend to other populations. Another limitation of our design is the fact that the data were collected retrospectively; thus, we were not able to follow the creation of the different identity stories in real time. Consequently, research exploring the emergence and creation of collective identity stories in real time could be an interesting avenue for future research. Similarly, additional research could look more closely at the composition of “pioneering teams” and the ways entrepreneurial agents’ local embeddedness (or lack thereof) influences the content of collective stories and their emergence. Such work could result in further policy recommendations for regional development.

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Figure 1. Examples of the transformation of first-order categories into second-order themes and theoretical constructs

Figure 2. Model of reciprocal interaction between context and entrepreneurship

Table 1. The Interviewees and their role in and connection to Priorat

	Interviewees	Role in Priorat	Background
1.	Rene Barbier	Winemaker; owner of Clos Mogador; one of the initiators of the revival of Priorat. In good years, his wine has obtained up to 98 Parker Points.	From a winemaking family in France that moved to Spain (Tarragona); studied in Bordeaux; worked for Palacios Family as sales person; in Priorat since 1979; strong proponent of single vineyard wines.
2.	Alvaro Palacios	Winemaker; owner of Finca Doff and L'Ermita; among the Closes.	From Rioja; studied oenology in Bordeaux (with Jean-Pierre Moueix); worked with Chateau Petrus; from a family with huge winemaking traditions.
3.	Josep Lluís Perez	Winemaker and first owner of Clos Martinet; biologist; oenologist for many wineries in Priorat; founder of the Cims de Porrera project.	From Alicante; lived and worked in Falset teaching oenology prior to moving to Priorat; father to Sara Perez.
4.	Carles Pastrana	One of the closes winemaker and owner of Clos de l'Obac Winery.	From Tarragona; journalist; married to oenologist Mariona Jarque; very strong focus on profitability and organization of his project.
5.	Daphne Glorian	Winemaker; owner of Clos Erasmus; enabled entrance into the US market in the early stage.	Swiss; lawyer by education; worked in wine distribution and sales; married to Eric Solomon, who has a specialty wine importing company.
6.	Marc Ripoll	Winemaker and owner of micro-winery Cellers Ripoll Sans.	From Priorat (Gratallops); from a wine-growing family that previously sold the grapes to the cooperative without making wine itself.
7.	Salustiano Alvarez	President of the DO Priorat (the regulatory organization); CEO of winery Valle.	From Priorat; from a family that grows fruits and nuts as well as manages restaurants.
8.	Sara Perez	Winemaker; oenologist; runs Clos Martinet; started restaurant Irreductibles in 2004 with her husband.	Daughter of Josep Perez; married to Rene Barbier's son; moved to Priorat as a child; studied biology in Barcelona; also runs Venus la Universa in DO Montsant; a determined proponent of organic winemaking.
9.	Ricard Pasanau	Owns Clos Pasanau (joined the family business in 2007).	From Barcelona, although his grandmother is from Poboleda; industrial engineer; his grandfather was part of the cooperative in la Morera de Montsant.
10.	Rene Barbier Jr.	Winemaker; runs Clos Mogador; owns restaurant Irreductibles with his wife.	Son of Rene Barbier; married to Sara Perez; manages the Clos Mogador.
11.	Pere Rovira	Winemaker and owner of Mas d'en Gil	Third-generation winemaking family from Penedés; runs wine cellar with his two daughters Marta and Pilar.
12.	August Vicent	Winemaker and owner of Celler Cecilio; owns the first winery registered in the DO Priorat.	Second generation from Priorat; initially continued with his father's winemaking method and sold wine in bulk; it cost him to change his business model, but friendship with Palacios helped.
13.	Xavier Buil	Winemaker and owner of Buil i Giné.	From Priorat (Falset); studied business at ESADE in Barcelona; first opened Priorat Natur; then engaged in wine business with his brothers.

14.	Fernando Zamora	Professor of oenology at URV; wine consultant; co-owner of wine cellar.	More than 20 years of experience lecturing in oenologic technology.
15.	Montserrat Nadal	Professor of viticulture at University Rovira i Virgili.	From Barcelona but spent all summers in Priora; began working early with Josep Lluís Perez and his wife in education.
16.	Joan Vaque	County Counsel of Priorat; local policymaker; responsible for Leader Plus program.	Local; 12 years' experience in rural development; started working in the Chamber of Commerce on themes related to labor market and occupational dynamism; since 1994, interested and involved in Leader II program.
17.	Joaquim Sabate	CEO of the consortium of cooperatives in Priorat (Gratallops, Lloa, Vilella baja, and Vilella alta).	From Priorat (Vilella baja); member of the cooperative for more than 25 years; returned to the region in 2003 after working away from the region.
18.	Josep Garriga	Winemaker and owner of Mas Garrian Winery; member of the association of nine small wineries in Priorat.	Studied communication, marketing, and primary education as well as secondary level winemaking; started bottling his wines in 2000.
19.	Josep Gómez	Owner of the Maius Viticultors wine cellar.	Continues family tradition of owning a wine shop; in 1998, bought land in la Morera de Montsant and grows wine; first vintage 2004.

**Table 2. Main themes in the collective identity story initially created by the pioneers—
Master story**

	Key elements of each theme
<i>Theme 1</i> <i>Building legitimacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reliance on links to Bordeaux, Burgundy in France, and Rioja in Spain ▪ Reference to centuries' long tradition of wine making in Priorat ▪ Pioneers' family heritage and working experience in wine industry ▪ Robert Parker and his list of the Best Wines
<i>Theme 2</i> <i>Building the feeling of belonging</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling pride of growing grapes in Priorat ▪ Very interesting history of winemaking in the region ▪ The region's grapes and wine have special characteristics
<i>Theme 3</i> <i>Building distinctiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unique characteristics of the region: llicorella soil, steep hillside vineyards, and specific microclimate ▪ Unique characteristics of Priorat wines: mainly garnacha and carineña grapes, dark purple in color, high alcoholic level (15–16%), mineral taste, and high acidity ▪ Coupage system of winemaking ▪ Continuous innovation: retention of stems, maceration times, oak barrels

Table 3. Storying and variations from the master story

	Master story	The collectors	The growers	The opportunists
<i>Main characters</i>	The Closes	Long-time locals	Young locals	New players in the region
<i>Motto</i>	All is possible	Making money is not the only goal	See the bigger picture	Join the train with opportunities
<i>Plot</i>	Enjoy life, make good wine, and change the wine industry	Maintaining high quality is more important than making money	See the bigger picture, be the best you can be, focus on growth and development	See and exploit existing opportunities to extend the market to other segments
<i>Setting</i>	Emphasis on the uniqueness of the terroir as well as the capacity to change the environment	Emphasis on the uniqueness of the terroir and grapes as well as the heritage of the region	Emphasis on desired improvement in the region, future growth oriented	Emphasis on current market characteristics and business environment
<i>Theme(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Legitimacy</i> of Priorat as a wine region ▪ <i>Belonging</i> to the region ▪ <i>Distinction</i> from other wine regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Legitimacy</i> through the maintenance of quality ▪ <i>Belonging</i> to the segment of artisanal wineries through conservation of the region ▪ <i>Distinction</i> from those focused only on making money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Legitimacy</i> through rejection of mediocracy and constant improvement ▪ <i>Belonging</i> to the region, ▪ <i>Distinction</i> from the past (in terms of the offering and infrastructure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Legitimacy</i> through association ▪ <i>Belonging</i> to the best ▪ <i>Distinction</i> from the high-end segment ▪ Opportunity to extend the market

Table 4. The three distinct narratives in the region

	The growers	The opportunists	The collectors
<i>Actively making wine in the region since</i>	Around 1996	Around 2000	Early 1980s
<i>Typical representative</i>	Young locals as well as children of the Closes who observed and participated in the regions' winemaking and the revival since early childhood.	Either locals who left the region and returned encouraged by the new development or the "big" wineries from Spain (e.g., Torres, Freixenet, or Codorniu).	Closes who initiated and drove the initial revival.
<i>Typical focus in value creation</i>	Market extension by experimenting with new wines; introducing complementary services and products (e.g., restaurant, lodging).	Product penetration to other new customer segments; other byproducts of wine (e.g., creams, vinegars).	Creating conducive conditions for entrepreneurial winemaking.
<i>Impact on regional development</i>	Development of the infrastructure (e.g., agro-businesses, restaurants) and increased attractiveness for tourists (e.g., sightseeing of the wineries).	Making the product more available and thus increasing awareness of the region but (possibly) at the cost of diluting the core values and characteristics of the region.	Maintaining and strengthening the brand and image of the region (classic Priorat wines). In the initial stages, increasing human capital in the region.

Appendix 1. Timeline of the development of the Priorat region

Year	Activity
1194	After being introduced by Greeks and Romans, wine cultivation performed by Carthusian monks was first mentioned.
1731–1841	Change of the business model resulted in increased rents for the grape growers and consequently the forest being converted into vineyards and population increase in the region.
1887–1896	In 1894, 74% of the land was occupied by vineyards. Historic Priorat had 5000 ha of vineyards. At the end of the 19 th century, the phylloxera reduced the cultivated area by more than 50%, increased cultivation costs by 200%, and dropped production to 73%.
1950–ties	Big depopulation due to the low prices of wine and industrialization of Camp de Tarragona (a vineyard area for Penedes wines). Only 600 ha of vineyards were available in 1950, and most of the production was sold by cooperatives to cellars in nearby regions (e.g., Penedés). The few inhabitants who stayed in Priorat were mostly owners of very small estates.
1979	René Barbier settled down in Priorat convinced of the potential of the local vineyards. The Closes group was formed by René Barbier, Alvaro Palacios, Carles Pastrana, Daphne Glorian, and Josep Luis Perez.
1989	First vintage was unofficially presented in a Paris exhibition by René Barbier and Alvaro Palacios.
1989–1991	Wine was produced jointly but labeled and sold under five different names: Clos Mogador (Rene Barbier), L'Ermita (Alvaro Palacios), Clos de l'Obac (Carles Pastrana), Clos Erasmus (Daphne Glorian).
1992	The Closes decided to produce their wines separately.
1993	Palacios produced a wine called L'Ermita sourced from old Priorat wines, which led to an increased interest in using the region's existing vineyards to produce wines in a new style.
1995–1999	The Leader II Program (EU subventions) was started to provide gastronomic resources and improve the quality of wine production and promotion.
2000	EC Council Regulation No. 1227/2000 established vineyard restructuring and conversion plans from land grown with traditional crops to new mechanized vineyards.
2003	Priorat received the certification "Designation of Origin" (DOC). This made Priorat the second area in Spain to receive this certification. Priorat had the lowest unemployment in Terragona (3.45%); 90% of the new employment was related to wine.
2001–2006	The Leader Plus program (Priorat, the culture of wine) promoted tourism and wine; 3 million EUR.
2005	Vineyards occupied more than 20% of the total land surface. In 2003, vineyards occupied 13.8% of the land and, in 1986, 8.8%. Terraced vineyards were introduced only after the Closes (early 1990s). In 2008, the transformation process was concluded.
2011	Close to 1,600 hectares of land (at present 50% [2,500 ha] of the cropped area in the region) are planted with grapes; close to 70 cellars; world-renowned quality wine.

Appendix 2. The development of the Priorat Region

*The Catalan authorities approved of Priorat's elevation from DO to DOC (Denominación de Origen Calificada) status in 2000, but national level confirmation from the Spanish Government only came on July 6, 2009