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“Understanding Roles in a Broker Retail Venture in the Creative Industries”

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Abstract

We Built this City (WBTC) is a broker venture trading innovative London-themed goods in a pop-up shop in the emblematic Carnaby Street in central London. WBTC was born by founder Alice Mayor's vital purpose to support creative professionals, bringing together a team to fulfil her vision through a journey of five shops and a successful e-commerce website. Putting together a functional team can be challenging for emerging ventures and even more for sole founders leading small groups of workers, where organisational roles will develop overtime alongside limited resources.

Organisational role literature has mainly studied roles from psychological and sociological perspectives that cannot comprehensively explain changing contexts where roles adapt. The previous exposes a gap in understanding how roles unfold, encompassing dynamic organisational development over time. This study attempts to fill this gap by asking how the WBTC team enact their role to successfully perform brokerage relations within the venture's networks. From here, this research aims to understand how roles shape, evolve and articulate within an emergent and fast-growing venture from the creative sector.

To answer this question, I adopted a longitudinal approach gathering rich qualitative data through multiple methods, to observe how the WBTC team performed their roles over time. I took an interactionist perspective that considered roles as non-fixed positions collectively constructed from different elements in individuals' social systems. I observed team roles evolving through the organisation's emergence and throughout its organising, stabilising and growing consecutive phases.

To start, I mapped team members' interactions with suppliers and consumers, where roles collaborated to alleviate workload and avoid role overload. The data led to identifying two organisational dimensions where the WBTC team roles operate in tandem: (1) an
individual dimension, engaging in dyadic relations with suppliers and consumers; and (2) a collective dimension, re-distributing role responsibilities to tackle contingent ventures needs while protecting individuals from role burnout. The individual dimension showed specialised types of relations categorised as customised and commoditised, leading team members to enact their roles in distinctive ways.

These findings suggest that although in the individual dimension, team members categorised their relations in specific ways, in the collective dimension, they did not discriminate any category and shared responsibilities and tasks with actors from a different relational type or motivation of their own. Therefore, in this study, roles appear as a malleable structure that despite being initially scripted, were flexible to effectively reconfigure, allowing the team to act as a firmly integrated block in the face of change.

These findings deepen our understanding on how different roles operate within creative teams. From theory, this research extends contemporary organisational role theory from a dynamic process perspective, extending our understanding on how roles shape and articulate in small teams as ventures evolve, showing how flexibility is vital to protect team members from suffering from role overload and for small teams to navigate multilevel network relations, which are critical for organisational survival and growth.

Keywords: Organisational roles, emergent ventures, creative industries, brokerage.
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To Nancy.
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1 CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter I start by laying out the research topic and presenting the research question it will examine, providing an overview of the research context and the empirical setting. I also present the philosophical paradigms and research strategy followed in this research and explain the methodological approach to investigating We Built this City (WBTC) venture team roles. By the end of this chapter, I argued the validity and reliability of this research, explaining ethical elements considered. The chapter close by describing the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Personal motivation driving this research

I was motivated to explore creative retail venture practices from my professional side and previous working experience as a graphic designer and entrepreneur. As a designer, I am passionate about creativity and all forms of artistic expression and, therefore, naturally drawn to and curious about the creative industries. As a former entrepreneur in the creative sector with a failed business behind me, I understand the importance and complexity of creative entrepreneurial processes and networks. While still standing, my one-woman-band venture relied on a series of indispensable actors, among which independent design shops, where I showcased and sold my products, were fundamental for the survival of my venture. Strangely, the shops' performance differed despite sharing many similarities, like being led by a reduced group of people; stocking similar goods; having standard terms and conditions with suppliers and reaching out to a reasonably homogeneous customer. My venture crashed when my best-selling shop, Cómodo, closed, leaving me and at least 150 other creative entrepreneurs with a significant hole in our revenue. Cómodo was the most profitable shop on my list, which left me puzzled about what went wrong with them. The hope of gaining valuable insights from the
European creative sector led me to do a case study on We Built this City (WBTC), a venture akin to Cómodo in the UK\(^1\). I intended that an in-depth look into this organisation would further my understanding and contribute to inspiring new strategies that result in improving public instruments and programmes supporting creative entrepreneurs in Chile.

### 1.3 Research topic and research question

Creative entrepreneurial ventures acting as brokers rely on networks to cope with lack of resources and limited access to markets (Bilton, 2010; Higgs et al., 2008; Schweinbacher & Larralde, n.d.; Townley et al., 2009; Uzzi, 1997) From a process perspective, brokerage is defined as “the process of connecting actors in systems of social, economic, or political relations to facilitate access to valued resources” (Stovel, Golub and Milgrom, 2011:141), and therefore represent an essential actor in creative communities that if correctly managed, can help numerous artists and designers to commercialise their creative goods and make a living that allow them to follow their true passion and talents in life.

Hence the potential importance of retail ventures performing brokerage activities in the creative industries, with this study, I will focus on team performance from the lens of role theory, to understand how roles shape, evolve, and articulate to perform these activities by taking an in-depth look into WBTC, an emergent venture from the creative sector.

Organisational role literature has mainly studied roles from psychological and sociological perspectives that cannot comprehensively explain changing contexts where team roles need to adapt. This shows a gap in understanding how roles unfold, encompassing the dynamic development of organisations over time.

Organizational theory examines individuals’ roles within organisations (Wickham and Parker, 2007). This literature stream divides into classic and contemporary

\(^1\) The similarity between We Built This City (WBTC), the UK venture from this research and Cómodo, the broker venture based in Chile, is reflected in appendix 2 where similarities like team size and strategic location with high customer footfall are described.
perspectives that differ in their approach to organisational roles. As previously outlined, classic organisational role theory concentrates on hierarchical, scripted and task-oriented roles (Biddle, 1986) based on principles of division of labour, where specific roles enable employees to carry out their tasks effectively (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Based on this principle, organisations define a set of norms that create social positions from which employees enact their roles (Katz and Kahn, 1966). This strategy, however, could be counterproductive when the employee cannot play the expected role.

An example is modern organisations showing conflictive situations where workers risk punitive actions if peers or superiors question their ability or willingness to comply with their work roles thoroughly. Besides, the dissatisfaction caused by mismanaging their work roles might bring decreased commitment and productivity that could foster absenteeism and even drive them to resign (Wickham and Parker, 2007). These problems expose weaknesses in the classic organisational role theory, where issues contingent on the employee’s reality demands a more holistic view of the conditions needed to perform work roles effectively.

In response to these problems, current role theory adopts a more integrative view that considers factors affecting workers both within and outside the workplace. This avenue aligns with HR management research investigating how to improve employees’ role management (Boles, Wood and Johnson, 2003; de Luis Carnicer et al., 2004; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). Wickham and Parker (2007) discuss different aspects of an employee’s life. These authors here suggest a broader approach to role theory that is more fit for current working environments due to the complexity increasing over the last four decades from societal changes. Changes include shifts from the traditional nuclear family to more diverse family schemes (Thompson and Prottas, 2005), expanded diversity in the workforce from women’s higher participation (Nordenmark, 2002), and the effects of technological advances that are drastically impacting work routines and processes (Wickham and Parker, 2007; Moshiri and Simpson, 2011).

The impact of these changes is explored in depth in literature streams concerned with maintaining healthy lifestyle conditions and utilising work-life balance (Mellor and Milyo, 2001; Boles, Wood and Johnson, 2003; Smithson and Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). In this field, evidence shows the ability of workers to perform their roles successfully correlates with satisfaction and stable work effectiveness (Heimer and
Matsueda, 1994). This describes valuable contributions to understanding organisational roles from an individual perspective.

To deepen this discussion, Chapter 2 will include a literature review based on role theory, presenting a brief overview of classic role theory, showing different lenses for understanding roles from functional, structural, symbolic and cognitive foci. Also, key concepts of role will be revised in this section to clarify fundamental elements in play in the day-to-day functions and development of roles; and finally, this chapter, will deepen on the concept of agency, and how it can have an important part in the understanding of contemporary role theory and practice.

Despite all previous contributions described, there is still a gap for deeper understanding of how roles are enacted, not only individually but also collectively, within dynamic functioning systems. This research aims to shorten this gap by focusing on agentic actions of team members of the organisation who adapted their roles to meet both individual and organisational challenges. To explain this phenomenon, we ask the question of how WBTC team enact their role to successfully perform brokerage relations within the venture's networks. With this, I not only hope to shed light to the complex process of broker’s team performance in the creative sector, but also expect to provide some clues that help understand how teams behave to tackle complex processes like the one observed, more broadly.

1.4 Research context

1.4.1 Emergence and early development of the creative industries in the UK

The creative industries were officially established as a sector in the UK as part of a governmental strategy to reconfigure the former Cultural Industry into a new, broader creative industry (DCMS, 1998). With this, the previous cultural sector, composed of traditional and heavily subsidised sub-sectors such as the theatre and the arts, was fused under the broader umbrella of creativity with emerging sectors based on new technologies like video games. The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) defined the creative industry as 'those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation
and exploitation of intellectual property (DCMS, 2001:5); and divided this sector into thirteen sub-sectors\(^2\) (DCMS, 1998).

In time, the DCMS original classification was subject to several modifications (DCMS, 2011, 2013, 2015), partly due to the myriad composition of this group (Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2016a) and from the elusive conceptual understanding of \textit{creativity}, which is a challenging construct to grasp (Slavich and Svejenova, 2016; Manzoni and Caporarello, 2017; Lampel, Lant and Shamsie, 2000; Caves, 2000; DeFillippi, Grabher and Jones, 2007). Significant changes arose in a report released in 2015 (DCMS, 2015), where methodological issues led to re-shaping the sector into nine new groups\(^3\) (Bakhshi, Hargreaves and Mateos-Garcia, 2013). This document developed a unique \textit{creative intensity concept}, which more accurately showed creative workers' participation in the economy. This new measure, accounting for a significant number of workers filling job positions in economic sectors different from the creative industries (DCMS, 2011; Hearn and Bridgstock, 2014), unveiled how deeply rooted the creative workforce was in the broader economy and the opportunity this represented to forge strategic linkages with more traditional industries (Freeman, 2007).

This broader involvement in the economy justified a growing interest and policy efforts from the UK government to support the creative sector, where recognised organisations (United Nations, 2008; Nesta, 2008; Bop Consulting, 2010) and numerous academics (Potts, 2009; Hautamäki et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2004; Bakhshi et al., 2013a; Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2011) have made substantial efforts to expand our understanding and move this sector forward. These efforts are also boosted by evidence stating that creative firms produce more innovative outcomes than any other

\textsuperscript{2} According to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (1998), these are the original 13 sectors comprising the Creative Industries in the UK, advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software design, TV and radio.

\textsuperscript{3} According to the Creative Industries Economic Estimates Statistical Release report (2015) the Creative Industries are divided into nine groups: Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design (product, fashion and graphic design); Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography; IT, Software and Computer Services; Publishing; Museum, Galleries and Libraries; Music, Performing and Visual Arts.
industry (Bakhshi and McVittie, 2009; Nesta, 2008; Bakhshi). This is highly relevant given that innovation is considered vital by the UK government for improving the economic competitiveness and productivity of the country (Department for Business, 2013; Cunningham and Cutler, 2004). All the above places the creative industries in an advantageous position for the future UK policy agenda for its potential to spread innovation to non-creative sectors by working in partnerships (Trüby, Rammer and Müller, 2008; Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie, 2008).

1.4.2 The creative industries' reliance on networks

The previous sub-section outlined the advantages of establishing cross-industry partnerships between innovative and non-creative businesses. Still, to explain the Creative Industries' dependence on networks, we need to start by considering the impact that globalisation and the increasing technological expansion have had over the last few decades, which ultimately disrupted industrial spheres, are shaping how markets operate and the way we participate within them (Levy, Sissons and Holloway, 2011). In this scenario, a new economy was born from the accelerated string of technological advances that revolutionised communications through the use of the internet (Mandeville, 2005), giving birth to the new paradigm of a knowledge-based economy, a brand new economy whose fundamental asset is knowledge (Rooney et al., 2003). The knowledge economy sits comfortably within the fourth industrial revolution⁴ that the world is experiencing, reinforcing the importance of shifting towards more innovative and knowledge-intensive paradigms that can add value to new ideas and innovative practices that fit today's more complex reality. The creative industries are in sync with this new economy for its singular ability to produce value from core intangible assets such as intellectual property (Hargreaves, 2011; DCMS, 1998), a solid symbolic brand value (Townley and Gulledge, 2015) and highly specialised human capital (Vallance, 2015), making this industry extremely knowledge-dependent and prone to establishing connections that provide them

⁴ The undergoing Fourth Industrial Revolution builds on the previous Digital Revolution occurring since half a century ago, and it basically states a more intensive role of technology that fuses the limits between physical, digital, and biological grounds (Schwab, 2015)(Schwab, 2015).
with constant inflows of new information. In the literature, highly complex environments characterised by a high degree of uncertainty lead organisations to increase inter-organisational participation in *networks* (Kranton and Minehart, 2000), where they establish varied connections to obtain the resources they need.

### 1.4.3 Organising in creative networks

Allen (1958) defined organising as a vital tool for achieving organisational goals, with characteristics like different grouping tasks to divide the work effectively; delegating responsibilities according to the necessary skills and ultimately; working together to reach the set-out organisational objectives. There are two ways of interpreting Allen's descriptions, one from the standardised division of labour of the Fordism model for mass production, and second, from Piore and Sabel's (1986) concept of "flexible specialisation", championing more fluid ways of organising work based on networks of specialised individuals. This last adopt a flexible logic that we already used to describe the creative sector in previous points, and it's also pertinent to explain the dynamics of WBTC roles.

Networks are complex social systems, broadly understood as a group of interconnected actors (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003b; Kanter, 1994; Stovel and Shaw, 2012a; Gould and Fernandez, 1989) through ties of different nature that enable an extended and more democratic participation from wider audiences (Borgatti and Foster, 2003). Interconnected actors absorb (Muscio, 2007; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002; Jong et al., 2008), interpret (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Hibbert, Siedlok and Beech, 2014) and learn (Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr, 1996) from each other, having an impact on organisational activity, providing new knowledge that transfers and adapts into new organisational capabilities. Therefore, networks as interconnected channels from which information flows, are precious for the knowledge economy in general and the creative industry in particular, for satisfying the sector's need to generate partnerships that cope with the narrow specificity of knowledge they concentrate for its highly professionalised workforce (Caves, 2000).

The knowledge specificity of creative professionals makes creative ventures prone to work with diverse creative individuals that can provide the varied skills demanded from numerous bespoke projects (Blair and Daskalaki, 2003). Moreover,
innovative networks primarily shaped by a wide array of these creative professionals commonly working under freelance schemes generating a big pool of highly-specialised potential partners (Townley and Beech, 2009). This facilitates adopting project-based strategies where creative organisations establish short-term partnerships with numerous individuals bringing together the resources and expertise required (DCMS, 2001; Bilton, 2007). Semi-permanent working teams are an example of this type of working model (Daskalaki, 2010; Jones and Lichtenstein, 2009; Blair and Daskalaki, 2003), for allowing a constant reconfiguration of both talent and skills demanded in their varied project portfolios, which help them cope with demand uncertainty.

The above describes a highly dynamic and flexible workforce. These features impact how creative individuals enact their roles; from a micro-perspective, creative workers need to be savvy in their skills but also need to work alongside colleagues with complementary skills to perform their roles collectively.

1.4.4 Creative networks and the mediating role

Collaboration is essential in the knowledge-based economy, where a dynamic exchange of knowledge through social interaction within networks is precious (Levy, Sissons and Holloway, 2011). As active participants in this new economy, creative organisations rely on collaborative practices to incorporate know-how, skills and resources to sustain and expand their businesses. Hesmondhalgh (2007:37) noted that "cultural, creative and artistic work is the product of collaboration and complex division of labour", arguing the importance of collaborative practices in the creative industries and suggesting they are a fundamental activity for innovative organisations to improve their performance and grow (Mandeville, 2005). Besides, evidence show creative networks are socially restricted circles and that relations within them are highly dependent on trust (Uzzi and Spiro, 2005b; Skilton, 2008), highlighting the importance of social capital in these relations (Bourdieu, 1984; Walker et al., 1997), which portrays as a beneficial practice in creative contexts. For this study, I will define collaboration as an accessible practice based on trust for small innovative organisations and creative practitioners with limited resources to establish generative linkages in their networks, to obtain the help they need for the multidisciplinary projects they develop.
All the benefits described give creative organisations strong incentives to form collaborative alliances of different kinds (Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr, 1996). However, this is not without challenges. Joint activities in the creative sector are complex for the power asymmetry generated by an uneven mix of organisational structures, with a small portion of big corporations dominating some creative sectors and a majority of small and micro-businesses populating the industry (Gander and Rieple, 2004). Another is the generation of numerous collaborations on a short-term basis (Townley et al., 2009), where creative workers need to orchestrate dynamic and bespoke collaborative projects effectively.

Networks need a critical strategic actor to mediate relations between individuals and organisations and their complex system of network relations. These actors are essential in the creative industries, where extant research has explained this role under actors with different names. Bourdieu (1984) described them as cultural intermediaries, framing them within a growing middle class educated and able to exert influence. Research on cultural intermediaries focuses on agency, negotiation, and power. It divides into two paths: the first between creatives and consumers interested in the creatives' work, where they mediate production and consumption (Bourdieu, 1986), and the second, as market actors that mediate between the economy and culture and are responsible for the qualification of creative goods (Callon, Méadel and Rabearisoa, 2002; Muniesa, Millo and Callon, 2007).

The mediating role has also been researched on gatekeepers (Hirsch, 1972a), focussing on their function to access specific individuals, organisations, communities or markets from their central position. This particular strand of literature explores the generative role these actors play in creative practices and commercial activities such as assembling semi-permanent workgroups (Blair and Daskalaki, 2003) and facilitating entrance to markets (Bakhshi, Hargreaves and Mateos-Garcia, 2013). Studies have also extended this scope by investigating the search and selection practices of gatekeepers in the sector (Foster, Borgatti and Jones, 2011), shifting focus from the effects and impacts of this role to more complex processes behind this activity. However, the most prolific research field is in networks and sociology literature under the concept of a broker. Brokers are beneficial in this setting for bridging disconnected individuals and organisations in highly complex and dynamic networks (Stovel and Shaw, 2012), where
they solve job-matching problems, facilitate exchanges of creative goods and services and coordinate various other activities (Caves, 2000). In the following section, I will describe brokers in more detail.

1.4.5 Brokers' internal and external networks

Until this sub-section, I discussed the brokerage process emphasising distinct behaviours adopted by this role. Until now, I referred to the broker as an "actor" without distinguishing between "individuals" and "organisations". Differentiating these two groups is critical for determining the setting and conditions in which the brokerage process will take place, where different scenarios would present specific network conditions.

There is a distinction between individuals and organisations. As single individuals, brokers representing themselves operate within one network category, their network, which would have blurred lines between their personal and work-related relations with other actors (Foster and Ocejo, 2015; Silva, 2016; Maguire and Matthews, 2012). In contrast, grouped individuals performing brokerage activities for an organisation divide their networks into two main categories: an internal network that includes team members, co-workers or other individuals working within the same organisation, and an external network that consists of all individuals and organisations that are outside of the venture but connect to it in some way (Edwards, Sengupta and Tsai, 2010; Kilduff and Tsai, 2003; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). I analysed WBTC's internal and external networks to understand the composition of the organisation's roles and the actors external to the organisation taking part in the brokerage activities performed. The findings section will explain WBTC's specific network characteristics in depth.

1.5 The empirical setting of We Built This City (WBTC)

The empirical setting of this research is a London-based organisation We Built This City (WBTC). WBTC was born from its sole founder, who was intensely involved in business management as director and unquestionable leader of the venture. The retail experience performs commercial activities in the design sector by trading art and design goods, initially within a pop-up shop in central London and later through an online shop. The venture has been active for six years and has significantly grown since its origins,
where its team grew from three to twelve employees. I found the venture at an early phase of development, which allowed me to directly observe how the roles shaped over time, tracking changes experienced by different roles. Moreover, the organisation's growing network led to identify over 400 creatives and other actors with whom WBTC engages in brokerage activities.

I selected We Built this City (WBTC) within the design sector, an independent retail venture. Creative retail experiences actively and systematically help organise a heterogeneous and sparse creative community (Bakhshi, Freeman and Higgs, 2013) and thus constitute a strategic entry point for understanding entrepreneurial relations in creative environments. Brokers of this type are small organisations that specialise in curating creative work, building a cohesive offer of artistic goods that facilitate their exchange by maximising the symbolic value of these products under the umbrella of their brand. In the design sector, these ventures represent a widespread alternative to commercialising creative work, where creatives can compete based on their talent and abilities rather than an already established position, which usually influences their acceptance in more mainstream commercial spaces. The latter makes these ventures an essential platform for artists and designers with whom they can build and sustain effective commercial relations that are mutually beneficial. I chose this organisational model for its capacity to articulate a sparse offer of creative goods, with its main goal and core activity being selling these goods. From this perspective, WBTC represents an appropriate setting to observe sustained brokerage relations for the importance these relations have in the systematic construction of their brand since engaging in successful relations with suppliers is critical for having a consistent curation that establishes a strong brand over time.

For all this, WBTC represents a rich empirical setting for observing how key roles emerge and carry out brokerage activities effectively. The design sector is an emblematic creative environment that highly relies on networks (Townley and Beech, 2009), which makes this context in general and the WBTC setting, in particular, a pertinent case to make findings from this research applicable to many other creative ventures sharing this same particularity.

Moreover, discovering WBTC at an early organisational phase made it possible to observe how it transitioned from a start-up to a more stable organisational phase. This
last enabled us to take a closer look at their initial challenges and struggles and follow how they made sense of these experiences in different stages of development. Besides, WBTC was an attractive choice in terms of location in Carnaby Street, as they are the only independent shop in this exclusive and busy street in the heart of London, operating alongside international consolidated brands. In this context, the humble start of the venture and the vital community-driven mission publicly stated from the beginning dramatically contrasted with the reality of this high-end environment. This immediately surfaced possible tensions that made the setting interesting for potentially observing conflictive motivations in the relations established with the creative crowd they support while surviving in this highly competitive street.

1.6 Methodology

This study is qualitative longitudinal research based on a single case study with multiple sources. The empirical setting chosen is a London-based successful retail venture from the design sector. The primary data source for our research are 38 in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting between 1 and 2 hours. The sample chosen is composed of the founder of the organisation, eight employees and 12 independent artists and designers engaged in brokerage activities of the organisation. Although the focus of this research is on the focal organisation performing a brokerage role, the constructivist approach of this research, consistent with its relational view, leads us to collect data from both ends of the relationships observed, including the artist and designers with whom this organisation engages in this brokerage activities. The data collection took place over 2.5 years, starting at the early stages when the organisation was only five months old. This process was divided into 3 phases, doing a total of interviews, which included follow-up interviews with key participants such as the founder, key employees and independent artists and designers. I considered other methods, employing non-participant observation, document analysis and hand-drawn diagrams collected from participants by the end of the interviews. These diagrams, which provided a clearer understanding of the participant's networks, proved particularly helpful in clarifying relationships between actors. It portrayed their role and hierarchy within this system, along with other structural elements relevant to the dynamics of these actors' networks. This method also provided a more profound understanding of the study context and added a reflexive component to
the interview process when participants engaged in an internal dialogue while drawing these diagrams, which captured how these individuals categorise people in their network and what they are valuable to the most. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed through iterative rounds of thematic analysis. Grounded theory methods such as memo writing were also employed, which helped to keep a record of the different stages of this analysis and helped connect narratives from other actors. I used Nvivo software as a technical tool to facilitate coding the data.

A qualitative, longitudinal, and multilevel analysis aligns with recommendations from role, brokerage and team formation literature advising about approaching these phenomena as complex dynamic processes with different levels of analysis.

I performed a longitudinal case study research, gathering data from a retail venture in the design sector. I based the study on primary data, mainly collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the founder and team of the experience; and the artists and designers supplying them with creative goods, grasping both sides of the relationships observed. I collected this data over two and a half years at three different points in time. The first phase occurred when the organisation was one year and four months active; the second phase at two years; and the last phase at the beginning of the third year. I also collected 70 documents from the venture and the artists and designers. I explain the data collection in the following points.

First, I analysed our data through four organisational phases; Second, I mapped every team member's interaction with suppliers and consumers in each one of these phases over time. Finally, I codified these interactions by interpreting patterns found in our data to conclude how the founder and each team member enacted their brokerage role over time.

I took the data used to map these interactions from the interviews, observations and documents collected, which deepened participants' narratives, providing detailed information about the activities described in the discussions, the actors involved, and the timeline for all the activities explained. I used this evidence to illustrate scenarios that helped build codes that reduced the high volume of data collected by shaping first into categories and later into overarching concepts. This process is explained in more detail in the Methodology chapter.
1.7 Originality and significance of the research

Brokers serve a fundamental role in designers' networks bridging relationships that mobilise resources within these complex social structures. A wide range of brokerage studies explain this role's structural, motivational, and relational factors; however, these studies have been mainly investigated within separate and even divergent roads that often overlook intersections where they might converge. Recent studies found cross-points in different brokerage approaches, showing brokers reconcile contradictory paths to manage relations. This dynamic aspect is an essential feature of brokers.

Focussing on behavioural aspects of collaboration is particularly relevant for creative entrepreneurial contexts, where evidence shows a vast majority of small organisations (Bakhshi et al., 2013b) are highly dependent on an individual's actions, particularly on the founder (Bilton, 2007). In addition, research shows that entrepreneurial individuals often cope with a lack of knowledge, systems and resources by actions based on contingency (Read and Sarasvathy, 2005). This might be particularly relevant for creative entrepreneurs, who, on top of facing the typical challenges every small organisation face, also needs to manage complex strategies given the uncertainty of creative processes. All these suggest that understanding behavioural patterns that adapt to highly dynamic and uncertain environments could be a helpful approach to assessing creative, collaborative relationships (Manson, 2001).

From a practical perspective, the importance of understanding mediated actors about brokerage behaviour is significant, given that these actors seek to tackle problems that need to solve in broader network participation (Baker and Faulkner, 1991), in this sense, brokerage activities represent value for these actors only to the degree that their needs and expectations met.

Moreover, advancing knowledge of effective practices of retail organisations in broker roles could significantly contribute to the sector's development. It's worth mentioning the vital role of governmental and non-governmental organisations supporting the creative industries to disseminate these learnings by taking the lead in educating visionary founders and their teams to develop the necessary skill set to improve their practices successfully. I firmly believe that research clarifying effective organisational procedures can lead to productive mediating activities, together with the engagement of these critical partners. Findings from this research could translate into a
valuable contribution to the large population of entrepreneurial workers in the creative sector and strengthen the creative industries where they participate and collectively build together.

Lastly, a relational approach looking at actors engaged in dynamic intra-organisational processes (Emirbayer, 1997) that can clarify how different brokerage views work together represents an effective research avenue to further our knowledge of brokers. The above also suggested that an inward idea of how brokerage relationships develop within organisations could provide valuable clues for the broader understanding of brokerage processes.

1.8 Contributions to the literature

This study addresses roles from two different dimensions show the journey entrepreneurial ventures in the creative sector transit to effectively navigate their networks from emergence and consequent growing phases.

The main contribution from this research is to contemporary role literature. From an interactionist perspective, this study clarifies how roles are claimed collectively in addition to individually, helping sort organisational challenges from the venture’s growth, explaining reconfiguration of roles as a collective effort of teams to tackle brokerage activities. This study also contributes to the understanding of organisational brokerage as a collective process developed by specialized roles for dyadic relations, which, through role coordination, share information that facilitates sustaining brokerage relations with suppliers and consumers from the venture’s networks. Lastly, this study can also make a contribution to understanding how teams come to be and evolve to sustain effective relations within their networks.

1.9 Thesis structure by chapters

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of this research, explaining my motivation for exploring the research topic and question in the context described. In this chapter WBTC is introduced as the empirical setting for this study. The methodology employed is outlined. By the end of this chapter, I argue the originality and significance of this study ending with the contributions this research makes to the previous body of knowledge. Chapter 2 - provides an overview of relevant concepts of
Role literature for this study. Chapter 3 - provides a conceptual framework for understanding the relevance and dynamics of the brokerage activities through which the empirical setting of WBTC is observed. Chapter 4 – lay out the methodology chapter where the philosophy and overall strategy adopted in this study to observe and analyse the WBTC setting is explained. Chapter 5 - compile the main findings from this study and Chapter 6 - contains the discussion that integrate these findings with the existing literature. Chapter 7 – bring this study to a close, summarising findings and presenting the contributions made with this investigation. Also, in this last chapter, research limitations are signalled along with recommendations for future research.

1.10 Chapter summary

This introductory chapter lays out the research topic of this thesis and presents the research questions it examines. It gave an overview of the research context, and the empirical setting intervened and presented the underpinning philosophical paradigms and research strategy. It also outlined the methodological approach to investigating WBTC roles and explained the originality and significance of this research, along with the ethical elements I considered. Finally, this section closes with the structure of this thesis describing all the chapters that comprise this body of work.
2 CHAPTER TWO: Role theory

2.1 Introduction

I will give an overview of role theory by reviewing different paradigms and aspects of the human psyche, behaviour, and social context, clarifying key concepts impacting role enactment from social elements, such as expectations, conflict, and change. I will also discuss the dichotomy of expectations versus agency, framing this discussion in classic and contemporary role literature.

2.2 A brief overview of classic role theory

Role theory answers how individuals expect to behave within a particular position in a determined social structure (Hindin, 2007). The study of roles goes back many decades, carrying an array of sociological perspectives that gave diverse meanings to what the concept of role represents. Biddle (1979), in his book Role Theory, lays out an overview of different views on roles from classic role literature, showing the various angles from which, the study of roles emerged. Here, Levy (1952), took a structural stance considering roles from actors’ position within a social system. Other scholars identified roles as a series of conditioned responses, as social norms themselves (Bates, 1956) or even as the values, attitudes and behaviour demanded by society reflected on the cultural patterns shared by the individuals within it (Linton, 1945). In this same analysis, different angles consider how to understand roles, for instance; as a separate class or external problem to the actor (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959); as what an actor does as an occupant of a particular position (Newcomb, 1950); or from a more macro perspective of how roles interact with its context (Parsons, 1951). Moreover, roles can also be measured from activities that impact or influence organisational outputs (Katz and Kahn, 1966) and expectations of other actors that engage in relations with them (Parsons and Shils, 1951).
All this show how the foundational theory of role provided multiple views from the social sciences discipline for its understanding.

In the light of such varied parameters and meanings, Biddle argues that conceptual understandings of roles must be flexible enough to include the wide range of phenomena studied around them; In addition to this, the author does not dismiss, but on the contrary, states all these perspectives as valid approaches, reaching his attitude to a role as “behaviours that are characteristic of persons in a context.” (Biddle, 1979, p. 56). Through this definition, the scholar takes a stance for an integrated view to understanding roles based on specific behaviours that can be recognised, from their similarity to others, within a particular context that includes a precise place and time. Although concise, this definition comprises four key concepts – behaviour, characteristics, person, and context – which should be explored to understand how roles unfold.

2.3 Different lenses for understanding roles

The following points address roles from different lenses that show an evolution in understanding this construct, from prescriptive positions described in the classic literature to dynamic actors constructing and reinventing their reality.

2.3.1 Functional role theory

Functional role theory considers roles rigid and prescriptive upon the shared understanding and expectations of a determined group of individuals. Roles, from this view, are normative behaviours determined by shared expectations of a group in a particular social system (Hindin, 2007). The functional approach to the role was first explored by Linton (1936), with the term fully developed after Parsons and Shils (1951) work. The operational theory states that individuals must learn and perform roles as expected. They will be held accountable for following the prescribed guidelines of a particular role and at risk of being considered deviants if the group expectations are not fully met. His view on the role was widely accepted until the mid-1970s, but after receiving numerous criticisms, it lost weight, and now few scholars take a functionalist stance on a role. Criticism of this structural theory revolves around the lack of clear-cut associations of specific functions of roles and associating them with particular social positions. Another problem was the instability of social systems, which makes it difficult
to predict if all participants will agree on the same set of norms and, by extension, whether they will concur on imposing sanctions. Another criticism is that roles may also respond to normative expectations not determined by the leading group or other cognitive processes of the actors performing the role (Hindin, 2007).

2.3.2 Structural role theory

Structural role theory frames roles within a bundle of expectations and norms (Biddle, 1979b), considering roles as scripts established by society, simply played out by actors. This structural view comes close to a functionalist perspective on the role by being also prescriptive for the individual, who will follow parameters dictated by agreed terms of actors with shared goals interacting in groups. Inconsistencies in this theory relate to asymmetries of roles within the group and how change adapts to roles. Another hole in this theory concerns what happens to deviant individuals who choose not to conform to the group's norms.

2.3.3 Symbolic interactionist view on role

Critiques from functional and structural role theories shifted role research towards more complex and multidimensional paths. In contrast, the interactionist view takes a micro-level approach to the actor's role, paying little attention to structural constraints from the social systems inserted, more concerned with how roles play out and how this impact both the actor and the others.

The symbolic interactionist perspective appeared from Mead's work on developing the mind and self (Mead, 1934). In this work, Mead analyses human characteristics through evolution, distinguishing the "mind" and the "self" as separate entities that work together to guide the human experience. In his theories, Mead states that human beings can navigate their lives and the world through an internal manipulation of symbols that allow them to review and ultimately choose a potential solution for removing roadblocks and solving problems. He also emphasises the human capacity to be reflexive, where individuals assess their actions to the point of treating themselves as objects that can take different directions within their reality according to the interpretation of the world around them. This reflexivity, says Mead, is what defines the "self". He also recognises that both self and mind are born out of the ongoing social interaction with
others. The theoretical base of this interactionist view is that roles are perceived and learned from social interaction with others, suggesting norms appear in this same way.

2.3.4 Cognitive role theory

Cognitive role theory minimises the relevance of social structures and positions, emphasising the importance of individuals and their behaviour enacting role focus on the relationship between the expectations on roles, the individual itself and his behaviour. This view has been advanced mainly in the field of social psychology, producing a high volume of empirical research branching out into several sub-fields investigating leadership roles and their relationships with followers from their group (Firestone, 1996); role-playing (Janis and King, 1954); role-taking (Mead, 1934); and the relationship of individuals and group beliefs (Benight and Bandura, 2004).

2.4 Key concepts of role

The following deepen a micro-level perspective on the role, explaining possible impact, consequences and dynamics experienced by individuals when enacting their roles.

2.4.1 Role consensus

In role theory, a consensus is understood as agreed expectations held by various people about a specific role (Linton, 1936, 1945). Mediation and negotiation theory investigate consensus in depth (Moore, 1987; Regan, Colyvan and Markovchick-Nicholls, 2006; Van Den Hove, 2006; Johansson et al., 2008), where scholars have explored tools for creating conditions that foster constructive discussions to reach common goals and understandings (Innes and Booher, 1999). Factors that influence consensus are based on similarities shared among individuals, which lead them to reach similar conclusions about the social norms that are appropriate and acceptable for enacting a determining role.

2.4.2 Role expectations

From a conceptual point of view, expectations are statements about other individuals' reactions (Enchi and Thomas, 2019). Expectations appear as a by-product of
agreed consensus on how roles should be performed, demanding a specific response that can be fulfilled or not by individuals in their roles. Expectations align with the understanding that an individual's behaviour responds to the limits and constraints of their roles. From this rather functionalist perspective, roles are defined as the group of expectations of external actors (Linton, 1936, 1945) from within the same social structure (Stone-Romero, Stone and Salas, 2003).

2.4.3 Role overload

Individuals perform numerous and varied roles. Role overload takes place when individuals are not capable of completing all the roles that are expected of them (Stone-Romero, Stone and Salas, 2003). The result of role overload can be psychological problems such as stress, which have been addressed through empirical research to assess the benefits and drawbacks of enacting multiple roles (Hecht, 2001; Coverman, 1989). An everyday context for this type of research concerns gender, where women's roles are investigated from the interplay of motherhood, housework and professional work, highlighting tensions among these roles and the effects this overlap has on the mental well-being of these individuals (McBride, 1990).

2.4.4 Role strain

Role strain, or role pressure, is strongly related to role overload and conflict. Hindin (2007) defines role strain as "the difficulty of meeting the normative expectations of the roles that an individual either chooses or is pressured to play" (2007:2). In terms of role conflict, it occurs when individuals' ideas and preferences do not match the expectations and opinions of others. A conflict can also arise when individuals accept roles surpassing their capacities (Hindin, 2007). Role strain can also be found through conflict when an individual in the role of an academic professor is constantly subject to the tension of actively participating in research projects and dedicating considerable time to teaching (Hindin, 2007). The latter might present problems in the amount of time dedicated to each task, making full compliance with all aspects of their role impossible.

2.4.5 Role change

Role change presents a normal cycle experienced by individuals where they have to adapt repeatedly according to environmental needs and expectations from their social
circle. Based on Mead’s (1934) social psychologist, Stryker (2008:17) states that “society emerges out of interaction and shapes self, but self-shapes interaction, playing back on society.” Society is in perpetual flux and subject to constant change. This is due to the human capacity to adapt to unpredictable contingencies that demand the continuous creation of new processes, leading individuals to engage in novel behaviours. In this context, roles adopted are malleable and constantly modified by individuals according to the circumstances they experience. The previous aligns with Lee’s (2005) theories on social relationships and change, with role behaviours changing according to the expectations of individuals to whom they are attached; many other scholars have also provided evidence to support this (Enchi and Thomas, 2019; Stone-Romero, Stone and Salas, 2003; Hindin, 2007).

2.5 Role expectations versus agency

I understand agency from Gidden’s standpoint as the purposive action that individuals have in shaping their roles, considering that they can reflect and tailor them according to their needs and possibilities (Giddens, 1984), having the ability and power to act differently from what is expected (Giddens, 1979). Gidden’s (1984) criticism of the deterministic perspective on a role is based on the belief that looking at a role in this partial way gives an incomplete understanding of social activities because role scripts appear as entirely written and the stage completely set for the actor.

An agent-centric view, by contrast, presents empowered agents who are knowledgeable and fit to act reflexively upon at least a partial awareness of preconceived conditions about their role (Mantere, 2008). In this same vein, Mantere (2008) explains the agentic avenue as coherent with social theories that are more sensitive to practice (Schatzki, 2001), arguing that the micro perspective in the agency view is deeply grounded in practice theory (Jarzabkowski, 2004a, 2005; Whittington, 2006). Examples of scholars adhering to this view are Floyd and Lane (2000), who analyse the relationship between market conditions and middle management. Here, managers need to adapt to contingencies from market fluctuations by orchestrating ideas coming from lower managers and championing them to upper managers to solve unexpected problems arising from the market changes (Mantere, 2008). The latter is based on contingency frameworks
demanding adaptation from organisational players to navigate market conditions (Miles et al., 1978).

All the above establishes the importance of dynamic agency in organisational contexts to adapt flexibly to respond to unexpected situations. In the following subsection, I look more deeply into how individuals use this agency by enacting the roles they need to perform.

2.6 A gap in contemporary organisational role theory

I argued for the relevance of an agentic perspective on role behaviour. Although classic role theories seem fairly logical in assessing and defining a priori criteria for building a bespoke workforce that effectively tackles organisational needs, other factors that could inhibit the efficacy of following this strategy also need to be considered. In this vein, technological, cultural and societal changes that significantly impacted organisational environments in the last few decades demand a reassessment of how roles are determined and enacted within current organisational spheres (Moshiri and Simpson, 2011).

Contemporary organisational role theory criticises the classical view for oversimplifying roles and disregarding relevant factors influencing modern organisations. Here, several scholars argue that role-taking within organisations is critical for understanding the current reality of work roles (Biddle, 1986; George, 1993; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). Role-taking postulates that individuals observe themselves from the perspective of others and model their actions to successfully navigate social transactions (Heimer and Matsueda, 1994). Stryker (2008:17) also found that communication enables “role-taking and communication rests on the interaction of common meanings among those engaged in the ongoing social process that constitutes society”. Moreover, there is evidence that employees enact their roles based on shared standard views that lead them to emulate the behaviours of their co-workers (Heimer and Matsueda, 1994).

In this same line, Baker and Faulkner (1991) reversed the order of Linton’s (1936) traditional views of roles as enacted from defined positions by arguing that roles are first claimed and then enacted by individuals, suggesting that an individual’s agency creates positions and the relationships between them. The authors say that concretised abstraction from these individuals through role enactment reinforces collective organisational action.
To this, I need to add current trends based on multitasking features that are commonly imposed on employees’ roles (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005), which makes role enactment more complex for two reasons: first, by increasing the demand for role behaviours that need to be articulated; and second, by forcing employees to manage multiple and sometimes contradictory expectations from peers and superiors (Jackson and Sullivan, 1990). The latter can lead to role-overload or role conflict, with which employees might cope in ways that might be detrimental to the organisation: by choosing which roles to enact; by underperforming the behaviour expected from their roles, or by disengaging entirely from the situation (Van de Vliert, 1981). This is highly problematic given evidence suggesting that reciprocal behaviour significantly impacts the way relations function, making collective activities possible (Heimer and Matsueda, 1994), for establishing effective dynamics among all co-workers.

These arguments show how role enactment plays an integral part in complex social systems like intra-organisational networks (Larson, 1992), where enacting a role within a new venture is a challenging task for workers involved in several organisational processes on collective coordination. The previous exposes a gap in organisational role theory that primarily investigated roles within organisations at the individual level of analysis from psychological and sociological perspectives that cannot explain how role enactment unfolds in time, nor how it contributes to the effective functioning of a new venture—advancing role theory from a more dynamic perspective that considers these processes providing clues about how those within new experiences enact their roles individually but also collectively, broadening our understanding about how entrepreneurial ventures. Addressing this gap extends contemporary organisational role theory by shedding light on how roles within a new venture emerge, function and adapt alongside the new venture’s challenges.

2.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I presented role theory as the science investigating how individuals expect to behave within a particular position in determining social structures (Hindin, 2007). I explored initial traditional interpretations of roles from a functional perspective, defining them from an objectivist view, showing roles as pre-defined and subject to the expectations of their social group. In contrast, I also explored a more dynamic and
relational approach to different behaviours shifting, suggesting individual’s behaviour can be understood through others' expectations. Also, comprehensive discussion of organisational role provided a theory to contextualise salient aspects of role literature for the context of the study.

In this chapter, I explained concepts that help understand role from a micro-level perspective, emphasising different factors impacting role behaviour. Furthermore, I also explained an agentic, interactionist perspective on the role. Finally, I discussed the differences between classic and contemporary organisational role theory, exposing a gap in the understanding of role-taking in the workplace regarding how contributions from these theoretical streams come together in comprehensive explanations of how roles are shaped and performed collectively in organisational teams.
3 CHAPTER THREE: Brokerage Processes in the Creative Industries

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide context to our study phenomenon by clarifying concepts considered in exploring and assessing WBTC team roles. First, I present an overview of the creative industries context, explaining specific characteristics of this sector and emphasising its reliance on networks through collaborative practices. Second, the study deepens into the figure of the broker as a strategic mediating actor in these networks, explaining the theoretical underpinnings and behavioural aspects of the contradictory and complementary ways in which they can choose to enact brokerage relations. Thirdly, I explain how creative teams organise work through dynamic models that allow them to assemble the multiple skills that creative work demands.

3.2 An overview of the creative industries

3.2.1 Emergence and early development of the creative industries in the UK

The creative industries were officially established as a sector in the UK as part of a governmental strategy to reconfigure the former Cultural Industry into a new, broader creative industry (DCMS, 1998). With this, the previous cultural sector, composed of traditional and heavily subsidised sub-sectors such as the theatre and the arts, was fused under the broader umbrella of creativity with emerging sectors based on new technologies like video games. The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) defined the creative industry as ‘those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation
and exploitation of intellectual property (DCMS, 2001:5); and divided this sector into thirteen sub-sectors\(^5\) (DCMS, 1998).

In time, the DCMS original classification was subject to several modifications (DCMS, 2011, 2013, 2015), partly due to the myriad composition of this group (Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2016a) and from the elusive conceptual understanding of creativity, which is a challenging construct to grasp (Slavich and Svejenova, 2016; Manzoni and Caporarello, 2017; Lampel, Lant and Shamsie, 2000; Caves, 2000; DeFillippi, Grabher and Jones, 2007). An example of this is significant changes in a report released in 2015 (DCMS, 2015), where methodological issues led to the reshaping of the sector into nine new groups\(^6\) (Bakhshi, Hargreaves and Mateos-Garcia, 2013). This document developed a unique creative intensity concept, which more accurately showed creative workers’ participation in the economy. This new measure, which accounted for a significant number of workers filling job positions in economic sectors different from the creative industries (DCMS, 2011; Hearn and Bridgstock, 2014), unveiled how deeply rooted the creative workforce was in the broader economy and the opportunity this represented to forge strategic linkages with other traditional industries (Freeman, 2007).

This broader involvement in the economy justified a growing interest and policy efforts from the UK government to support the creative sector, where recognised organisations (United Nations, 2008; Nesta, 2008; Bop Consulting, 2010) and numerous academics (Potts, 2009; Hautamäki et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2004; Bakhshi et al., 2013a; Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2011) have made substantial efforts to expand our understanding and move this sector forward. These efforts have also been boosted by evidence stating that creative firms produce more innovative outcomes than any other

\(^5\) According to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (1998), these are the original 13 sectors comprising the Creative Industries in the UK, advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software design, TV and radio.

\(^6\) According to the Creative Industries Economic Estimates Statistical Release report (2015) the Creative Industries are divided into nine groups: Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design (product, fashion and graphic design); Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography; IT, Software and Computer Services; Publishing; Museum, Galleries and Libraries; Music, Performing and Visual Arts.
industry (Bakhshi and McVittie, 2009; Nesta, 2008; Bakhshi). This is highly relevant
given that innovation is considered vital by the UK government for improving the
economic competitiveness and productivity of the country (Department for Business,
2013; Cunningham and Cutler, 2004). The latter places the creative industries in an
advantageous position for the future UK policy agenda for its potential to spread
innovation to non-creative sectors by working in partnerships (Trüby, Rammer and
Müller, 2008; Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie, 2008).

3.2.2 Creative industries’ reliance on networks

The previous sub-section outlined the advantages of establishing cross-industry
partnerships between creative and non-creative businesses. Still, to explain the Creative
Industries’ dependence on networks, I need to start by deepening the impact that
globalisation and the increasing technological expansion have had over the last few
decades, which ultimately disrupted industrial spheres by re-shaping how markets operate
and the way we participate within them (Levy, Sissons and Holloway, 2011). In this
scenario, a new economy was born from the accelerated string of technological advances
that revolutionised communications through the internet (Mandeville, 2005), giving birth
to the new paradigm of a knowledge-based economy. In the economy and new economy,
its fundamental asset is knowledge (Rooney et al., 2003). The knowledge economy sits
comfortably within the fourth industrial revolution7 that the world is experiencing,
reinforcing the importance of shifting towards more innovative and knowledge-intensive
paradigms that can add value to new ideas and innovative practices that fit today’s more
complex reality. The creative industries are in sync with this new economy for its singular
ability to produce value from core intangible assets such as intellectual property
(Hargreaves, 2011; DCMS, 1998), a solid symbolic value (Townley and Gulledge, 2015)
and highly specialised human capital (Vallance, 2015), which make this industry
extremely knowledge-dependant and prone to establishing connections that provide them

7 The undergoing Fourth Industrial Revolution builds on the previous Digital Revolution occurring
since half a century ago, and it basically states a more intensive role of technology that fuses the limits
between physical, digital, and biological grounds (Schwab, 2015).
with constant inflows of new information. In the literature, highly complex environments bringing great uncertainty like the one described lead organisations to increase inter-organisational participation in *networks* (Kranton and Minehart, 2000), where they establish varied connections to obtain the needed resources.

Networks are complex social systems, broadly understood as a group of interconnected actors (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003b; Kanter, 1994; Stovel and Shaw, 2012a; Gould and Fernandez, 1989) through ties of different nature that enable an extended and more democratic participation from wider audiences (Borgatti and Foster, 2003). Interconnected actors in networks absorb (Muscio, 2007; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002; Jong et al., 2008), interpret (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002; Jong et al., 2008) and learn (Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr, 1996) from each other, having an essential impact on organisational activity and providing new knowledge to transfer and adapt organisational capabilities effectively. Therefore, networks as interconnected channels from which information flows are precious for the knowledge economy in general and the creative industry in particular, for satisfying the sector’s need to generate partnerships that cope with the narrow specificity of knowledge they concentrate on for its highly professionalised workforce (Caves, 2000).

There are many ways in which generating partnerships represents an advantage for creative ventures. Bilton and Cummings (2010), stated the need for unfamiliar people, ways of thinking and frames of reference to produce innovative outputs, suggesting creative spheres feed on active inflows of external information. Also, Caves (2000) complemented this view through his *motley crew* principle, describing the creative workers as a diverse and highly specialised workforce, which impacts the quality and configuration of innovative products by bringing their own personal particular into the process and tastes. All this establishes a creative organisation’s need for external inputs to access the complimentary views, skills, and resources that their complex projects demand.

Moreover, from a knowledge transfer perspective, Daskalaki (2010) states that engaging in partnerships incorporates external knowledge that compensates for lack of know-how. Hearn and Bridgstock (2014) argue that this knowledge can be either codified or tacit and that its combination with the internal already available leads to new valuable
Cohen and Levinthal (1990) described this ability to incorporate new knowledge as *absorptive capacity*, a concept later expanded by Zahra and George (2002), defined as a group of organisational practices performed to obtain, assimilate and transform external inputs into new knowledge that becomes part of the know-how of the firm. The absorptive capacity concept shows that the value of collaborative processes lies not only in achieving a common goal when developing creative projects but also in the new knowledge generated and absorbed.

Potts et al. (2008b) reinforce the latter by arguing that strategic relational practices from this sector consistently lead them to form alliances to develop multidisciplinary creative projects (Townley & Beech, 2009). Collaboration is the most explored relational strategy in network participation, a generative practice commonly used in creative environments. Creative entrepreneurial ventures rely on teamwork to cope with a lack of resources and limited market access (Bilton, 2010; Higgs et al., 2008; Schweinbacher & Larralde, n.d.; Townley et al. al., 2009; Uzzi, 1997). If correctly managed, resource scarcity turns into valuable competitive advantages that boost creative venture performance (Bakhshi and McVittie, 2009). The following sub-section will deepen into collaborative practices in the sector.

### 3.2.3 Organising in creative organisations

Allen (1958), defined the act of organising as a key tool for achieving organisational goals, with characteristics like: grouping different tasks to divide the work effectively; delegating responsibilities according to the necessary skills and ultimately; working together to reach the set-out organisational objectives. There are two ways of interpreting Allen’s descriptions; one, from the standardised division of work of the Fordism model for mass production, or two; from Piore and Sabel’s (1986) concept of “flexible specialization”, which champions more fluid ways for organising work based on networks of specialised individuals. This last, adopts a flexible logic that I previously used to describe the creative sector in previous points and it’s also pertinent to explain now the dynamics of creative teams.

The knowledge specificity of creative professionals prone creative ventures to work with diverse creative individuals that can provide the mixed skills demanded from numerous bespoke projects (Blair and Daskalaki, 2003). Moreover, creative networks,
largely shaped by a wide array of these creative professionals, commonly work under freelance schemes that supports this process, by generating a big pool of highly-specialised potential partners (Townley and Beech, 2009). This facilitates adopting project-based strategies where creative organisations establish short-term partnerships with numerous individuals bringing together the resources and expertise required (DCMS, 2001; Bilton, 2007). An example of these type of working model are semi-permanent working teams (Daskalaki, 2010; Jones and Lichtenstein, 2009; Blair and Daskalaki, 2003), which are specially popular in the music and film sectors (Davenport, 2006), for allowing a constant reconfiguration of both talent and skills demanded in their varied project portfolios.

The above describes a highly dynamic and flexible workforce. These features impact how creative individuals enact their role; where from a micro-perspective, creative workers need to be savvy in their skills but also have the ability to work alongside colleagues with complementary skills to perform collectively as a team.

3.2.4 Creative collaborative networks

In the previous sub-section, I mentioned collaboration as an essential practice in the knowledge-based economy, where a dynamic exchange of knowledge through social interaction within networks is precious (Levy, Sissons and Holloway, 2011). As active participants in this new economy, creative organisations rely on collaborative practices to incorporate know-how, skills and resources to sustain and expand their businesses. Hesmondhalgh (2007:37) said, "cultural, creative and artistic work is the product of collaboration and complex division of labour"; arguing the importance of collaborative practices in the creative industries, suggesting they are a fundamental activity for innovative organisations to improve their performance and grow (Mandeville, 2005). Evidence in the literature state that creative networks are socially restricted circles and that relations within them are highly dependent on trust (Uzzi and Spiro, 2005b; Skilton, 2008). More research highlights the importance of social capital in these relations (Bourdieu, 1984; Walker et al., 1997), which makes collaborative relations a beneficial practice in these creative contexts. For this study, I will define collaboration as an accessible practice based on trust for small innovative organisations and creative
practitioners with limited resources to establish generative linkages in their networks, to obtain the help they need for the multidisciplinary projects they develop.

Collaborative practices directly respond to the nature of creative work, where numerous academics have made essential contributions. In this area, Hirsh (1972) recognises the production and distribution of creative goods as a complex task involving varied processes bringing together creative actors to work collectively. Entrepreneurs rely on collaboration to cope with a lack of resources and market access (Larson, 1991). They can also tackle real and abstract challenges, such as dealing with the liability of their smallness\(^8\) by incorporating resources needed and expanding their creative potential by accessing fresh perspectives that lead to novel ideas with innovative outputs. Tackling these challenges allows creative ventures to widen their spectrum for possible projects and increase their innovative capacity, raising the value and desirability of their innovative products and services.

All the benefits described give creative organisations strong imperatives to form collaborative alliances of different kinds (Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr, 1996). However, this is not without challenges since joint activities in the creative sector are highly complex for many reasons. To start, it's an uneven mix of organisational structures, where a small portion of big corporations dominating some of these creative sectors engage in collaborative relationships with the majority of small and micro-businesses populating the industry (Gander and Rieple, 2004). Here, problems might arise due to the power asymmetry in these alliances. Another one is the generation of numerous collaborations on a short-term basis (Townley et al., 2009), where creative workers need to orchestrate dynamic and bespoke collaborative projects effectively. And lastly, there is the element of uncertainty when working with external actors in the organisation, where experimental processes usually take place, leading to unpredictable outcomes and, consequently, higher rates of failure.

\(^8\) The liability of smallness refers to the disadvantages of small organisations in terms of their lack of resources and in consequence present difficulties access to new ones, being more at risk of failure that bigger firms (Bruderl and Schussler, 1990; Freeman, Carroll and Hannan, 1983).
Networks need a critical strategic actor to mediate relations between individuals and organisations and its complex system of network relations. These actors are significant in the creative industries, where extant research has explained this role under actors with different names. The following sub-section reinforces the importance of mediating actors in innovative networks and presents different perspectives of this role described in the literature.

3.2.5 The mediating role in creative networks

The above explained the need for collaboration in creative networks emphasising the importance of orchestrating complex partnerships. Concerning this, an example that reflects the importance of mediating actors in networks is illustrated.

In point 3.2.1 I mentioned that creative firms produce more innovative outcomes than any other industry (Bakhshi and McVittie, 2009; Nesta, 2008), which shows great potential to spread innovation to non-creative sectors when working in partnerships (Trüby, Rammer and Müller, 2008). In this context, a Creative Credits experiment9 was developed, where non-creative firms were subsidized by the UK government to invest in creative services with the goal that these partnerships would transfer creative firm’s innovativeness to the traditional firms (Bakhshi et al., 2013a). Results showed that even though in most cases the partnership was able to fulfil initial objectives, most of these alliances were dissolved due to cultural differences hindering communication between the firms. The experiment exposed fundamental differences between these types of businesses, which reached a breaking point while interacting directly, suggesting that a third party that could have translated differences and managed conflicts might have been useful to sustain these partnerships further in time. Hence the importance of mediating actors as strategic pieces in networking activity.

Different strands of literature have contributed to the understanding of actors in mediating roles within networks. Bourdieu (1984) described them as cultural intermediaries, framing them within a growing middle class that was educated and able

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9 The Creative Credits Experiments was a randomised pilot study developed by NESTA in the city of Manchester in the UK, which fostered and observed the partnerships between creative and non-creative businesses in short term (6 months) and longer term (12 months).
to exert influence. Research on cultural intermediaries focuses on agency, negotiation and power and is divided into two paths: one is standing in between creatives and consumers interested in the creatives’ work, where they mediate production and consumption (Bourdieu, 1986); and a second path where they are considered as market actors that mediate between the economy and culture and responsible for the qualification of creative goods (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa, 2002; Muniesa, Millo and Callon, 2007).

The mediating role has also been researched under the name of gatekeepers (Hirsch, 1972a), focussing on their function to access specific individuals, organisations, communities or markets from their central position. This particular strand of literature explores the generative role these actors play in creative practices and commercial activities such as assembling semi-permanent workgroups (Blair and Daskalaki, 2003) and facilitating entrance to markets (Bakhshi, Hargreaves and Mateos-Garcia, 2013). Studies have also extended this scope by investigating the search and selection practices of gatekeepers in the sector (Foster, Borgatti and Jones, 2011), shifting focus from the effects and impacts of this role to more complex processes behind this activity. The most prolific research field for this mediating role, however, has been in the networks and sociology literature under the concept of the broker; brokers are particularly useful in this setting for bridging disconnected individuals and organisations in highly complex and dynamic networks (Stovel & Shaw, 2012), where they solve job-matching problems, facilitate exchanges of creative goods and services and coordinate a variety of other activities (Caves, 2000). In the following section, I will describe brokers in more detail.

3.3 Understanding the brokerage process

3.3.1 The broker

Brokers are network actors bridging two other disconnected actors and are considered key to the effective functioning of these social systems (Burt, 2002). Brokers are particularly relevant within creative spheres, which I established in previous points, and strongly rely on networks to obtain support and complementary skills to pursue opportunities and move creative endeavours forward (Bakhshi & McVittie, 2009; Bilton, 2007; Potts et al., 2008b). From their central position, brokers mediate relationships between creative entrepreneurs, products and audiences they need to reach. They also facilitate the adequate flow of the resources required to generate exchanges; and open up
spaces to innovative ideas for developing novel products and services that fortify creative markets (Burt, 2004).

The above identifies brokers as important actors enabling processes that support the development of cultural production (Lingo and O'Mahon, 2010), and as valuable networks orchestrators with the power to articulate a complex mix of relations and activities taking place within innovative social systems (Potts et al., 2008b; Spiro et al., 2013).

3.3.2 Main brokerage perspectives

From a process perspective, a brokerage is "...the process of connecting actors in systems of social, economic, or political relations to facilitate access to valued resources" (Stovel, Golub and Milgrom, 2011:141). Brokers have been researched from two main avenues that attempt to explain how brokerage unfolds: from a structural perspective that enhances the importance of the central position held by brokers in networks; and from an interactionist perspective that deepens on relational factors affecting the connections they establish within these networks. I will explain both views as follows.

- **The structural perspective**

  From a structural perspective, the literature highlights brokers' advantages from their network position, which grants them a certain degree of control over the relationships they bridge (Burt, 1992a; Burt, 2005). In this light, Simmel (1850) analysed triadic structures from a sociological lens, describing brokers as skilful actors who can benefit from their mediating role. Simmel explained brokers could use their central position to set actors apart or even turn them against each other, labelling brokers who sought individual advantages as following a Tertius Gaudens behaviour.

  Through this same behavioural approach, Burt (1992a) explained brokerage with his theory of *structural holes*, distinguishing brokers as strategic actors spanning gaps between two other disconnected actors to obtain benefits (Burt, 2001; Burt, 1992b, 2002). To develop his theory, Burt draws on Granovetter's work (Granovetter, 1973), arguing brokers' strategic position allows them to access high-quality information from non-redundant sources they bridge in networks. Burt's structural hole theory reinforces this idea, suggesting that brokers' position provides them with novel knowledge that leads to enhanced organisational learning, gaining new capabilities, and overall improving their
performance in their social systems (Baum et al., 2000). This brings brokers a significant competitive advantage over actors in other network positions that don't have access to this type of high-quality information.

The structural view and the Tertius Gaudens perspective on brokerage explained advantages obtained from brokers' central network position. However, these views lack deeper explanations about the nature of the numerous and varied relations these brokers establish. The interactionist view emerged, dealing with relational issues of the brokerage process.

- The interactionist perspective

From an interactionist perspective, brokers are actors mediating flows of resources and information between two other actors who are not connected (Fernandez and Gould, 1994). In contrast with the structural perspective, the interactionist view deepens into how brokers engage in relations within their networks and the impact they can have on the actors they bridge by working collaboratively (Obstfeld, 2005c; b; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005).

From this standpoint, Obstfeld (2005b) developed a tertius iungens concept and explained brokers in a more positive light than the Tertius Gaudens opportunisti view, arguing that brokers seek their benefit and can also aim to benefit the collective. The tertius iungens view aligns with an agentic perspective10 concerned with individual's actions and motivations shaping networks (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998), where brokers go beyond their central network position as agents who actively participate in the content and shape of the resources they mobilise within networks.

The collaborative quality of brokers under this view profoundly impact creative networks by making them more flexible and open (Caves, 2000; Howkins, 2001; Banks and O'Connor, 2009), improving how information and resource flow within them. The latter adds to creative settings being highly reliant on developing dynamic networks to cope with a lack of resources and expertise (Uzzi and Spiro, 2005a; Vallance, 2015; Bilton, 2010; Bakhshi and McVittie, 2009; Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi, 2008;

10 Emirbayer and Mische (1998:294) explained “agency” as “…inseparable from the unfolding dynamics of situations”.

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DCMS, 2017). All the above present brokers as critical contributors to more generative and influential networks in creative spheres. (Foster and Ocejo, 2015).

3.3.3 Brokerage strategies and behaviour orientations

Building on the brokerage perspectives presented, the following points will now deepen on the strategies adopted by brokers. I will outline information flow strategies taking place in brokers’ triads, give the brokerage orientation spectrum under which brokers behave and finish by explaining the dynamic process they can adopt.

- **Structure and information flow strategies**

  Although a social behaviour perspective on brokerage focuses on brokers' interactions rather than structure (Grosser et al., 2019a), there are operational aspects of information flow that validate brokerage behaviour (Stovel and Shaw, 2012a). Gould and Fernandez (1989) identified five types of configurations where information flowed differently between the broker and actors mediated. These are *liaisons, itinerants, coordinators, gatekeepers,* and *representatives* (Fig.1). Each of these types had a particular structural configuration and different motivations and goals to engage in brokerage relations which framed brokers' behaviour.

![Figure 1: Brokerage typologies. Adapted by Stovel & Shaw (2012).](image)

Figure 1 depicts where each triad member stands, showing their position from a social and structural context. In a *liaison*, all actors belong to different groups, for which the broker is independent of both parties. The *itinerant broker*, however, shows a different structure in the triad, where a prior connection between the mediated actors makes the broker an outsider in this group. Conversely, when all parties belong to the same group, the broker appears as a *coordinator*, where being an insider makes the broker a “local broker” rather than an itinerant one. Lastly, in the case of *gatekeepers* and *representatives,*
the broker is connected to one other party of the triad. Here the differentiating factor is whether the party introduced by the broker is an insider or an outsider, where gatekeepers would introduce an outsider to a member of own his group; and representatives would serve as trusted delegates from the group to communicate or negotiate with an outsider party (Gould and Fernandez, 1989).

The differences in this typology are essential since they expose biases that could influence the broker's actions. Despite the structural basis of this classification, it provides new grounds for exploring more profound aspects of brokerage relationships by clarifying linkages and associations brokers might have before engaging in brokerage activities, widening our scope of underlying elements behind these relations.

The following sub-sections will deepen into the content of brokerage relations showing a range of behaviours adopted by brokers.

- **The brokerage orientation spectrum**

  From the varied paths that brokers might choose to enact their role (Burt, 2002; Stovel & Shaw, 2012b) explained in sub-section 3.3.2, I contrast different strategic orientations\(^{11}\) followed by brokers. First, I deepen into brokerage orientations from the two primary constructs of the *tertius gaudens* and the *tertius iungens* views, establishing two opposites in the brokerage orientation spectrum to later present a complete behavioural scope with related orientations placed within this framework.

  On the one hand, the tertius Gaudens orientation, from the Latin verb “*gaudens*”, which means to separate, is a behaviour adopted by brokers to seek advantages in the lack of connection of the actors they mediate (Simmel, 1950). On the other hand, the tertius iungens orientation, from the Latin verb “*iungo*”, *which* means to unite or to connect, is behaviour brokers adopt to create new coordinate generative network connections (Obstfeld, 2005b). With this, I establish the brokerage behaviour spectrum on one extreme, the “separation” and the “connection” of network actors, where all nuances will be standing between these two concepts.

\(^{11}\) We refer to “strategic orientation” as the brokers’ chosen behaviour when interacting with the actors they mediate within their network (Higgins, 1998; Obstfeld, 2005a).
Unlike the tertius gaudens view, a tertius iungens view champions the broker’s ability to generate new connections and facilitate a generative resource exchange among the actors they mediate (Mu, Tang and MacLachlan, 2010; Tang, 2011; Tsai, 2001). This behaviour towards brokerage can strengthen ideas and facilitate collaborative projects among actors in their networks. This last is vital in creative settings where a novel combination of knowledge that can lead to innovative outcomes is a collective task and a constant requirement of this sector. Nonetheless, an open and collaborative attitude might carry some hazards because after establishing partnerships to work together, the broker could have little control over how the mediated actor’s relation unfolds, where they could choose to conspire against the middleman and turn against the broker. Regardless of this possibility, the risks assumed seems lesser than the benefits that generating new network connections can bring to brokers, which can bring several advantages and opportunities in the future (Obstfeld, 2005a; Foster and Ocejo, 2015).

Obstfeld (2005a) explained the following four brokerage strategies that range across the whole scope proposed, these are: separation, coordination, brief iungens and sustained iungens, where the first two come closer to the tertius gaudens side of the spectrum and the last two move towards the tertius iungens side.

As stated by its name, the separation orientation states the advantages of maintaining the actors' mediated disconnection. With basis on Burt’s (1992b) arguments on information control, this particular behaviour grants more protection to brokers in terms of coalitions against them that might endanger his control over the triad. The separation orientation, however, might involve manipulating the mediated actors, implying intense management is required to block information flowing between the two other actors actively. The latter exposes exploitation from this particular orientation that negatively affects longer-term partnerships. This last suggests that a specific type of behaviour is unsuitable for long-term partnerships. Still, it might be advantageous in situations where trust in short-term relations where levels are low.

The coordination orientation from Obstfeld closely relates to the “non-partisan” role described by Simmel (1950) as a mediator, for which I will use these two terms interchangeably. Mediation orientation is adopted when the broker acts as a link between either organisations or individuals who are disconnected or do not wish to interact directly. This strategy aims to manage information vital for parties to reach agreements
effectively. The latter would be impossible if the two parties were communicating alone of significant asymmetries or pre-existing conflicts. The broker's functions as a mediator would be to manage tensions and enable communication between them. This particular brokerage behaviour is comparable to Obstfeld, Borgatti and Davis (2014b) work on conduit brokerage, which focussed on passing on information between two actors; and to Foster and Ocejo’s (2015) tertius transferens that focus on translation and meaning-making functions that brokers can perform.

In sum, although part of the same tertius gaudens view, there are significant differences between the separation and mediation orientations, where the latter would need to make fewer efforts than the former for not having to block information flow between the two actors mediated actively. In this same vein, although standing within the tertius gaudens categorisation, the mediation orientation moves away from the opportunistic behaviour of the separation orientation because the intention behind this particular orientation is to establish relations that benefit the parties mediated and not to extract benefit from them.

Moving to the other side of the spectrum, I find that brief iungens and sustained iungens overlap in their function by having the same goal of bringing actors together, sharing a tertius iungens approach from a declared intention to connect actors within their networks actively. The difference between brief and sustained iungens is the duration of the brokerage relation. In a brief iungens orientation, the relationship established is short and maybe even limited to an introduction, as opposed to sustained iungens orientation where further coordination from the broker might be required, stretching the relationship in time.

This sub-section showed tertius gaudens and tertius iungens perspectives, which, although influencing all the orientations presented, represent only two ends of the spectrum for brokerage behaviour. Also, I identified other directions to deepen into more fine-grain conclusions of how brokers behave to enact their role in assessing specific situations.
3.3.4 Dynamic brokerage strategies

As shown in the previous sub-section, the tertius gaudens and tertius iungens perspectives have described some of the benefits and drawbacks brokers obtain by following each one of these or similar strategies. However, the way brokers purposefully chose one strategy or another to navigate complex situations has received scant attention in the literature. Given to complementary and overlapping elements from the orientations discussed, it is not surprising that these views do not necessarily cancel each other and could be used in tandem, where brokers might accommodate their behaviour according to contingency factors (Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010); or choose to use different behavioural orientations with distinctive actors from their networks to strategically achieve their goals (Quintane and Carnabuci, 2016).

In this light, Lingo and O’Mahony (2010) found compatibilities between tertius gaudens and tertius iungens brokerage orientations in the creative setting of music production. This study showed how producers switched brokerage types to manage the great deal of ambiguity in the process of developing creative projects in this sector, showing how brokers systematically leverage specific organisational needs with the constant switch of brokerage orientation used. This unveils an adaptative process in brokerage relationships, shedding light on how brokers reconcile distinctive brokerage orientations to effectively respond to challenges in brokerage activities. Lingo and O’Mahony’s work is among the few studies about the interplay of these two theories, for which more studies are needed to understand contradicting motivations in generative collaborative processes that are central in creative settings, where the tertius gaudens approach might seem contra intuitive since tertius iungens is a behavioural orientation closer to fosters innovation (Obstfeld, 2005b).

The above highlights that the brokerage role needs to be observed without prejudice or judgement for any orientation, but rather to maintain hindsight on aspects involved in brokerage relations and a permanent assessment of the brokerage process through a dynamic perspective where adopting mixed orientations might be necessary. A key argument for this is the danger of losing control, where for instance, brokers might benefit from adopting an orientation from the tertius gaudens side of the spectrum to avoid potential collusion in a collaboration going bad and with this protect their position between the actors mediated.
3.3.5 Brokers’ internal and external networks

Until this sub-section, I discussed the brokerage process emphasising distinct behaviours adopted by this role. I haven’t however clarified of how brokers look like, referring until now to the broker as an “actor” without making distinctions among “individuals” or “organisations”. Differentiating these two groups is critical for determining the setting and conditions in which the brokerage process will take place, where different scenarios would present distinctive network conditions.

A clear distinction can be made between individuals and organisations. As single individuals, brokers representing themselves will only operate within one network category, their network, which would have blurred lines between their personal and work-related relations with other actors (Foster and Ocejo, 2015; Silva, 2016; Maguire and Matthews, 2012). In contrast, grouped individuals performing brokerage activities for an organisation will divide their organisational network into two categories; an internal network that includes team members, co-workers or other individuals working within the same organisation; and an external network that includes all individuals and organisations that are not part of the venture but are connected to it in some way (Edwards, Sengupta and Tsai, 2010; Kilduff and Tsai, 2003; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). Actors in external networks for instance, current or former clients, suppliers, informal collaborators, and stakeholders in general. In the organisational context of our study, I conceptualised the internal network of WBTC as composed by its team, and its external network by the suppliers and consumers of the venture.

These networks’ specific characteristics and composition will be explained in depth in the methodology section in chapter four, but in the next section I will address WBTC’s internal environment by deepening into the way creative teams organise and function.

3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter connected three areas that together provided conceptual support to our study. First, I explained the creative industries context, presenting its origins and showing its impact on the wider economy. I explained how creative ventures organise in flexible teams by sourcing specific talent from their networks and providing context of
elements that might influence how creative workers enact their role individually and collectively.

Moreover, I emphasised collaborative practices from this sector's active participation in networks, explaining how the urgent need for a highly specialised workforce demands a constant inflow of new resources for creating its signature innovative products and services.

I identified brokers as key resources in networks that provide the necessary means to carry on complex social interactions bringing competitive advantages to creative organisations (Baker & Faulkner, 1991), emphasising the need for mediating actors that bridge other actors within these networks.

By examining a wider spectrum of behavioural orientations, I presented brokers as dynamic agents able to adopt different behaviours, with brokerage processes being more complex than initially described. With this, I suggest that effective avenues to reach a deeper understanding of how brokers enact their role is looking beyond absolutes, exploring varied behaviours on the spectrum between tertius gaudens and tertius iungens, due to brokerage dependence to elements in dynamic processes.
4 CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology of a research project is the roadmap of the choices made to actively investigate a phenomenon through specific sets of strategies and methods that lead to comprehensive results (Crotty and Crotty, 1998). This chapter will explain the methodological approach this study took to answer research question how the WBTC team enact their role to successfully perform brokerage relations within the venture's networks.

The nature of a “How” research question, as an explanatory question can be best addressed from narratives observed and by tracing phenomena over time (Yin, 2013a), led to a longitudinal case study where rich data can be obtained and analysed from multilayer qualitative data.

This chapter will outline the philosophical paradigms that underlined the research strategy and expand on the reasons for using a case study approach, emphasising why qualitative data is the best avenue to understand our phenomenon of study. I will also give a thorough account of the data collection stages and the analysis of this data; and finish the chapter by discussing research validity issues around the methodological decisions presented.

4.2 Research philosophy

In contrast to the natural sciences, the social sciences haven’t drifted away or disassociated from philosophical paradigms. In this field of study philosophical schools of thought are invoked to provide stronger investigative rationales and to validate the methods used to investigate social phenomena (Hughes and Sharrock, 2016). Marlow, refer to these paradigms as ‘directing us to the problems that are important to address, the acceptable theories, and the procedures needed to solve the problems’ (Marlow, 2001:7).
This said, criticisms have come to this field for the dangers of overemphasising theoretical perspectives in every aspect of research, warning of the dangers of losing sight of the goal of understanding reality through the clues provided by the phenomena the researcher sets out to observe (Hambrick, 2007). In this view, non-positivistic ontological and epistemological approaches, such as social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Shotter, 1993), critical realism (Bhaskar, 1975; Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010; Gorski, 2013) and phenomenology (Sartre, 1956), contributed to building theoretical and methodological agendas in organisation and management studies, validating phenomenon-centric approaches that involve theory after obtaining clues from the data.

Taking heed of this call for caution in using preconceived ideas and the need for looking at phenomena with fresh eyes, this research adopts a social constructivist approach to this research, to observe how situations unfold from multiple standpoints by different individuals. With this, the research adopts a more open perspective that moves away from more constrictive positivist approaches.

At the core of the social constructivist paradigm is the assumption that the understandings and meanings of social phenomena are collectively arrived at by groups of individuals (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Constructivism, sometimes called constructionism, posits that individuals collectively build meaning around phenomena. This implies different groups can produce specific multiple and sometimes contradictory world views about the reality in which they live (Gray, 2014), using language to generate and enact this common vision (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

Von Glasersfeld’s (1991) ideas on “radical constructivism” align with this epistemological stance. He states that the most valuable element of the constructivist approach is the claim that we do not need a traditional notion of truth to understand social phenomena and produce new knowledge. It is important to clarify that radical constructivism constitutes a strong criticism of the overuse of theoretical guidelines for its counterproductive attempt to avoid the inevitable messiness of understanding reality; however, it does not suggest an absolute absence of boundaries, a relativistic stance holding that within the definitional constraints framing our field of action, there is endless space for building infinite alternative understandings (Von Glasersfeld, 1988).

Constructivism means abandoning the positivist goal of discovering objective truth in favour of socially constructed meanings revealed from the subjects
studied (Crotty and Crotty, 1998). This approach is coherent with the turn that the understanding of strategy has taken by shifting attention from economic principles explaining strategy as something that organisations have, towards more complex actor-centric views describing these strategies as something that individuals within these organisations create (Jarzabkowski, 2004b).

4.3 Research strategy towards generating theory

Theory in qualitative research serves multiple purposes (Eisenhardt, 1989a), such as setting up epistemological guidelines, helping develop methodological plans, providing frameworks guiding the studies, and theory also, can be the product from the explanations given to our phenomena. (Collins and Stockton, 2018).

Although all these areas are important, when embarking on a research project, a theory-building focus in organisational sciences compels researchers to assess strategies for approaching and making sense of empirical data in the light of previous knowledge. In this research, I started from the assumption that generating theory demands the creation of new explanatory narratives that move away from established notions around our phenomenon of study (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). From this phenomenon-centric outlook, I set our course of action based on Charles Sanders Peirce’s pragmatic views on the nature of the scientific inquiry, defining this act as the enterprise of reaching reliable beliefs through resolving doubts identified around our phenomenon (Burks, 1946).

Peirce based his world views on his notions of human life as deeply grounded in three elements underlying our interaction with the world: our sense of self, beliefs, and doubts (Chiasson, 2001). Inquiries are triggered in our minds by information that dissonates with our beliefs, provoking doubts that motivate our quest to assign new meanings to our experiences (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). Abductive perspective represent a disruptive approach to investigating phenomena (Peirce, 1955). It is based on “clues giving rise to speculations, conjectures, and assessments of plausibility rather than a search among known rules to see which one might best fit the facts” (Weick, 2005:433). This strategy, doubts the engine generating different possibilities dynamically assessed and transformed until plausible explanatory patterns arise, making doubt the key element of the research processes (Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008).
Peirce championed the abductive strategy as a more inventive and feasible roadmap for building novel theories than other strategies that rely on stronger theoretical influence, such as deductive (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and inductive lines of reasoning (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012). Understanding the importance of originality as fundamental for scientific research, I chose an abductive research strategy that aligns with this research's social constructivist paradigm and relativistic nature. An abductive strategy expands our scope for exploring social interaction before theory involvement; this may help to avoid leaving unexplored promising but less obvious explanations of our phenomenon (Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008). Walsham (1995) argues that in qualitative research, fundamental processes like data collection and analysis are subject to multiple iterations where theories are revised to be expanded or discarded, reinforcing the idea that theory generation depends on multiple processes conducted by the researcher throughout the research (Blaikie, 2010).

To deepen our understanding of abductive reasoning, scholars have suggested explaining it in contrast with the deductive and inductive strategies (Shank, 2008; Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). A deductive strategy hypothesises around an existent theory, deducing this hypothesis by reviewing the literature and choosing a particular theory before collecting data to guide this process (Bell and Bryman, 2007). Alternatively, an inductive strategy first explores phenomena, selecting supportive theories only after the data has sparked new insights (Huberman, Miles and Saldaña, 1994). In contrast, an abductive discovery process will only begin with a surprising anomaly that will stir the direction towards fitting theory (Van de Ven, 2007). Czarniawska (1999) adds to this, going as far as to describe this process as “detective work” in the search of clues that can put together puzzling observations leading to build novel plots, acknowledging that the abductive process stands at a blurred margin in the scientific methods arena and arguing that discoveries through this process occur in the context of mystery about how ideas arise and become research outcomes. In sum, deduction states that something “must be so”, induction states that something “can be operationalised” and abduction merely suggests that something “may be possible” (Peirce, 1955).

Several differences are observed between these three approaches. A fundamental one concerns the role of the theoretical framework in these contrasting strategies, which takes a dynamic feature in the abductive option by being reconstructed upon the
fluctuations of the data and theoretical insights developed during the research process (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Also, abduction has sensory characteristics that demand the exercise of continuous reflexivity to surpass preconceived ideas and give way to novel conceptions (Hansen 2007). Moreover, in contrast to deductive logic where conclusions and hypothesis take place a priori, an abductive researcher would not do this assessment until several steps into the research process (Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008), after being able to construct a hypothesis from intensive data iterations sparked by a series of doubts (Peirce, 1955). The abductive strategy also distinguishes the fact that the researchers consider data to be theory-laden, but the specific theory explaining the data has not yet been discovered (Shank, 2008).

It is clear that an abductive strategy best addresses the issue of problem discovery (Van Maanen, Sørensen and Mitchell, 2007), to which Shank (2008) adds, abduction is valuable in social sciences as a potent inferential tool superior to “tried-and-true explanations”, on which deductive and inductive strategies build upon (Shank, 2008:1). Another strong point in the abductive process is doubt, which resonates with observations from several theories developed in organisational studies, stating these are approximations to theory with the potential to becoming stronger in time by demonstrating deeper and more effective processes that unravelled to be theorized in the future (Weick, 1995).

4.4 Research design

The research design aims to link all essential areas of the study to establish a roadmap for moving from initial questions to a set of conclusions (Yin, 1994). I created a research design to investigate the WBTC team based on the research questions of how team roles are enacted from emergence and how they evolve to successfully perform brokerage relations within the venture’s networks. These questions comply with requirements of specificity and generality for developing good questions to guide scientific research (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012). They will direct our study for investigating team role enactment in the brokerage activities of WBTC.

To answer our research questions, I designed a case study investigation of a retail venture from the design sector, an empirical context rich in network dynamics, to obtain primary data from the numerous relations within it. From here, I observed evolving
brokerage relations among the team and several independent artists and designers supplying WBTC with creative goods and assessed relations with customers and clients. The behavioural focus of this study led us through an exploratory line of enquiry, which is best achieved through a qualitative approach (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), to unveil nuances needed for a deeper understanding of social activity and the interpretation of participants’ accounts (Grant and Perren, 2002). Scholars support discussions about appropriate research methodologies for investigating social networks, with some claiming the only path of understanding is interpreting meanings participants give to their relations (Grant and Perren, 2002; Shaw, 2006). These claims justify adopting an interpretivist paradigm in this study (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), taking a longitudinal approach that observed these relations for two and a half years, to understand how they evolved from emergence to more advanced venture stages.

I also adopted an approach exploring intra- and inter-organisational dimensions, in line with Fuller, Warren and Norman (2011) to include multiple levels for an integrated view of how relationships unfold. In this same vein, I investigated the single setting of this study from different angles, including multiple sources with distinctive data collection methods. Here, our primary data came from in-depth interviews performed with the team of WBTC and several artists and designers from their network. Still, other methods were also employed, including diagrams, participant observation and the collection of documents. All these data were triangulated and codified in an iterative analytical stage to reach our conclusions (Eisenhardt, 1989a).

All the above described a research design based on one particular empirical setting with multiple sources, allowing an in-depth and multi-dimensional analysis aimed at constructing robust explanations (Yin, 2013a). In the following sub-sections, I will deepen the discussion on all aspects mentioned in this design, starting in the next sub-section with our case study strategy.

4.4.1 Case study research

Case study research is well regarded in the social sciences (Perren and Ram, 2004), used in anthropology, industrial relations and sociology (Meyer, 2001). Meyer (2001:329) defines case study research as a “detailed investigation of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, to provide an analysis of the context and
processes involved in the phenomenon under study”. With a case study strategy research can achieve different aims, providing detailed descriptions of empirical research settings and testing or generating theory (Eisenhardt, 1989a).

I adopted the case study method based on several considerations. First, several academics argue that the case study method is pertinent to investigate in-depth processes addressed by “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2013a; Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, 1991; Tellis, 1997; Huizingh, 2011). Also, case studies have the potential to investigate in-depth processes from within single settings (Eisenhardt, 1989a), which enable researchers to understand complex processes taking place within specific boundaries. This need is well established in entrepreneurship literature, describing complex multilevel processes that small ventures face when continually learning to run and push their ventures forward (Fuller, Warren and Argyle, 2008). This stage can be particularly difficult for ventures in broker positions, which are constantly involved in a wide array of relations articulated in complex networks (Simmel, 1950; Krackhardt, 1999). An in-depth look into WBTC helped gather detailed accounts of how roles shaped and evolved to encompass the venture’s development. From this perspective, adopting a case study approach allow this research to focus on several aspects of a single organisation, alongside a comprehensive longitudinal mode that can show how processes unfold and its outcomes (Bromley and Dennis Basil, 1986; Yin, 2009).

Moreover, from a strategic view on data, research based on a case study method involves either qualitative and quantitative data or a mix of both (Yin, 1994). Moreover, as Smith, Gannon and Sapienza (1989:41) argued: “researchers interested in specific details and nuances frequently must use subjective types of data”. Here, subjective data is data gathered from primary and secondary sources. The former includes interviews and other methods involving the investigators’ management and participants inference, and the latter independent observer techniques such as participant observation and other similar ethnographic methods (Smith, Gannon and Sapienza, 1989). I followed these recommendations using these methods in this category to dig into participants’ beliefs and actions, which made possible a deeper understanding of participants experiences. In the following point, I expand on the importance of collecting qualitative data for this study.
4.1.2 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research has historically been used for its revelatory capacity (Lincoln and Guba, 1989) to dive into individuals’ feelings and thoughts from an interpretivist perspective to understand meaning and processes (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Ritchie and Lewis characterise qualitative research as “aimed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, experiences, perspectives and histories.” (2003:3). Conversely, Strauss and Corbin (1998) define qualitative research by explaining what qualitative research is not; namely, something derived from quantification methods based on statistical inputs. This distinction places qualitative research in the interpretivist arena, methods include interviews, photographs, field notes recordings, memos (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), focus groups, and other ethnographic methods such as participant observation (Perren and Ram, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Bednarek and Lê, 2014).

Qualitative research received criticism for its practitioners' difficulty in providing transparent accounts, sometimes perceived as intuitive data collection and analytical processes (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012). The latter drives scepticism from academic spheres that adhere to positivist views and statistical methods. However, the dangers of lack of rigour is addressed by several scholars who developed detailed blueprints on data collection and analytical processes performed when working with qualitative data (Gioia and Manz, 1985; Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012; Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). This last, drove research built on qualitative data towards gaining more acceptance in several research communities like small business and entrepreneurship (Perren and Ram, 2004), education, nursing, information studies and a wide array of disciplines belonging to the humanities and the social sciences (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

In this research, qualitative data was key to unravel tacit understandings about the role of the team members of WBTC, where the researcher read between the lines of participants’ accounts to understand what drove the actions described. This led to the interpretations of underlying factors' patterns, bringing to the surface clues that helped explain our phenomena, following a protocol that allowed the collection, reduction, and analysis of this research's data. This chapter will describe this in more detail in the following sub-sections.
4.4.3 A process view from a longitudinal approach

I explained brokerage as a multifaceted activity that adapts to organisational needs and goals (Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010), showing that enacting this role might result in complex combinations that need to be investigated from a dynamic perspective (Obstfeld, Borgatti and Davis, 2014a). Our perspective on process focuses on the interrelation of actors rather than static measurable factors (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003a), acknowledging a dynamic exchange of information that flows through the team when engaging in relations with actors from the venture’s network.

Van de Ven (1992) states that interpretational processes can be observed by tracking elements over time, leading us to adopt a longitudinal approach to these relations this study, with three rounds of data collected from participants. Moreover, Obstfeld, Borgatti and Davis (2014b) argued that a process focus should consider the motivations of actors as well as the activities in which they engage during this process, for which the qualitative nature of this study was useful to understand what motivated each team member of WBTC and to assess how these motivations drove the participants’ decisions and actions I described and observed.

To observe how team members enacted their role I chose a creative retail venture that strongly relies on brokerage activities. Brokerage literature has explored what drive brokers to enact their role (Foster and Ocejo, 2015; Grosser et al., 2019b; Burt, 2004; Obstfeld, 2005b) and the different activities they perform (Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010; Stovel and Shaw, 2012d; Burt, 2004; Fleming and Waguespack, 2007), however, internal processes enabling brokerage activities are not clear. In this context, organisational teams are key to build a functional organisational structure that can manage brokerage activities with both their internal and external networks.

I also adopted a process view with an interactionist perspective on the team, considering team members roles as non-fixed positions creatively constructed alongside different elements in these actor’s social systems. Here, I identified two organisational levels where the WBTC team need to enact their role in tandem: first, an internal level where team members acted individually to deal with suppliers and consumers relations; and second, an external level where team members collectively managed brokerage activities based on triadic relations with varied external actors from the venture’s networks. To understand how these levels work separately and together, I studied how
the team performed at both levels and then bridged these results to understand how these they coexist to perform effective brokerage activities.

4.4.4 Considerations for selecting WBTC as empirical setting for this research

- **Criteria for choosing WBTC**

  The empirical setting for the study stands on theoretical and practical considerations. Theoretical considerations were related to our context of study in terms of the structure of the creative industries, described in subsection 3.2 as a heterogeneous and uneven sector composed of numerous diverse sub-sectors. The design sub-sector present more homogeneous inter-organisational relations among actors mostly ranging from micro to small enterprises (Mortati, Milano and Cruickshank, 2011), in contrast to others such as the music, film or fashion sub-sectors, where more commonly a small group of big corporations dominates a large number of smaller businesses and individuals. Selecting the design sector allowed us to target brokerage relations among actors with similar power dynamics, simplifying our assessment.

  Within the design sector, I selected an independent retail venture. Creative retail ventures actively and systematically help organise a heterogeneous and sparse creative community (Bakhshi, Freeman and Higgs, 2013) and thus constitute a strategic entry point for understanding entrepreneurial relations in creative environments. Brokers of this type are small organisations that specialise in curating creative work, where they build a cohesive offer of artistic goods and facilitate their exchange by communicating a strong message of the symbolic value of these products. These ventures represent a widespread and fairly democratic alternative to commercialising creative work in the design sector. All creatives compete solely based on talent and abilities and participate in equal circumstances. The latter makes these retail ventures an important platform for artists and designers with whom they need to build and sustain effective commercial relations. I chose this organisational model for these types of businesses' capacity to articulate a sparse offer of creative goods from artists and designers, which makes establishing a wide array of brokerage relations to sell these goods their core activity.

  The above led to selecting We Built this City (WBTC) as the empirical setting for this study. WBTC is a London-based retail venture trading art and design goods created by local artists and designers inspired by London and British culture. The venture
established by Alice Mayor, championed the idea of a platform for showcasing and selling creative work in a shop on the iconic Carnaby Street in central London. Her initiative gave UK based artists and designers a strong physical and online presence that gives exposure and helps increase their sales volume.

I was lucky to discover WBTC at an early stage, where an emerging venture was a good setting to observe how the team shaped and evolved their role from emergence. This allowed us to take a closer look at their initial challenges and struggles and follow how they made sense of these experiences in different stages of development. Besides, WBTC was an attractive choice in terms of their location in Carnaby Street, making them the only independent shop of an exclusive and busy street in the heart of London, operating alongside international big brands from the apparel sector. In this context, the humble start of the venture and the strong community-driven mission publicly stated from the beginning, dramatically contrasted with the reality of this high-end environment. This surfaced tensions that made the setting potentially interesting for observing possible conflictive motivations in the relations established with the creative crowd they intended to support, while surviving in this highly competitive street.

- We Built This City: creative retail broker

The organisation has been active since 2015 and growing since its emergence. Initially, WBTC commercialised art and design goods within a physical shop in central London and later developed an online shop. Its founder remains the organisation's leader and is strongly involved in the strategy and management of the business. An initial team of 3 people has increased to 14. Also, an initial network of 90 creative suppliers has grown to the 300+ artists and designers who sell their products through them today.

Regarding the composition of WBTC’s team, almost everyone has a creative background (appendix 5), where the design, art, music, fashion, and theatre sectors are represented. This was an important competitive advantage for the venture to effectively establish relations with suppliers and consumers, two fundamental stakeholder groups in their network. This fact strengthened their brand positioning the venture as run by experts in artistic spheres. This last is particularly important for creative ventures with specific knowledge and understanding about the symbolic value of creative goods (Townley and Gulledge, 2015), which is probably the most powerful tool for promoting artistic products to audiences.
WBTC started as a subsidised project for an eight-week pop-up shop\textsuperscript{12} in Carnaby Street. After successfully trading for this period, they closed the shop and were invited to return four months later, when another space opened up in the street. In the four years I observed the venture, it changed locations 6 times along Carnaby Street. They also eventually negotiated a more permanent contract with the landlord that allowed them to change their pop-up status to a 3-year contract. They developed an online platform to reach bigger audiences, boost local sales and sell their creative offer worldwide.

Over the years, the venture gained legitimacy by winning prestigious awards, receiving important attention and positive support from the media, and strengthening their brand and the shop itself \textit{(appendix 4)}. All this allowed them to become more efficient and professional and to present a consolidated image. With this, WBTC achieved its initial aspirations of becoming an effective window and commercialisation channel for local artists and designers, becoming highly valued stockist for the creatives participating in the shop.

Overall, WBTC’s specific focus on brokerage activities with numerous actors and the access it provides into evolving relations that encompass the venture’s development represent a rich empirical setting for this study.

4.4.5 Data collection

The longitudinal approach from this study led to collecting data in two and a half years. The data collection unfolded through a preliminary stage and three consequent stages that provided snapshots of WBTC at four different points in time. The following paragraphs describe the data collection stages, explain the sampling strategy for choosing participants and inform how these individuals were approached to obtain information from different sources.

\textsuperscript{12} A pop-up shop is a short-term retail space. These spaces are usually occupied by small brands that lack the resources to have a physical shop. In Carnaby Street, pop-up spaces open when shop spaces remain empty for a short period of time in-between leases. WBTC was authorised by the board of Landlords of Carnaby Street to use these spaces for a reduced rental fee.
- **Data collection stages**

A preliminary data collection stage occurred six months after the venture’s emergence. This preliminary stage intended to do a field recognition of the research setting and meet the founder in person, to foster a collaborative bond that would facilitate access. The first data collection stage occurred after the venture had been active for one year and six months. The second stage was when the venture was two years and six months old, and the third and last stage was when the venture had been active for three years. In the images below I show three photographs of the WBTC shop in Carnaby street in central London, where the evolution of the venture is clear throughout all the data collection stages.\(^\text{13}\)

*Figure 2: Evolution of the shop across data collection stages.*

![Data collection stage 1](image1.png) ![Data collection stage 2](image2.png) ![Data collection stage 3](image3.png)

*Source: We built this city website.*

The preliminary stage was informal, with the collection of informative documents about WBTC and one non-recorded face to face conversation with the founder of the venture. In the three data collection stages, however, multiple research methods were employed, including semi-structured in-depth interviews with key team members and a sample of artists and designers supplying WBTC with creative stock. I also collected

\(^\text{13}\) The photos illustrate how the layout of creative goods and branding elements in the shop significantly improved throughout stages one, two and three, where a smaller collection and a more polished design in general evidenced the professionalisation of the team, which significantly improved the retail standards of WBTC over the time observed.
diagrams and documents from these two groups and several non-participant observation sessions in all stages.

Figure 3. below illustrates the data collection stages described, in addition to four key organisational phases identified within the complete data collection timeline, categorised as “emerging”, “organising”, “growing” and “stabilising” phases of WBTC, according to the developmental stage of the venture.

*Figure 3: Data collection stages and organisational phase category.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION POINTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong> (Emerging)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop-up shop 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(November 2014 - January 2015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2</strong> (Organise)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop-up shop 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(May 2015 - April 2016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3</strong> (Grow)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop-up shop 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(May 2016 - Sep 2017)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4</strong> (Stabilise)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop-up shop 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(September 2017 - March 2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three data collection points described, gave place to the analysis of four phases in the evolution of the brokerage relations established by the WBTC team. The figure above shows each phase marking a pop-up shop's beginning and end. The first shop had already closed when starting the data collection for this study, therefore data from the emerging phase was gathered retrospectively from the interviews in stage two and archive documents collected. The second phase represents the second and third pop-up shops within the organising phase. This overlap occurs because these particular shops accounted for key roles emerging and getting more defined, tracking more effectively if considering events from the two shops within a common framework. Phase three started when the fourth pop-up shop opened, observing significant changes in how the venture operated in response to growth. Finally, the stabilising phase was contemporary to the fifth pop-up shop of the venture, from where data was collected in the third and last data collection stage, which reflected a more mature venture operating under more stable processes.
- **Sampling strategy for the study**

I carried out two different sampling strategies to find participants for this research. For the venture’s team, I performed theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989a), targeting mostly managerial roles that could give a deeper understanding of the functioning of the venture. In the case of the artists and designers, in the first data collection stage, did a random sampling (Morse, 1991), sending emails to the entire list of stock suppliers from the venture. In the second data collection stage, I better understood the empirical setting, being able to perform snowballing sampling (Bhattachjee, 2012) based on insights and hints from previous interviews and informal conversations. The latter guided me towards artists and designers that had a stronger bond with the venture that could provide more detailed information about their relations with the team. This strategy led us to perform follow-up interviews from previously selected participants and others with individuals I haven’t selected in the previous data collection stage. Lastly, based on knowledge acquired in previous data collection stages, the third time performing a purposive sampling, I reached more pertinent informants who helped refine preliminary categories to guide our theoretical development (Yin, 2013b).

I concluded the data collection when I observed significant changes in how the team behaved, which provided good scope for analysing how team members enacted their role. At this point, I had sufficient evidence of how these roles emerged, shaped and evolved at both an individual and a collective level.

- **Access to participants**

Once the venture was selected and its founder invited by email to participate in this research, two interviews took place with the founder & director. One brief phone conversation and one face-to-face interview were conducted in London in the preliminary data collection point while pop-up shop two was up and running. After this interview, the founder and director granted access to WBTC personnel. They authorised the researcher to perform non-participant observations in the events hosted in the Carnaby Street shop *(see appendix 9).*

To get access to WBTC’s network of creative suppliers, I send an introductory email inviting them to the study with detailed information about the researcher’s credentials, in addition to briefly explaining the academic purpose of the study, its conditions and tentative timeline. To facilitate access, I asked the venture to act as
gatekeeper, disseminating in their network that research was undergoing in collaboration. This last was key to give the study the legitimacy needed, facilitating trust and more positive responses.

After receiving positive responses from potential participants, a second email was promptly sent attaching a participant information sheet (*appendix 1*), with detailed information about the aim of the study and participant’s rights, and the researcher’s contact details. The email proposed an interview timeframe, suggesting the interviewee's workplace as the ideal meeting point, but remaining flexible to any other place of their choosing. After receiving this information, I scheduled the interview and documented it in an excel sheet with all participants' information. In general, it only took these two emails to secure the participation of both, WBTC roles and suppliers. During all the data collection points, only one person needed to reschedule, two politely declined and a number of them did not respond to the invitation.

- **Sources**

One of the main principles of data collection in case study research is to collect multiple sources, because evidence collected from varied perspectives facilitates depth and breadth in understanding the phenomenon of study (Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009). This strategy contributes to creating meanings from diverse sources (Goodman and Magidson, 1978) accessed through different research methods to capture various distinctive elements from participants experiences.

Consistent with the above, I followed guidelines applying to case study research based on qualitative data, beginning with the need to gather evidence from multiple sources where discoveries emerge from the triangulation of all the collected data (Yin, 2011). Additionally, I considered Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012) advice for applying multiple methods in case studies to achieve good qualitative research. Eisenhardt (1989b) supports this position, believing that this data collection strategy enriches the researcher’s views by strengthening new constructs and hypotheses from the triangulation process. I explain in more detail the multiple methods employed to collect data for this study.
4.4.6 Research methods

Research methods are researchers’ techniques to collect and analyse the data needed to answer research questions (Crotty and Crotty, 1998). I included different research methods in the research design of this study to access multiple dimensions in how WBTC team enact their role through the brokerage relations they establish. First, I collected a series of documents and media files that provided a general understanding of WBTC’s history and network. Second, conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews that represent the main data source in this study about participants actions and beliefs. Third, I performed a participant-led diagrammatic elicitation technique that deepened our understanding of the venture’s network and the role played by participants within it. Lastly, I performed non-participant observation sessions that grasped the participants' situational context and dynamics, providing a solid background for understanding their narratives. In the following paragraphs I explain these methods adopted in more detail.

- Documents and media files

The main objective for collecting documents in this study was to understand WBTC and the participants. Although documents are not primary data directly responding to research objectives, this method provides useful data in qualitative inquiry from an exploratory and content-driven approach (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). From a general perspective, the information gathered was useful to have an initial notion about the venture’s team composition, activities and network connections through the mapping of existent collaborative projects with artists and designers, which also helped to identify the most suitable participants to be contacted.

The 200 documents collected included information about the venture and the artists and designers supplying WBTC with their creative stock. These documents were taken from the venture's website, the artists and designers’ websites, third parties’ online press releases, and other sources described in table 1. The types of documents collected included: website sections with text and images exported as pdf files; photographs from online sources and taken by the researcher in the field; Instagram posts saved as images; articles from specialised creative blogs and online magazines also exported as pdf files; and streamed videos from online platforms and websites.

In the case of WBTC, content from the venture’s website and its Instagram account were explored along with promotional videos and talks from the founder,
granting insights about their core principles and clarifying the venture’s values, activities, collaborators and history. In the case of the artists and designers, I collected information about their professional background and ventures; the places where they stocked their products; the range of the creative goods they produced, and the range of activities they performed. In addition, I also had access to mentions about their participation in WBTC and other information that helped fill gaps about their relationship with the venture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: List of documents collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of document</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website screen shots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles of in-shop workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“About us” website sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online articles about WBTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles written by WBTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram screenshots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London creative scene articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of documents</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents were particularly useful at the very beginning of this research to allow a better understanding of the research setting: how the company emerged and what it had done up to the time of the interview. Additionally, throughout all data collection phases, information regarding more recent developments and current projects led to generative talks that showed landmarks and contingent situations impacting how team members performed in their roles. For this, the collection and analysis of documents took place throughout the research. They were updated and complemented with new information before returning to the field, mainly through the organisation's website, social media channels, and other relevant online sources.

- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews**

In this constructivist research, I aim to access participants’ perspectives - both explicit opinions and more subtle nuances - which reflect values and beliefs driving
individuals’ relations (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Martins and Terblanche, 2003). Here, interviews are a useful tool in exploratory research. I selected semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect the qualitative data required for this study, given that these are more suitable than structured interviews or questionnaires, which provide straightforward answers leaving little space for interpretation or novel insights about our phenomenon of study (Seidman, 2013).

The interviews performed yielded data in the form of both real-time and retrospective accounts from the WBTC team as well as artists and designers from their network. I performed 36 semi-structured in-depth interviews with the founder of WBTC, eight people from the WBTC team and 14 artists and designers. These were face-to-face meetings, except for four Skype meetings. In general terms, the interviews lasted between 35 minutes and two hours, which summed up to 48 hours and 56 minutes in total. The interviews were conducted in: the WBTC shop, WBTC’s office, various coffee shops and pubs chosen by participants, and in the artists’ and designers’ studios. After the interviews, the researcher wrote notes that described each experience, including impressions, unanswered questions and other relevant observations. The founder of the venture and two other key team members were interviewed in all data collection phases, providing a strong continuity in the narratives gathered. Five additional team members were interviewed on a one-off basis throughout different phases. The tables below show all interview participants divided into two groups, (1) the team and (2) the artists and designers. The tables clarify the data collection stages in which participants were interviewed, the time each interview lasted, and the overall interview time for each group.

**Table 2: Team interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational role and name</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 1</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 2</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Founder &amp; director (Alice)</td>
<td>1:53 hrs.</td>
<td>0:53 hrs.</td>
<td>1:40 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Product buyer (Olivia)</td>
<td>1:16 hrs.</td>
<td>1:20 hrs.</td>
<td>2:13 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Marketing &amp; communications (Adam)</td>
<td>1:45 hrs.</td>
<td>1:27 hrs.</td>
<td>1:04 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Art &amp; stationery buyer (Katy)</td>
<td>1:13 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Shop manager (Liv)</td>
<td>1:11 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Shop manager assistant (Amelia)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:44 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Former shop assistant manager (Nick)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:48 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Freelance worker (Emily B.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:49 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Artists and designers’ interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artists</th>
<th>Designers</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 1</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 2</th>
<th>Interviews Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Will Clarke</td>
<td></td>
<td>0:34 hrs.</td>
<td>0:53 hrs.</td>
<td>1:21 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Jenni Sparks</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:49 hrs.</td>
<td>0:55 hrs.</td>
<td>1:15 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Robbie Porter</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:25 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:56 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Paul Thurlby</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:02 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:08 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Rich Fairhead</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:08 hrs.</td>
<td>0:56 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Tirso Sánchez</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:27 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Sabi Coz</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:20 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Anthony McEwan</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:48 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Emma Orchardson</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:18 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:42 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- Mel Elliot</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:08 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- Lilly Price</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:48 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12- James Ward</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:05 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13- Emily Hayes</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:21 hrs.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14- Rob Lowe</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0:49 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total interview time per phase</th>
<th>7:18 hrs.</th>
<th>5:12 hrs.</th>
<th>5:46 hrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total interview time across phases</td>
<td>18:16 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About the interview process, Whyte (1979) argues that the success in performing interviews and observation in the field relates to the researcher's ability to connect with participants. The author suggests that efforts invested into building trust are even more important than mastering particular techniques. I reflected on Whyte's guidelines on certain aspects and attitudes that could facilitate establishing a productive bond with participants early in the interviews, developing a protocol replicated in each session to aim for the best data quality possible.
The protocol started by dedicating the first 10 minutes to an informal conversation, where the researcher shared personal stories with participants related to her creative background and entrepreneurial experience to establish a shared understanding of the creative working context to encourage a deeper and more reflexive conversation. Here, shared experiences were highlighted, exposing challenges connected with participants from an authentic perspective. Afterwards, participants were presented with a consent form and asked if they had any questions or concerns before signing it and recording the conversation. During the recorded period of the interview, the researcher maintained a relaxed, friendly and responsive tone, making prompts and asking to follow up and clarifying questions when needed. By the end of each interview (except the three remote interviews performed online), all first-time participants were asked to draw a diagram illustrating their network, including WBTC and their position within it. The recorder was turned off when participants concluded the chart and all questions were answered. Still, the researcher kept the conversation going for about five to ten more minutes to capture the participant's impressions and any other thoughts or simply resume unfinished topics covered in the previous discussion. Information found relevant at this last non-recorded stage was written down in a data collection diary after the interview ended and included in the study's analytical phase.

- **Participant-led diagrammatic elicitation technique**

Collecting diagrams from participants is a valuable method to explain complex relations within a specific context from a graphic perspective that facilitates understanding how all parts relate. More commonly, visual representations in scientific research are included in later stages of studies to illustrate final results. However, diagrams are also helpful at earlier stages during the data collection phases. (Copeland and Agosto, 2012). Copeland and Agosto (2012:513), explain that “Graphic elicitation techniques, asking participants to provide visual data representing personal understandings of concepts, experiences, beliefs, or behaviours, can be instrumental in helping participants to express complex or abstract ideas or opinions”. The authors argue that drawing, diagramming, and mapping are concepts used interchangeably to describe this method, distinguishing two different instances for its application: (1) a participant-led diagrammatic elicitation, which allows total freedom for participants to draw their
diagram; and (2) a research-led diagrammatic elicitation, where a diagram is created by the researcher and presented to participants to give their opinion (Umoquit et al., 2013).

This research followed the participant-led diagrammatic elicitation alternative, aligned with the principle of minimizing the researcher’s influence on participants' responses. (Copeland and Agosto, 2012). Participants were given no guidance except for straightforward instruction. The instructions were slightly different for WBTC team members on the one hand and the artists and designers supplying the venture on the other, with the team instructed to illustrate the WBTC network and their participation within it. The suppliers were asked to draw their business network and include WBTC.

*Table 4: Participant-led diagrams collected.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of diagrams</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Artists and designers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table from the this study’s author elaboration.

*Figure 4: Team member’s diagrams*

1. Founder & director
2. Marketing & communications
3. Product buyer
As shown in the images above, I collected 17 hand-drawn diagrams. Some were created in an analogue form with pen and paper, and others digitally with an iPad and an electronic pencil. These diagrams helped us to understand the network of WBTC from different perspectives and clarify network relations within the participants’ social system.
This method added a reflexive element to the interview process from a methodological standpoint. Participants engaged in an internal dialogue while drawing these diagrams that allowed the researcher to grasp how these individuals categorised people and organisations in their network. Also, this unexpected output from the act of drawing provided a reflexive element at the end of the interview, which led in some cases to clarifying participants’ previous accounts and even correcting misconceptions from their statements. Additionally, drawing these diagrams sparked positive feedback from the participants, who described this method as helpful to think about situations they take for granted, showing appreciation for being given this instance to reflect on those issues.

Overall, graphic elicitation techniques supported previous evidence that it benefits qualitative studies by incentivising reflexivity in participants, allowing theoretical conceptions to converge with concrete beliefs and experiences to provide unique data that cannot be obtained through more traditional methods. (Copeland and Agosto, 2012).

- **Non-participant observation sessions**

  Fieldwork observation helps us understand the social world where participants are inserted, unravelling shared views among individuals from their behaviour within their networks. (Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin, 1975). The non-participant statement allows us to investigate participants in an appropriate environment for the phenomenon of study without interfering with the natural flow of the events observed. Here, the researcher can take a close look at participants' behaviour and group dynamics, collecting valuable qualitative data about specific situations, which, despite being subjective and interpretative, can be a vital tool if combined with other research methods such as interviews. In this study, I employed this method to make sense of team role dynamics, complementing or corroborating insights from participants' accounts collected from their interviews.

  I observed nine activities relevant to the understanding of WBTC. These activities included multiple scenarios where the team had to manage critical aspects of the brokerage relations established by the venture. These activities included: following the founder and the product buyer to one of the leading trade fairs they attend each year in London; observing a team meeting in a co-working space used explicitly by the venture to hold monthly meetings; following one of the ventures' signature live events in the shop, aimed to enhance customer engagement and bring exposure to one of their creative
suppliers; watching how the incident moved from one pop-up shop to a new location across Carnaby Street and attending a special collection launch from one of their most profitable artists.

Table 5: Participant observation scenarios and participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Team members/Suppliers</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade-fair show</td>
<td>Pulse - Central London</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia</td>
<td>2:00 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen’s pop-up shop management</td>
<td>WBTC shop</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia - Adam - Emily - Liv</td>
<td>1:00 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening the shop in the morning</td>
<td>WBTC shop</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia - Liv</td>
<td>30 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-shop live event</td>
<td>WBTC shop</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia - Liv</td>
<td>1:00 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent design market</td>
<td>Crafty shop market - Brixton</td>
<td>Will Clarke</td>
<td>45 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meeting</td>
<td>Co-working space</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia - Adam - Emily - Liv</td>
<td>1:10 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-shop workshop</td>
<td>WBTC shop</td>
<td>Olivia - Liv</td>
<td>1:20 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New collection launch</td>
<td>WBTC shop</td>
<td>Alice - Olivia - Adam - Emily - Liv / Jenni Sparks</td>
<td>1:00 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy project</td>
<td>Battersea shop - Central London</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>30 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total interview time across phases</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>9:15 hrs.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above specifies the activities observed, noting the place and duration of each session and which participants were involved.

Notes were taken while performing these non-participant observation sessions and analysed alongside the participant interviews' data. Additionally, to note-taking, the team meeting was recorded and transcribed for analysis in the same way as the interviews.

4.4.7 Data analysis

Researchers following a constructivist paradigm not only need to organise, categorise and generate dynamic comparisons within the data but also to produce assertions about underlying meanings from participants’ narratives (Charmaz and Reiner, 2016). Researchers reflect on these meanings, reshaping and polishing initial ideas, turning them into discoveries that are further presented as the study’s results. In this process, analysing data is a central part of understanding phenomena and building theory from empirical results. Data analysis is the most complex and challenging part of case study research because of the high volume and variety of data these studies produce.
Analysing raw data can be overwhelming, especially when adopting social constructivist lens that require much interpretative thinking based on the data (Grix, 2002). In this study, this problem is compounded by the longitudinal approach taken, where new data is constantly contrasted with findings from previous data collection stages. Blaikie (2010) argues abductive research demands the researcher to engage in systematic reflection and a conscious approach to analysis, which maintains a particular order, allowing the researcher to avoid what Pettigrew (1988) describes as “death by data asphyxiation”. In this vein, the following sub-sections will explain the roadmap devised to analyse the data in this study.

- **Analytical approach to coding**

Analysing social sciences data, mainly qualitative research, can be highly subjective (Wickham and Woods, 2005). Therefore, even though general guidelines can be provided to analyse data, some authors argue that there is still considerable room for devising bespoke systems that more sharply address the research questions of each study (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). The following description of the process of coding and developing themes in this study presents a series of decisions taken to best fit this research’s needs.

This study aims to understand how the WBTC team enacted their role from an individual and collective perspective, based on participants’ narratives, actions and behaviour, along with documents and diagrams collected in three data collection stages. This data evidenced the venture’s development over four emerging, organising, stabilising and growing stages. To this end, I devised a strategy that included grounded theory elements and focused on staying as close to the data as possible (Saldaña, 2009).

I used narrative analysis to get familiar with the data by making sense of participants from their stories and observations from the field (Cortazzi, 1994). Then, clustering analysis took place at different times during the analytical phase: to map WBTC network relations, to map WBTC team role responsibilities, and later, to map role motivations across phases. Thematic analysis was another practical coding strategy to facilitate identifying patterns in a large volume of data from different sources. The thematic approach made visible relevant elements from the data, breaking down participants’ narratives into codes that were grouped, revisited and scrutinised until a
meaningful account of the observed phenomenon was provided (Greg, MacQueen Kathleen and Namey Emily, 2012).

In addition to an iterative and flexible analytical approach described above, the abductive strategy in this research directed our attention to discovering new information from the data rather than guiding this process from a clear theoretical objective. Nonetheless, relevant literature was revisited in parallel throughout the entire analytical process, where the researcher iterated between the data and learnings from the literature. In this process, constructs from role and brokerage theory were bridged to create a conceptual framework for this study, with which I was able to refine initial research question and give a more focused direction to this study from the theoretical construct of role enactment, which provided academic support to our observations (Yin, 1994)

- Data reduction process

Our data reduction process started with “getting familiar with the data” by listening to the audio of the interviews without interruptions to capture nuances and clarify doubts from these previous conversations. This practice followed Mason’s (2000) idea that listening to interview recordings is an effective analytical path because the researcher’s attention is concentrated on capturing every detail of participants’ responses, as opposed to interviewing, where there is tension between listening and managing the conversation flow. Later, the audio files of the interviews were transcribed into text and compiled into 1,400 pages of Microsoft Word documents. No judgements or critical thinking took place at this point. However, this intuitive exercise helped to build a strong base for a more critical approach to data from a clear general understanding of all participants’ accounts (Saldana, 2009).

*Table 6: data reduction process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Getting familiar with the data</th>
<th>Step one consisted on listening to interviews audio files without interruptions. This was key to capture nuances and get a better general understanding of WBTC’s roles and relations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Transcribing interviews</td>
<td>In this step, I systematised audio files into text and field notes in a logical order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Starting an Nvivo file</td>
<td>Step three was possible due actions taken in the previous step, were all documents generated are integrated into Nvivo, creating digital folders and tags to categorise the data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After this first step of data familiarisation (shown in table 6 above), data reduction occurred, where raw data was coded into more comprehensive and manageable information segments (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). To carry out this process effectively, Nvivo was used as a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to facilitate coding, for which a project file in Nvivo was created to start building and organising the data set for this study. In addition to this file, a backup folder was safely stored in the researcher’s computer, where all project-related information was added to the Nvivo file. Nonetheless, traditional manual techniques were also employed in this study, namely the use of post-it notes and colour markers, which helped organise emergent concepts and early developing themes to categorise printed documents.

Nvivo was particularly useful for taking notes from audio segments with the audio pad feature, facilitating contrasting and comparing extracts from different interviews. Here, grounded theory methods such as open coding and memo writing helped connect participants’ narratives from various data collection stages and organisational phases. Nvivo also proved helpful in organising these memos in the memo section. At this stage, the danger of developing high volumes of codes that do not necessarily help the conceptualisation of data needs to be considered. This last is particularly important when using CAQDAS like Nvivo, with the capacity to automate coding processes that could lead to premature and inconsistent theory (Richards, 2005). With these issues in mind, and taking into account the fact that the purpose of coding is to learn from the data and find patterns that lead to accountable explanations of the phenomenon observed (Richards et al., 2007), coding in this study was performed consciously and reflexively avoid the creation of irrelevant concepts and themes.

Finally, I codified these interactions by interpreting patterns found in the data, which allowed to specify the process by which WBTC team members enacted their roles over time. For this, a combination of different types of codes were used: (1) pre-coding facilitated an exploratory approach when familiarising with the data (Layder, 1998), capturing intuitive leads that were reviewed and clustered under emerging concepts; (2) attribute coding captured a snapshot of the sources and circumstances in which the data was obtained, such as demographic and personal attributes of participants, to facilitate comparative analysis of groups of participants (Lofland et al., 2006), but more importantly, attribute coding helped label the roles of crucial actor categories of supplier,
consumer and WBTC team, the organisational phases that structured the WBTC venture, and a series of dynamic interactions between distinctive roles; (3) open coding led to creating “first order categories” from interview excerpts, where emerging concepts leading the team to enact their different roles were coded; (4) axial coding led to identifying relationships from the first order categories previously created, helping develop second order themes that identified patterns influencing how team members enacted their roles, and (5) selective coding enabled theorising our findings by producing aggregated dimensions that explained specific motivations leading to the role enactment of the WBTC team. Table 7 below clarify the analytical process described, showing the coding system in different analytical strategies performed.

Table 7: Analytical process and coding strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through thematic analysis each role was defined and labeled according the way in which each one functioned. Also, in this step, I was able to identify different situations that seemed relevant, which were clustered and revised in the next step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clustering analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this step, a large volume of themes was identified from different aspects of how the team enacted their roles during different stages of the brokerage process. This shipped a more complete view of each role responsibilities and relations with internal and external network actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Through this strategy I was able to understand how WBTC team performed. Reviewing participants accounts during their brokerage activities, allowed to construct an integrated view about how the team worked together, informing both an individual and a collective perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 This strategy also clarified differences and helped establish limits between the organisational phases defined in the study. (Emerging, organising, stabilising, growing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This coding process allowed the study to shape the raw data into an organised data set, enabling the researchers to “get into the data” comprehensively. The entire coding process described here helped the study to be transparent about a reflexive theory-
building process, demonstrating accountability in how the evidence was extracted and interpreted from the raw data collected.

- **Data presentation**

  I used different graphic formats to visually represent the data and findings from this research to facilitate a better understanding of both the research process and results. Tables, graphs, and doodling were also part of the analytical process of this research, where I created codes to make sense of the data. These were later compiled in the case study database with field note summaries, diagrams with conceptual connections and tabular material in Excel spreadsheets with information from participants.

  In different chapters, I employed tables to illustrate connections between participants’ quotes and conclusions derived from the iterative coding rounds. These tables served to present participants’ narratives in the process of coding these accounts. Tables, diagrams, and other figures presented more precise outputs from the analysis, showing new findings and their relationships. Additionally, several diagrams illustrated our results. Diagrams were handy when explaining how the team members enacted their roles across the different organisational phases in chapter seven. Additionally, I presented evidence in the form of hand-drawn diagrams to clarify WBTC’s network in chapter five. In this chapter, I used photographs from WBTC to provide a clear image of how the venture’s shop was organised throughout the observed period to illustrate the changes experienced.

4.5 **Validity and reliability of the research**

  Despite McGrath’s (1982) statement that research without flaws is an unrealistic goal, there are many ways of ensuring the most significant possible validity and reliability of research. According to Campbell and Fiske (1959:58), research validity is “the extent of agreement between two or more measures of the same trait obtained through maximally different methods.” Reliability in research refers to the consistency of the results from the methods used in measuring certain phenomena, which, if replicated, should reach the same conclusions (Smith, Gannon and Sapienza, 1989). Different dimensions can contribute to the validity and reliability of a study, some of them being: the specificity of the research problem addressed, researchers’ biases influencing the data collection and analysis, and the generalisability of the findings of a study (Smith, Gannon
and Sapienza, 1989). In the following points, I will address some of these aspects of this study.

4.5.1 Construct validity

A construct is a concept that can only be measured and understood based on other ideas associated with it. Yin (2013a:33) explains construct validity as “establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied”, to which Scandura & Williams (2000) expand by arguing the pertinence of the methods of measuring the proposed construct need to be developed on a relevant theoretical basis. Yin (1994) also states that the convergence of findings in the triangulation process increases construct validity. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the sub-section below.

4.5.2 Internal validity

Management research’s impact correlates to its methodological rigour and the care exercised in data collection and analysis (Scandura and Williams, 2000). In the following points, I establish the internal validity of this study by arguing the reliability of the data collection and analytical processes and the degree of objectivity of the researchers.

- Data reliability

The qualitative approach taken was a vital choice supporting data reliability in this study. Qualitative data is considered subjective data and, unlike objective data, is recognised as particularly useful in reaching deeper understandings of relations within social systems (Smith, Gannon and Sapienza, 1989). Additionally, in point 4.4.1, I discussed that the use of multiple sources was an essential factor in the quality of case study research (Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009; Goodman and Magidson, 1978), where a later triangulation process of rich qualitative data collected, allows for a comprehensive examination and convergence of findings across the different sources employed (Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009). The multimethod approach of this study, using semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, collection of documents and graphic representations from participants, gave rise to a robust database for this research, which according to Stake (2003:441), allows us to “clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” and to give internal consistency
to the data (Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009). Moreover, the transcribed interviews and the research diary, which recorded the observations performed, facilitated a thorough coding and analytical process. These were also complemented by information in the documents and diagrams, allowing a rich triangulation process.

- **The objectivity of the research**

Regarding research objectivity, Smith, Gannon and Sapienza (1989) argue that researchers might condition participant responses on the specific way in which they asked questions. Allison and Zelikow (1971) agree, noting that scientific research is subject to the researcher's constraints and biases. This aligns with social science discussions about how values and beliefs deeply rooted in human nature impose limits on objectivity (Denscombe, 2002; Yin, 2013b; Eisenhardt, 1991).

Awareness of this issue was essential in this research, given that the researcher’s professional background was shared with many participants. On the one hand, this provided the sensitivity and competence to engage with them deeply, but on the other hand, it exacerbated the dangers of bias. To avoid this problem, the researcher adopted Silverman’s (2006) analogy of the *film critic* mindset, which validates personal and emotional involvement during interaction with the subjects of analysis, followed by a shift to a distanced, critical stance that allows the researcher to deconstruct the whole experience to perform an objective analysis of the data. With this, the researcher could engage in fruitful conversations during the interviews but maintained a non-judgmental stance when looking at participants’ accounts in the analytical phase.

On the other side of the researcher-participant relationship, Dearborn and Simon (1958) found that participants’ biases might also distort empirical data collected by providing inaccurate information. Participants could do this purposefully to protect sensitive information of the organisation or unintentionally by having a partial view of the venture’s operations, giving them a limited or distorted view of its functioning. I addressed this potential problem by systematically comparing and contrasting interview material from the various participants. The same was done with the suppliers’ interviews, which brought a different perspective of WBTC team roles, which was helpful in corroborate or contend elements from the team’s narratives. In addition, all participants’ responses were contrasted with observations performed in the field, where events and processes previously described in the interviews were complemented by observing team
dynamics in real-life, which added a multidimensional understanding of team role enactment from both an individual and a collective perspective.

4.5.3 External validity

Research is considered to have external validity when it can be generalised across factors such as individuals, times and settings (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Scandura and Williams, 2000). Organisational studies have had an ongoing debate about research effectiveness in terms of external validity, where positivistic approaches employing objective data are more commonly considered to meet this standard (Harrigan, 1981). Qualitative research, however, has been less effective in demonstrating it can be generalised, mainly because its goal is understanding specific problems from an in-depth perspective rather than from a view to establishing causal relationships across a broad data set.

In the following points, I explain how the external validity problem was tackled by using qualitative elements that ostensibly conflict with this objective and which we argue could – paradoxically – make qualitative studies more trustworthy than positivistic studies.

- **Generalisation**

About case study research, Denscombe (2002) argues that although every case is unique, a point can be understood as an example from a larger group, which could validate broader generalisation. This perspective, however, needs to be carefully assessed to make transferability compatible with the specific contextual elements from each case (Shenton, 2004). Regarding this, Lincoln and Guba (1989) stress that the researcher is responsible for providing detailed accounts of contextual information from the research to facilitate making connections with similar contexts. I have provided detailed information about WBTC in sub-sections 4.4.4, 4.4.5 and 4.4.6.

Another line of argument state certain elements contribute to the generalisability of a study, which rather than depending on the context of the data employed, relate to how the data is collected and analysed (Smith, Gannon and Sapienza, 1989). Thomas (2010) compared abductive and inductive research strategies, concluding that abductive research does not have the generalisability that inductive studies can reach, but
recognises, this type of knowledge does produce “exemplary knowledge”, which validates case study research following this strategy.

Despite the prior, in terms of the generalizability of this research, one strong point is its focus and contribution on the understanding of team performance. Team performance is a fundamental organisational issue, from which no less than the survival of the venture pends on. Exploring roles to understand how organisations function, is a transversal topic that can shed light across industries outside of the creative sector, from different shapes and sizes. Findings from this research, which present a model allowing team roles to reconfigure that optimise team performance, can be transferred to non-creative business, bigger organisations and other sorts, where the dynamics of this model could operate with the needed modifications to fit each particular context.

From an industry level, generalisability has been a constant challenge for researching the creative industries because it is an heterogeneous sector comprised of contrasting sub-sectors. Research in this field commonly adopts a sector-specific focus (Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010; Baker and Faulkner, 1991) that primarily results in particular insights that are not necessarily representative of the entire creative sector. With this challenge in mind, I aimed to amplify the scope of this study by choosing the emblematic sector of design (Townley and Beech, 2009). This sector, is considered highly representative of the industry for successfully aligning with fundamental New Economy thinking paradigms, with features like the use of new technologies, adopting flexible project-based patterns, and effectively involving customers feedback (McRobbie, 2003). Moreover, the design sector is considered highly network-dependent (Townley and Beech, 2009), suggesting this sector as an strategic context to observe broader practices within creative businesses.

Lastly, although external validity would have been enhanced by adopting a multiple case study strategy that gave room for a deeper analysis between variables (Herriott and Firestone, 1983), the timeframe and resources for this research constrained the research to a single case study approach. Nonetheless, the choice of a rich case study setting like WBTC allowed to access multiple sources (Yin, 1994) and provide data that could strengthen our triangulation process and validate our study. This said it is worth mentioning there is evidence showing that single case study research’s detailed attention and in-depth look to a particular setting (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) could even be
more effective for theory generation than multiple case studies, suggesting that there is always a trade-off in the adoption of a research strategy and that validating measures should consider the vast spectrum here mentioned to assess the true worth of a research project.

4.6 Ethical considerations

I established an ethical framework for this study based on Wenger’s (2010:229) conceptions of communities of practice, stated as “…the basic building blocks of a social learning system, because they are the social ‘containers’ of the competencies that make up such a system”. Wegner states that participation in these communities enables individuals to absorb and generate meaningful knowledge in specific domains through shared understandings with others. Therefore, I looked at the ethical framework used in the management research community of practice to determine the ethical parameters for this study.

The management research community, however, present some challenges, Bell and Bryman (2007) warn about the lack of homogeneity in this community of practice for its multiple compositions of overlapping communities, which share some views but are unique in their particularities. To cope with this issue, the authors performed an explorative analysis of the ethics codes from close social scientific associations to identify shared ethical principles within this community. In the same vein as Bell and Bryman, Sin (2005) suggests that ethical consideration in management research should be a general transversal code that applies to the entire community to respect and protect the participant's integrity (Bell and Bryman, 2007). This last also aligns with Lee and Renzetti’s (1990) views about how ethics in management research should be integrated into every aspect of the study and not only about specific topics that might be more sensitive to participants. The following table illustrates Bell and Bryman's findings and the actions of this research to comply with this list.

Table 8: Ethical principles from the management community of practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Actions taken in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Harm to participants</td>
<td>- No participants were harmed in any way during this research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Informed consent - Participants were asked to sign an agreement that specified their rights as participants of this study.

Anonymity - Anonymity was offered to all participants, but they all permitted to use their real names in this document.

Dignity - All participants were treated with dignity.

Privacy - The privacy of all participants was respected at all times.

Confidentiality - The information collected from participants has been appropriately protected and not shared with third parties.

Affiliation - There is no conflict of interest with the researcher leading this study.

Honesty and transparency - The researcher was honest and transparent about all aspects of the research at all time.

Deception - The researcher did not engage in deceptive behaviour of any kind with participants.

Misrepresentation - Research findings have been true to the data collection and the analytical process performed.

Reciprocity - Participating in this research was established from the beginning as a collaborative instance for discussing the challenges faced by the venture, which received from the researcher an external view that was welcomed from participants.

By following the recommendations for addressing the principles from our community of practice described in the table above, I consider that this study complies with the ethical rigour expected in the management field.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter explained the methodological approach of the study. I outlined the philosophical paradigms justifying our approach and explained why I followed an abductive research strategy. I described the decisions that led us to adopt a longitudinal case study, describing the reasons for using a case study to investigate the venture’s team. I also provided an overview of the empirical setting chosen and explained why WBTC was selected. Moreover, I thoroughly explained the data collection process and the following analytical phase. Later in this chapter, I explained in detail how each method was applied to collect the data from the multiple sources selected and provided a detailed account of the timeline and individuals who participated in each part of this process. By the end of the chapter, I explained the data analysis phase of this study and the validity, reliability and ethical considerations considered.
5 CHAPTER FIVE: Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results from this study are presented in two main parts. The first part, explaining specialised relations in brokerage activities, will show the categorisation and structure of all actors involved in the brokerage activities from WBTC, emphasising relational aspects of how each role is enacted. The second part, presenting different aspects of role enactment through WBTC organisational phases, will incorporate the longitudinal approach of this research showing roles’ interaction and dynamics, starting by explaining four organisational phases identified. We continue describing WBTC’s composition as WBTC describes itself: from a two-tier scheme of shop roles and HQ roles, identifying five main managerial roles with the respective set of tasks they perform with suppliers and consumers. We map each role evolution from the analysis of relations established with suppliers and consumers. Later, we identify unique patterns of behaviour in each role at the individual level, which were the result of a dynamic cycle of changing tasks employed by roles to adapt to challenges experienced by the firm. These findings show that roles, although initially scripted at an individual level evolved and tasks were reconfigured accordingly.

5.2 Specialised relations in brokerage activities

The broker role of WBTC is to mediate creative goods between suppliers (artists and designers who are creative entrepreneurs) and consumers. WBTC plays an important role, allowing artists and designers to fully dedicate envisioning and producing the creative products while WBTC connects them to consumers to buy their products. Thus, WBTC as a broker facilitates the commercialisation of creative goods, where artists and
designers lacking time and resources find in WBTC an effective channel to reach their consumers.

…these types of businesses are artists and designers who actually are creating the work, they want to come up with new designs, they want to push their careers forward but they cannot because …, as they are a one man band a lot of the time or two man bands, they are being swamped by all this business admin and so getting stuff online and having to despatch and all of this and where do you get any time to actually do what you have got into it for and what you are best at,… – Founder & director (Alice).

I compared diagrams collected from managerial roles from WBTC (Figure 6) to identify how WBTC categorise its brokerage relations. The diagram analysis revealed the main actors involved in the brokerage activities of WBTC; (1) the “WBTC team”, (2) “supplier” and (3) “consumer”. The diagrams showed that within the team of WBTC two types of roles—the “HQ roles” and the “Shop roles”. That artists and designers identified as distinctive suppliers to WBTC, suggesting these creative professionals require specific behaviours during the brokerage processes. The existence of distinct types of consumers: the “customer”, referring to individuals purchasing creative goods in the physical and online shops; and the “client” described by the Art and Stationary buyer (A&S buyer) as organisations, such as “hotels, restaurants and shops” that require specific purchasing conditions that differ from customers buying stocked products in the shops.

*Figure 6: Hand-draw diagrams from WBTC team.*

1. Founder & director – Alice
2. Marketing & communications - Adam
3. Product buyer - Olivia
The diagrams in the previous section provided vital information about how the internal structure of WBTC shapes to establish the set of relations needed in their brokerage activities. I now deepen this structure in figure 7 below, giving more detail about the categories of actors involved and how they interconnect.

**Figure 7: Categorisation of actors involved in WBTC’s brokerage activities.**

In the first section on the left side, appear two main actors, the “supplier” category, who are creatives providing WBTC with creative goods; and to the left, the “consumers” category, composed by individuals and organisations acquiring these goods. In the diagram, we see WBTC team in a central position between these two that allow the team to mediate relations between the “suppliers” and “consumers” categories, and also, between “suppliers” and the “other network actors” category, shown in the lower left side of the diagram.
Additionally to these categories, there are sub-categories within each of them: in the supplier category, we have the sub-categories of “artists” and “designers”. A distinction was made between these two types of creatives, which share the same goal of creating and delivering creative products to stock WBTC but differ in the processes they use and needs they have to meet WBTC terms of participation. "Artists”, require a one-on-one close relationship with team members from WBTC because of the specificity of the artist’s work, which is unique, and therefore more expensive, with bespoke systems that need to be considered such as framing services and exhibition requirements that demand more time and resources than products coming from a standard production line. “Designers”, are more manageable in the sense that the process of adding and exhibiting new products is more straightforward than with artists. Also, prices are lower, products come with protective packaging which facilitate ordering and delivery processes. For these differences, a distinction had to be made between these two suppliers. The latter came as a direct observation from the data, from WBTC team members describing differences in the way they sustained relations with each one of these suppliers.

The consumer category, divides in the sub-categories of “customer” and “client”. On the one hand, the "customer”, which are a large group of individuals that buy the creative products supplied by the artist and designers just explained, has two subsidiary categories of its own: the “in-shop customer”, which are individuals going into the physical shop in Carnaby street to purchase the creative goods WBTC stock there, and “online customer, which are individuals buying these same goods online from the e-commerce platform of the shop.

On the other hand, the “client”, which where identified as an important revenue stream for WBTC through profitable consultancy schemes, also has two subsidiary categories, the “bespoke client”, which are organisations working with WBTC under a consultancy scheme, having highly personalised relations with WBTC who tailor solutions for their specific problems; and “volume client”, which are organisations buying stock in higher numbers than the shop stock but don’t require special services beyond coordinating bigger purchases.

Lastly, the sub-category “Printer”, from the main category “other network actor” placed on the lower side in the left side of figure 7, identified a key actor facilitating entrance and assuring participation in WBTC. This actor is necessary to cope with
suppliers’ shortcomings preventing their participation in WBTC, in situations such as being able to find suppliers that allow them to create a product that hold both, the standards of WBTC and fit the budget of the creator. Printers, establishing relations with WBTC suppliers from brokering actions taken by the team, helped artists struggling to achieve the right price point to meet commission percentages required by WBTC.

All these sub-categories were further explored and developed from evidence found in participants interviews, field observations, and collected documents, which led to clarify each role involvement in brokerage relations. These findings are presented later in tables 7, 8 and 9, where I deepen on how WBTC roles interact with all the categories described above in figure 7.

5.2.1 WBTC roles

In terms of WBTC, our findings showed that roles divided in two sub-categories, “shop roles” and “headquarters” (HQ) roles. This categorisation was consistent with evidence found in documents collected from online media. The following excerpt from the founder & director in an interview at the “The Dots”, supports this finding, describing the division of roles in similar terminology.

I am also proud to say that we now employ a predominantly female team at WBTC both in store and at our HQ. – Founder & director (Alice).

The in store or “shop roles” are mostly young individuals with a creative background between the ages of 21 and 35 and are based in the shop at Carnaby street. Individuals in this category are full and part-time workers in the roles of shop manager, assistant manager, and shop staff. The shop roles are based in WBTC pop-up shop in Carnaby. The “HQ roles” are senior professionals between the ages of 35 and 45, with either creative backgrounds or previous experience in the creative sector (appendix 5). All individuals in this category have strategic roles that lead different areas of the venture, including the founder & director, marketing & communications (comms.), the product buyer and the A&S buyer. The HQ roles are based in an office located thirty minutes away from the shop, where the roles work under full-time or part-time contracts and have more decision-making power than the shop roles. Finding from the interviews helped deepen on specific organisational roles, where we found five main roles involved in the venture’s
brokerage relations between suppliers and consumers that are described in *table 9*. Below which illustrates the HQ and Shop roles’ role in the brokerage activities of WBTC.

*Table 9: WBTC role involvement in brokerage relations.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Involvement in brokerage relations</th>
<th>Brokers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HQ team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder &amp; director</td>
<td>- Explore and approve curated work from artists and designers. - Create and pursue business opportunities with bespoke clients.</td>
<td>○ Artists and designers • Bespoke clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product buyer</td>
<td>- Participate in projects with bespoke clients, interpreting their needs and proposing solutions from the artist and designers from WBTC network. - Curate design products, orders and manages the design stock for the pop-up and online shops.</td>
<td>• Mainly designers but also artists • Bespoke clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Stationery buyer</td>
<td>- Curate the artwork. - Place orders and manages prints and stationery stock for the pop-up and online shop. - <em>Help artists to develop</em> selling strategies to reach competitive pricing points <em>by connecting them with affordable printers from WBTC networks.</em></td>
<td>• Only artists • Printers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A&amp;S buyer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing &amp; Communications</td>
<td>- Communicate with artists and designers for online shop. - Organise in-shop events with artists. - Manage relations with volume clients (shops, restaurants, hotels). - Communicate through emails with customers to answer questions and solve problems.</td>
<td>• Artists, and designers. • Volume clients, online customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(comms.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shop team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop manager</td>
<td>- Receive stock in the shop from artists and designers. - Communicate with customers to generate sales. - Process purchases from customers in the shop.</td>
<td>• Artists and designers • In-shop customers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 10*, below provides a general snapshot of the brokerage relations the different roles establish in the brokerage processes of the venture.

*Table 10: Role relations in WBTC brokerage processes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HQ roles</th>
<th>Shop role</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Consumer</th>
<th>Other network actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder &amp; director</td>
<td>• Artist</td>
<td>• Bespoke client</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our findings show that the founder & director, product buyer and the marketing & comms. roles interact with clients. The founder and product buyer manage relations with bespoke clients whereas the Marketing & Comms role manages relations with volume clients. The A&S Buyer role differs from the rest of the HQ roles because there is no direct relations with any of the consumer categories. This role focusses on guiding the artists to meet the conditions needed to deliver stock to WBTC. The A&S Buyer role, however, relies on other roles to bridge the artists goods with the consumers. With online customers, for instance, the marketing and comms role takes over relations with artists by requesting graphic material from the artwork to upload to the online shop of the venture, enacting its brokering role when dealing with customers purchases through in the online shop. The quote below shows how the marketing & comms. role (Adam) enacts brokerage for WBTC.

Katy is obviously one of the main liaisons with all the artists but anyone who I didn’t already know or hadn’t really collaborated with or met I was being introduced to, effectively for most people anyway the introduction was from Katy and then I would pick up and start actually requesting things. – Marketing & comms. (Adam).

This next except illustrate the how this role reaches out to the artists to request the necessary materials from their products to move forward with the brokerage process in reaching consumers for the artists’ goods.

“Adam writes to all of the artists to say this is what we are doing, are you okay for us to put your content from your website, so basically the descriptions and also the images, …just information like, are you happy for us to go on to your website, then we used a lot of their images but we also created this stock image of our own…” -Founder & director (Alice).
To serve consumers, the marketing and comms role also takes over relations with designers that were previously established by the product buyer. The quote below explains how the product buyer.

... a typical situation is that Olivia has brought a designer in and we sell their products and we say, oh it would be great if you do a workshop for us... she gets the terms and things sign off by Alice...and then it will sort of be passed on to me, copying in Adam, he will be putting the event together...- Marketing & comms. (Adam).

The marketing and comms role brokers designers’ products with volume clients managing special terms for payment and delivery in these exchanges. This is explained by the founder & director in the excerpt below.

“El Ganso is a fashion brand that I just bought 200 prints to go to Madrid recently and I was like, yes, like getting it all going and then Adam was the one who actually sent the catalogue kept emailing until they said yes and he did 400 different types of invoices because they suddenly wanted to pay in Euros and all the rest of it and then he got it through, got it into a van and got it there safely, and the money is in.” – Founder & director (Alice).

Amongst the HQ roles, the marketing & comms role was the one showing more versatility by brokering relations with both artists and designers and with volume clients and customers in activities, such as managing the online shop and overseeing all customer service tasks.

With bespoke clients, the founder & director and the product buyer worked together to broker relations between artists and designers. We observed that the founder & director attended to the commercial aspects in the relationship with the client whereas the product buyer enacted a brokering role by mediating product requirements between the supplier (artists and designers) and the clients. The two quotes below show how the founder & director focused on the client; and the second, the product buyer focused on the supplier.

Alice basically handled dealing with them (the client) …Yes, so she’s doing all the staffing and negotiating any further work because there’s a lot more, they want from us. -Product buyer (Olivia).

So, we commissioned stuff from Crispin Finn…I came to them with a list of products we’d like to sell, and we were sort of seeing this as a core range
Battersea\textsuperscript{14}. So, I said, “Here’s something we want to make”. They went away, and they came back within a week... -Product buyer (Olivia).

The following quotes extracted from a WBTC meeting illustrate how these two roles mediate relations between the artists and bespoke clients.

Olivia, I will ask Battersea on Friday about trademarks, about whether we can do it... – Founder & director (Alice).

..., this first meeting we have got enough basically to go in on Friday with, but we might want to also put it out to the community and say that we are working on this has anyone else got any ideas blah blah blah... I would like to do that... just do it as an email/mail merge rather than anything too fancy then we might be in a better place on Friday... – Product buyer (Olivia).

Yes, I have also got to check whether –, if you (bespoke client) want more, we can then get more but we need to have the ability to promote this ...But do an artist’s email that is what they are expecting us to do, and we would just be saying like calling submissions... – Founder & director (Alice).

Right, I see what you mean so the trademarks, is more than the consumer thing... They are two separate things, what I am saying is that I want to do an email to all our artists so just to our internal mailing list, which I do think would be worth doing beforehand. – Product buyer (Olivia).

The dialogue presented between the two roles clearly show how each role have different but complementary focusses in the brokerage process.

The shop manager -and the rest of the shop-roles-, take over suppliers’ relations when they drop-off stock in the shop, where this role sells their products to in-shop customers at Carnaby street.

...you get to meet amazing people and the thing for me is feeling like being part of the community and so all the artists and designers, I have met most of them and they have come in and the excitement on their faces when they come in and drop off a whole new batch of prints or something... -Shop manager (Liv).

The shop manager has face-to-face interactions with artists and designers when they come regularly into the shop to drop-off new stock. The helps their brokering role

\textsuperscript{14} Background information about Battersea project in appendix 8.
by having high quality information that they used to engage customers in interesting conversations and facilitate sales.

- **Specialised relations in the brokerage processes of WBTC**

  The findings presented show WBTC enacted brokerage collectively through different roles. This is a response to its heterogeneous social system, which leads WBTC to use distinct ways to effectively relate with key actors from their networks.

  In the following points, we look deeper into the categories previously identified of “supplier” and “consumer”. We will explain that the roles engage in *customised* or *commoditised* relations according to product development. “Commoditised” relations are a type of relations used by the WBTC to respond effectively to routine processes related to the trading of design goods. In contrast, “customised” relations are a type of relation that demand time, flexibility, and empathy, which are used by WBTC to reach agreements, build loyalty, and develop complex bespoke projects from the ground up.

  *Table 11* below summarises customised and commoditised brokerage relations between WBTC and the suppliers, consumers, and printers.

*Table 11: Specialised relations in the brokerage process.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WBTC brokering roles</th>
<th>Customised</th>
<th>Commoditised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>- Artist</td>
<td>- Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>- Bespoke client</td>
<td>- Volume client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- In-shop customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Online customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other network actors</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Printer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Specialised relations with suppliers**

  The founder & director and the product buyer revealed differences between the “artists” and “designers”. Artists, provide custom pieces that require personal, customised relations, such as commission rates that are negotiated on a case-to-case basis. In contrast, designers provide standardised design products that are easier to replicate and
manage through a straightforward approach. The following two quotes illustrate these views.

…so, it is just easier to keep it separate… with an artist, you have to sell 20 more, how are you going to get them there, are they going to come packaged, what is the commission rate, when are you going to get paid, so we send out artist agreements … and designers don’t get that because you just say, I would like 50 of these please, give me your invoice and I will pay it… – Founder & director (Alice).

…on my side for the most part if I can pay, then designers want our business because it is a wholesale set-up, so my side of that in terms of forging the relationships is reasonably straightforward. – Product buyer (Olivia).

Artists create unique pieces or limited editions of artwork, whereas designers’ products are developed in series, which facilitate designers’ production of goods where they manage standardised costs and had standard agreements with WBTC that are clear before production. This is not the case with artists creating unique pieces, with whom these practical issues are more difficult to foresee, leading to relations with artists to be more flexible and unique to each artist and her work. Nonetheless, WBTC needs to maintain certain standards, as explained in the following excerpt.

…we had to put together a checklist, that would be things like this is how you supply it, this is the packaging, this is how it needs to be labelled, we need to have one artwork provided ready-framed so that it can be hung on the wall because back then as well we were not in a position to frame anything because we did not have the funds to frame anything on behalf of the artists and so they would have to supply it framed, one framed, that goes on the wall… If we don’t sell it, we just give that frame back to the artist and they can use it again for whatever they need to use it for. That had to be factored in and then that is a cost on their part and so there are lots of little things where we had to have a checklist but to explain the reasons why so that they understood. – Art & stationery buyer (Katie).

In addition, we found different processes for managing customised relations, which required more detailed information and guidance with the artists in contrast to the wholesale scheme used to buy stock from designers. Artists normally go through a “sale and return” process, where the artists get paid upon every sale and WBTC returns all pieces that are not sold. The uncertainty in this selling scheme requires a stronger relation
with artists, who need to trust that WBTC will keep their work in good condition if it returned so it doesn’t lose its value.

...we buy wholesale products from the artists, normally sale or return, some wholesale but very rarely and it is only normally if we have tested it and we know that it is a good seller and then we might buy wholesale for the next run. – Marketing & comms. (Adam).

In sum, relations with artists are specific to each individual and need to be agreed upon to meet product requirements that comply to doing their part in the brokerage process with consumers. In contrast, relations with designers require less time and efforts from the WBTC due to standardised processes from these actors that facilitate aligning WBTC’s product requirements. This show that brokerage relations involving artists and designers differ, where brokerage processes with designers are built over straight-forward transactional basis, whereas brokerage processes with artists need to consider collaborative elements to get these exchanges to fruition. In the light of this evidence, we defined WBTC relations with designers as commoditised relations and relations with artists as customised relations.

- **Specialised relations with consumers**

  Relationships with *customers* are sporadic interactions with a great number and variety of individuals, either visiting the physical shop on Carnaby street in the case of *in-shop* customers, or alternatively online interactions through the online ecommerce shop in the case of online customers. Based on the products traded in these shops, we identified these relations established with customers as commoditised, where customers select and buy products from stocked suppliers.

  Similarly, relations with *volume clients*, take place from a transactional perspective that require limited creative input and focused on higher volume purchases of stocked in the online shop. The quote below shows a straightforward exchange of goods that was repeated each time in the same way, describing a standardised order from volume client El Ganso that is merely contingent to available stock from suppliers.

  So, El Ganso the shop wanted loads of prints and we sent them for all their new stores. I think they did three orders; one was then repeated on the second order and then the third one was done by an artist called Bea Sanchez, ... – Product buyer (Olivia).
Bespoke clients, on the other hand, represent a more complex brokerage relationship through formally contracted projects, which involved a more complex brokerage process with WBTC roles and suppliers. The quote below show that these consultancy projects are subject to specific timeframes that demand a bigger commitment from WBTC, which directly impact the roles involved in these relations, whose time is stretched between their usual responsibilities with WBTC and the demands from consultancy clients.

It is a different business and if someone came to me and said I have got £100,000 project to work on then I would just get people in to do the project and do it but where you are only adding one-fifth of that on to the bottom line it is great but it is a lot of the product buyer’s work where she could be doing something much better for our shop and so you have to weigh it up. – Founder & director (Alice).

Brokerage relations with bespoke clients are more complex and demanding, and therefore more carefully evaluated by WBTC, according to the financial return that these tailor-made projects might bring to the venture. For this, we categorised relations with bespoke clients as customised relations during the brokerage processes of WBTC. Figure 8. below illustrate these relations.
Our findings showed a tendency of WBTC to specialise and articulate roles in their brokerage processes. The brokering position of WBTC was enacted collectively through a combination of roles and not necessarily from one role that mediated between suppliers and consumers. We also identified that WBTC collectively enacted brokering roles by establishing customised or commoditised relations with suppliers and consumers.

- **WBTC’s Individual brokerage: when tertius gaudens and tertius iungens are enacted**

WBTC’s primary behavioural strategy was tertius gaudens that kept suppliers and consumers separated. The Battersea consultancy project reveals that the product buyer was able to control both relationships due to lack of direct lines of communication between the designer and the client. As shown below, the product buyer dissuaded the client from seeking a license directly with the designers.

With Battersea, …, they were very keen to own a lot of independent property, so they wanted to license outright any images that we commissioned. Mainly because of time for ourselves, before we even knew we only had three weeks, we just said, “Are you sure?”...“Why do you need this? You’re going to...
sell a few hundred pounds worth a day, you don’t need to own ... It’s going to cost you thousands, you’ll never make your money back”... – Product buyer (Olivia).

The product buyer then engaged in damage-control afterwards with the designers to informally ask them to please “not-to-sell” the Battersea artwork elsewhere, as shown in the quote below.

‘I do like to be Battersea side’, which is the slogan they (Designer brand Crispin Finn) used. They’re amazing, they came up with a slogan, they came up with an image, they had a whole sort of story behind it because it’s on the river Thames and sort of taking up that kind of British seaside atmosphere but with Battersea. I really liked it. It was sort of like an instant hit...we’ve done so many products either with the image on or just the writing... So, basically, now, Crispin Finn own that image. All we’ve done is just say, “Please don’t sell it to anyone else ...and they've gone “Yes, okay”. That's the nice thing about working with independents because there’s like a mutual agreement which I completely trust but at some point, soon they probably need to get real and say, “Okay we need to make sure ...” – Product buyer (Olivia).

This illustrates how WBTC acted as a barrier to licensing the artwork, which worked in favour of the designers but against WBTC’s interests.

When we asked the product buyer if the client was aware of the conversation and verbal agreement described in the previous quote, she explained that the client was only informed that the image wasn’t exclusive, without going into details of the conversation, as stated in the following quote.

No, we just told them it wasn’t exclusive. So, they know it’s not exclusive... Crispin Finn can do anything they want with it. But I think it would be a very strange move on their part because they’ve just produced between 150 to 200 of the products we’ve asked for. We’ve paid them a fee plus a wholesale cost, and I think anyone smart would know that the only actual long-term customer is Battersea Power Station, no one else is going to want it long term...’, so I think Battersea will buy that at some point, personally. Hopefully for Crispin Finn, it would be good …So, fingers crossed that will progress. Basically, everything got done on that level. – Product buyer (Olivia).

This example clearly illustrates how WBTC enacted their brokering by adopting tertius gaudens behaviour that kept relations between suppliers and consumers separated.
We did, however, discover cases when the A&S buyer enacted a tertius iungens approach, collapsing relations.

We can sometimes help we as well have got good relationships with printers that do us deals because we have got that relationship and so, if an artist is saying that I am struggling with my prices because my printing is too expensive or whatever, it might be then we can always kind of help with that if they need it. – A&S buyer (Katie).

In this quote, Katie explains how she put in direct contact printers from the ventures network and the artists, to help them lower their production costs to meet WBTC’s commission rates to sell their products in the shops.

The last three excerpts, illustrate two different brokerage approaches, where tertius gaudens is enacted by Olivia, as she decides to withhold information she considered relevant for WBTC to maintain competitive advantage. In contrast, tertius iungens is enacted when there is no competitive disadvantage to WBTC, and instead by collapsing the relationship, there is mutual gain. This is clear in the case of the A&S buyer, the printer, where the printer did not compete with the brokerage role of WBTC and instead strengthened WBTC’s position by potentially adding more suppliers and increasing WBTC offer of creative goods.

5.3 Role enactment through WBTC organisational phases

The figure below illustrates the data collection points in time, in addition to four organisational phases categorised as “emerge”, “organise”, “grow” and “stabilise” phases of WBTC. We defined these organisational phases according to the development of the venture observed each time we went back to the field. The first phase “emerge” responded to the beginning of the venture, when WBTC was born out of the experimental proposal from Carnaby to do a pop-up shop for eight weeks. The second phase “organise” received this name due that in this phase all the roles from WBTC were created and an initial layout of all tasks that each role needed to perform was set. The third phase “grow” receives this label because theming this period the venture had learned from previous phases and was more effective in terms of driving revenue to them, this was directly
related to an improved articulation of roles. Finally in the fourth phase “stabilise” we found fewer changes than in previous phases, where the systems developed to run the venture through articulated roles seemed to be working through more established routines. Figure 9, shows three data collection points in four organisational phases of WBTC, which align with five pop-ups shop the venture transited during this research.

5.3.1 Roles initially scripted from organisational needs

We found that each role in WBTC was initially scripted, having a particular set of tasks defined by organisational needs. In the emerging phase, the founder & director enacted a wide array of tasks and so, new roles were created to alleviate her workload,
which involved multitasking due to having few employees and limited resources. The excerpt below from the A&S buyer, the only managerial role that existed in the emerging phase along with the founder & director, illustrates this point.

“It was me and Alice, Amy was working on the finance side, we had another girl on the shop management, setting up the shop, and so Alice had a team of basically three people who were setting up the shop… handling bricks and pallets of stuff, painting, calling in all friends, favours, bribery and family…and so, I think it was Alice looking after the product and setting up the shop and managing all of that and me on the art, so it was a really small team and lots of people being roped in to do the dirty work as well.” – A&S buyer (Katie).

Katie’s words show that at this point the founder and director role was overloaded with non-essential tasks that could be delegated to others, which she could not do because of the limited resources of the venture in its emerging phase. In response to the role overload experienced by the founder and director, she identified the areas where support was needed and created a position for qualified individuals to fill the new role. The quote below illustrates this process.

… I realised that I needed to get out of the shop because I had spent eight weeks behind the till and I was like I am actually not being very effective now and somebody else could do this who isn’t me and so I needed to get out of that…so I brought Olivia in – product buyer- to do that” – Founder & director (Alice).

The latter explains the need for creating a new role that would be defined from the tasks that the founder & director could not attend, due that her efforts need to be focussed on leading the strategy of the business and planning sustainable avenues to grow the venture and the WBTC brand, as the A&S buyer states in the quote below.

It frees her up to do what she does really, really well. To find new business, to spread the word about We Built this City. – Art & stationery buyer (Katie)

This explains the need for creating a new role that would be defined from the tasks that the founder & director was not able to do. The following quote by the product buyer shows how her role was scripted when she first arrived at WBTC.

“So, my role is basically to do the operational management of the shop and the buying on the product side, so not the art, …” - Product buyer (Olivia)
This quote shows that the role of the product buyer focussed specifically on dealing with the product side of the business, to which she concentrates on establishing relations with the designers and not the artists. In contrast, the following quote states the opposite, describing the specific focus of the A&S buyer, who was specifically brought in to build and sustain relations with the artists.

“Katie deals with the artists. So, Katie who I used to work with at Culture Label, used to be the director of the art group and so she has this amazing eye for commercial work that is going to sell to, it is not just stuff she likes, she is very well trained in what will sell” – Founder & director (Alice).

This quote illustrates how the specific skills of Katie directed the A&S buyer role into her field of expertise, which lays in art and not design. The following excerpt reinforces these arguments, with the founder & director contrasting the A&S role and the product buyer role, explaining them as two very distinctive and separate paths.

“Olivia works with these guys [designers] so basically more product and so her whole bit of the shop is products, so it is mugs, ceramics, jewellery, all the Christmas gifting, which is massive, at any one time there are about 300… So, Olivia does all of that and then Katie deals with all the artists, i.e. the artwork on the walls. – Founder & director (Alice).

The table below presents five main roles within the two sub-categories of WBTC shop roles and HQ roles, describing the pre-defined tasks with which each role enacted their role when joining WBTC.

Table 12: Role scripts of WBTC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Main role tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder &amp; director</td>
<td>- Overseeing the curated selection of artists and designers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Leading the vision and business strategy of the venture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Championing WBTC’s suppliers through active PR in the media(^{15}).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Overseeing the financial strategy and development of WBTC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Managing the WBTC roles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) The media are organisations providing information to the public. WBTC mainly targeted printed and online life-style magazines and design and trends blogs and vlogs, such as The Skinny and Time Out magazines and Insider Trends, to name a few.
| HQ roles | Product buyer | - Helping plan the selling strategies of WBTC.  
- Participating in projects with consultancy clients, interpreting their needs and proposing solutions from the artist and designers from the WBTC network.  
- Curating design products, placing orders and managing the design stock for the pop-up and online shops. |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Art & Stationery buyer (A&S buyer) | - Curating the work from the artists that supply stock to WBTC.  
- Placing orders and manage prints and stationery stock for the pop-up and online shop.  
- Building relationships with artists based on trust for guidance.  
- Supporting the artists’ creative processes with advice from professional expertise. |
|  | Marketing & Communication s (comms.) | - Planning and leading PR activities alongside the founder & director.  
- Managing the online platform by coordinating the submission of key material from the artists and designers selling their goods online.  
- Organising in-shop events with artists.  
- Coordinating internal communications with WBTC roles.  
- Managing relations with clients such as restaurants, shops, or other organisations. |
| Shop roles | Shop manager | - Managing the shop roles.  
- Managing in-shop stock and sales.  
- Bridging communications in the shop with the HQ roles. |

Table 12. shows that the entire HQ roles, comprised of the founder & director, product buyer, A&S buyer, and marketing & comms. roles, have a clear focus on the practical side of the business, driving revenue related activities that are fundamental for the venture. These roles participate in key aspects of the selling strategies that determine the venture’s performance, such as curating creative work, developing financial plans, placing orders, managing stock and being the main point of contact with clients.

Finally, the shop manager belongs to the shop-roles and differs from the HQ roles from where she worked, which was in the shop rather than the office, where she had direct access to both suppliers and consumers, allowing this role to brokers information between the Shop and the HQ roles., with insights from in the pop-up shop about customers preferences and feedback, which she passed on to the HQ roles for them to improve current and future strategies.
Mapping roles across entrepreneurial phases

We analysed tasks performed by each role in their relations with suppliers and consumers throughout the emerging, organising growing and stabilising phases of WBTC.

- **Founder & director [Alice]**

**Phase 1 Emerge**

In the emerging phase, the founder & director role included a broad range of responsibilities due to limited resources, which led her to engage in a variety of relations with suppliers and consumers, interacting with designers, customers, and clients. The founder directed her energy and focus to designers because the A&S buyer role was already in place and in full control of artist relations from the beginning. In the absence of more people due to the lack of resources from the rather humble start of WBTC, the founder & director role assumed all day-to-day tasks from the shop, including important but nonetheless, basic chores like ringing-up purchases in the till and engaging with customers visiting the shop. All this coexisted with more complex tasks such as pursuing relations with clients that were critical for this role, whose primary goal was to lead WBTC strategy by actively finding new avenues to achieve economic stability and grow.

**Phase 2 Organise**

In the organising phase, the product buyer and shop assistant roles emerged, taking over the founder & director’s relations with designers and with in-shop customers.

I asked Olivia to go into the shop and run it for me in order that I could get out and start building other bits around this. - Founder & director (Alice).

The marketing & comms. role was also created in this phase, who worked alongside the founder & director in PR and marketing activities and took over WBTC’s internal communication and coordination, enabling the founder to focus on managing relations with clients and lead WBTC’s strategy, as stated by the product buyer:

Adam now does all the marketing and all the social sides of things which I think has probably massively helped Alice because she was doing all of that stuff before but also trying to run the business. – Product buyer (Olivia).

This evidence shows that the creation of new roles in this phase significantly benefited the role of the founder & director, who was now able to concentrate on what
was strategically important for the development of the business, such as developing proposals for expanding their consultancy business, as explained in the quote below.

“Then again, they (Carnaby street) always have empty units and so the idea is that the recent pitch to them is that we will have our store and we will run that, but we will also help you curate other areas of the Estate…” – Founder & director (Alice).

Phase 3 Stabilise

In the stabilising phase, the role structure previously described sustained, in which the founder & director had no interactions with artists, designers or customers and continued to concentrate on the relations with clients that could bring in higher revenue to grow the venture. Moreover, in this phase, the founder & director was able to make major progress by getting a deal with the landlord that allowed the venture to significantly reduced their rent in exchange for bespoke work for Carnaby, who at this point also became a client. This was an advantageous move for WBTC since the venture’s central location in Carnaby street was one of its main strengths for the high footfall of customers in the area, which was fundamental for generating a stable revenue that could assure the survival of the business. In the following quote, Alice describes the importance of being able to remain on Carnaby:

The customer on Carnaby is just our customer, it is perfect, it is basically you get the right number of Londoners, the right number of tourists, they have all got money and Carnaby is the right area to provide what we are doing because it has the right heritage to it. – Founder & director (Alice).

The above reinforces the idea that the founder and director need support roles that liberate her time to focus on critical issues for the development of the venture. Also, the quote below explains how it is important to be able to show having this support to clients to inspire trust and credibility.

Olivia tends to help me now on the bigger pictures and so she comes into Carnaby meetings with me and I think it is important at this point we start, it is more than just me because I think they just look at me and they are like, you know, how are you going to do all of this? because I keep pitching in all of this stuff … Alice. - Founder & director (Alice).
This evidence shows the value of sharing tasks among roles, who can choose not only to assume tasks from other roles but to act together to strengthen their position and the position of the venture as well.

**Phase 4 Grow**

In the growing phase, the founder & director’s role remained the same as in the previous phase, where the main role of the founder & director was to be fully dedicated to the strategic development of the venture by establishing relations with high profile clients. These relations, however, became more complex and increasingly demanding, which implied more time and effort from the founder & director and the product buyer roles. At this point, the role of the founder started to overload, as stated by Alice:

> It’s the juggling constantly of the … it’s having a shop, it’s having an online shop, it’s having a team in a shop, it’s having a team in an office, it’s having consultancy business where suddenly I’m having to play agency-client relationship where they want things from me. Then I’m going into Carnaby and setting up rent deals with them and they want things, it’s a beast. It’s too many hats and its too many different types of businesses all going on at once. – Founder & director (Alice)

Here, the evidence clearly shows that the founder and director’s role responsibilities for orchestrating different aspects of the businesses meant having to “wear different hats” to assume new challenges arising in consequence of the growth of the business. Although creating new roles freed up Alice’s time, she also had to coordinate these roles for WBTC. Additionally, the evidence presented across the four phases observed, demonstrated that even though Alice exclusively catered her efforts to sustaining relations with bespoke clients, these relations became more complex in time, which added to her tasks and overloaded her role.

- **Product buyer [Olivia]**

**Phase 1-Emerge**

The product buyer role was not defined until the organising phase. In the emerging phase, the responsibilities of this role belonged to the universe of tasks performed by the founder & director.

**Phase 2-Organise**

In the organising phase, the product buyer role was officially created. The founder & director created this role to run the shop operations and take over the relations with
designers, managing the product stock and administrative work associated. This was based on her retail background, as stated in the quote below.

She -Olivia- has a retail background, she used to work in music production but before that, it was all about retail, … – Founder & director (Alice).

In this phase, the product buyer only focussed on sustaining relations with designers, not being involved with the artists, as mentioned in the quote below, which states the need for this role to exclusively deal with the high volume of designers showcasing goods in the shop.

We keep it separate just because of the volume of artists and designers in the store and so there at any one time there are about 300. … So, Olivia does all of that and then Katie deals with all the artists, i.e., the artwork on the walls. – Founder & director (Alice).

Also, at the beginning of this phase, the product buyer interacted with in-shop customers, with whom she would engage in conversations to collect valuable information that helped strengthen her design product curating job and to get a better understanding of how to best target in-shop customers.

So, Olivia worked in the store for six months running a team, really working out how you run a shop well but she also was a buyer because she wanted to do this sort of stuff and bring in the right products and I said, well the best way of doing that is to actually run the store, to begin with because you have to understand what the customers want, how people react to things, whether you need to tell the story in the store of the product, all that stuff.” - Founder & director (Alice).

Later in this same phase, this role changed by dividing into two different roles, where the (1) “product buyer” role, enacted by Olivia, focussed solely on relations with designers, and the (2) “shop manager” role, enacted by Liv, took over the operations of the shop and relations with customers. At this point, the product buyer role also got involved with bespoke clients, where the evidence below shows that she supported the founder & director by attending meetings together.

I think I took her out of the store in September because we had a really good summer and I could see also that she needed also to move on and I needed more support on my side, so I needed an HQ. Olivia is now outside in HQ and Olivia’s job is to do all the buying, to deal with all the designers. …Olivia tends to
help me now on the bigger pictures and so she comes into Carnaby meetings with me and I think it is important at this point we start it is more than just me…” - Founder & director (Alice).

**Phase 3 Stabilise**

In the stabilising phase, the role of the product buyer was modified, and she started to interact with artists in addition to designers. This was a consequence of the part-time contract of the A&S buyer, who worked three days a week, which makes it difficult to lead events and workshops with the artists at the shop. Initially, the person in the marketing & comms. role assisted the art & stationery buyer with this, but later this role became overloaded when a new e-commerce selling channel was developed, delegating this responsibility to the product buyer.

“So, events were being covered by Olivia a bit more when I was in the throes of the online…-Marketing & communications (Adam).

Additionally, relations with designers also changed, and now included producing collaborative products with this supplier, making these relations more complex.

“My job is changing slightly because I am going into product development which means we have got, as well as the buying, we will be making our own range this year.” - Product buyer (Olivia).

This quote shows how during this phase the product buyer’s involvement with clients intensified, demanding more time and attention from this role.

**Phase 4 Grow**

In the growing phase, relations previously established with artists to coordinate in-shop events continued and even increased, with the marketing & comms role becoming busier with the management of the online shop. Moreover, in this phase, relations with designers also gained more traction, as collaborative projects multiplied for the consolidation of consultancy projects that increased this role’s workload.

…we are curating their gift shop because it will be a visitor attraction and so I am doing all of that …and then we are going to develop a Carnaby Street souvenir range and so what we have agreed… we are also going to champion Carnaby as a visitor destination within the store as part of our rent agreement.” - Product buyer (Olivia).
Due to this role getting overload, we observed that the product buyer, who before received tasks from other roles who were overloaded, followed this same pattern when the founder & director stepped in assuming more tasks from their shared role in dealing with bespoke clients, as explained in the quote below.

“Alice basically handled dealing with them…Yes, so she’s doing all the staffing and negotiating any further work because there’s a lot more, they want from us.” -Product buyer (Olivia).

- **A&S buyer [Katie]**

**Phase 1 Emerge**

This role’s sustained relations with artists from the emergence and onwards. Previous evidence showed that this role was specifically tailored to dealing with artists, given that expertise was needed to curate the art and recruit the artists, which was fundamental for building a strong and competitive identity and brand. Also, her part-time contract limited adding more responsibilities to this role.

…her expertise was not in the product sector…, her real skill is in art, and she is only part-time, …” -Founder & director (Alice).

The limited scope and availability of this role led to other WBTC members eventually support this role, taking over tasks from relations with the artists.

**Phase 2 Organise**

The A&S Buyer continued to focus on the artists. The quote from the founder & director below supports this statement by explaining the importance of keeping this role solely focussed on relations with artists:

Handling artists is harder than gifting suppliers [the designers] in a funny way. Well, there’s more sort of handholding going on, whereas with the gifting suppliers there’s more getting it right in terms of numbers and whatever, margins.
– Founder & director (Alice).

This evidence demonstrates the importance of this role full focus and dedication with the artists.

**Phase 3 Stabilise**

The stabilising phase showed the same pattern as the previous emerging and organising phases. No changes were observed in this role at this point. The quote below explains how this role maintain focus on her relationship with artists and responsibility
with the artist’s goods when going to the shop only to oversee these goods and not to participate in any other tasks regarding in-shop customers.

“I will go in and see how the shop is doing, look at the stock, make sure I am in touch with what is happening in there, otherwise I would be best in the office for the two days I am working.” - Art & Stationery buyer (Katie).

**Phase 4 Grow**

The grow phase replicated the same pattern observed in this role’s responsibilities and tasks. However, there was an important change about the person enacting this role, when Katie was temporarily replaced by Liv, who then enacted both the A&S buyer and shop manager roles simultaneously. This change was temporary to cover for Katie’s pregnancy leave. This process implied that the A&S buyer role and the shop manager role fused in this phase. The next quote from the founder & director illustrates how these two roles came to be enacted by Liv due to Katie’s absence.

“…so, Liv has basically taken over Katie’s role as a maternity leave cover… I realised it would require her to do both the job in the store and be in the office”. -Founder & director (Alice).

- *Marketing & Comms. [Adam]*

**Phase 1 Emerge**

The marketing & comms. role did not exist in the emerging phase since it was formally created in the second phase of the venture. The associated tasks of this role were part of the founder & director’s responsibilities at this point. Nevertheless, Adam, the individual enacting the marketing & comms role, was already informally “helping out” with some of his future tasks during this phase, where his input was more ad hoc and spontaneous rather than a formalised role, as stated in the quote below.

“I joined full-time in the lead-up to Christmas that has just past and so for the first year basically I was just doing things to help out and I wasn’t really on the payroll and so I was just helping out.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

**Phase 2 Organise**

The marketing & comms. was formally created in the organising phase. This role differed from the rest of the roles by having a wider scope, relating to all suppliers and consumers in some way across all phases. For instance, we see that although not being
the main “point of contact” with artists and designers, this role involved communication with artists and designers, as stated in the evidence below.

“… so, I would never be a day-to-day contact and so if a designer wanted something, wanted to ask a question, or wanted to submit a new product or whatever it might be or suggesting a workshop they would never really come to me. If they do, I will just pass it straight back to Olivia.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

“Adam writes to all of the artists to say this is what we are doing, are you okay for us to put your content from your website, so basically the descriptions and also the images, …just information like, are you happy for us to go on to your website, then we used a lot of their images but we also created this stock image of our own…” -Founder & director (Alice).

We also found this role interacted with customers and clients. With customers, the connection was mainly with online customers who reached out to WBTC’s online channels, such as social media through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter platforms as well as through the contact form from the online shop, as stated in the quote below.

“…I will keep on doing everything and I am doing the customers as well…there is a procedure online …which was not really happening previously because everyone would either have the conversation in the shop or not at all.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

With clients, there was a distinction between volume clients and bespoke clients. With volume clients, this role took a more active part with sporadic clients from organisations looking to purchase a high number of goods that exceeded the stock in the shop, directly coordinating these special orders, as explained in the quote below.

“El Ganso is a fashion brand that I just bought 200 prints to go to Madrid recently and I was like, yes, like getting it all going and then Adam was the one who actually sent the catalogue kept emailing until they said yes and he did 400 different types of invoices because they suddenly wanted to pay in Euros and all the rest of it and then he got it through, got it into a van and got it there safely, and the money is in.” – Founder & director (Alice).

In contrast, with bespoke clients this role took merely a supportive stance, helping the founder & director to follow up on tasks set up by her with these clients, but only when asked, as shown in the evidence below.
“On a day-to-day basis I never do any of the buying, I never do any of the communication with anything unless it is to do with anything that I am sort of looking after.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

We also learned from previous evidence that this role supported the art & stationery buyer role in the organisation of in-shop events with artists. This last reinforces the importance of the flexible element of this role, which greatly helped cope with important tasks that might get neglected due to the overload of other roles.

**Phase 3 Stabilise**

In the stabilising phase the marketing & comms. role was consistent in interacting with all suppliers and consumers. During this phase, the online shop of the venture was officially launched and managed by him leading to the addition of new tasks to this role. Some of these new tasks were related to gathering information and imagery from suppliers, which proved to be a time-consuming activity that greatly overloaded this role. This led this role to interact more with artists and designers than before, as shown in the quote below, where the A&S role introduced him to all the artists so he could start dealing directly with them.

“Katy is obviously one of the main liaisons with all of the artists but for anyone who I didn’t already know or hadn’t really collaborated with or met I was being introduced to, effectively for most people anyway the introduction was from Katy and then I would pick up and start actually requesting things.” – Marketing & comms. (Adam).

The following quote reinforces that in this phase, the management of the online shop consumed considerable amounts of Adam’s time and intensified his interactions with artists, designers and customers. The quote below illustrates the dedication that communicating with online customers entail.

“He specifically said, can you let me know, because he bought a couple of Rugman pieces as he particularly liked that, and he said will you let me know if he ever comes in... So, then I kind of took it upon myself to email him when Rugman was coming in…” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

The following quote from the product buyer reinforces this view, where she recognises that the marketing & comms. role was the role receiving more impact in terms of the workload associated with online sales.
“It is fine, it has really been Adam who has been affected by it (online shop), … He is very busy, and he is mainly in despatch now.” – Product buyer (Olivia).

We found that managing the online shop did not lead to creating a new role, but rather to the addition of this responsibility to Adam’s role.

“We did not employ anyone additional to help with the actual creation of the website at the beginning … so we had to get permissions and we had to contact all of them, get images back from them, work out if there were certain items that they did not want to be stocked up there.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

There were consequences of this, with the added responsibilities overloading the marketing & comms. role and some tasks having to be absorbed by other roles, such as that of the product buyer, who had to provide further support to events run in the shop.

“So, events were being covered by Olivia a bit more when I was in the throes of the online…-Marketing & communications (Adam).

Regarding customers and clients, the interactions identified in the previous (organising) phase, continued in this one, with Adam responding to customers’ requests and helping the founder to follow up on clients when required.

**Phase 4 Grow**

In the growing phase, previous patterns stayed consistent in terms of the interaction of the marketing & comms. role with all supplier and consumer categories. The quote below provides evidence of the continuity of the dispatching task that was added to this role from the opening of the online shop.

“I’m still doing the majority of the dispatch, and that is mostly because of my role going back slightly more to what it was previously in that I do actually need to be in the shop quite often.” - Marketing & comms. (Adam).

The next quote from the founder & director explains that previous interactions of this role seemed to solidify in this phase from a better understanding of Adam’s skills, which led to a more refined definition of his role’s responsibilities. For instance, Adam became a more prominent presence at the shop, the main point of contact for customers of both the physical and the online shop, as stated below.
“I think Adam should just be there. When he’s there he really notices that people say to him constantly have all these questions like “Can we sell that piece off the wall? Can we dispatch this to Israel?” and all these questions. He said, “I sometimes don’t know what would happen if I wasn’t there.” – Founder & director (Alice).

Along with the value of his presence at the shop, being in charge of dispatch in this phase, emphasise the importance of having a role that is able to adapt and include key tasks that differ from the set of scripted tasks initially associated with a role, which in this specific case, allowed the venture to open a new commercial channel from incorporating a number of new tasks to the marketing & comms. role.

- Shop manager [Liv]

**Phase 1 Emerge**

The shop manager role was not created until the organising phase, for as with previous roles, at the emerging phase the responsibilities of this role, in particular, fell under the responsibilities of the founder & director role.

**Phase 2 Organise**

In the organising phase, the shop manager role was created to run the shop operations and the shop-roles, interacting with artists, designers, and customers. With the artists and designers, interactions took place when they popped into the shop to drop off their stock or see their work exhibited.

“Liv is in the front-line, she is seeing the customers and getting the feedback from the customers, and she is seeing people’s reactions there and hearing people’s stories...” – Art &Stationery buyer (Katie).

Here, the shop manager interacts with these suppliers, which as stated in the following quote, is part of the job in terms of learning facts about their creative processes to pass on interesting information to in-shop customers.

“You have got to take some time and learn a little bit about each of them and you get to meet a load of interesting people and you get to know a little bit about the background and why they have created this art thing, so there is quite a lot to learn. – Shop manager (Liv).

Similarly, interactions with customers occur in the shop. Relations with customers are based on information related to the artwork or the WBTC suppliers themselves and
about the commercial exchange of these goods. The next quote shows how communicating with customers was taken seriously by WBTC, and how the product buyer - the first shop manager - helped Liv to prepare for this task.

“Olivia was great at teaching me on how to interact with customers and what is a good thing to say, she is great at that type of thing.” – Shop manager (Liv).

Moreover, evidence shows that in this phase the shop manager also worked closely with the product buyer and the art and stationery buyer, assisting them with tasks involving the coordination of the artwork and products showcased at the shop.

“… I was helping Katy ring around the artists and saying we know that you have this Queen print, and we really want it in, I know it is really short-notice but we need it for Tuesday, (laughs) but talking to them like that and kind of arranging things and so quite a lot of contacts…” -Shop manager (Liv).

In terms of interactions with clients, the evidence did not indicate any.

**Phase 3 Stabilise**

In the stabilising phase, the pattern observed in the previous one was continued and consolidated, with the shop manager continuing to interact with artists, designers and clients. The approach taken by this role is reflected in the following quote.

“He has a bit of a thing for Central London and really liked it, he seemed to love it a bit. He came back a few times and started to strike up a conversation with some of the shop team … and they would have a bit of a laugh.” – Marketing & communications (Adam).

This evidence relational elements upon which interactions with suppliers were sustained, which apart from having a strategic purpose, were also intensified by similar age ranges, common interests and a shared passion for creative work between the shop manager and the suppliers.

“We were out in a club, a nightclub, and I was queuing up for the toilets and I was just like “ah!” and she was like “ah!” She’s so lovely. She said “oh my god, how you doing?” … it was so nice to see her. We were dancing for ages together, I met her friends, she met my friends. And then I was saying I’ve got these new things happening soon and she was like “oh my god, send them over. Love to see it.” So, it was more of like a friendly exchange than I’m going with a business proposal…” – Jenny Sparks.
With this, the shop manager, and the shop-roles more broadly, ended up building strong bonds and even friendships with some suppliers. Liv comments below about this bond of the WBTC roles and its suppliers:

“It is priceless, … it is a real sense of a little community, and you feel part of it.” – Shop manager (Liv).

**Phase 4 Grow**

At this phase, the shop manager role additionally took over the A&S buyer role, as Katie temporarily stepped down to go on maternity leave, as previously mentioned. Another implication of the shop manager enacting two roles is that she had to change workplaces, dividing her time between the pop-up shop on Carnaby Street and the office, where she joined the rest of the HQ roles. Therefore, relations with designers in this phase continued as they were on the days she was based in the shop. In this same vein, interaction with customers also continued under those same conditions.

### 5.4 Role change

During the phases observed, we found several situations in which the initially scripted roles changed. In the table below we illustrate individuals from WBTC enacting different roles across the phases observed, as shown in Table 13 below.

*Table 13: Individuals assuming different roles across phases.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Phase 1 (Emerging)</th>
<th>Phase 2 (Organising)</th>
<th>Phase 3 (Stabilising)</th>
<th>Phase 4 (Growing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder &amp; director</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product buyer</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arte &amp; stationery buyer</td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Liv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing &amp; comms.</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop manager</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Olivia-Liv</td>
<td>Liv</td>
<td>Liv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These changes occurred from the organise phase onwards when all roles observed were created, except for the founder & director and the A&S buyer roles, which existed
from the emergence of WBTC. In the following point, we illustrate these changes through the evolution of each role.

*Figure 10: Role evolution over phases observed.*

The figure shows how in phase 1, the emerge phase, there were only two roles in WBTC, represented in the figure with two disconnected black dots. On the one hand, the founder & director, took a wide array of responsibilities in this stage which included doing PR, admin work and even working behind the till in the physical shop. And on the other, the A&S buyer, specialised in dealing with the artists and stocking a curated collection of artworks.

In phase 2, the organise phase, the figure show how three new roles are created to alleviate the workload of the founder & director. These roles are illustrated in the second column with new black dots and an arrow system showing the focus of the new role. The first role created was the marketing & comms. role, which shared PR tasks with the founder, showing a dotted line with two arrows, (one pointing to the marketing and
comms. role and another one pointing to the founder role) representing that the tasks assumed by this role were taken forward in collaboration between these two roles. The second role created was the product buyer role, which took over all tasks related to the shop and relations established with designers, for which the founder was fully responsible up to that moment. The latter is illustrated in the figure with a dotted line that starts from the founder role and points to the direction of the product buyer role, signalling the transfer of task from one role to the other. The third role created in this phase was the shop manager role, who came to alleviate the workload of the new product buyer role, by taking over all management tasks from the shop, freeing the product buyer role to concentrate on curating and buying design goods. Similarly, to the product buyer explained, the figure illustrated a dotted line that starts in the product buyer and points to the shop manager, showing the first role transferred responsibilities to the second one.

Phase 3, the growth phase, was the most active in terms of role changes. In this phase, the founder & director role continue sharing tasks with marketing and comms. role but changed the relationship with the product buyer role, from delegating to sharing tasks. This was due to new challenges in this phase that arose from trying to sustain an increasing workload which was a direct consequence from growing. Also, due to this, a new connection shaped between the marketing & comms. and the product buyer roles, which started sharing tasks, coordinated activities with artists together. Moreover, these roles also assumed tasks that belong to the A&S buyer, because as the venture grew, it required articulating other roles to cope with increasing volume of work in fewer working hours. The A&S buyer role overloading, had a big impact on the team, where tasks had to be assumed by a number of other roles, the marketing and comms and product buyer roles previously mentioned, and the shop manager role as well, who helped in coordinating tasks with the artists. This activity is illustrated in the figure with three dotted lines starting from the A&S buyer going in the direction of the three roles mentioned.

In phase 4, the stabilise phase, we observed less activity in relation to role tasks changes. The founder & director continued to work in collaboration with the product buyer, particularly because bespoke client work increased in this phase, a customer category managed by these two roles. In this phase however, two punctual situations were identified as triggering changes; one was the overload of the marketing & comms. role,
from an intensified volume of tasks from the online shop, leading the role to delegate other responsibilities to the product buyer, as illustrates the arrow pointing from the marketing and comms to the product buyer role. Finally, a new connection appeared in this phase when the A&S buyer and the shop manager roles merged, due to a maternity leave of the A&S role who was temporarily absent. The symbology of this new role interaction illustrates in the figure as a solid black arrow pointing to both roles.

The changes in figure 11, showed how WBTC evolved roles to cope with role overload with the increasing volume of tasks which directly responded to the venture’s growth. The diagram illustrates a dynamic mechanism of role creation, task sharing, task delegation and role merge, which allowed roles to meet these increasing demands through a flexible structure that effectively responded to evolving organisational needs.

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I presented the results from this study explaining the categorisation and structure of all actors involved in the brokerage activities from WBTC and clarifying relational aspects about how each individual from the team enacted their role. A longitudinal look provided by the data collection and analysis performed throughout four organisational phases which is explained in detail, allowing to understand roles interaction and dynamics, providing comprehensive explanations of how roles evolved in WBTC. I observed the new venture from an individual and a collective dimension, from the emergence and throughout the venture’s stabilise phase.

The findings in our study revealed that WBTC enacts brokerage in two different ways, as a collective, where the firm used specialized roles to manage dyadic relations and coordinated these roles to share information, and as individuals, who were buyers and mediated the relationship between suppliers and consumers. The buyers enacted brokerage under distinct circumstances: from Tertius Gaudens that kept artists and bespoke clients separate when joining them threatened the firm’s brokerage position; and from Tertius Iungens when collapsing a relationship benefitted everyone involved and did not threaten the firms’ brokerage position.

The dynamic agency presented was clear from findings showing roles adapting in response to the new ventures’ evolving needs and avoids role overload either by creating a new role or by sharing and/or delegating tasks with other roles or by merging two roles
into one. These findings stress the importance of individual’s agency in roles, where
dynamically enacting roles alongside evolving organisational needs, develops the
flexibility needed to adapt and grow entrepreneurial ventures.

Overall, these findings reinforce the idea that brokers navigate network relations
by purposefully devising their own dynamic strategies, adjusting to specific needs that
each brokering relation requires.
6 CHAPTER SIX: Discussion - Role enactment in brokerage relations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings of this study are discussed and integrated with existing contributions of role and brokerage literature. The discussion will follow a structure of four main sub-sections. The first contain an introductory overview of the role literature gaps addressed by this study from the integrated perspective of the findings presented in chapter 5. The second one focusses on roles performing brokerage from a collective and an individual perspective. The third sub-section focuses on role enactment alongside the evolution of the venture. Finally, a fourth sub-section will bring together the findings of the previous point, presenting an integrated view of how together they extend our understanding of role enactment in organisations.

6.2 Integrating findings from two studies addressing role literature gaps

Role theory is the science that investigates how individuals are expected to behave within a particular position in determined social structures (Hindin, 2007). Classic role theory supports the notion of organisational roles being scripted in top-down schemes that employees accept and enact according to set expectations (Jackson and Schuler, 1992). Strategy scholars tend to adopt this functionalist perspective when explaining role behaviour (Stryker, 2008), where organisational roles are organised collectively and can be objectively viewed – as Giddens (2001) illustrates – as bodily organs serving specific functions in the integrated bodily system. This prescriptive way of looking at roles is associated with a functionalist school of thought championed by Biddle (1986), which argued that roles are pre-defined and perfectly combined in organisational settings to effectively lead organisations forward. Current discussions on role theory, however,
consider this view debilitates contemporary role theory, by disregarding the agency of individuals, who under this view stand powerless to elements such as social structures like networks (Katz and Kahn, 1966), which we already established are imperative in the creative industries and therefore, key in the empirical setting of this research. Therefore, an agent-centric view presents empowered individuals as knowledgeable agents that act reflexively. This view provides more depth in the understanding of how individuals enact their roles from a micro-social perspective (Mantere, 2008).

The discussion about role behaviour from an agency perspective is clarified by Winship and Mandel’s (1983) interpretation of the concepts of “role” and “position”, where they argue roles are “mechanisms by which people identify similar positions across different situations”(Winship and Mandel, 1983:316), defining the role as a classification in a particular social structure, contrasting and limiting the concept of positions as locations within this same structure (Baker and Faulkner, 1991). Based on this idea that roles go beyond a particular social structure and represent social abstractions that can be generalised, Baker and Faulkner (1991) defined the relevant social structure as “a pattern of positions and their relationships” (Baker and Faulkner, 1991:281). This interpretation is based on notions of community decision making (Bonacich, 1987; Flores et al., 2012; Laumann and Pappi, 2013), as opposed to objectivist guidelines that conceive social structure as a set of nodes placed in different network positions (Burt, 1992a).

An agent-centric view tells us that role enactment plays an important part in complex social systems like intra-organisational networks (Larson, 1992), where enacting a particular role within the dynamics of a growing venture is a highly complex task that needs to be coordinated collectively among individuals occupying different positions and enacting different roles within the organisation. This exposes a gap in organisational role theory, which largely investigated roles within organisations from an individual level of analysis focussed on psychological and sociological views that cannot provide comprehensive explanations of how role enactment unfolds and contribute to the effective functioning, stability and growth of the entire venture. Therefore, advancing role theory from a dynamic perspective that considers processes of how employees enact their role not only individually but also collectively, should broaden our understanding of how entrepreneurial venture shape, function and evolve. Addressing this gap extends contemporary organisational role theory by shedding light on how roles within an
entrepreneurial venture emerges and adapt as the venture grows and meets new challenges as it develops over time.

6.3 Roles performing collective and individual brokerage

In the light of the previous, findings from this research reveal that WBTC enacts its brokerage role in two different ways: (1) as a collective, where the firm uses specialized roles to manage dyadic relations and coordinated roles to share information, and (2) as individuals, who were buyers and mediated the relationship between suppliers and consumers. In terms of brokerage from the agent-centric view adopted, brokers have the agency to actively participate in the content and shape of their relationships (Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2016b). Here, the literature provide consistent evidence of contrasting motivations driving brokers behaviours, from divisive and opportunistic forms by following a Tertius Gaudens (Simmel, 1950; Burt, 1992a) approach; to a collaborative and unifying from a Tertius Iungens (Obstfeld, 2005c), where actors are brought together rather than kept apart. In light of the previous, the buyers enacted brokerage under distinct circumstances: Tertius Gaudens which kept artists and bespoke clients separate when joining them could threaten the firm’s brokerage position, versus Tertius Iungens when collapsing a relationship benefitted everyone involved and did not threatened the firms’ brokerage position.

Contemporary brokerage research opened the discussion for dynamic processes where brokers choose to enact their role by drawing from both behaviours, tertius iungens and tertius gaudens, like we found in this study. Lingo and O’Mahoney’s together with Quintane and Carnabuci’s work wrote about the interplay of these two theories showing contradicting motivations in generative processes that highlight a need to observe broker’s role without prejudice or judgement for any orientation in particular, but rather to maintain hindsight on aspects involved in brokerage relations and a permanent assessment dynamic brokerage processes. Here, a mixed approach to brokerage relations appeared to be an effective road to tackle brokerage processes leading to organisational advantages and growth. But despite these valuable contributions, brokerage research has focussed on individuals enacting their brokerage roles within organisations, rather than following more dynamic and integrative understandings of organisational processes from a firm level, leaving how organisations enact their brokerage position an undeveloped
topic to explore. This research fills this gap by addressing brokerage as a collective process, where WBTC enact their brokerage position through dynamic specialised roles and systematic internal coordination. Evidence in this research showed different individuals from WBTC enacted their role in contradictive ways, by either adopting a tertius gaudens approach, preventing communication between the mediated actors, controlling information flowing from the dyadic relations established; or by adopting a tertius iungens approach, which they used to cope with suppliers’ shortcomings to meet the necessary standards for becoming stocked suppliers. The above directly contributes to previous academic studies exploring these dichotomies like the ones mentioned by Lingo and O’Mahony, where this study extends their claim by adding a dynamic component by explaining how different roles from the team choose to use one strategy or the other with specific network actors based on the goal they are trying to achieve.

Moreover, findings in this research, showed a tendency of WBTC to specialise, but also combine roles during brokerage processes, were existing roles were temporarily coordinated by team members, leading a collective brokerage that created distinctive combination of roles to establish “customised” or “commoditised” relations with suppliers and consumers. In comparison with previous research, these findings revealed that it is the same firm who enacts both customised and commoditised relations, which differs from Quintane and Carnabuci’s (2016) study focussing on individuals within the same firm, where they do not explore how tertius gaudens and tertius iungens affects the firm’s strategy for managing brokerage. By addressing this relationship our study breaks new ground, finding that brokers collectively manage different network relations. These findings overlap with Foster, Borgatti and Jones (2011), where the authors distinguish art worlds as divided into customised and commoditised relations, - where niche dealing with novelty and variety aligns with customised relations; and relations based on replicability and repetition with the commoditised relations from our study. Findings from this study contrast with their study in that they found brokers tended to specialise in one of these relations and develop distinctive networks for each one of them, whereas this study found that both can take place within the same firm, just enacted by different roles.
6.4 Role enactment in evolving ventures

Baker and Faulkner (1991) view roles as first claimed and then enacted by individuals, proposing that positions and the relationships between individuals are created from roles, suggesting overarching social structures as constructed from concretised abstractions these individuals create through their roles. This aligns with an interactionist school of thought for which individuals are responsible for the set of relationships they establish an agent-centric view that present empowered agents who act reflexively upon at least a partial awareness of preconceived conditions about their role (Mantere, 2008).

This view is relevant in nowadays society that is in perpetual flux and subject to constant change, where human’s agency to adapt to unpredictable contingencies, demand a constant creation of new processes, leading individuals to engage in novel behaviours. In this context, roles adopted are malleable and are constantly being modified by individuals according to the circumstances they experience (Stryker, 2008). We understand agency from Giddens’ standpoint, as the purposive action that individuals have in shaping their roles, considering that they can reflect and tailor them according to their needs and possibilities (Giddens, 1984), having the ability and power to act differently from what is expected (Giddens, 1979). In this light, Biddle (1986) argues that conceptual understandings of roles must be flexible enough to include the wide range of phenomena that can be studied around them.

There are implications of an agency perspective where roles help knit organisational settings, defining roles and shaping groups that organise inter-organisational relationships (Turner, 1968). This has implications for understanding how organisations grow, due to their need to adapt by incorporating new learnings (Zahra and George, 2002), where enacting roles in this way represent an effective avenue for maintaining flexible processes that accommodate new challenges as opposed to rigid ones that could hinder the venture’s performance. Here, several scholars argue that role-taking within organisations is a key factor for understanding the current reality of work-roles (Biddle, 1986; George, 1993; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005), where Stryker argued that “role-taking …rests on the interaction of common meanings among those engaged in the ongoing social process that constitutes society” (2008:17). All this is based on contingency frameworks demanding adaptation from organisational players to navigate markets conditions (Miles et al., 1978; Jones, Svejenova and Strandgaard, 2016a).
Despite these valuable contributions to understanding roles, these largely have been made from an individual perspective, leaving out a deeper understanding of organisational roles and how these roles unfold and function as dynamic systems in new ventures. The latter extends this previous knowledge by presenting a model for changes in new venture role enactment based on task reconfiguration. In this research, I explored traditional perspectives of role from an objectivist view showing roles as pre-defined and subject to the expectations of the social group where individuals are inserted and contrasted these views, with a more dynamic approach with different behaviours according to the shifting reality shared with others, arguing that individual’s behaviour should be partly understood as collectively constructed phenomena.

I explained how WBTC enacted their roles by adopting different tasks in their interactions with suppliers and consumers. The evidence showed roles as initially scripted and enacted by individuals from specific skills needed for each script. These roles were defined by the founder & director, who created new roles to liberate her own role from a great number of tasks of different nature that she assumed in the emerging phase. Despite being initially defined, roles showed to be flexible in terms of the tasks they performed over time. We found interconnections among WBTC roles where tasks were either shared or delegated, changing the structure of the original tasks each role was set up to perform. I also found that a certain role could assume all tasks from another role, enacting two roles at the same time. This was the case of the shop manager who temporarily enacted the A&S buyer role together with her original role. In this situation, a shop assistant role helped the shop manager/A&S buyer roles by sharing some of her tasks, showing how this practice of task sharing and delegating was widely spread across the venture and promptly used whenever a role started to overload.

The excessive workload of some roles had to be solved collectively and cooperatively with other roles within the new venture. This was achieved through the dynamic mechanism of task creating, delegating, and sharing, shown in figure 12 below, which served to balance the workload of roles from an individual level, through a system that protected the new venture as a collective. This was critical to improving WBTC’s ability to manage a bigger and more complex network over the development of the different organisational phases observed.
Figure 11 illustrate the process just described by showing two paths that suggest a model for new venture role enactment in evolving organisations. In the left side, the figure shows a short path that takes places at an individual level of role, where in a one-off process the role is scripted and enacted accordingly. The right side of the diagram shows a different, more complex and longer path, which occurs at the collective level of role through a dynamic cycle that could include countless iterations. This path starts in the same way of the short one including its two steps followed but adds more steps to the process. After the role being scripted and enacted by following the guidelines in that script, role overload appears as a factor leading to make changes from that initial script. Change, leads to evaluate role tasks, leading to a reconfiguration that include four possible ways of action, to: (1) “creating a new role” that undertakes a high volume of tasks and significantly release the time and energy from a particular role; (2) or “sharing tasks” with one or more than one role, if the support needed is partial and the role is still able to partially fulfill their tasks; (3) or, “delegating tasks” if the role is no longer able to perform them: or, (4) fusing two roles, where one role will add all the tasks and title of another role, who is incapacitated to carry on with its responsibilities.

As shown in figure 11, after reconfiguration the arrow goes back two steps to role enactment, where the reconfigured role will now operate according to the new guidelines. The figure then shows, this role reconfiguration mechanism is dynamic and can be actioned again when needed, by following arrows in the process, where a new case of role overload activates the process where the role will opt again for one of the four options described to role reconfiguration sub-categories.
With these findings, the purposive enactment of role presented, contributes to fostering organisation’s resilience in the face of change. This establishes the importance of a number of factors that could contribute to this. One factor is the leadership of the founder but also, the agency of individuals in different roles to identify virtuous connections that map effective synergies for sharing or delegating tasks if needed. Another factor points directly to fostering collaboration among roles, which from our findings, was key to make this model work, where roles adapted in response to increase volume of tasks by helping each other. Having a culture of collaboration that protects all roles from overloading give certainty to the whole team that, when needed, each role will get the support they require from the rest of the team members. The findings just described contribute to Role literature by providing a dynamic view from a constant reconfiguration of role tasks, which present roles can effectively function as a strongly integrated block in the face of change as new ventures evolves and face new challenges.

6.5 An integrated view of the findings of the study

Findings from this study provided an in-depth look in how roles function within small teams in entrepreneurial ventures and more broadly, about team performance.
Understanding this last, is key for any organisation but fundamentally, for small creative organisations, where structures tend to be horizontal and founders and managers usually coming from creative professions, lack of managerial theoretical or practical knowledge on how to lead a group of employees.

In this study, I argued that WBTC survived and grew by building from the ground up a collaborative process that allowed to cope with different sorts of challenges by first, using a skill-based criterion to define each from their expertise, but later, by including a contingency-based criterion that added a flexible component, which helped the organisation to adapt over time.

We observed how WBTC thoughtfully distribute the increasing workload resulting from growing and function as a cohesive team through a dynamic structure that was able to evolve in time. With this, WBTC team gave us a relevant lesson on how organisations need to flow and carry out processes that put workers in the centre, considering both professional requirements, but also human capacity and wellbeing, which in this case resulted highly effective from an organisational perspective by making it more resilient to change. This flexibility, demonstrated the need to shape roles according to specific needs of suppliers and consumers, unveiling close-knit connections between roles and agency, which was key to consciously tailored roles to fit specific and complex situations.

The findings in this study, where a set of roles were closely observed and followed in time to understand how they came to be and evolved, presented a documented account of this process, which greatly distances from early precepts in role literature describing roles as restrictive categories individuals needed to fit. This directly responds to gaps identified in this research highlighting the need of understanding processes based on the agency of actors to shape and modify their roles that could stay relevant in time.

6.6 Chapter summary

In this discussion chapter four sections ground and integrate the findings from this research. First by framing these findings through gaps identified in role and brokerage literature. Second, by taking a collective and an individual perspective to discuss the findings. Third, by discussing role enactment in relation to venture evolution by presenting a dynamic model that allow to reconfigure roles to protect them from
overloading, which provide a potent tool to adapt to change. Fourth, by presenting an integrated view of the findings of this study, which clarifies the true significance and contribution of this work.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This last chapter provides closure to the study by summarising the findings and explaining the contributions made to the academic community. The following points highlight contributions to organisational role literature and to some extent to brokerage theory, align with providing a practical viewpoint by showing small ventures development while performing brokerage activities in their networks. This chapter ends by acknowledging the limitations of the framework and scope taken by this study, stating some recommendations for researchers to extend future work and a brief closing statement that wraps up the journey undertaken in this endeavour.

7.2 Summary of the findings

This research observed a retail venture throughout entrepreneurial phases of emergence, organising, stabilising and growing, to understand how roles are enacted over time from two dimensions operating in tandem: an individual dimension, where the
venture engages in dyadic relations with suppliers and consumers; and a *collective* dimension, where role articulation takes place to sustain the brokerage relations of the venture.

Findings from this study reveal that WBTC team enacts brokerage in two different ways: (1) as a collective, using specialized roles to manage dyadic relations where they coordinate roles to share information, and (2) as individuals, who were buyers and mediated the relationship between suppliers and consumers. The buyers enacted brokerage under distinct circumstances: Tertius Gaudens that kept artists and bespoke clients separate when joining them threatened the firm’s brokerage position versus Tertius Iungens when collapsing a relationship benefitted everyone involved and did not threaten the firms’ brokerage position.

From a role articulation stance, this research identified a mechanism of ongoing role reconfiguration, adapting alongside the venture’s evolving needs. Findings showed that an excessive individual workload of a role can be tackled collectively and in cooperation with other roles from the venture, through “role creation”, “task delegating and sharing” and “role fusing”, which served to balance the workload of roles from an individual level, protecting roles as a collective from actions of each individual role.

Overall, these findings suggest the importance of understanding roles from an agentic perspective to better grasp how new ventures cope with change, contributing to role literature from an agentic view that reinforces previous contributions presenting role enactment as a dynamic and reflexive activity. This extends our understanding of how new ventures develop flexible systems to adapt and grow in the increasingly dynamic scenarios we face ahead.

### 7.3 Contribution

This study followed academic recommendations to focus research on contingency factors involved in relationships among brokers and the actors they mediate (Borgatti & Foster, P. C., 2003), adding to the body of work of academics arguing that agency in role enactment is key to tackle ongoing challenges preventing ventures from surviving and systematically growing.
7.3.1 Contributions to role theory

This research contributes to contemporary role literature from an interactionist school of thought, explaining roles as flexible structures taking shape according to inflows of information shared with other actors from their social systems, reinforcing the idea of agency as a fundamental factor for understanding how roles are enacted in modern organisations and widening the scope to future research in this direction.

This research exposed a gap in organisational role theory, which has largely investigated roles within organisations at the individual level of analysis, mainly through psychological and sociological perspectives that cannot provide comprehensive explanations of how role enactment unfolds in time and contribute to the effective functioning of a new venture.

Adding to academic discussions concerned with organisational role enactment, this study’s evolutionary approach in examining two complementary dimensions, illuminate unknown synergies between classical and contemporary organisational role literature. The latter is achieved by shedding light on the interplay between pre-established role scripts that were useful at an individual level, and the agentic behaviour from these same roles at a collective level.

Our theories align with technological, cultural and societal changes that are greatly impacting organisational environments in the last few decades, and which demand a deeper and urgent reassessment of how roles are enacted within current organisational spheres (Moshiri and Simpson, 2011). It is to be expected that this avenue will continue to expand and gain traction, given that the societal changes are a growing concern in several modern societies worldwide, where they are being actively discussed in organisational and public policy arenas.

7.3.2 Contributions to brokerage theory

This study contributes to understanding organisational brokerage as a collective process developed by specialized roles for dyadic relations, which through role coordination share information that facilitates sustaining brokerage relations with suppliers and consumers from the venture’s networks. This adds to the identification of the brokerage types of combined tertius, where this study proposes a fresh way for establishing brokerage relationships in paradoxical settings. Here, I identified conditions
under which individual brokers are likely to enact tertius gaudens versus tertius iungens: the former is used when collapsing relations threatens the structural position of the firm and thus its revenue sources; and the latter when collapsing relations enhances the likelihood of mutual gain and does not threaten the firm’s position. This has implications for Obstfeld’s findings (2005c), where the collective good of the firm in new product design outweighed individual advantage for a manager and provided a way to think about mutually beneficial actions.

Findings from this research contribute to brokerage literature then, by revealing brokerage can be collectively or individually enacted. The latter goes in a different direction of the large body of work focusing on brokers exclusively as individuals. Here, this study also make a contribution to brokerage practice, providing guidelines to entrepreneurs from the creative sector, positively impacting network participation skills and ultimately increasing the chances of survival and growth of entrepreneurs ventures (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005; Uzzi & Dunlap, 2005; Uzzi, 1997).

With this, we answer academic’s calls to include socially defined evaluation criteria (Foster, Borgatti and Jones, 2011), treating brokerage as a dynamic social process (Foster and Ocejo, 2015), focussing on the interplay of different brokerage types previously found in the literature (Obstfeld, Borgatti and Davis, 2014b; Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010; Furnari and Rolbina, 2018).

7.4 Practical implications to creative entrepreneurs and policy makers

Our analysis suggests that establishing relationships and defining organisational roles need to happen in tandem due to the reciprocal influence they exert on each other. Practical contributions from this research, with its insights regarding mechanisms used to generate and sustain collaborative relationships at different venture phases, can inform and aid the design of governmental programs intended to support collaborative activities in the creative sector. Not only legislation is needed, but equally important, to have a better understanding of the industry’s dynamics, shortcomings, and needs. This study could have implications for venture evaluation, where depending on their organisational stage, experts from evaluating panels could anticipate more promising performance in brokerage activities according to role structures theorised in this study. This could join
other common guidelines venture capital executives already follow to assess entrepreneurial team’s strengths.

In terms of entrepreneurs’ activities, clarifying how creative ventures can build and sustain brokerage relationships from emergence and provide clues on how they might effectively evolve over time, can help creative workers enhance their participation on networks. This last, is fundamental for a sector that is massively populated by entrepreneurial ventures and independent workers, which heavily rely on their ability to collaborate, providing guidance and support in their current and future endeavours.

In sum, findings from this research, showing brokerage relationships unfolding in creative entrepreneurial settings, generate theory that can lead the actions of broker entrepreneurs in the creative sector and to policy makers with the need to have more fine grain information about how the creative sector, and creative workers’ really operate.

7.5 Research limitations

This study adheres to Biddle’s beliefs on approaching role in a malleable manner that acknowledges the complex nature of roles, which resonates with our intrinsic human ability to generate endless interpretations to make sense and co-create our reality. This research also answered academics' advice to include socially defined evaluation criteria (Foster, Borgatti and Jones, 2011), treating brokerage as a dynamic social process (Foster and Ocejo, 2015), exploring different brokerage types previously found in the literature (Obstfeld, Borgatti and Davis, 2014b; Lingo and O’Mahony, 2010; Furnari and Rolbina, 2018). Despite these modest contributions to the understanding of role development in the context of dynamic processes such as brokerage activities, I acknowledge the limitations of this work in some respects. A relevant one is the nature of its single case study methodology. Despite WBTC’S being a rich empirical setting for its strong network connections and emergent organisational status which allowed me to observe the development of the venture, I am aware that multiple cases could have provided a valuable space for comparative analysis that deepened the reality observed through accessing more layers that provide more robust validity to this research. To this, methodological limitations to data collection and analysis performed by one researcher also might fall short in comparison to having more researchers involved in these tasks, which could have enriched interpretations of the data.
### 7.6 Future research

This research facilitates future discussions around effective strategies leading small ventures to grow from a model of specialised but flexible roles collectively enacted. Future research could probe the implications for generating different management systems for designers and artists’ as I found different strategies and processes are needed to effectively address these network actors, depending on the nature and processes of the goods they produced.

Moreover, this work could extend by deepening on factors driving individuals in different roles to change and adapt, particularly on the dynamic aspect of the reconfiguration of roles presented by this research. Future research could extend this work by focussing on the dynamic aspect of reconfiguration of roles from a venture’s perspective, deepening on factors that lead them to adapt their role.

Because of the prominence the founder role showed in the data, appearing as a sort of a “master role” initially englobing all future roles activities and responsibilities, which after delegating most of its initial responsibilities remained as a wild card that could step into filling other roles, future research could place more emphasis on this particular role, digging deeper into the decisions made by this key individual which this study suggests, plays a big part, particularly when it comes to setting values and a longer-term vision for the organisation to follow and grow along.

Lastly, future studies could also consider replicating this research using multiple cases with space for a comparative analysis between different ventures, to peel off more layers of this phenomenon and strengthening these findings. This research could also include non-creative ventures to assess if elements identified as relevant in this study sustain in different entrepreneurial contexts, which could lead to more expansive theories of brokerage relationships in other entrepreneurial areas.

### 7.7 Closing words

In pursuing their vision, entrepreneurs contribute not only to the economic development of society but also, preserve, reconfigure, and spread traditions, beliefs and valuable humane aspirations. As a creative entrepreneur, I experienced first-hand how entrepreneurs invest their energy, time, and all kind of resources in our ventures. Despite
our enthusiasm and commitment, creative entrepreneurs usually lack commercial skills, hindering their venture’s success. The creative sector stands vulnerable and in need for external support in developing sustainable practices that lead their ventures to good port. From this perspective, this study hoped to contribute in a positive way to the understanding of creative ventures with the motivation of supporting this limitless but at the fragile industry.

7.8 Chapter summary

The initial aim of this research was to understand how roles shaped, evolved, and articulated within a small team in a fast-growing creative venture, led by a sole founder. The findings from this research provided an in-depth view of how individuals from the WBTC team enacted their roles individually and collectively, showing a dynamic view that presented roles as highly flexible, with the benefits this brought to consecutive organisational stages. These findings suggest the importance of dynamic agency in entrepreneurial ventures, where individuals adopt roles in response to evolving needs.

The longitudinal perspective from this study allowed to look at and assess roles from behavioural changes that adapted from a socially constructed reality. This last reinforced contemporary role theory’s need to direct role literature towards dynamic research contexts that allow understanding roles from the complexity that a process perspective entails.

This study contributes to role literature from an interactionist perspective, by showing how role enactment changes when relations become more complex, leading roles to be claimed collectively as opposed to in specialised ways. This adds to existing academic work challenging classic role theory that explains organisational roles in scripted top-down terms and therefore fails to consider agentic elements leading individuals and new ventures to adapt to individual needs and organizational challenges.
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Appendices

1. Authorisation from WBTC to disclose the venture’s name.

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**Subject:** Re: FW: News from academic Thesis moving towards the end.

**Date:** Wednesday, 16 October 2019 at 13:32:02 Chile Summer Time

**From:** Alice Mayor

**To:** VILLAMAR Pamela

**CC:** Adam Sheenmark

Hi Pamela

So lovely to hear from you and congrats you’re nearly over the line with the thesis - I’m sure an amazing piece of work!

Just stepping in here to authorise the names of the We Built This City team and company, to be used in your doctoral thesis. This has been discussed with all parties involved and we all consent to this.

Hope to catch up soon :)

Thanks

Alice
2. Visuals of Cómodo and WBTC shop


We Built This City (WBTC), London – UK. Shop evolution 2015 - 2018

Source: 1 – 2: christianerdemann.cl 3: culturenretail.nl 4: wheretraveler.com
3. WBTC store fronts – Live painting events

*Source: We Built This City blog*
4. Pop up shops on Carnaby over time

Pop up shops over time, first shop with three-year contract, one month pop up themed shops, offices where the HQ team meet.

Source: We Built this city blog.
5. WBTC team

Photo 1. HQ team. From left to right.
- Product buyer
- Marketing & comms.
- Shop manager
- Founder (Former)
- Finance & operations.

Photo 2. Shop team.

Photo 3. Teams together on Carnaby street.
- Art buyer (in green parka)

Sources: Time Out magazine website, Join-the-dots website, We Built This City website.
Professional background of the team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 HQ team</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Profession/background</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Founder and Director</td>
<td>PR (BA Philosophy)</td>
<td>PR marketing-art online retail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aimee</td>
<td>Finance-Operations (former)</td>
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<td>Financial analyst for retail</td>
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<td>Katy</td>
<td>Art and stationary buyer</td>
<td>Illustrator</td>
<td>Art Buyer retail</td>
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<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Product buyer</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Fashion Retail</td>
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<td>Adam</td>
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<tr>
<td>John</td>
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<th>Location</th>
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<td>Student</td>
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<td>Musician</td>
<td>Music artist and producer</td>
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6. Social media: Snapshots from the venture’s Instagram account

Source: Instagram account from We Built this City.
7. Events on Carnaby

Jenny Sparks Giant Carnaby letters event.

Source: Jenni Sparks website, We Built this City social media.

Different versions of live art on Carnaby street.
8. Battersea Power Station project

Battersea Power Station has opened a new store paying homage to the iconic Power Station building through a curated selection of products that celebrate its history and heritage.

Open in time for Christmas, the **Battersea Power Station Design Store** stocks a range of products including homewares, fashion, stationery, jewellery, artwork, gifts and souvenirs, all inspired by the Grade II* listed icon and its riverside location.

Products have been created by local artisans and designer-makers as well as more established brands. The Battersea Power Station Design Store has been curated in partnership with We Built This City, a London-based business which brings together goods from artists, designers and makers which celebrate the capital city whilst supporting its creative community.

**Alice Mayor, Founder of We Built This City, said:** “We’re thrilled to have been able to offer our curation and commissioning services to Battersea Power Station on this exciting new retail destination, while also opening up a unique opportunity to our network of talented artists, designers and makers.

“We watch with excitement as this new permanent home for art and design plays host to a hotbed of creative talent and ideas celebrating what is undoubtedly one of London’s most inspirational and best-loved landmarks.”

30 November 2017.

*Source: Summarised article adapted from original post at Battersea Power Station web site.*
9. In-shop events

Text
10. Images from the analytical process of the empirical papers.