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Céline del Bucchia, Arnaud Stimec, Anastasia Dereppe, Benoit Marienval

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# On the path to ecological entrepreneurial masculinities: a study of deeply engaged entrepreneurs for socio-ecological transition



**Céline DEL BUCCHIA**

Audencia Business School  
[cdelbucchia@audencia.com](mailto:cdelbucchia@audencia.com)

**Arnaud STIMEC**

LEMNA EA 4272  
IAE Nantes Université - Économie & Management  
[arnaud.stimec@univ-nantes.fr](mailto:arnaud.stimec@univ-nantes.fr)

**Anastasia DEREPEPE**

Kosmogonia  
[anastasia.dereppe@kosmogonia.org](mailto:anastasia.dereppe@kosmogonia.org)

**Benoit MARIENVAL**

Kosmogonia  
[Benoit.marienval@kosmogonia.org](mailto:Benoit.marienval@kosmogonia.org)

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# On the path to ecological entrepreneurial masculinities: the study of deeply engaged entrepreneurs for socio-ecological transition

## **Purpose**

Recent voices have called for the need to reconsider the myth of male power based on a one-dimensional view of a dominant patriarchy in entrepreneurship. In a search for alternatives to hegemonic masculinities, this paper explores a specific context - that of radical ecological and social transition - to identify how entrepreneuring in this specific social environment questions and shapes entrepreneurial masculinities.

## **Design/methodology/approach**

We engage with constructivist grounded theory to analyse 17 life story interviews of French entrepreneurs, complemented by 6 focused follow-up interviews and 2 focus groups of women to give a broader and more nuanced cultural understanding of entrepreneurial masculinities.

## **Findings**

The paper makes four important contributions to the literature on gender and entrepreneurship. First, it enriches the spectrum of entrepreneurial masculinities with a non-hegemonic type of masculinity, namely, caring entrepreneurial masculinity. Second, it proposes an alternative model of hybrid hegemonic masculinity by showing that the 'hero' posture in entrepreneurship is not necessarily that of a winner but can also serving a mission for the common good. Third, it introduces the concept of ecological entrepreneurial masculinity by bridging two distinct areas of the literature related to our data. Finally, it underscores the strong influence of women and communities in entrepreneurs' social environment by their role in engaging change in entrepreneurial masculinities.

## **Originality**

We show how a specific social environment can partially challenge hegemonic entrepreneurial masculinities. The paper introduces ecological masculinities as an alternative framework.

## **Key words**

Entrepreneurial masculinity, ecological masculinity, hegemonic masculinities, entrepreneuring, ecological transition, gender.



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## 1. Introduction

While the overarching myth of male power based on a one-dimensional view of a dominant patriarchy in entrepreneurship has long been taken for granted and rarely questioned, recent voices have called for the need to consider multiple masculinities (Smith, 2022) along with a reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018). For instance, some recent work (Hitty et al., 2024) has explored the impact of fatherhood on entrepreneurial masculinities. While hegemonic masculinity seems to mellow with engaged fatherhood, it nonetheless remains significant. In a search for entrepreneurial masculinity alternatives to hegemonic masculinities, this paper explores an explicit context, that of deeply committed ecological projects. Some deeply engaged ecological movements, such as Ecofeminism (Shiva, 1988) and Ecological masculinities (Hultman & Pulé, 2018), may question hegemonic stances over natural resources and planet Earth as well as over humans. These two concepts acknowledge the theoretical link between positions of domination over planetary resources, living things, other human beings and, above all, men over women.

Digging deeper into the issue, we examine a specific type of entrepreneur who chooses to move away from a purely market-based approach to entrepreneurship in order to concentrate on a key mission, that of driving ecological change. These entrepreneurs unanimously seek to change our model of society in order to align it with planetary boundaries, driven by the urgent need to take action to protect our conditions of life on Earth. Their ecological engagement is radical, differentiating them from "green entrepreneurs" who do not fundamentally change their lives but simply try to improve the system (Gunawan et al., 2021). The former, on the other hand, denounce the excesses of human domination over nature such as unsustainable extractive and destructive behaviours and, to some extent, the hegemonic position of humans over nature. They set up businesses, associations, and hybrid organisations whose main goal is to get others to change direction. This context is particularly interesting in the study of entrepreneurial masculinities as such entrepreneurs are at the intersection of challenging the overexploitation of natural resources model (human domination over Earth) and entrepreneuring.

In this paper, we view entrepreneurial masculinity (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017) as gendered norms that dictate the behaviours and attitudes expected of men (and some women) in the entrepreneurial field, where success is often equated with traditional masculine traits such as dominance, control, and risk-taking (Hamilton, 2013). The emerging literature on entrepreneurs and masculinity (Hamilton, 2013; Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017; Smith, 2022) calls for more research on the limitations of equating EM with hegemonic masculinities. To extend this somewhat limited view, we explore a specific entrepreneurial context, that of deeply engaged entrepreneurs for ecological transition—whose entrepreneurial driver is the ecological urgency of taking action above and beyond any financial concerns—with the following research question: how does entrepreneuring in the social environment of radical ecological transition challenge and shape entrepreneurial masculinities?

Drawing on the extant theorising of men and masculinities (Connell, 1995) and entrepreneurial masculinities (Smith, 2022), we adopt a constructivist grounded theory to analyse life story interviews with French entrepreneurs who consciously opt for a deep socio-ecological switch in their lives, including their entrepreneurial activities, as well as



focus groups of engaged women working in the same type of organisation with male entrepreneurs. Our research setting offers insights into everyday interactions with this specific social environment to help develop awareness of, and partially challenge, entrepreneurial masculinities.

The paper makes four important contributions to the literature on gender and entrepreneurship. First, it enriches the spectrum of entrepreneurial masculinities with a non-hegemonic type of masculinity, namely, caring entrepreneurial masculinity. Second, it proposes an alternative model of hybrid hegemonic masculinity by showing that the 'hero' posture in entrepreneurship is not necessarily that of a winner but can also serve a mission for the common good. Third, it introduces the concept of ecological entrepreneurial masculinity by bridging two distinct areas of the literature related to our data. Finally, it underscores the strong role of women and the community in the entrepreneurs' social environment as they engage change in entrepreneurial masculinities.

We begin by outlining our theoretical framing of entrepreneurial masculinities. This is followed by a methodological approach that draws on constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The findings describe three ways of 'doing gender' (Fenstermaker & West, 2002) for radical engaged entrepreneurs in ecological transition. We conclude by discussing alternatives to hegemonic masculinities in the entrepreneurial literature and propose a framework for ecological masculinities.

## **2. Literature review: entrepreneurial masculinities and ecological masculinities**

### **2.1 Entrepreneurial masculinities and hegemonic masculinities**

Masculinity is not a natural, intrinsic condition but is relative, socially constructed, performed, and learned (Kimmel, 2005). Several studies have shown that men consciously act out masculine roles to meet the expectations and conventions imposed on them by the social arenas they inhabit and the different publics they face (Bly, 2001).

Entrepreneurial masculinity (EM) is a pattern of practice (Messerschmidt, 2018) that underpins gendered norms and expectations legitimising how entrepreneurs 'should' act and behave. The cultural stereotype associated with entrepreneurial masculinity is 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 2005), an idealised and narrow figure of the heroic man in a position of power. By legitimising domination over women and a hierarchy between men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018), hegemonic masculinity often acts as a difficult-to-escape underground norm for both women and men. The original work by Connell (1995) shows how men who are not at the top of the hegemonic order tend to be subordinate, complicit, or may agree to be marginalised. This leaves a narrow place for other masculinities such as positive masculinities (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018), understood as "those masculinities (locally, regionally, and globally) that contribute to legitimating egalitarian relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities."

The hegemonic representation of entrepreneurial masculinity (Hamilton, 2013) is thus an ideal that both male and female entrepreneurs may seek to align with. Indeed, female entrepreneurs may reproduce stereotypes of male entrepreneurs as part of their ongoing attempt to establish legitimacy (Greene et al., 2013). Giazitzoglu and Down (2017) go



beyond the myth to show the empirical relationship between masculinity, hegemony, and EM in their ethnography of white, male, middle-class entrepreneurs. This hegemonic EM is characterised by hierarchy, a winner-related discourse, and dominance over other men. It is enacted through material symbols of power, such as prestigious cars and money. Such hegemonic and heroic masculinity gives entrepreneurs a degree of apparent authenticity and legitimacy.

However, the emerging literature on entrepreneurs and masculinity (Hamilton, 2013; Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017; Smith, 2022) calls for more research on the limitations of equating EM with hegemonic masculinities. In line with this, we need a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of how male entrepreneurs enact EM. This includes consideration of multiple masculinities and challenging the overarching myth of male power (Smith 2022), including the way EM reconstruct and evolve.

## **2.2 The evolution of entrepreneurial masculinities and hybrid entrepreneurial masculinities**

Despite certain changes in the characteristics of masculinity, they generally remain within the scope of hegemonic masculinities. For instance, Mendick et al. (2023) argue that the John Wayne figure of hegemonic masculinity in entrepreneurship has been replaced by that of Tony Stark (Iron Man) who embodies power through suffering, genius, and disruption. Thus, geeks, who were considered to be outside the hegemonic world in Connell's (1995) original study, may now be at the heart of today's hegemonic entrepreneurial masculinity as leaders of the most successful companies. The determination of marginalised individuals to get a better or even a leading position is thus highly understandable.

Few studies document willingness to move towards a positive masculinity. Research on fatherhood and entrepreneurs (Hytti et al., 2024) provides insights into EM in the context of transition in men's lives. The authors show that even when such men assume a caring role within the home, they retain their status and superiority as entrepreneurs. Thus, the discourse of the "new father figure has not contributed to greater gender equality and the extinction of hegemonic masculinity" (Hytti et al., 2024, p. 269), but rather to a reconfiguration of hybrid hegemonic masculinities. This highlights the resistance and persistence of the hegemonic model, even for men who sincerely wish to adopt an egalitarian position within their household.

Since masculinity is socially constructed, the social and cultural context in which entrepreneurs evolve may play a specific role in the construction of their entrepreneurial masculinity. For instance, relations between male entrepreneurs have been acknowledged as determinant (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017). The community may also play a strong role in defining an ideal type of entrepreneur. In one recent study, Roos and Petterson (2024) show how the community forges a collective expectation of an entrepreneur that may save a village. In this case they embrace a traditional EM, qualified as beyond heroic and almost holy.

The context of entrepreneuring with an ecological or social commitment seems promising as it can include questions on power and governance (Gunawan et al., 2021). For instance, founders may choose to adopt a hybrid organisation (Battilana & Lee, 2014) to balance social, environmental, and economic issues. However, the literature suggests



that hegemonic masculinities are not a central concern in this type of entrepreneurship (Hechavarria & Ingram, 2016; Gunawan et al., 2021). For example, Cesinger et al. (2021) show that entrepreneurs constantly switch between the Darwinian (self-interest, competence, competition), communitarian (supporting and being supported by the community), and missionary (advancing a cause and being responsible) postures identified by Fauchart and Gruber (2011).

From this perspective, deep ecological commitment that explicitly contests the hegemonic view of humans with respect to nature and resources could offer a promising research context. The sustainable view of entrepreneurship has been criticised by political ecologists and activists as a shaky compromise since it fails to seriously address planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2012), social inequalities (including gender, social, or ethnic groups, etc.) in a world in transition (e.g., Velicu et Barca, 2020) and, above all, a critique of capitalism (e.g., Cannon, 2001) as a source of exploitation of resources (mineral or human). Thus, it may form a source of knowledge about positive stimulation from working relations and the voluntary evolution or reflexive posture of entrepreneurs.

### **2.3 Ecological masculinities: towards non-hegemonic EM?**

If we are looking for sweeping change in masculinities (i.e., non-hegemonic masculinities), it may be possible to find it in contexts where entrepreneuring takes on a different meaning, as in contexts where it is not driven by profit but rather by the common good. Given the urgent need to address planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2012), a few emerging entrepreneurial groups are taking a radical approach, choosing to act by creating organisations "to bring about new economic, social, institutional, and cultural environments" (Rindova et al., 2009, p. 477). This may lead to specific forms of entrepreneurship combined with activism (Monteverde et al., 2025). The role of traditional masculinities may also be acknowledged as part of the problem. Here, the seminal study by Connell (1990) on environmental activists and their efforts to "remake" their masculinities in conjunction with feminism could be a starting point, underscoring the role of the community in encouraging a rejection of patriarchy. The counter-culture ideology promotes greater egalitarian decision-making and solidarity. However, Connell (1990) also notes some side effects of deconstruction, at times making it difficult to take action, either through fear of reproducing undesirable behaviours or through lack of direction.

The recent emerging concept of ecological masculinity (Hultman & Pulé, 2018; Pulé & Hultman, 2021) reflects this view in the literature by attempting to explore masculinities within the framework of the Anthropocene, deep-ecology, and ecofeminism (Shiva, 1988). Ecological Masculinity is explicitly defined as an alternative to hegemonic masculinity that may emerge through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, including "broader, deeper and wider care" (Hultman & Pulé, 2018, p.238). Three dimensions of care (as an alternative to domination and exploitation) may be considered: the Earth, others, and self. Thus, we might expect entrepreneurs in the field of radical ecology to deploy alternative EM and to challenge hegemonic views, leading to the following research question: how does entrepreneuring in the social environment of radical ecological transition challenge and shape entrepreneurial masculinities?

## **3. Methodology and fieldwork**

### **3.1 Research design and context**



This study puts the spotlight on entrepreneurial masculinities by showing how individuals, entrepreneuring towards ecological transition in the context of a turning point in their lives, account for the way they envision entrepreneurship and the mission that drives them. This specific entrepreneuring context is at the intersection of the decision to align their professional activities with their values and commitment to ecological transition. The French entrepreneurs studied here left prestigious careers in the traditional economy to devote their time to developing ecological transition, understood as a deep-rooted environmental model. The French context offers fertile ground for projects that prone ecological transition, including emblematic initiatives such as the "Climate Fresk", designed to foster understanding of climate issues at global level to help rapidly drive the changes needed to preserve life. In 2023, it exceeded its target to train 1 million people, with the number standing at 2 million one year later. For many of the entrepreneurs we consider, the Fresk is not only a trigger, but is also a supportive community of engaged people, linked to and influenced by several other ecological communities.

From a gender perspective, those working to promote ecological transition are predominantly female, as in the social and solidarity economy (SSE) where 67% are women (*Observatoire National de l'ESS*). Entrepreneurs, however, remain predominantly male. People in this field often make sacrifices compared to their previous or potential career and have specific demands in return that align with their values (e.g., De Cooman et al., 2011).

### **3.2 Data collection and sampling**

To identify EM, we considered it as a social construct that entrepreneurs reproduce at their micro-level identities (Smith, 2022), adopting a constructivist approach to identities (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). One way to approach identities is through individual storytelling. Moreover, in the post-feminist tradition (Fenstermaker & West, 2002) and in male gender studies (Connell, 1995), 'doing gender' scholars have investigated gender as a routine accomplishment made up of everyday interactions. As Hytti et al. (2024) observe, a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) is especially suited to identifying "doing gender" mechanisms. Based on the notion of theoretical sampling, we used different samplings as part of a thread.

#### **3.2.1 Life story interviews with 17 engaged entrepreneurs**

First, we conducted life story interviews (Bah et al., 2015; Connell, 1990) underpinned by the constructivist grounded theory perspective of an unfolding story (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews began with the person's background and the stages they traversed before their big move from the traditional world to the ecological transition world: i.e., their encounters, questions, and motivation for launching the project. The interviews then turned to the project itself: its mission, its seed stage, the economic model, its impact, future goals, steps undertaken to develop the project, personal and professional changes in their life, how they feel today, and how they envision the future. While the interview guide did not focus on EM as such at this stage, questions linked to how they see their role and how they make decisions as engaged entrepreneurs were fully covered in the life story interviews. With such storytelling (covering interactions with their teams, their family, their friends, and their professional relations), the interviewees made sense of what it implies to act as an engaged entrepreneur on a personal level, using certain cultural EM codes for engaged entrepreneurs that they reproduced in their micro-level identities (Smith, 2022).



The sample (n=17) is part of a wider research project that seeks to understand the underlying factors in a radical ecological shift involving a more diverse segment of committed individuals to ecological transition (n=78), including female project leaders and various stakeholders. The key criteria for selecting the interviewees included 'radical' engaged projects in place for at least two years, entrepreneuring, and male project leaders. The projects are considered a reference and best practice in ecological communities that spontaneously called them to mind. Our sample population is characterised by a high level of education. Most of the interviewees have a Master's degree from prestigious institutions. We were careful to include the diverse types of organisations common to ecological transition in our sample: associations, hybrid organisations (Battilana & Lee, 2014), and companies whose commitments are underpinned by the founder. The median age was 35. See Table I for more details of the organisation types.

**Table I: Entrepreneurs Interviews and type of organisations** (page 27)

Interviews were conducted by a pair (one male and one female) of entrepreneurs from the research team and from the same ecological networks who were fully trained for the exercise by the academic researchers involved in the paper. Some of the interviewees were from their direct network, others were recruited through snowball sampling. This facilitated access to very busy entrepreneurs and helped to build trust during the interviews. One of the entrepreneurs, who passed away 10 years before the interview (E4), was described through an interview with his wife and co-entrepreneur and his son. All the participants were granted anonymity and confidentiality, fostering authenticity in the testimonies, with the entrepreneurs frequently claiming they had never previously shared certain aspects of their lives. The interviews were conducted face to face, often in the project location. This facilitated a wider overview of the project, with informal discussion both before and after the interview and observations. The interviews lasted between 81 and 145 minutes (average 104 minutes) and were digitally recorded before being transcribed.

**3.2.2 In-depth interviews on entrepreneurial masculinities (n=6)**

Following constructivist grounded theory, we used theoretical sampling to conduct additional interviews to the original sample of seventeen. The aim was to collect the interviewees' reflexive thoughts on acting as an entrepreneur in ecological transition, and how they refer to power relations and signs of success, with a focus on the way their ideals and vision evolved when faced with the realities of their everyday interactions as entrepreneurs.

The six complementary interviews each lasted around one hour. Given the sensitive nature of the interviews related to the reflexive posture as male entrepreneurs in their work environment, two men from the research team paired up to conduct the interviews (one is an entrepreneur as described above and the other an academic researcher) in a bid to foster free speech and avoid gender-related judgments. The sample was chosen according to the type of engaged organisation so as to maintain variety in managerial cultures. The six interviewees included two non-profit organisations, two hybrid organisations, and two strongly committed companies.



### 3.2.3 *Female focus groups for an enriched perspective*

The third data set involved 2 focus groups with women engaged both as entrepreneurs and employees from the same network. Given our constructivist perspective, the focus groups provided a broader and more nuanced understanding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 109) of the gendered aspect of entrepreneurs' practices and discourse, helping to detect any blind spots. The groups gave us an opportunity to identify cultural ideals related to EM in this female environment, and how women experience such EM in their everyday working relations. Special note was taken of their reflexive thoughts about working with male entrepreneurs.

There were 4 participants in each female focus group, all with the same background as the men we studied (see Table 2 for more details). To reduce the risk of systematic stereotyping or man-bashing, at the beginning of each focus group we asked the participants to list the names of ecological transition entrepreneurs they had worked with and to refer to these specific individuals during the session. Each woman listed between 6 and 12 entrepreneurs. The two focus groups were conducted by a pair of women from the research team for the same reason as the second series of men-only interviews.

#### ***Table II : Focus group of women and type of organisations (page 28)***

With the dual perspective of men and women, we were able to identify ways that EM are challenged in their specific cultural environment and how they evolve. The recorded and transcribed material represents 35 hours of interviews and 538 pages in total.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

Following a constructivist grounded theory methodology, each interview was coded by at least two members of the team. We began by reading the individual interviews without any predefined codes, adopting an open-ended event-based approach (Charmaz, 2006, p.53) rather than by word or by line. The open coding approach helped us to understand the culture and social codes in which entrepreneurs evolve and to identify gendered practices related to the trade-offs they make between their mission as entrepreneurs and the cultural codes of the ecological ecosystem in which they evolve. Following iterative coding and a back and forth between the data and codes, we examined the forms of domination and signs of success that entrepreneurs relinquish, those they maintain in their managerial posture, and those they report as being in transition. As recommended by Charmaz (2006, p.62), axial coding was used flexibly in combination with ongoing comparative work, the use of conditional matrices, and correlation with theory. This helped us identify three types of EM masculinities that reflect three different ways of doing gender in relation to managerial practices, recognition, and drivers of change.

We then used the data from the female focus group to compare and challenge the men's perspective with the women's experience. This step took us to a second round of back and forth in analysing the men's life stories and identifying new understandings behind their words, helping us to better capture the hegemonic dimensions that men take for granted and fail to mention, such as, for example, their search for recognition by personalising their project. Memos were discussed and written collectively throughout the process, using text and graph-based representations.



The inductive coding process allowed us to identify three distinct ways that entrepreneurs do gender as 'engaged entrepreneurs' (see figure 1 for the detailed inductive process of coding). In the following findings section, we first present what such entrepreneurial masculinities have in common with the hegemonic framework of entrepreneurial masculinity and then present each of the three ways of doing gender in detail.

#### **4. Findings: Entrepreneurial masculinities, from hybrid to ecological entrepreneurial masculinities**

All the entrepreneurs considered herein experienced a major shift that led them to develop an entrepreneurial project geared towards ecological and social transition. Initially, they held a very traditional perspective of their potential to be a winner, derived from their family, their prestigious education, or their former professional experience: *"what are the things that others haven't seen and that I need to focus my professional efforts on to continue to be excellent?"* (E12). However, at a certain stage in their career, they realised that the world they were programmed for is doomed. This often followed a shock when they recognised the offshoots of their 'success', leading them to rethink certain taken-for-granted standards, such as the role of money and possessions that reflect the material success of entrepreneurs they had praised in the past.

They thus gave up their high salaries and living standard symbols such as prestigious cars, travelling by plane, a holiday home with swimming pool, and the accumulation of possessions. Many of them have become vegetarians, volunteer in engaged projects, and define the level of their salary according to what they need to live with sufficiency (Princen, 2005) rather than their market value. These radical choices involve not only themselves, but also their family, illustrating their willingness to adapt their way of life to planetary boundaries, as well as their capacity to reconsider the cultural norms of success they inherited. In addition, their common entrepreneurial driver is to create new standards of living, producing and consuming to deal with planetary boundaries they fail to find in most companies and organisations.

Beyond these common characteristics, which differ drastically from the hegemonic cultural view of EM based on domination through material resources (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017), the following section presents three ways in which these men perform masculinity as deeply engaged entrepreneurs. It should be noted that individuals may navigate between different types of entrepreneurial masculinity, revealing their ambivalence and evolution over time.

##### **4.1 Prioritising "climate emergency" over other issues: the heroic missionary entrepreneurial masculinity**

*"I want us to be able to change course! The temperature curves we're seeing are staggering, and everyone's completely indifferent, and we have the means to change things. We can do it and we don't have time to procrastinate or waste energy on bullshit. We have to be fucking efficient to try and save our skins and those of our children and more"* (E15).



The heroic missionary entrepreneurial masculinity views the "climate emergency" as taking precedence over all other missions, ultimately justifying an entrepreneurial project as a means to "save the world".

#### 4.1.1 ***Normalising efficiency and control over collaborative and inclusive practices***

The entrepreneurs explain the pressure they feel over the immensity of the task ahead with respect to the ecological emergency. They put climate above all other causes as it determines our ability to live on Earth. Based on scientific reports, they are convinced that we have little time left to tackle the ongoing climate disaster. To achieve their goals, these entrepreneurs insist that they cannot take on every battle, otherwise they may lose their way. They thus prioritise efficiency and the ability to make decisions regarding their task. For example, E3, who created a consulting company devoted to ecological transition, explains the challenges involved in persuading companies to make changes with regard to ecological transition. He argues that *"if we present ourselves as environmental activists with all the codes of environmental activists, we won't get through the front door"*. He justifies his refusal to use "inclusive writing" for the same efficiency-related reason.

We identified a heroic attitude, which is less that of a winner in traditional EM and more that of a saviour. Driven by the culture of efficiency, such entrepreneurs believe that only they can or should lead their teams in the right direction. The heroic attitude is strongly perceived by the women they work with, who refer to the 'hero' that created the project with a wry smile (FG1). The men are aware of the limitations of their stance, especially their egocentric nature to the detriment of listening to others. They justify their dominant posture as a necessity to achieve their goals; they have a clear vision of what to do and how to get it done.

They engage in decision-making and assertive leadership, even if it means going against the culture of ecologically committed organisations that tend to be more group-oriented and inclusive. They may try to be collaborative in taking decisions, but the women (FG1 and FG2) note that they fail to make enough time for collective decision-making. Their attempts are often perceived as 'fake collaborative decisions', as in situations where decision-making is presented as participative when the project leader is subtly trying to influence opinions in the name of the environmental crisis. For them, the "climate emergency" justifies an EM built on efficiency.

#### 4.1.2 ***Being recognised as a "game changer" rather than a "game winner"***

The signs of success of this heroic missionary entrepreneurial masculinity are not based on distinction through money and material possessions. Engaged entrepreneurs reject such traditional hegemonic success symbols. Despite having drastically reduced their standard of living to align their lifestyle with their ecological engagement, they express no regrets: *"I'm not frustrated about it, and above all, I don't need to take a private jet to go away for a weekend with my girlfriend"* (E6). Overall, they consider they are far more aligned with their values and feel better for rejecting the economic system they denounce. Their social recognition is no longer based on status-related consumption.

However, our analysis shows that such heroic missionary masculinity includes alternative signs of distinction. Their main reward is recognition for the impact of their actions as game changers within their community, especially by engaged peers they admire. They value their impact when discussing their mission by mentioning the name of powerful organisations or high-level, decision-making institutional bodies. The women's focus



groups were particularly instructive in this respect, noting how these entrepreneurs associate their name with that of their organisation, like a "title of nobility". The heroic missionary EM emphasises the personalisation of the entrepreneurial venture, with storytelling based on that of heroic game changers.

#### 4.1.3 *Evolving through conflict and power relations*

The heroic dimension of this EM can cause tension in everyday work interactions as there is a gap between the culture of collaboration and equality in ecological engaged ecosystems and the entrepreneurs' posture. Eg, for example, noted trainees' cultural shock when they arrive: "*They'd learnt about non-violent communication, but non-violent communication didn't exist in my generation*" (E9). Women report feeling the need to develop a confrontational strategy in the face of this heroic missionary masculinity. For example: "*I said: either you go and get back the guy you spoke to like that yesterday, or I'm off. I can't stay with someone who talks to people like that, it's just not possible. And then he says, Oh shit, you're right*" (wife and co-founder E4). Women note the extent to which this is a constant and onerous task for them: "*I've adopted the strategy of not letting anything get past me and of being a real pain in the arse*" (W4).

When confronted with assertive women who put strong pressure on them, entrepreneurs agree to change their directive posture as long as it does not endanger the mission, as the quote above illustrates. They know they need these engaged women to achieve their mission, and the women, aware of their power, dare to be confrontational.

## 4.2 Managing social and ecological transition: the 'good pupil' entrepreneurial masculinity

*"I didn't realise that sometimes I could arrive with an armada of consultants for a project, and it would just be guys. [...] Or that guys monopolise the floor in a group and that women are crushed and don't have a say. I wasn't aware of it because I didn't have the tools for it"* (E6).

This 'good pupil' entrepreneurial masculinity includes care towards others and attention to equality in work relationships on the same level as the climate emergency.

#### 4.2.1 *Adapting managerial practices in a search for exemplarity*

Entrepreneurs perform this EM by adapting their management style to the cultural codes of the ecological ecosystem, striving to be considered exemplary managers in their teams. For example, horizontal governance and collaboration is a widely shared ideal: "*I can't imagine an ecological transition project that isn't fully paired with a different governance project*" (W4).

However, despite their determination and willingness to be good and fair managers, they harbour a dual governance reference framework, having been educated with a vertical view of management. Very often, they discover the implications of inclusive management as they experience it. This adaptative posture is illustrated by the way they emphasise their desire to adopt managerial practices that differ from those of the traditional world. This does not mean tackling all issues, but rather, being vigilant with regard to the inclusiveness and collaboration they speak of with pride.



*"It also opened my eyes to the fact that it was important to get people on board. It wasn't enough to try and make an impact on your own. So, OK, you can be more intelligent in a group - I've realised that" (E13).*

They proudly explain the personal effort they make and the risks they are ready to take to promote inclusiveness and collaboration. For example, the founder of a consultancy firm devoted to ecological transition explained that a major client explicitly asked him not to put any women on his team because of the committee's misogynist attitude: *"Three years ago, I would have gone along with this request, while today, it's "no way!". I was ready to lose the deal if necessary. As it happens, I still won it" (E6).* Still, the dilemma between inclusion and efficiency, which they sometimes deny, remains a key issue.

Others explain how they renounced personal financial gain from their activity to put the profits back into their organisation and how they have set up structures such as associations or foundations that have control over the organisation. They explain that this process secures their organisation's mission from individualistic behaviour.

#### **4.2.2 Performing exemplarity as self-sacrifice**

Performing exemplarity in their managerial posture has three main counterpoints. First, they realise they may be ignoring their inner self and deep needs. Second, they may make sacrifices in their personal life, setting aside little time for loved ones, romantic relationships, or themselves. One entrepreneur, for instance, who refused an investor's offer to buy his organisation that would have given him a golden bridge, today acknowledges that he ignored and rejected the need for security for him and his family.

*"My partner and I have always left everything in the business, so we have no savings... And now we've got the children's education to pay for and so on. At some point you say to yourself: "Blimey, what about the family? Did I respect that? (...) Right now, I need security. I hadn't identified my need for security until now, but I think that's why I didn't accept it (the golden bridge). I need security because if I don't have it, I get anxious, I hit my limits" (E8).*

Another consequence of performing exemplarity may be flight. Some have thought about or decided to quit their leader position in the activity they founded as they were unsure that they would not reproduce dominant behaviour, or they felt too much contradictory pressure between efficiency and exemplarity.

Despite the number of personal sacrifices made, they find themselves little valued as successful entrepreneurs according to mainstream success criteria. Compensation for their sacrifices comes from the acknowledgement of those around them. They may forego material rewards but need to be valued as a member of the community by their social environment for their work and their sacrifices. Consequently, criticism from the community may sometimes be hard to take.

#### **4.2.3 Evolving through a long-lasting and disruptive test and learning process**

*"Following a discussion that went badly wrong here, I realised that I'm a big, dumb old white male and that got me thinking. (...) It's all very well to say that we're going to save the planet, etc., but who's actually going to save it and who's proposing to save it? It's still the same people (i.e., men)" (E10)*

While these entrepreneurs would like to be exemplary managers, they often fail to grasp what this implies. Their generally female work environment plays an important role in their learning curve. The women in the focus groups point to the gaps between intentions



and behaviours, highlighting certain blind spots that reflect their dominant masculinity. Such interactions challenge them in their quest to set an example, forcing them to make further renunciations, to develop their awareness, and to make new changes. This observation was shared in the two women's focus groups as well as by the entrepreneurs, who said they make an effort to ask for and welcome feedback from women.

The following examples show how the effort to quit a hegemonic position is a lengthy process and more complex than a simple decision. First, entrepreneurs may feel insecure about their behaviour because, despite their sincere desire to make progress, they are held back. One entrepreneur gave the example of a confrontation that shocked him, for instance: *"Once, in a meeting, I used a military metaphor. One of the team said to me, 'Military metaphors aren't possible, but don't worry, that's going to change' (...) In terms of content, it may be relevant, but in terms of form, it was quite violent"* (E5). This helped him understand the need for change, but he still feels unsecure: *"I have a far more polished vocabulary and I'm much more careful about what I say. And if I say something wrong, I correct myself afterwards. Sometimes I'll even send a message after a meeting saying: 'At one point I said this, I hope it didn't offend you, or I hope it didn't offend anyone, or something like that."*

Second, although they try to empower women, their goal sometimes fails. The women and several male entrepreneurs reported instances when this happened. It often occurs when men try not to monopolise the floor and give it to women instead. However, as the women are unprepared, it can put them in a situation where they fail or feel uncomfortable.

Third, despite a stated predisposition to learn from women, the dominant 'know-it-all' posture sometimes resurfaces. The men feel they have grasped an issue with the help of women and hence consider it resolved, even though they are only starting the process: *"We tell them about inclusive writing for 2 minutes and bam, they think they've understood everything about feminism"* (W8).

Last, they may constantly look for moral approval of their "good pupil" EM, which can be tiresome for those around them. All the women mentioned the fatigue and cost they experience in their bid to educate male entrepreneurs.

Given the long, demanding and challenging process entrepreneurs who perform the good pupil EM go through, they are beset by doubts, even if these are not always expressed. They are reassured when they find inspiring success models, an alter ego or people close to them who prove that what they are aiming for is possible and not just a pipe dream.

#### **4.3 Acknowledging the interconnection of struggles: towards a caring entrepreneurial masculinity**

*"You have to be careful in the search for impact. Because, as we all know, it can ruin you and can lead you down a path that is not your own (...) in my opinion (the impact) should be a driving force, but not the inaccessible moon that takes up all your thoughts"* (E11).

The caring EM puts care above the search for ecological impact. Caring about the Earth and others implies caring for oneself and paying attention to one's deep needs.



#### 4.3.1 **Managing as facilitators**

This entrepreneurial masculinity is characterised by the rejection of authoritarian and vertical and hierarchical forms of management. When it comes to decision-making, entrepreneurs favour collaboration and horizontality, arguing that every member of the organisation has a legitimate voice.

Entrepreneur 14, for example, begins every meeting with a round table discussion of how the participants feel. They make decisions collectively or in reference circles and use self-management tools to get organised. The collective process evolves in a culture of feedback and cooperation in which they have been trained.

As these entrepreneurs are aware of their privileges as white, educated males, they proactively adopt a caring stance with their colleagues along with facilitator behaviour:

*"How can I be of service but not be the guy in the shadows either? There's all that at stake. Last year, the team said they wanted to organise a festival. So I said, Hey..., I'll come to the first few meetings and then I'll let all of you manage things" (E10).*

They show a desire to learn from others and question their own behaviour. They embody the values they stand for and are prepared to end a professional relationship in a toxic situation involving themselves or others (women in particular).

The social construction of their masculinity is not based solely on male role models. Caring entrepreneurial masculinity includes women as inspirational role models: *"I remember a discussion with a woman who co-founded a committed organisation who inspired me a lot about the place of leadership, with a role of assumed power but with rights and responsibilities that are made explicit, ideas for sharing opinions on important decisions, or even counter-power and safeguards" (E7).*

The women in the focus groups recognise that there is a place for healthy cooperation in some organisations, boosted by the determined approach adopted by these men.

#### 4.3.2 **Searching for intrinsic gratification**

Enacting such caring entrepreneurial masculinity gives entrepreneurs the satisfaction of being authentic to themselves. Feeling aligned with themselves is a source of self-esteem and well-being: *"Working on this project, with this reflection, I feel a little more intelligent every day. And I know that there's still a long way to go. I don't claim to be exemplary in this respect" (E1).*

This caring entrepreneurial masculinity puts more value on the human path and its intrinsic reward than on its outcomes. *"But what I got out of it was essentially the human adventure, the intellectual stimulation linked to the development of these projects, being at the heart of the machine, and getting rewarded for being seen as someone who developed this thing. That's probably the most rewarding thing I got out of it" (E7).*

As this quote shows, the importance of intrinsic reward does not exclude the importance of external recognition which compensates for the difficulty of the path they have chosen and the doubts they experience. For example, they express real satisfaction at being a man who women trust and at being seen by them as an ally. Their scope for action is micro level and local, and their timeframe is more the present than the future.

*"Hope is born when I meet someone who tells me- about me or anyone else who cares- that it helped to transform them and to be happier, more fulfilled, more at home, thanks to the efforts of organisations like ours" (E11).*



In the process of deconstructing their hegemonic masculinity, the entrepreneurs make little reference to what they have relinquished in material terms. Rather than consider what they have given up as a sacrifice, it is felt as a relief that allows them to move closer to their inner needs. A few exceptions include the impulses they need to curb in order to watch what they say and make room for the initiatives of others.

#### 4.3.3 *Evolving thanks to a learner's mindset*

Caring entrepreneurial masculinity includes a proactive and reflexive stance on the power relations at stake in working interactions. Entrepreneurs listen to the people they work with, observe, analyse and deconstruct the patterns of domination they witness, and reflect on their own behaviour and that of other men. One entrepreneur explained how he became aware of issues of domination by sitting in on women's discussion circles: *"I didn't realise what they (women) were going through, the difficulty in expressing themselves and finding a place, being cut off all the time (...), it was a big step forward for me"* (E14).

This proactive and reflexive posture is illustrated by the way they manage while learning from others. Unlike the hegemonic model of masculinity, this EM values learning from others and asks for help and advice. The two women's focus groups suggest that such EM are still rare, but the women noted that they are happy when more advanced men share the burden of educating other men or agree to join them in their struggle (as long as they do not take over). When we asked women to cite male entrepreneurs who have adopted such behaviours, they needed some time to identify any. Thus, while the perspectives of men and women do not entirely converge on men's proactivity, what they do agree on is that these men are advancing and want to learn and progress.

## 5. Discussion

Our research contributes to recent work on entrepreneurial masculinities that highlights a partial, even superficial, deconstruction of hegemonic masculinities. We focused on highly engaged male entrepreneurs who wish to change the socio-economic model in order to align it with planetary boundaries. Their commitment has pushed them to join engaged communities where women are in the majority (although not in management positions).

As demonstrated earlier, the literature calls for a more subtle consideration of the diversity of EM and alternatives to the hegemonic model. First, we show that strong commitment to environmental issues can encourage specific types of EM based on one dimension of caring: caring for the Earth with the aim of respecting planetary boundaries. Aligning with this commitment, these entrepreneurs reject the material signs of success that reflect the exploitative world they condemn. Given the importance of money and material signs as indicators of an entrepreneur's success in our society, we might believe that the scale of their 'sacrifice' automatically puts them in a non-hegemonic position. Our findings are more nuanced in fact. While their engagement leads to the reduction or discarding of certain hegemonic features, it often ends up as a hybrid form of EM. We identified three types of EM: the heroic missionary, the good pupil, and the caring EM. Only the latter is close to a non-hegemonic posture.

### **5.1 A new hybrid masculinity: the heroic missionary**



The "heroic missionary" EM is that of a superhero wishing to play a major role in the challenge to 'save' the planet. While it echoes the heroic posture previously theorised (Jernberg et al., 2020; Mendick et al., 2023), here it involves serving a superior cause (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011) rather than serving the Darwinian heroic self. This superior cause acts as a superordinate goal (Sherif, 1958) in the name of which some features of heroic hegemonic EM are assumed: the man with a vision, verticality, and control. Stakeholders are expected to align with the cause and refrain from raising too many parasitic issues that stray from the initial purpose, particularly conflict (Sherif, 1958). In this situation, the superior cause of "ecological emergency" legitimises verticality and a saviour stance. The heroic missionary EM is based on new symbols of distinction: they are immaterial, focused on the superiority of the cause and its impact, and personalisation of the project. Nonetheless, these entrepreneurs derive value from being pioneers who educate the masses or holders of power in the ecological transition. They represent a hybrid and alternative form of hegemony which may be inspirational for traditional entrepreneurs aiming to switch to an ecological transition for its avant-garde heroic dimension that compensates for the material renunciation required.

## **5.2 Caring masculinity: non-hegemonic masculinity on the horizon?**

A significant contribution of this study lies in the caring masculinity model. This virtually non-hegemonic type of EM is new in the male entrepreneurial literature where hegemonic masculinity is largely omnipresent (Hamilton, 2013; Smith, 2022). It introduces an alternative way of being valued as an entrepreneur that includes adopting a low-key stance, acknowledging that one is still developing, and accepting emotions and vulnerabilities that may be inspired by female models. This type fits in with the reflexivity that characterises ecological masculinities in relation to the Earth, others, and self (Hultman and Pulé, 2018). Moreover, unlike former studies (Connell, 1990; 1995), this non-hegemonic EM does not necessarily imply renunciation actions or playing a key role.

Given the advanced maturity of our sample with respect to their capacity to deconstruct the exploitative and extractive model of the society we live in, we might expect most of our sample to align with this type of masculinity. Instead, its members appear to be in a minority. Moreover, the alternative view provided by women is that entrepreneurs engaged in ecological transition are less advanced in their deconstruction than they claim. This highlights the complexity and challenges involved in departing from a dominant posture as an entrepreneur, indicating that willingness to confront the patriarchy may be a strong factor (e.g., Hytti et al., 2024) but is not sufficient. Here, the theories of ecological masculinity offers key insights.

## **5.3 Good pupil entrepreneurial masculinity: a transitional masculinity between two worlds**

The good pupil entrepreneurial masculinity includes care towards others and attention to equality in work relations in equal measure with climate emergency. With such an ambitious programme, entrepreneurs who adhere to this type of EM pay the price of their desire for exemplarity through self-sacrifice.

While they make a great deal of effort to quit the hegemonic entrepreneurial cultural model that values heroism, material success, and personal fulfilment, they are not rewarded for their stance. Their subsequent distress means they may not be able to sustain their effort over time, which is why this EM could be considered as transitional.



Entrepreneurs adopting such a model may need to continue to evolve in their entrepreneurial masculinity-related transition. There is a risk that they may renounce their entrepreneurial position, a risk identified by Connel (1990) in his study of environmental activists. Another risk is that of a backlash, where the individual returns to a traditional model of masculinity. This would be a real failure for the whole ecological transition ecosystem and underscores the need for greater concern about masculinities for engaged entrepreneurs (Hechavarria & Ingram, 2016; Gunawan et al., 2021). Like Connel (1990), we insist on the role of the community in encouraging an evolution in entrepreneurial masculinities. The question we pose is how can ecological communities support and educate entrepreneurs attempting to evolve towards caring managerial postures?

While our findings highlight the role of women in challenging entrepreneurial masculinities, we also know from our data and from the literature that supporting men in their evolution towards more caring masculinities remains a mental burden for women, as is frequently the case at home (Fenstermaker and West, 2002). Consequently, this educative role should not just be left on the shoulders of women. It underscores the need for considerable education on the limits of hegemonic masculinities and learning how to move to alternative models for all members of the communities involved.

#### **5.4 Considering entrepreneurial ecological masculinities**

To understand the differences between the three types of EM on the basis of an apparently similar ecological commitment, the theoretical model of ecological masculinities (Hultman & Pulé, 2018), which introduces non-hegemonic masculinities, is particularly useful. Looking at the three dimensions of care involved in ecological masculinities, the Earth, others, and oneself, we observe a strong alignment between the levels of commitment in these different dimensions and the decline in hegemonic traits. While all three entrepreneurial masculinities are committed to respecting planetary boundaries (caring for planet Earth), only the "good pupil" (to a certain extent) and "caring" types link their ecological commitment to caring for others. Finally, only the "caring" EM adopts an attitude that is attentive to his deeper needs, while the "heroic missionary" and "good pupil" EM continue to depend on the judgement of others.

Our findings thus tend to support the notion that disengaging from the hegemonic posture involves confronting the three dimensions of care considered in the ecological masculinities model. From this perspective, the impact of fatherhood explored in recent research (Cannito, 2020; Hytti et al., 2024) only addresses one dimension of the domination/care issues in relationships with others (in this case the family), without specifically engaging the other dimensions, which could explain why they end up, at best, with a hybrid profile. While there may be different paths to deconstructing hegemonic masculinity stances (personal development commitment, psychotherapy...), this study offers significant insights into the role of people in work relations and networks as agents of change towards ecological entrepreneurial masculinities.

#### **5.5 The role of women and working relations in the evolution of entrepreneurial masculinities**

This study raises the question of how EM evolve. It highlights the power of confrontation by women and their capacity to participate in the evolution of EM. Women help develop men's awareness of the way ecological and social issues (including gender issues)



interweave and their gradual transition to more caring EM. Their role differs drastically from traditional entrepreneurial settings in which the hegemonic masculinity model is partly coproduced through the agency of women (Smith, 2022).

This raises new questions: how do women manage to contribute to the evolution of EM here when they are powerless in traditional entrepreneurial contexts? Why do such engaged women dare to be confrontational? Why do men pay attention to them and accept their criticism? We suggest that these engaged women have experienced a path of deconstruction similar to the engaged entrepreneurs. Like the male entrepreneurs, they are driven by a cause that rejects material comforts. They no longer aspire to material symbols of success and have freed themselves from purely breadwinner jobs. Their freedom gives them huge power in their interactions with men, such as being ready to leave if the work environment threatens the values they are fighting for.

More than the women's strong determination and confrontational behaviour, their power lies in their superior numbers and their historical engagement in socio-ecological movements (UN, 2022, OECD., 2021). The values they defend are the values of their communities. When women challenge hegemonic masculinities by promoting a culture of equality and horizontality, they rely on cultural values shared by the community that educated engaged entrepreneurs find hard to deny. This alternative community-supported cultural framework is a fertile context for challenging hegemonic masculinities and for engaged entrepreneurs to experiment with caring behaviours.

## **6. Limitations and future research**

Our study makes several contributions to the literature, but we also identified a number of limitations. First, it is based on a relatively homogenous group of men who mostly hold Master's degrees and have significant cultural capital thanks to their grasp of scientific issues related to climate change. Second, while we draw on women's experience in their interactions with engaged entrepreneurs to capture the cultural expectations of how the former should behave and to enrich the otherwise masculine narratives, we focused on one specific category of working interactions, namely, women with a certain degree of power. Future research could take other stakeholders (family, couples, clients, etc.) and contexts into consideration, with a focus on care from a multidimensional perspective. Third, the extent of renunciation of economic well-being varies in our sample (some had acquired a comfortable situation from their former experience, while others had not), with some living in a way that could be considered as marginal from a mainstream perspective (living with a community in eco-environments), while others are more traditional. Examining a wider diversity of profiles could help to inform future research, such as by taking other educational profiles (less educated) or 'makers' (Anderson, 2012) into account. Moreover, exploring whether and how female entrepreneurs in the same context manage to avoid the traps of dominant behaviours could also be an interesting research avenue. Fourth, long-term and immersive research may help to limit the risks of narrative reconstruction by giving access to native and corporal language, as well as real-time tension in interactions. For example, an ethnographic study on engaged male entrepreneurs (inspired by Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017) could be particularly useful to dig deeper into ways men perform entrepreneurial masculinities in their interactions with women and their engaged community. Finally, we need more insights into ways individuals perform one type of EM or move towards a more advanced positioning



regarding a non-hegemonic direction. As the "good pupil" type of EM appears unstable since it implies a lot of suffering and self-sacrifice, we do not know if or how entrepreneurs will evolve over time. Moreover, since it implies a lengthy self-evolution process, the caring EM may be less attractive to traditional entrepreneurs who might find it harder to identify as a 'real' entrepreneur than the heroic missionary entrepreneurial type of masculinity.

## **7. Conclusion**

By focusing on engaged entrepreneurs that challenge models of domination over the Earth's resources, our study shows how much resistance there is to hegemonic masculinities and, at the same time, how challenging it is for men to move away from them. It confirms that individuals' determination is just one factor in their capacity to break away from patterns inherited over many generations. Even when alternative entrepreneurial models meet the demands and have the support of their working relations, real change on hegemonic issues requires deep cultural patterns and other social influences to be taken into consideration.

Our study offers hope for the role of communities in terms of work or lifestyles that provide different cultural frameworks in which alternative masculinities are recognised and valued by both women and men. These alternative frameworks also give hope in the sense that they make the dominant traditional postures, still widely valued in today's society, 'obsolete'. The literature on transition calls for an inspiring new vision of the world. Caring entrepreneurs seeking to develop a masculinity freed from the hegemonic model could be the genesis of a new male figure that some people consider essential in order to cope with today's major challenges and to manage the socio-ecological transition.



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Entrepreneurs	Additional interview	Organisation type	Activity of the organisation	Previous entrepreneurial experience in "traditional business"	Previous management position in "traditional business"
E1	X	Hybrid	Eco-friendly living space		X
E2		Association	Eco-farm, hospitality and education	X	X
E3	X	For profit	Consulting/Coaching/Training		X
E4		Association	Eco-farm, hospitality and education	X	X
E5	X	Hybrid	Workshop for ecological awareness		
E6	X	For profit	Consulting/Coaching	X	X
E7	X	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness		
E8		Hybrid	Construction and Eco-friendly living space		
E9		Hybrid	Local Food logistics		
E10		Association	Education		
E11		Hybrid	Workshop for ecological awareness	X	X
E12		Hybrid	Workshop for ecological awareness		
E13		Association	Workshop for ecological awareness		
E14	X	Association	Eco-friendly living space		
E15		Hybrid	Mobility and sharing economy		
E16		Association	Organisation for social services		X
E17		Association	Consulting/Coaching		

Table I: Entrepreneurs Interviews and type of organisations (Source: Authors own work)



Table II : Focus group of women and type of organisations (Source: Authors own work)

<b>Wome n</b>	<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Organisations type</b>	<b>Activity of the organisation</b>
<b>W1</b>	1	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness, Citizen mobilization movement
<b>W2</b>	1	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness, Citizen mobilization movement
<b>W3</b>	1	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness, Education
<b>W4</b>	1	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness, Education Eco-friendly living spaces
<b>W5</b>	2	Association	Workshop for ecological awareness Eco-friendly living spaces Education
<b>W6</b>	2	Association Hybrid organisation	Workshop for ecological awareness
<b>W7</b>	2	Association	Eco-friendly living spaces, Informal network of transitions
<b>W8</b>	2	Association	Education, Workshop for ecological awareness



Open coding	Axial coding	Theoretical coding
<p>Being the one that chooses the right struggle  Using scientific discourse to legitimise emergency to act  Legitimising vertical decision making and control with ecological emergency  Pretending collaborative processes to ease decision adoption  Using dominant metaphors to embark teams  Taking a stand as a saviour  Being inspired by other heroic "saviours"  Feeling helpless regarding personal "feminine" issues</p>	<p>Normalising efficiency and control over collaborative and inclusive <b>managerial</b> practices</p>	<p><b>Prioritising "climate emergency" above other issues:  the "heroic missionary" entrepreneurial masculinity</b></p> <p>The mission behind this EM: save the world as a non-negotiable priority</p>
<p>Reducing their potential earnings and career.  Abandoning statutory signs of success  Using the name of powerful actors to display their impact  Personalising their project thanks to the associate of their name to the project  Being recognized by other heroic "saviours"  Taking the lead in media and events as project owners and leaders</p>	<p>Being <b>recognised</b> as a "game changer" rather than a "game winner".</p>	<p><b>Managing social and ecological transition:  the 'good pupil' entrepreneurial masculinity</b></p> <p>The mission behind this EM: save the world by doing their best for earth and the people their work with</p>
<p>Facing demanding and confrontative teams  Clashing with women  Expressing astonishment about some cultural expectations</p>	<p><b>Evolving</b> through conflicts and power relations</p>	
<p>Promoting inclusion and collaboration to be a good and fair manager  Including collaborative and inclusive practices for efficiency purpose  Renouncing to personal financial gain to prioritise the mission of the organisation  Referring to exemplary engaged male entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Adapting <b>managerial</b> practices in a search for exemplarity</p>	
<p>Sacrificing without questioning their deep needs  Having doubts about but not expressing them  Expecting to be recognized as exemplar  Finding a place in the community</p>	<p>Felling the need for <b>recognition</b> of the community to counterbalance the huge amount of sacrifices</p>	
<p>Feeling unsure with one's behaviour in interacting with women  Encouraging women to take the floor without considering they need to be prepared to such an evolution.  Being awkward or having simplistic views in trying to promote women and diversity</p>	<p><b>Evolving</b> through a long lasting and shaking up test and learn process</p>	
<p>Rejecting hegemonic masculinities explicitly</p>	<p><b>Managing</b> as facilitators</p>	



<p>Promoting shared governance and collaborative practices          No compromising group dynamic and individual well-being over efficiency          Facilitating initiatives from others          Naming women as entrepreneurial role models          Sharing visibility or leaving visibility          Trying to be proactive and not only reactive to demands related to inclusivity</p>		<p><b>Acknowledging the interconnection of struggles: towards a caring entrepreneurial masculinity</b></p> <p>The mission behind this EM: learning to listen to one's deep needs and help people grow is the first step to socio-ecological transition</p>
<p>Not expressing any loss related to material renunciations          Acknowledging their deep need and feeling good about respecting them          Promoting collective success without fading from the collective project.          Feeling gratified when they help people grow (rather than save the world)          Displaying a humble attitude</p>	<p>Searching for intrinsic <b>gratification</b></p>	
<p>Claiming a personal path in deconstructing their masculinity          Acknowledging being still "on the way"          Observing interactions to learn about power relations          Observing and reflecting on self-behaviour in interaction          Acknowledging the power to learn from others          Developing the capacity to ask for help</p>	<p><b>Evolving</b> thanks to a learner's mindset about inclusion, diversity, and self-deep needs</p>	

Figure 1. Data analysis inductive process. (Source: Authors own work)

