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NARRATIVE AND DISCURSIVE APPROACHES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A Second Movements in Entrepreneurship Book

Edited by
Daniel Hjorth and Chris Steyaert

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Foreword and acknowledgements

Narrative and Discursive Approaches in Entrepreneurship is a second book in a miniseries of four publications called *Movements in Entrepreneurship* which originate from so-called writers' workshops where authors first meet to discuss their possible contributions based on first drafts responding to a thematic call for chapters. The aim of this series is to move the field of entrepreneurship by stimulating and exploring new ideas and research practices in entrepreneurship in relation to new themes, theories, methods, paradigmatic stances and contexts. While the first book, entitled *New Movements in Entrepreneurship* and symbolized by the element of *water*, follows the streams of research we as scholars take part in, focuses on the ebb and flow of entrepreneurial life and was carried through following actual emerging movements in entrepreneurship research, this second book is edited with the symbol of 'air' in mind, taking in fresh air from and following new winds from neighbouring disciplines such as anthropology and literary studies, from new paradigmatic stances such as poststructuralism and feminism and their recent explorations of the linguistic turn through narrative, dramaturgical, fictive, conversational and discursive projects.

Also this book has found its momentum as a text through the ideas and efforts of many. We thank Leif Lundblad, as founder of ESBRI (Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research Institute), for his generous support and Magnus Aronsson for his visionary, warm and practical support in organizing the writers' workshop in Sandhamn and bringing together the virtual community of writers this book forms. Tobias Dalhammar has been invaluable in the arrangement of the workshop and in the editorial support of this book. Ellen O'Connor, Dian-M. Hosking and Bengt Johannisson through their inspirational 'keynotes' were excellent in warming up the authors for more intensive and critical discussions of the drafts. This was complemented by Jerry Katz and Howard Aldrich who shared their enormous experience with the authors coming to terms with their writing attempts. We thank the many anonymous reviewers who helped the authors to revise their chapters substantially after the workshop. Our publisher, Edward Elgar – especially Francine O'Sullivan – shared their trust and their fullest professionalism to accomplish this second book in the series they host.

Keep looking at the 'Movements', *Daniel and Chris*

Introduction

Daniel Hjorth and Chris Steyaert

Following our first publication workshop challenging contributors to think
and write the *New Movements in Entrepreneurship* (see Steyaert and Hjorth,
2003), this second workshop took on the challenge of gathering around the
theme of 'Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship'. This
is now a book that you hold in your hands. It is again a result of a collec-
tive and international work and represents, as such, a much suggested effort
in entrepreneurship research to establish new dialogues between cultures. If
the first workshop invitation was more broad and general, this second one
specified a more narrow focus at the same time as it opened towards neigh-
bouring disciplines where narrative and discursive approaches have been
explored for some time now. The idea is that a simultaneous combination
of a stringent focus and new stimulations can create an intensification in
how we study entrepreneurship, resulting in new movements.

As we start to introduce you to this book, we prefer to skip the usual rhet-
oric of why these approaches are important, much needed, etc and point
immediately to a central tension in this book, that one can 'read' in the title
Narrative and Discursive Approaches. All chapters in this book, whether
they start with a narrative emphasis or a discursive persuasion, have sooner
or later to address the connection between narration and discourse. There
are no clear cut narrative or discursive approaches, and the 14 chapters
move between these possibilities to enact their own specific and sometimes
creative response to that tension.

To address this tension in this introduction, we would like to formulate
three immediate, and for the reader pertinent and pragmatic, questions. The
first question – '(how) do narrative and discursive approaches work within
entrepreneurship studies?' – can only be responded to by inviting readers to
read and work with Chapters 2 to 10, and to see whether they work for them.
These nine chapters can be seen as experimenting with narrative and discur-
sive approaches, and for the authors it has been an exciting and difficult tra-
jectory, not in the least because all of them have come with embodied
experiences rather than with armchair observations. The second question is
'what are the larger stakes for entrepreneurship when turning to language-
based approaches?' In replying to that question, we can refer to the new

themes that we might address in studying entrepreneurship, but also to the broader debates one gets involved in when taking the linguistic turn in entrepreneurship seriously. There are two chapters in this book – one by Steyaert and one by Hjorth in between which the other nine chapters are situated (kept hostage?) – that address explicitly the broader conceptual movements that are at stake when one works with narrative and discursive approaches. Both chapters might help readers to prepare for reading the different applications tried out in this book. The third question – 'how can we be moved by these approaches?' – and simultaneously our third encouragement to readers to join this movement, is again replied to in three concrete attempts of 'readers' who have been involved with the production of this book and who have in writing formulated some of the inspirations and questions this spectre of chapters raise. In Chapters 12, 13 and 14, you can find a series of replies by Katz, Gartner, and Hosking, which can inspire you to think how these language-based approaches can be used when moving into your sphere as student and/or practitioner of entrepreneurship.

These three questions will now be elaborated in three parts. In the first part, we present the general themes as announced by the title of the book and further elaborated in the chapters by Steyaert and Hjorth. In the second one we describe the contributing chapters in terms of main ideas. Finally, in the third part, we open up to the first readings of this book (Chapters 12, 13 and 14) by Katz, Gartner and Hosking (and Hjorth).

PREPARING TO READ: NARRATIVE AND DISCURSIVE APPROACHES

This book is clearly responding to what has been described as the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences and humanities. Now, it took some time for this 'turn' to reach organization studies and when it did – and it still does (see Deetz, 2003) – it emerged as an interest in metaphors as tropes in a language re-inaugurated as an active force rather than as a passive medium for the distanced observer. Metaphors were 'discovered' as tools for organizing, often emphasized in their positive effects rather than their negative. With this 'turn', however, not only the cultural context of organizing was emphasized, aiding our understanding of complex social processes, but an opening towards 'language problems' more generally followed. One could say that Wittgenstein's turning of philosophy's attention towards its major tools – language in its various forms and dimensions – meant that everything was rephrased as a linguistic problem. Structuralists thrived on this idea, leaning on the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, to say that language is a never-ending chain of signifiers and that what people say can be analysed in terms

of a formal structure of language, reflecting linguistic and cultural orders. Claude Lévi-Strauss became a leading figure in this structural-linguistic anthropology and operated as a *bricoleur*, using concepts knowing that these could not be grounded in truth nor fixed by some higher meaning. Already here was an opening towards the force of power in language use. This meant that the discursive nature of language was brought back into focus. Philosophy and anthropology played their important parts in this process. This made the rather weak interest in questions of politics and ethics impossible to keep out of the studies.

Boosted further by the postmodern debates on the role of the (social) sciences in the formation of the human, especially inspired by Michel Foucault's work, organization studies turned towards organizational practices with novel perspectives. Especially through the discussions on the ethics and politics of organizing, the linguistic as well as the non-linguistic, the discursive as well as the non-discursive, speech and text as well as bodies and aesthetics were now part of studying and theorizing organization. It took some time for the linguistic turn to reach entrepreneurship studies. It would be fair to describe Gartner's 'Words lead to deeds' (1993) as one early example. Others have followed, but we still lack the breadth and depth these approaches could bring to entrepreneurship studies. This book tries to contribute to a remedy against this lack. It does so emphasizing the narrative and the discursive as part of effects of this linguistic turn.

To answer a question of what the point would be with narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship studies we would start with a question ourselves: 'What is silenced by the lack of a response to the "linguistic turn" in entrepreneurship studies? What major contemporary debates are we staying out from?', and, as we here limit ourselves to narrative and discursive approaches as examples of responses to this turn, especially: 'What is silenced by the lack of narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship studies? What major themes do we leave out?' Quite obviously, the chapters of this book are all different answers to this question, demonstrating what could be done and what specific (new) themes emerge. But many of these answers can be linked to the broader debates that the linguistic turn has brought to the social sciences, organization studies, and now also to entrepreneurship studies. With two conceptual chapters by Steyaert and Hjorth, we try to bring to the foreground some of these debates that co-construct the frames of this book, in which the different chapters move themselves. In Chapters 1 and 11, we prefer to refer to entrepreneurship as forms of social creativity, taking place primarily in societal rather than in business contexts. Entrepreneurship is a societal force: it changes our daily practices and the way we live; it invents futures in populating histories of the present, here and now. In such processes, entrepreneurial processes, the

present and the future is organized in stories and conversations, the primary form for knowledge used in everyday practices. In addition, in such entrepreneurial processes, the discursive nature of knowledge, including self-narratives, present a major challenge for subjects in entrepreneurial processes. Subject positions, or roles in discourse, have to become stabilized and related to others in dialogical and discursive practices of organizing desires, attention, resources, and images. Entrepreneurship as a dialogical creativity is located in between the possible and the impossible. Understanding the discursive reproduction of knowledge and practices often means a heightened sensitivity in the face of how 'normalities' are reproduced, and thus what force anomalies carry. Convincing others – directing desires, organizing resources, dealing with obstacles – and sharing images of 'what could become' is done in small narratives to which people can relate. This book has collected discussions of the discursive and narrative of entrepreneurial processes, and we now turn to a short description of what they do.

READING CONTRIBUTIONS: OVERVIEW

In nine chapters, namely Chapters 2 to 10, narrative and discursive approaches are tried out and presented. They are all somewhere, specifically, in between narrative and discursive. We can imagine readers picking what seems the most tempting from the titles and this overview of contributions to create their own (dis)order of reading and connecting.

Sami Boutaiba, responding performatively to the opening chapter on prosaics by Steyaert, takes us into entrepreneurship in the making. He brings us into a story of a start-up, but told in a new way. The story as such, we learn, is kept together by thin threads between different small narratives carrying energy and explanatory force for their narrators. Facing demands from their own primary images and stories of what they were supposed to become, they struggle to relate themselves – as a group – to external 'audiences' demanding certain kinds of stories. Boutaiba exemplifies how a prosaics of entrepreneurship takes us into ways of knowing entrepreneurship previously lacking in our field.

If Boutaiba's story reminds us of what is now already seen as a typical 'new economy' kind of start-up, characteristic of the millennium switchover, Monica Lindh de Montoya's world, as she enters the streets of Caracas in Chapter 3, has got far less media attention. As if we were sitting in the back of one of the cabs of the 'driven entrepreneurs' her story is based upon, so close to us are the everyday troubles and struggles to find opportunities and create a life of one's own. Lindh de Montoya reminds us of the anthropological contributions to entrepreneurship studies and

shows us how this perspective draws attention to aspects of entrepreneurial endeavours we otherwise often miss. The anthropologist locates entrepreneurship in the midst of society and social processes of making a living in its fundamental sense.

Again, in Chapter 4, Lene Foss' story brings us even closer yet into the (geographically) remote when she tells the story of an effort to narrate an entrepreneurial identity in the process of establishing a theatre in a rural (Norwegian) region. In a way, it is a classical story with references to Horatio Alger, Emilia Erhardt, Marie Curie, Witold Gombrowicz, Ivan Karamazov and Louise Bourgeoise; people creating lives and stories, inventing and re-inventing their identities. In Foss' case there is a fascinating story of a move (literally) to the boundary of the possible and an attempt to move that boundary beyond present limits. It is a story of being on the move – between centre and periphery, between past and future, between identities. A central vehicle for this movement is narratives, and self-narratives in particular.

We have all heard about the start-up mecca of the Bay Area, the Silicon Valley ventures, and the dot.com adventures. Ellen O'Connor's Chapter 5 takes us to this world of speed, expectations, dreams, competition and changing technologies/preferences. The world of the IT economy and the challenges to get attention and legitimacy in a market crowded with 'hungry sharks'. Legitimacy is a central problem in entrepreneurship studies. But seldom (if ever) have we got to read such a close-up study of legitimacy problems as we do in the way of O'Connor's. The chapter evolves equally well as an illustration of how narrative knowledge and narrative forms of knowing play a crucial role in everyday organizing. It addresses how the concept of an 'entrepreneurial team' (or team entrepreneurship) is at stake here. This study not only shows how legitimacy building is central to venturing, but it also gives body to central business administration concepts – such as strategy and financing – which in this story take on a 'live' (in the making) sensation.

Robert Smith and Alistair R. Anderson collect in Chapter 6 plenty of entrepreneurial stories, so-called e-tales: hagiographies, classical e-tales, entrepreneurial biographies and novels on entrepreneurs, narratives and their metaphorical composition as discussed in entrepreneurial studies, familial fables and memorial tales. They examine this excellent overview and varied spectre of stories in detail and find the proverbial devil in the e-tale, namely that all stories of entrepreneurs and on entrepreneurship promote an entrepreneurial ethos replete with an underpinning of moral values. They argue convincingly that narrative is not a neutral representation but instead fulfils a moral purpose.

Alf Rehn and Saara Taalas continue in Chapter 7 to explore between the moral and the immoral and what, as a consequence, can be assumed in

entrepreneurship studies and what has already passed into the 'taken-for-grantedness' of convention. Rehn and Taalas' broadly stated ambition to discuss the possibilities of entrepreneurship as a social science unhindered by 'blind assumptions' derived from judicial and economic systems of thinking challenges us to reflect upon how entrepreneurship is carved out as a specific theoretical domain. What happens if we think beyond these boundaries? What could become of entrepreneurship studies should they include empirical cases presently left unnoticed due to these assumptions-in-use? We are invited to a discussion of what it takes for a study to be included as an entrepreneurship study. Through their fascinating narration of the blat system in the former Soviet Union and of Bad Boys Inc. (innovative drug-dealing) we are helped to think entrepreneurship beyond the limits of the present.

Seldom is the drama of entrepreneurial processes brought into the research context and made to affect the scholarly text. Torben Damgaard, Jesper Piihl and Kim Klyver's text (Chapter 8), however, does so. They make use of their experiences in the field – consulting and counselling the entrepreneur – as they make up a play in which their roles in the drama come into use. It uses the form of drama to both 'methodologically' grasp their field study and analytically discuss the process of consulting and counselling the entrepreneur. Having created this play, this drama, they step onto another layer of the text where they reflect upon their roles in the drama and provide us with insights concerning the theoretical and methodological points of using drama in the research process.

In Chapter 9 Katarina Pettersson shows how a feminist perspective on the Gnosjö discourse changes how this well-known Scandinavian example of an entrepreneurial region is commonly read. Pettersson shows how the Gnosjö discourse – and discourses on entrepreneurship more generally – are masculine in nature. While 30 per cent of Gnosjö's entrepreneurs are women, they are often excluded from studies of entrepreneurship, studies that still claim to represent the Gnosjö case or what entrepreneurship is. Tracing the Gnosjö discourse in research studies as well as daily newspapers, Pettersson is able to describe how these texts co-produce images of entrepreneurship assuming its masculine nature.

Kathryn Campbell (Chapter 10) moves through entrepreneurship studies driven by the quilt and quilting as metaphors. She approaches the problems of 'normal science' and suggests 'paradigm pluralism' as a way to make space for new entrepreneurship research from a feminist perspective that can give room to women entrepreneurs. Her text seeks to allow us to 'imagine better theories for women entrepreneurs'. To do that she suggests we augment our symbolic repertoire through the quilt metaphor which brings us to new insights into the entrepreneurial process. Campbell also

provides examples of how thinking with metaphors can be applied in entrepreneurship research through discussing new strategies for theory-building.

REREADING: FIRST RESPONSES

It is no secret to say that the nine chapters we invite you above to read have been read before. These nine chapters are a result of many readings, discussions and rereadings. For the writers' workshop at Sandhamn in the Stockholm archipelago, where all authors discussed each other's preliminary versions, some experienced readers were invited to join the conversations, and also, after the workshop, many different readers – this time in the role of anonymous reviewers – contributed with their constructive feedback to the ongoing writing process. We asked three of these reviewing readers (of whom two also participated in the archipelago workshop) to become writers while rereading one more time the almost finished book manuscript. Our question was 'how do these texts move you?', and we hope their answers might give readers a glimpse of the many pragmatic questions, intensive experiences and conceptual challenges. Jerry Katz, as a careful listener and a constructive storyteller, formulates many pertinent questions and has as many practical suggestions to the further application of this book's approaches on both sides of the Atlantic. William B. Gartner responds by telling an intriguing story himself to set up a dialogue with some of the chapters. He sees the book as performing the variation that emerges from taking a narrative route, an emphasis he himself had to struggle to tell people and to get published. The motive behind that struggle and persistence, which Gartner borrows from the poet William Carlos William, is the belief that narration and fiction teach us to pay attention to and to respect the stories of our life. A third response is from Dian-M. Hosking who explores in a dialogue with Daniel Hjorth the relational implications involved in conceiving entrepreneurship through narration and discourse. Rather than a question-and-answer kind of interview, their dialogue forms a double perspective, a play of act and supplement while connecting entrepreneurship and relational constructionism.

1.   The prosaics of entrepreneurship

Chris Steyaert

CONNECTING WITH CHAPTERS INCLUDED

The linguistic turn and the performative turn[1] that have become more and more prominent during the last 20 years in social and organizational studies,[2] have recently had offspring in entrepreneurship studies, in such a variety of narrative (Steyaert, 1997; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001), meta-phorical (Dodd, 2002; Hill and Levenhagen, 1995; Hyrsky, 1999), textual (Pitt, 1998), dramaturgical (Gartner, Bird and Starr, 1992; Czarniawska-Joerges and Wolff, 1992; Anderson, 2003; Baker, Miner and Eesley, 2003), discursive (Cohen and Musson, 2000; Ogbor, 2000) and deconstructionist (Nodoushani and Noudoushani, 1999) analysis. As a way of connecting with this increasing number of contributions on narrative, metaphorical, dramaturgical and discursive approaches that enrich the field of entrepreneurship as well as with the chapters included in this book that undertake a similar endeavour, I would like to pursue one particular view to underline what it is that these linguistically-oriented approaches do and can do for understanding and conceiving the complexities of entrepreneurial processes. While the different chapters in this collection illustrate there is much 'the linguistic turn' can do for entrepreneurship studies, I would like to elaborate on one such possibility, namely, that these language-based approaches to entrepreneurial processes are all conversational research practices that allow us to address the everydayness – the prosaics – of entrepreneurship. The potential of narrative, dramaturgical, metaphorical and discursive analysis lies maybe not only in their singular application but above all in their combined use, in the interrelationships between narration, drama, metaphor, discourse and deconstruction. Therefore, I will set up a conversation, an informal exchange of views that can connect the various linguistically inspired frameworks in entrepreneurship studies and refocus them as 'conversational studies' of entrepreneurial everyday life. Such a refocus responds to the need for processual conceptions of entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 2000) and to the creation of a social science view (Swedberg, 1999) that situates the social process of entrepreneurship within everyday social interaction. Through developing this conversational view as a

Bakhtin-oriented dialogical approach, the prosaics of entrepreneurship thus combines this unique feature and association, namely that the everydayness of entrepreneurship refers as much to a mundane, and – why not – even a boring posture as to a literary connotation where a prosaics – as in the novel – addresses the actuality of becoming, its ongoing becoming effected through conversational processes. As in Bakhtin's work where art and lived experience are intertwined, where speaking appeals to everyday utterances and to the authorship of the writer, so also is entrepreneurship a process of creation that connects the everyday with the artistic (Holquist, 2002; see also Hirschkop, 1999). A prosaic approach stresses that entrepreneurship is a form of co-authorship in the form of collective stories, dramatic scripts, generative metaphors and concurring discourses. With a prosaic study of entrepreneurship, we leave a predominant focus on model-building and general concepts that this field has promoted (Steyaert, 2000) and take the route towards a study of the conversational processes that account for the everydayness of entrepreneurial processes. To establish that route, I will first indicate the main features that a prosaic approach focuses upon, a form of messiness that implies surprise, open-endedness and unfinalizability. Second, I will elaborate these features of a prosaic approach through a Bakhtinian conceptuology based on the notion of addressivity, heteroglossia and polyphony. Third, this prosaics will be related to more recent contributions that depart from the linguistic turn, such as narrative, genealogical and deconstructionist analysis, and that share common interests with prosaics. As a conclusion, I will indicate three dimensions of a prosaic approach that can form parameters for future research in entrepreneurship as it embraces wider horizons.

INTRODUCING PROSAICS: SURPRISE, OPEN-ENDEDNESS AND UNFINALIZABILITY

A prosaics acknowledges the importance of the everyday and the ordinary, the familiar and the frequent, the customary and the accustomed, the mediocre and the inferior, in short, the prosaic. Prosaics will be developed out of the work of the Russian literary theorist Bakhtin, and is a term, actually a neologism, used by Morson and Emerson (1990) as a general interpretation of his work. Bakhtin preferred prose over the poem in writing a theory of literature, against the general tendency to see theory of literature as poetics and to analyse prose as rhetorics, denying its own kind of literariness. The analysis of the novel as a literary genre gives the opportunity to approach style not in the first place as a characteristic of the author but as part of the genre. For instance, the novel according to

Bakhtin orchestrates the diverse languages of everyday life into a heterogeneous sort of whole (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 17). Using the 'model' of the novel for conceiving, analysing and writing up research projects will 'direct' entrepreneurship scholars to (studying) the writing of novelists and their styles.

The point of departure of prosaic writing is the belief that the everyday is the scene where social change and individual creativity take place as a slow result of constant activity. Innovation is not the Great Renewal but the daily effort of thousands of small steps which – after all – make a difference. This implies that one acknowledges the importance of everyday speaking where people talking with each other are as much authors as novelists. In addressing tiny, little alterations, Bakhtin joins writers such as Tolstoy and Chekov who see in the everyday events of life, in every thing, the 'greatness' of living. These examples of two main figures of Russian literature should not be misleading. What Bakhtin was thinking of is not only literary highlights, selected by the history of literary criticism, but a much more multicoloured stage of forms and genres:

> At the time when major divisions of the poetic genres were developing under the influence of the unifying, centralizing, centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life, the novel – and those artistic-prose genres that gravitate toward it – was being historically shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces . . . on the lower levels, on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all 'languages' and dialects; there developed the literature of the *fabliaux* and *Schwänke* of street songs, folk-sayings, anecdotes, where there was no language-center at all, where there was to be found a lively play with the 'languages' of poets, scholars, monks, knights and others, where all 'languages' were masks and where no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 272–73).

As prosaics has a sensitivity for the eventness of an event, for its creative moving ahead, it is highly suspicious of systems and all attempts that try to create all-encompassing patterns. Prosaics' and Bakhtin's resistance to systems can be read as a way to avoid monologization, a process through which all elements are ordered and fixed and through which surprise and freshness become excluded. In creating systems, there is a chronic double danger. One is the act of exclusion, things become driven out and end in a state of 'non-existence', and the unnoticed becomes even more unnoticeable. Another is that things which happen accidentally are meaningless (at least to the system being created) and not related but become somehow related, meaningful and are no longer accidental. Here we can point to an important turnaround, which relates back to a statement by Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 201), opening the conclusion of their last book *What is philosophy?* Their statement – 'We require just a little order to protect us

from chaos' – emphasizes that the (over)production of order has to be accounted for, not that there is disorder. As Morson and Emerson point it out, mess is the natural state of things (p. 30). Our lives and living is messy. To assume and create order is a task, a project; it is stepping into the production of organizing. In creating a somewhat ordered life, many people create an even bigger mess; all of us, go through that stage, for a day, for a week, for a couple of years, even for a lifetime. Whether disorder and mess is seen as a problem, depends on if one considers 'order' as an ideal, and all its related discourse, such as security and stability, as preferable. In stressing 'mess', one acknowledges a becoming-ontology, which is the point where this turnaround should be positioned. This mess is called by Deleuze (1995, p. 138) 'holes', the parts of our life where our identity crashes, our voice stutters: 'That's what I find interesting in people's lives, the holes, the gaps, sometimes dramatic, but sometimes not dramatic at all. There are catalepsies, or a kind of sleepwalking through a number of years, in most lives. Maybe it's in these holes that movement takes place'.

Calling things a 'mess' should not be seen as something unpleasant or negative, but as part of the open and creative becoming of life, inexhaustible and unfinalizable. Call it surprises, or adventure, or movements indeed, but when we act and speak, we are working as much with intentions as with surplus we cannot anticipate or know. Some of us – persons as well as organizations, just to take two well-known constructs – are good in excluding 'surplus'. Organizing could be seen as the practise of excluding surplus, of avoiding gaps. That is when we are acting in monologues, when the other can only enter in my life and conversations in the way I want it and like it. If I practise the genre of dialogue, the other is able to tune in from the surplus every listening and presence creates, and thus not from the part the other understood I brought in (because that would be mere repetition, which is, as we have all experienced, funny and irritating). Then, if I am responding from the surplus I create to what the other 'gave' me, I am taken by a process that is never-ending and never the same. One could call this cycle an adventure, or yes indeed, a mess. As people sometimes say, we fell from one surprise into another.

THE CREATION OF A LIVING WORLD: A BAKHTINIAN PROSAICS

The above, in a nutshell, says that prosaics addresses forms that are open-ended, accounts for the creative part in becoming, and acknowledges the aesthetic dimension of science. In short, it is an approach that takes part in a world becoming and that can be conceptually anchored in Bakhtin's language

theory, addressing how in everyday language, communication creates as much mess as message. And for creative living, what we need is both. The 'mess' is not a problem, or something to be reduced or avoided, but the necessary difference which makes the dialogue go on. Bakhtin's theory is in some way both overturning the classic sender–receiver theory of communication (the message part) as the poststructuralist language theory *avant la lettre* (the mess or difference part) by bringing them together in one conception of language. How does language work then according to Bakhtin?

He departs from the concrete utterance as the smallest unity in communication:

> Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. And this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of a unitary language. Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces) (p. 272).

What Bakhtin brings in here is that in communication, there is not only a unitary or common language, the thing we focus habitually on as necessary for understanding, there is simultaneously a participation and creation of diversity, through which communication and meaning escapes us and yet becomes possible. This is the play of 'surplus', which Bakhtin relates to the 'addressivity' of an utterance – I don't talk to the walls but to somebody in particular, not necessarily 'present', and who 'listens' from within certain horizons, from a specific context which can never be the same as the one speaking. Surplus emanates from this open and active listening, a kind of 'live entering' which should not be seen as empathy, where the merging evades the space for surplus.

Surplus is also effected by 'heteroglossia', by the simultaneous presence of several social 'languages' co-habiting one language. In communication, we do not only speak 'polyglot' – through many tongues, but also heteroglot – through a mixture of social and historical 'back vocals' which echo social backgrounds and reverberate past uses. We all speak with accents and intonations, and this not only gives an aura to our speaking, it is our speaking. As rooms are never echo-free, communication constantly produces tones and overtones, and there can never be the simple 'message' (except in totalitarian systems). Surplus can thus be connected to

'polyphony'. Polyphony builds on the idea of the utterance where speaker and listeners emerge as co-authors, recreating a dialogic relationship. When we speak with each other dialogically, there are already two consciousnesses involved, there is already a combining of several voices. When we said before that communication can never be only 'message', we disregarded how power is enacted in an encounter. As in a totalitarian situation (for example, propaganda), communication can be only message, since it is 'served' as a monologue, as blocking of surplus. Bakhtin contrasts here internally persuasive discourse and authoritative discourse, where the latter supposes one cannot 'retell things in one's own words', from one's own developing discourse. The word is fixed, and not supposed to lead to new words. In a polyphonic situation, the process is never finalized nor finalizable, as consciousnesses meet as 'equals', as ones which affect the other to affect oneself, as voices full of 'eventualities' or event potential. It is here that Bakhtin uses Dostoyevsky's writing to illustrate the polyphonic novel, where the writing author takes a new position towards his own writing. Dostoyevsky is not in full control of his 'personages', but they take over, so to speak, and, from their own space and surplus, the novel develops as an event; more than that it is steered through a plot.

With the notion of 'surplus', we can reframe what we sometimes call creativity. Surplus is the stuff of creativity so to speak. Life is stacked and congested with surplus. Creativity is therefore not an exceptional condition, but an everyday occurrence: 'For Bakhtin, creativity is built into prosaic experience, into all the ways in which we continually turn what is given into what is created. To live is to create, and the larger, more noticeable acts we honor with the name *creative* are extensions and developments of the sorts of activity we perform all the time' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 187).

The idea of surplus that I linked earlier to addressivity, heteroglossia, and polyphony, and, in the end, to the creative process of life, gives a very different view on 'living speech' and, after all, on life. Due to centripetal and centrifugal forces, language is like a sea, giving ebb and flow, a creative *va-et-vient*, through which it is itself on the move and constantly renewed from within. Language is not an abstract system or *langue* but a heterogeneous interweaving of languages with different social and historical tastes and smells. In the happening of the utterance as a concrete social act, something is said, with an overflow of intonation, contamination, pronunciation, allusion, citation, etc. This kind of 'direct dialogism' is enacted through this interplay of utterances as described by Bakhtin (1986:91):

> Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another . . . Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality

of the sphere of speech communication . . . Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies upon the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account.

The point is that all of us are constantly participating in this rich play being as much surprised as used, as much enlightened as confused by the things we hear ourselves say and by what others bring back to that:

> In real life, we very keenly and subtly hear all those nuances in the speech of people surrounding us, and we ourselves work very skilfully with all these colours on the verbal palette. We very sensitively catch the smallest shift in intonation, the slightest interruption of voices in anything of importance to us in another's person practical everyday discourse. All those verbal sideward glances, reservations, loopholes, hints, thrusts do not slip past our ear, are not foreign to our lips. All the more astonishing, then, that up to now all this has found no precise theoretical cognizance, nor the assessment it deserves (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 201).

For Bakhtin, the novel is the place where such an intensity of living (speech) can be reached, and the place where such an assessment can be executed. In this option, the issue is not to consider to assess fiction novels as an entrance to management (see Alvarez and Merchan, 1992; Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux, 1994), but to reckon prosaics as a conceptual, analytic and writing style for empirical research.

EXTENDING PROSAICS: NARRATION, GENEALOGY AND DECONSTRUCTION

Prosaics can be related to more recent (in the sense of coming after Bakhtin) attempts that departing from the linguistic turn have tried to develop alternative approaches to overcome system-building. I will discuss three examples – namely narrative, genealogical and deconstructive 'analysis' – with regard to their prosaic inclinations.

Narratives and Local Accounts

Since Lyotard's (1984, p. 64) point that 'the little narrative remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention', one can easily think of stories as related to a prosaic approach. For Lyotard, little narratives have a centrifugal function, as they can put pressure on institutional authority and bureaucracy, and thus go against the Grand Narratives (Sim, 1996). It is a matter of move and countermove, constantly, without accepting or applying to external rules. Such a (postmodern) artist or writer

is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes or the work he creates is not in principle governed by preestablished rules and cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by the application of given categories to this text or work. Such rules and categories are what the work or text is investigating. The artist and the writer therefore are working without rules in order to establish the rules for what will have been made. This is why the work and text can take on the properties of an event . . . (Lyotard, 1992, p. 15).

As a consequence, one is working within the frames of the narrative one is engaged in, which is not 'transferable' to another story one might get involved in. Little narratives are small-scale fictions which are providential, temporary and local, and make this no secret to the reader. In a similar way as Bakhtin stimulates us to focus on disorder, Lyotard believes (postmodern) science should orient itself to the instability and

by concerning itself with such things as undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterized by incomplete information, 'fracta', catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes – (it) is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical. It is changing the meaning of the word knowledge, while expressing how such a change can take place. It is producing not the known, but the unknown. And it suggests a model of legitimation that has nothing to do with maximized performance, but has as its basis difference understood as paralogy[3] (Lyotard, 1984, p. 60).

Richardson's account of the use of the narrative comes close to a prosaics-oriented legitimation: 'If we wish to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences, if we wish our work to be faithful to the lived experiences of people, if we wish for a union between poetics and science, or if we wish to use our privileges and skills to empower the people we study, then we should value the narrative' (1990, pp. 133–34). Stories allow the story-teller to interweave in sequence and in consequence, and hence in detail, the ongoing events lived by people. Stories can be prosaic in the sense that the eventness is not lost in writing or telling. Stories can be seen prosaic in a more defined, Bakhtinian sense as they emerge as novelistic. For this, 'that which makes a novel a novel, that which is responsible for its stylistic uniqueness, is the speaking person and his discourse' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 332). Stories are thus interweaving personages that 'speak' with each other from their own developing languages.

While there is no possibility from the outside to define a story, and its many genres, as prosaic, it can be easily confirmed that a narrative writing has many, even unanticipated possibilities for prosaics. The example I will give here is the anecdote, this special kind of story that is given by Van Manen (1990) a special place in his hermeneutical phenomenological approach to pedagogy. The anecdote is a secret, private or hitherto unpublished narrative

or detail of history (Van Manen, p. 116). Its Greek meaning of 'things unpublished' gives it its special prosaic status: a short passage of life, not worth becoming official and published. Research based on anecdotes is considered no research, and thus not to be published. Prosaic-oriented research would welcome the anecdote, as a special genre that can be concrete, and still full of sensitive insight and proverbial truth (Van Manen, 1990).

Genealogy and Superficial Secrets

The relatedness between prosaics and genealogy, I think, can be explored around their mutual interest for 'superficial secrets'. A prosaic ethnography tries not to be superficial in how it represents life due to technics of abstraction, nor does it move everyday events beyond their appearance, turning our daily small secrets into mysteries. Prosaics balances between the hollowness of abstraction and the secrets of the surface. Foucault, in moving from archeology, and the formation of discourses, to genealogy, is seeking out what Burrell (1997) calls 'superficial secrets'. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 106) for the genealogist, trying to record the singularity of events,

> there are no fixed essences, no underlying laws, no metaphysical finalities. Genealogy seeks out discontinuities where others have found continuous development. It finds recurrences and play where others found progress and seriousness . . . Genealogy avoids the search for depth. Instead it seeks the surfaces of events, small details, minor shifts and subtle contours.

As in the case of the little narrative, genealogy cannot move to the centre, failing when displacing established systems:

> genealogy cannot cease to be marginal and oppositional and still be genealogy . . . (It) is essentially a readiness to continually problematize established truths through development of alternative accounts and critical analyses of targeted facts, concepts, principles, canons, natures, institutions, methodological truisms, and established practices (Prado, 1995, pp. 151–52).

In some way, it cannot do without the grand narratives, as genealogy wants to act as a counterpoint, similar to Bakhtin's 'double-voicedness'. As for prosaics, genealogy can only 'succeed' when it moves away from what is expected to be 'consulted', to seeking 'in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history' (Foucault, 1984, p. 76). Genealogy becomes highly 'prosaic' in its search for 'effective history', a term Foucault draws from Nietzsche, and in trying to be 'close' but not closed:

> Effective history . . . shorts its vision to those things nearest to it – the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies; it unearths the periods of

decadence, and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is with the suspicion – not vindictive but joyous – of finding a barbarous and shameful confusion. It has no fear of looking down, so long as it is understood that it looks from above and descends to seize the various perspectives, to disclose dispersions and differences, to leave things undisturbed in their own dimension and intensity (p. 89).

Deconstruction and What Fell Off the Table

The little narrative as well as the genealogical approach can be related to prosaics, as they oppose systems as much as they are opposed to being systems themselves. A similar point can be made about deconstruction and the way Derrida has thought of it, according to Eagleton (1996, p. 128):

> Derrida is clearly out to do more than develop new techniques of reading: deconstruction is for him an ultimately political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintain its force. He is not seeking, absurdly, to deny the existence of relatively determinate truths, meanings, identities, intentions, historical continuities; he is seeking rather to see such things as the effects of a wider and deeper history – of language, of the unconscious, of social institutions and practices.

Deconstruction is indeed a 'technique' of reading, which as no other approach plays out the centrifugal effects of language, by showing how every text can have a double reading, which emerges in the margins of the first reading. Such a process is endless, as every marginal text can be reread into a new text. When we write or speak, we are always in an intertextual space, so that the intention of what we say, is already overturned, disseminated in new meanings: 'There is a continual flickering, spilling and defusing of meaning . . . All language, for Derrida, displays this 'surplus' over exact meaning, is always threatening to outrun and escape the sense which tries to contain it' (Eagleton, 1996, p. 116). The notion of surplus is used in both Bakhtin's and Derrida's thinking to indicate that meaning is always providential and momentous,[4] and fixation of meaning is a moment in an unarticulated stream of endless meaning. Prosaics and deconstructionism use both a way of 'reading and writing', to acknowledge the never-ending Heracleitean movement, and to give the text a voice. As Chia (1996, pp. 19–20) phrases it, deconstruction

> leads us to understanding organization as a fundamental reality-configuring process; an ontological activity of carving out and making familiar a world which we therefrom inhabit. Adopting a deconstructive stance in the practice of organizational analysis involves the careful unfolding of texts, events and organizing processes through a strategy of 'close reading' . . ., it involves meticulously charting out the strategic maneuvers of ordering and organizing entailed in creating networks of relations in order to mobilize bias towards serving a particular function.

THE WIDER HORIZONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

When reading the chapters in this volume, the prosaic tones of entrepreneurship are becoming illustrated, echoed and multiplied: we meet the closeness of prosaics in Boutaiba's story of the everyday unfolding of Yala-Yala, a meeting of four partners conversing discourses of time with a big T in a drama of insignificant moments; we learn about the superficial secrets of taxi owners and taxi drivers and their mundane yet so overwhelming problems as they resonate in the hurly-burly of Caracas; we zoom in on the small moves of an actress, her becoming entrepreneurial, as she draws upon stories, discourses and dramas that form the heteroglossia of her past to invent a new form of community-anchored theatre; we follow in O'Connor's story, in a series of close-ups, a unfinalizable conversation of legitimation that echoes the discursive stances of a set of actors that follow each other up on the scene of a new internet enterprise; we hear about more, even suspicious secrets as we follow Rehn and Taalas in their suspicion and even resistance to the system-building of entrepreneurship and as they visit what traditional entrepreneurship scholars would consider unpromising places to study entrepreneurship; more resistance to system-building is echoed as Pettersson gradually dismantles the male-dominated discourse that should accomplish the entrepreneurial aura of a region, and as Campbell questions the construction of a normal science, another monument of male signature, and reinvents what entrepreneurial studies can be through the metaphor of the quilt, a most heteroglossic fabric to interweave colours, stories and inclinations; with Damgaard, Piihl and Klyver, we are able to watch a fictive play, a small event that allows us to more precisely understand the relationships entrepreneurs, consultants and researchers can form with each other; as Smith and Anderson read a series of stories, we meet again and again the same moral discourse that imbues 'the story of entrepreneurship' as a centripetal force in the variety of stories we can tell about entrepreneurship. Every one of these chapters forms a story of its own, creates its own balance of prosaic detailedness, dramatic stance, metaphorical inspiration and wider set of discourses to construct the eventness of the entrepreneurial endeavours they speak about.

These chapters illustrate what entrepreneurship can be after its linguistic turn, and their prosaic inclinations allow us to identify three parameters that can form a potential for future studies of entrepreneurship, if we accept we must embrace even wider horizons. The developmental agenda a prosaic approach suggests is to concentrate our studies upon the philosophical, the social and the aesthetic of entrepreneurship. After and via the

linguistic turn, more turns turn up: the philosophical/vitalist, the social/ performative and the aesthetic/literary.

The Philosophical of Entrepreneurship and Vitalism

Life has to be lived. With that simple 'saying', we undermine any idea that would pretend that events could be captured in plain predictions, complete deterministic schemes or pre-existing patterns. There is an openness that resists all forms of system-building and that embraces a world becoming. If entrepreneurship is, according to a prosaic premise, to surrender itself to floating around in the flux of becoming, it will have to turn to the so-called philosophers of becoming (Steyaert, 1997). The list is long ever since Heraclitus launched his idea that 'one can never step twice in the same river'. In the history of philosophy, other names, such as Nietzsche, Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, have connected their philosophies to this very idea of becoming, which has at the end of the second millennium exponentially been haunted by such thinkers as Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, Serres, Derrida, Bakhtin, de Certeau and others. There is a lot of intertextual potential to pursue. The choice of using Bakhtin to conceive a prosaic approach in this text emerges now as a rather reductionist one, and, even more, by its shortness, hides the intertextual constitution of Bakhtin's writings, interweaving the different threads of the so-called *Lebensphilosophie*, explored by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Dilthey and – especially significant for Bakhtin – Simmel and Cassirer (Brandist, 2002). But beyond Bakthin, there is a whole philosophical oeuvre from Serres' *Genesis* (see Steyaert, 2000) to Deleuze's vitalist and neo-materialist philosophy that can allow us to conceive entrepreneurship as a becoming, never again enclosing it in a reductionist scheme or system.

The Social of Entrepreneurship and Performance

With a prosaic approach, entrepreneurship is enacted through daily activity and interaction. It is a social process, that requires study in such a way that the approach does not kill what it tries to study, and respects the eventness of the events through which it proceeds. By approaching entrepreneurship as a prosaics, we can situate its formation there where it happens and where it can happen: as lived experience, as story, as drama, as conversation, as performance, in all its everydayness. Such a prosaic approach of entrepreneurship implies that we (re)connect to a range of diverse approaches that takes their departure in social theories – as developed in sociology, anthropology, psychology, cultural studies – that only occasionally have been applied in entrepreneurship studies (see Swedberg, 1999).

The social process of everyday life, as it (per)forms entrepreneurship can become connected to Garfinkel's and Cicourel's ethnomethodology, de Certeau's practice of everyday life, Goffman's dramaturgical sociology, Geertz's thick description and many social constructionist theories that try to conceive the sociality of everyday life (see Shotter, 1991 and 1993, and Hosking and Hjorth, Chapter 14).

What connects many of these social theories is the performative dimension of everyday life (Sahlin-Andersson and Sevón, 2003). Everyday life is about everyday practices. Prosaics thus connects or combines the linguistic turn with the performative turn. For instance, Bruner (1990, p. 34) interprets the function of narrating in a dramaturgical sense: 'When we enter human life, it is as if we walk on stage into a play whose enactment is already in progress – a play whose somewhat open plot determines what parts we may play and toward what denouements we may be heading. Others on stage already have a sense of what the play is about, enough of a sense to make negotiation with a latecomer possible'. Narration allows us to connect to the play that we join constantly in different contexts, and that we partly co-create, drawing upon the range of discourses we can (or are allowed to) weave in. The sense and direction of the play is constantly in need of new interpretations and new interactions even when a very known and rehearsed script might be followed. Narration remains an open text as others step in or out of the conversation. For Bruner, narration is also an accounting for the exception that occurred, rebalancing the canonical and the expectable with the unexpected. In that sense, a story is not only about mess but, based on Burke's dramatism, also about 'trouble', when certain canonical stances become violated or are missing (and new narrations need to be developed). The performative and interactive side of prosaics doesn't limit the processual interest to the here-and-now or the micro-level of face-to-face situations. Every performance is conversational in a broader sense, as its intertextuality introduces and omits certain discourses and power relationships, implying societal scripts of which some are hard to change while others can be resisted. While all the world may be a stage, men and women are not merely players, nor are their scripts free to be written.

The Aesthetic of Entrepreneurship and Writing

With the performative of prosaics, we have set one foot in the aesthetical. Bringing in the novel as the central vehicle to look at social processes as an unfinalizable text where centrifugal forces are not outdriven by centripetal habits, and where a detailedness is created so that the eventness is not lost, requires a study of aesthetic processes. For Bakhtin, the novel is '[T]he only genre which is in a state of becoming, therefore it more profoundly, essen-

tially, sensitively and rapidly reflects the becoming of actuality itself' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 7, translation by Hirschkop, 1999, p. 12). To draw upon the novel to conceive entrepreneurship is then to acknowledge the similar authorship the writing of life presupposes as in literary writing. The question is then: What forms, genres and styles of writing can become implied here? Can we foresee how the centralizing tendency of the academic publication systems can be interrupted, or, at least, is it possible to move to another more prosaic scene, where a variety of conceptual and writing forms can be played out, and where every research study experiments with its own form, as knowledge creation cannot be disconnected from form creation? In what melange of more local and 'popular' genres, forms and styles would we arrive thus? After the linguistic turn, ahead of us is to focus on the styles and stylists of our theories (Czarniawska, 2003) and – to put it simply in a grand way – rewrite entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2003).

2. A moment in time

Sami Boutaiba

THE WAY OF BECOMING

This chapter has it that life be understood as a becoming process. It is normative and political both in the sense that understanding life as a becoming process privileges a moving dialogue between human beings. This way of entering an understanding of any kind of social life is heavily influenced by the writings of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993) and Morson (1994) who also depicts his own work as Bakhtinian (ibid., p. 5). In what follows, I will elaborate upon some of the central concerns of literary philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin in order to clarify the conceptual framework that has informed my understanding of the first approximately one and a half years of YalaYala's existence as a company. I see no better way of entering the work of Bakhtin than the following quote that has been translated by Morson and Emerson (1990) from a Russian text:[5]

> One must not, however, imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect . . . Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and significance; abstracted from boundaries it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies. (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 51)

From this quote's emphasis upon boundaries, it becomes possible to address a number of related concerns of Bakhtin. In this chapter, it is conducive to start in his book-length essay on the chronotope (literally meaning time-place, but usually translated as time-space), which appeared in the collection called *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981, pp. 84–258). In this essay, Bakhtin reflects upon the way literature always understands the life and experience of its characters from an underlying conception of time and space, of which time is depicted as the primary category of the chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85). In the essay, Bakhtin discusses various literary genres and the capability of these genres to capture a time that is open, a time where all the small steps of everyday life are allowed to do something, to move the characters as the narrative develops. In fact, the essay can very

much be read as a juxtaposition between the novel that, according to Bakhtin, depicts a life where characters enter a crude contact with the present, and other genres that each in their own way fail to apprehend that the everydayness of interpersonal encounters, various events, challenges, and even the seemingly smallest action, make a creative difference as to the life of the characters depicted in the narrative. Or as he writes in another essay in the same collection: 'The novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 27). Thus, Bakhtin actually tries to advocate[6] the kind of temporal existence, where the present doesn't lose its presentness, because only in the present, as David Carr (1986) also makes us blatantly aware throughout his whole book, can we gain a renewed sense of what we are all about, of the kind of narrative that is meaningful to our existence as we see it here-and-now. It is exactly Bakhtin's emphasis upon the presentness of the present that allows for a sense of freedom, but we are wise to caution already here that Bakhtin doesn't imply a romantic sense of freedom that may come from a loose sense of a boundaryless existence. On the contrary, boundaries help us explore ourselves as liminal heroes, and it is this exact emphasis upon liminality that makes Bakhtin's plea for an open time a prosaic one. In fact, the latter emphasis upon prosaics can already be understood as a possible continuation of his phenomenological writing (see Gardiner, 2000, for discussion) in his early work called *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (Bakhtin, 1993). In this book, ardently opposing any kind of theoretism, i.e. systematic ways of thinking, he repeatedly emphasizes the 'eventness of Being' (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 1), or the 'once-occurrent Being' (ibid., p. 15), and by so doing makes a plea for non-alibis, for addressing the movement of time and the beings we become in this movement. Whether we construct our lives in one way or the other, we always become, and Bakhtin's voice urges that it makes a crucial difference whether we are able to address these 'defining traces of existence' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 100), whether we are able to enter a dialogue with ourselves while becoming. If not, we come to lose the sense of historicity, the sense that time is not reversible in terms of what it makes us. This latter is also a way of emphasizing that the emphasis upon the presentness of the present is not a way of talking about an isolated present 'that banishes both memory and anticipation' (Morson, 1994, p. 201), as if the here-and-now didn't already produce an echo of an earlier time and a certain promise of a time to come. On the contrary, we are dealing with a time that is already temporally extensive, a time that already leaves a trace, and without this sort of understanding of historicity, we become oblivious to the fact that characters, cultures and life *tout court*, though unfinalized (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 83) and themselves moving events that obligate us to play with and along as well as to

interrogate, are also obligated to try to understand how and to what extent time has already made us other. I guess my dual emphasis upon playing and a more serious and critical self-interrogation already places me in between some of Bakhtin's own writings. On the one hand, the book called *Rabelais and His World* (1984b) and its underlying metaphor of the carnival clearly deals with dominant norms from a playful perspective, whereas for instance his book called *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* (Bakhtin, 1993), works to create a certain sense of seriousness around the consequences of our acts, of addressing life as an event and does it in an ethically responsible fashion by making ourselves answerable (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 16), to other people as well as to ourselves.

It is exactly the act of addressing what we become, the traces of our existence, when thrown into the prosaics of everyday life, which invites us to interrogate the possibilities for other narratives through which our life could be meaningful. Thus, it should be stressed that addressing life and the way it already appears meaningful, is an action, an active effort of getting the sense of the small steps and what they have made us. A way of losing one's innocence, one might even say. This kind of existence already resonates the challenge of getting the sense of a dialogue between what is already actualized and what is potential, between what Morson (1994, Chapter 5) would call sideshadows and life as it is presently understood. In such a dialogue, the sense of freedom and the sense of 'who we are' emerge from the ongoing dialogue with the boundaries of existence. This is exactly the reason for which it becomes difficult to accept perspectives on emergence that reduces 'the act of creation' to a certain time-period, and to some but not other activities, as seems to be the case in the otherwise very interesting article on organizational emergence by William Gartner (1993, pp. 232–33). As I see it, we need to recognize that the entrepreneurial (read: creative) activity is an inherent part of everyday life, and even the seemingly trivial activities of everyday life have great capacity to move us in new and unexpected directions. This seems to me one important way of entering a process-sensitive conceptualization of entrepreneurial action that Steyaert (1995) and Gartner (1993) both seem to call for in their use of, amongst others, social psychologist Karl Weick (1979) and his tenacious insistence upon a process-vocabulary of organizing.

There is a further remark to make on the becoming perspective developed here. Thus, every process of becoming is essentially social. Even in the seemingly most solitary movement, we are always-already situated in a language that is social. As to the act of starting a new company, it seems to be one, almost paradigmatic example of a human project and the kind of relational effort involved in this (the effort of making others believe in an idea or product, the effort of moving together to make the voice of the company

a strong one, etc.). Generally speaking, I agree with Gartner (1993) that reflections on entrepreneurship ought to focus, not upon individuals who are entrepreneurs, but upon entrepreneuring as a social activity. To be sure, a lot of the bias in entrepreneurship studies focused upon individuals may derive from the fact that a lot of studies are based upon retrospective (Gartner, 1993) interviews, where people (notably leaders qua the Western preconception of the kind of role leaders are supposed to play) centralize themselves in a manner little justified in the actual process in which they were involved. As this analysis is mostly based upon a real-time study, it seems more conducive to the kind of process-understanding focused upon social becoming (Morson and Emerson, 1990). This reflects the belief that any individual will always-already be a part of a social process, already enmeshed without being obliterated as if 'it' was a mere docile body defined and moved by a social machine.

To sum up, I quite tenaciously insist upon process. I do this through an underlying questioning as to the ability of the people that I have investigated to maintain a critical dialogue with their own process of becoming in their way of narrating existence. As I already hinted at with the Bakhtin quote in the beginning, such a dialogue is about liminality, and the chronotopic understanding already suggested that it was about a temporal and a spatial liminality. Concisely speaking, this actually ties together the notion of dialogue, process, time, and space. Thus, the possibility for an ongoing, critical self-dialogue, and the process-sensitivity this entails, can be either impeded or made possible depending upon the extent to which temporal boundaries and spatial boundaries are allowed to be renegotiated along the way. Temporal boundaries tell us something about the moments that are allowed to do something to our understanding of existence. Spatial boundaries tell us about the way people interact with difference (Bell, 1998), and whether they actually address these differences in a moving dialogue in the social space that emerges between members of a given community. The story that I present to you as a reader is rather detailed and generally written in the spirit of the following quote:

> Unlike quantitative work, which can be interpreted though its tables and plot summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text. Just as a piece of literature is not equivalent to its 'plot summary', qualitative research is not contained in its abstracts. Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading. (Laurel Richardson, 2000, p. 924)

I hope my text will move the reader along and that meaning will emerge in the very (entrepreneurial?) act of reading the quite detailed analysis. It is an analysis of a small, newly started company called YalaYala.[7] In the analysis, I show and discuss how the members of this company had great

difficulties taking in the prosaics of their everyday experience in the way they narrated themselves. I will elaborate upon how YalaYala narrated company life in between what Bakhtin (1981, p. 278; 1984, p. 63) has called the chronotope of the threshold, and an epilogue time, which is Morson's (1994, pp. 190–98) softer term for Bakhtin's (1981) concept of Épic time. A life poised on the threshold is Bakhtin's way of talking about an extreme sense of openness to the possibilities of life, the freedom of getting the sense of the possible qualitative diversity in the cross-section of a single moment (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 29), but it is essentially also a sense of time that lacks extension, that views life as little but a series of synchronic slices. As will become clear in the analysis, this sense of time seemed inherent in the way they created a 'space of free agency', the propensity to accentuate the agency part of free agency, the alleged preparedness to seize the demands of the immediate moment, and the refrain of following leads. As to epilogue time, it is a notion pointing at a life that has to be lived out, as opposed to being lived 'from the middle'. In the epilogue, all the important stuff is over, and what remains is the cooling down of the 'ever after'. This sense of time seemed inherent in the immense importance YalaYala attached to the way their project came to life, the temporal pocket of what was narrated as YalaYala's genesis. Most importantly, perhaps, it seemed that the space of free agency and the chronotope of the threshold that was built into it (a time of fast moments and a fragile social space of 'surface interaction') stayed with the members of YalaYala during the time of my investigation, even though it actually took quite a struggle for the members of YalaYala to become able to ignore what they were becoming in the prosaics of their process. It is this struggle that I try to discuss in terms of YalaYala's ability to let their ongoing experience do something to their initial idea and their communal narrative. I do this by discussing how they took in various challenges along the way in their narration, such as what happened: when they got an 'offer' to be bought; the writing of a business plan; the arrival of a new partner; the difficulties of leaving space for the individual members; the entry of new employees; and the exit of some members along the process, etc. The way I understand their process, YalaYala's 'interaction' with each of these events told us a great deal about their ability to enter into a moving dialogue with what they were becoming, which is really what prosaics is about. With this introductory foreshadowing, I invite you, the reader, to enter the story yourself.

THE TIME OF THE NAKED SPACE

The five founders of YalaYala had their domicile in a small base-ment in Copenhagen. They were five younger persons around the age of thirty, four men and one woman, all educated in the school called 'Kaospiloterne'. It was two relatively naked rooms with some black desks with few things on them, a few papers and a couple of portable computers at the desks where members were seated. When entering the first room, three small picture frames hang on the wall with hand-written notes on them. It was the result of the brainstorming processes the members had gone through in their search for a suitable name for their company. They settled on YalaYala Ventures and Consulting,[8] which to them was a signifier of the way of life of the new economy. The name YalaYala is Arab for 'fast, fast' or 'come on, come on', connoting the speed at which everything, allegedly, changes. *Autrement dit*, there was no time to waste! Also, they insisted that the name shouldn't have the word chaos in it, since they were a bit tired of this brand and also wanted to do something that wasn't immediately identified with being a chaos pilot. I was told that none of them had fixed places in the rooms. Chance or the fact of working together on a project might determine where they would sit. When entering the second room, the first thing that met the eyes was the big poster on the wall. It had an aggressively-looking man on it, pointing his fat index finger in the direction of his audience. The poster had the words written on it: 'Speed is God and Time is the Devil'! I was going to meet all five members at once, so that they would be able to decide, whether I could follow them the next couple of years. They accepted my project without any hesitation. They only wanted to get a rough feeling about how much time I would demand of them. As they told me: 'time is scarce and we are not always here'. It became a short meeting, then, since they liked the idea of someone following them for a longer period: 'It will be a bit like having our mirror following us around to tell us who we are', as one of them remarked during the course of the meeting. Besides, they were used to the attention, they told me, because they had all done their studies at 'Kaospiloterne'[9] at a time, where media interest in this 'alternative' education was rather intense: 'We are quite used to the attention. We've had journalists going in and out of the school from the very beginning of our studies'. At the very same meeting, they asked me whether they would be able to hire me as

a consultant from time to time. I was a bit surprised, since the four of them had just met me. The fifth I knew from ten years back and we had not remained in contact in this in-between period. Nevertheless, they seemed to seize an opportunity when they saw one. Or as one member formulated it: 'If we see a possibility, we act fast. That is what we are good at, we have a competency for acting'. Moreover, the members emphasized that they had a dual focus: they worked with new ventures (what they referred to as entrepreneurship) and they worked with consulting (what they referred to as intrapreneurship). As it said on their homepage: 'YalaYala, establishing the new, renewing the established'.

As a space, the basement left little traces of their inhabitants. It could easily be emptied without leaving any trace of its inhabitants and, as such, the existence in this space appeared a fragile one. The same fragility could be found in the way they referred to their genesis, what was narrated as the Beginning of it all. Hence, all five members had, alongside others, been invited to a job interview in a consultancy company that had very close connection to the school of chaos pilots (where the members had also graduated). However, the impression of the meeting was not good at all: 'it didn't really click', 'they were too old-fashioned with their hierarchy, short-term perspective, and lack of vision', as some members told me. Besides, the company had the kinds of jobs, which members wouldn't like to work with. Mostly, it was very short-term jobs, a process-consultation of a couple of hour's duration, seminars, team-building events, and the like. So they all had this feeling that this relationship with the consultancy company was not going to work. On the way back to Copenhagen, something apparently happened: 'We all looked each other in the eyes, and that's where we fell in love', 'on the train back home from Aarhus, we suddenly became focused on doing something together'. As it were, this was narrated as the momentous moment of their existence, the event around which their existence could become their own, the way in which being a member of the new economy came to existentially matter as opposed to simply automatically identifying themselves with the new economy hype that prevailed at the time. That was their way of moving from mere category to narrative, in the words of Donald Polkinghorne (1988, p. 21). In short, moving from an event seemed important to be able to go beyond being plain and simple dopes of a cultural category. This seemed to be YalaYala's way of touching a prosaics of existence (Morson and Emerson, 1990), of getting a threshold moment (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 248) that moved them in their story about themselves. This small story even seemed to have the kind of dramatic

element that emerges from almost becoming part of what one truly is not, a threat to the authenticity of their self-understanding. One member made this point particularly clear: 'when I come to think of it, I believe it was extremely lucky that the others and I didn't go into this firm. It would have been so . . . not us'. Fortunately, the story seemed to go, there was a resolution to this small drama, that is, they discovered what they didn't want to identify themselves with. They got an anti-fixation point, a direction in which they shouldn't move. If there is anything that can be referred to as the origin of culture, I believe that it is this kind of sensory topic (Shotter, 1993b, Chapter 3), understood as 'places' in the flow of experience that can somehow be 'found again' (Shotter, 1993b, p. 63), and 'places' that arouse strong feelings as only a sense of genesis can do. Subsequent to this decisive moment, life could really begin, or so the story went. Let us look closer into what it did begin with.

THE SPACE OF FREE AGENCY

As a radical counter-move to the depiction of the consultancy company, the members decided to create a network of free agents that could: choose the jobs they thought were interesting and 'felt for', abandon wage-earner mentality,[10] and be extremely mobile as individuals and leave the network if something more interesting came along. In other words, the network was going to be a 'platform' for the individual: 'I guess all the members of YalaYala were kind of hungering for the openness . . . or freedom that YalaYala could give them as compared to other, more traditional companies'. The way the members spoke about their project, it surfaced repeatedly that they were going to create something, which was to be completely different from what they believed to be the core of the traditionalist consultancy company, a new type of 'expressive organizing: '. . . it was a neat way to create an organization. We have been the kind of people who constantly look for new, expressive types of organizational forms'. At the time, they did not want to create a company in the traditional sense of the word. In fact, anything that connoted something traditional was not *comme il faut* in the way they narrated themselves. Hence, instead of becoming a traditional, legal company, they defined some kind of loose affiliation among the members of the network with specific ideals tied to it: 'We want a network where we can do what we really like, say yes to jobs and also say no to jobs, and just be who we are.

We want room to be ourselves. And we want to be free agents working in a transparent organization, where we know each other and trust each other'. They disliked the idea, as it were, of being one person at home and another when they performed their job. In the name of individual freedom and free agency, they came up with what they referred to as a minimal community: 'We wanted to create a community in the simplest way possible, we wanted to shorten it down to as little as possible, which is why we came up with three things – name, website, and office'. On the basis of these three basic elements aimed at supporting the practical existence of the members of the network, they were to do something, which was not going to be too narrowly defined in fear of placing a too tight limit on themselves. As a consequence, they broadly referred to their working areas as Entrepreneurship (doing consulting in newly started/not yet started companies) and Intrapreneurship (doing consulting in existing companies). In sum, those were the ideas that crystallized subsequent to their meeting with the consultancy company.

It seemed that the notion of free agency was an identifying theme that was mentioned over and again to describe what YalaYala was all about. Apparently, it held a promise of a brand new sort of community. However, it could also be interpreted as being on the brink of nothingness. I deliberately write 'also', because their movement produced a tension-filled environment (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 145) that seemed in between forces of centrifugality and forces of centripetality'[11] (Morson and Emerson, 1990; Bakhtin, 1986). Perhaps a bit counter-intuitively, the space of free agency did not only create a group of people who all ran in their own directions without any sense of community. To the members of YalaYala, the space of free agency was very much seen as an opposite to the way of work in the old economy that was associated with rigidity, wage-earner mentality, narrow job functions and hierarchical relationships between the people in the workplace – a way of organizing that seemed embodied by the 'traditionalist' consultancy company aiming to hire them. In this respect, their movement had a somewhat strong ideological tone, one of wanting to create a more human organizational space. In fact, so many times did they mention what they didn't want to be, departing from the bad experience they had in their encounter with the consultancy company, that their universe began to look almost Manichean. As such, their movement held in common a very distinct feature with that of paranoid stories (Keen, 1986). Thus, they were moving by means of a seemingly

very clear-cut polarity between 'good and evil', as if they were on the run trying to escape what they had almost become. I believe that it was this strong experience of otherness that endowed their movement with a sense of centripetality, a sense of coming towards a centre. They were moved to become other, to embark upon a quest (Downing, 1997) to conquer space in the virgin land of the new economy. Most important, the evil face of the consultancy company experienced in the encounter seemed to have created a sensory topic (Shotter, 1993a, 1993b), a shared moment of togetherness. In short, they narrated themselves as protagonists of a new epoch, as if they had seen and experienced the collision between two distinct epochs in their encounter with the consultancy company that was simply categorized as 'old economy'. And it is exactly in this type of movement that important clues to understanding the becoming process of YalaYala emerged. Hence, in this movement, seemingly utterly separated epochs defined the point of departure. Thus, it seemed that it was a very radical break that YalaYala defined between them and the consultancy company that had almost hired them, but which they had managed to escape in the nick of time. Yet, to a large extent this radical break with the consultancy company seemed a radical break with themselves. Thus, YalaYala had a contact network of people that was quite overlapping with the one of the consultancy company, as one member also once mentioned to me in a casual remark. Besides, they had been doing the exact same kind of work all along that the consultancy company were identified with (short-term jobs like team-building courses, small process consultations, arranging workshops, etc.), and the consultancy company had employees that were chaos pilots and was generally closely tied to this chaos-pilot milieu, of which all the founders from YalaYala also were a product. It was in this sense that it seemed extremely radical to say that everything that company was, they wouldn't be, because in a sense they already were. As such, they talked about something that looked like a radical conversion, a submitting of themselves to a thoroughgoing programme of reconstruction that made their own past an absolutely closed one (Bakhtin, 1981), sealed off from a moving dialogue. In this way, they were not only placing themselves in a time that was supposed to be utterly different from the time of the consultancy company, they were also creating a story for themselves in a manner that made them utterly foreign to their own biographical time, which, by its very definition, is always a time characterized by duration and small, prosaic moves (Morson, 1994; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986).[12] It seemed that the way of the 'clean break' was probably too abrupt, that a slowly evolving path was needed, and perhaps also at least some sense of a plan as to how to go about it, how to become other. Still, it is not my (exclusive) purpose to totally deconstruct the centripetal force of this sensory topic that the encounter with the

consultancy company produced. I only mean to say that a sensory topic can turn into something else if a movement is defined as if seemingly different times were sealed off from each other. More precisely, it can turn the movement into an epilogue (Morson, 1994, pp. 190–98), a carrier of dead language, as if the depiction of a meaningful existence would always require a saturated reference back to the moment of defining their 'otherness', turning the presentness of the ongoing present (Morson, 1994, pp. 176–77) into both afterword and negation. That is, it was often talked about as if it was the concrete peak moment of their existence that had already happened to them and created a negative point of reference. For now, I will leave this as a crack of doubt to the sense of meaningful existence that appeared to be the product of this frequently mentioned and highly value-laden encounter.

However, there was also a strong element of centrifugality in their movement in the first place. Thus, free agency was not only an aspect of their becoming that helped them distinguish between their organizational community and that of the consultancy company. On the contrary, it was also an invitation to enter into a specific form of relationship with each other in which the forces of centrifugality (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) worked. By focusing on the individual and evoking the metaphor of a platform for the individual, YalaYala seemed to think of their community as: a point of take-off for the individual, a resourceful ground for individual opportunities, a place of individual freedom and mobility, a place that could be left if no longer deemed valuable for the individual in question. One member characterized one of the essential thoughts in the design they had in mind in the following way: 'I guess one could see our idea in the light of the film called "Heat" . . . do you know it? In this film, Robert de Niro has an ideal way of living. He is committed to what he does, but he is always capable of leaving everything behind within seventeen seconds'. There can hardly be a more precise and illustrative way of showing what Richard Sennett (1998, p. 79) had in mind when he said that people in the new capitalism relied upon a specific mantra regardless of what they were involved in: 'The trick is, let nothing stick to you'. The reference to 'Heat' was an envisioning of an eternal preparedness to let go, to begin anew, as if their involvement in the everyday, communal life was strictly instrumental and fundamentally external to the person in question. As a consequence, then, the coexistence of these members could be seen as somewhat fragile. The demand for tolerance of individual idiosyncrasies was very high, and perhaps it was in this light that the almost idyllic atmosphere at meetings should be interpreted. Everything seemed to be pretty easily accepted (projects, leads, ideas), and nobody had any noteworthy arguments over matters of concern for YalaYala as a community. The moment as perceived by the individual was

what counted, and it was in this sense that YalaYala's way might be referred to as the way of the moment. It was in this way that the sense of community of YalaYala always seemed threatened by the centrifugal forces from within. The members should be able to spar with others free agents in the network, and everybody would be able to benefit from YalaYala as a point of take-off. They got access to each other's clients, could use each other as subcontractors, could ask for advice, and they deemed that it would be less lonely if part of the same network was housed on the same location. However, should it cease to be a powerful take-off, YalaYala (as a community) would be already and only in the past, or so the story went. And it was all in the name of freedom and with only a limited sense of community. In fact, YalaYala was narrated in a way that made it share one prominent characteristic with that of the shopping mall. In a shopping mall, people come for the sacred purpose of consumption (Bauman, 2000). A shared physical space where individuals come to consume whatever is there in the space. In such a space, an actual interaction between individuals is already an interruption, already something that comes in the way of the irredeemably individual pastime that it is to shop (Bauman, 2000, p. 97). Just as it was evoked by the idea of a platform for the individual, the individual was there to gain something, and they were never to commit themselves to YalaYala in a way that prevented them from being able to move on, should they suddenly feel a desire to do so. Even though that seemed to be the ultimate tendency of this ideal of being mobile, free agents, it was also a consumerist utopia that lived side by side with a rather strange bedfellow, namely with an ideal of what Bakhtin (1981, p. 133) has called public exteriority. Thus, while wanting to enjoy the possibility of freedom to move wherever, whenever, members of YalaYala simultaneously talked about their community as one that embraced whole human beings, a community where members could and should be open on all sides, completely 'on the surface' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 133). Thus, besides mobility, extreme openness and transparency seemed to be the other aspects of being free agents, namely a freedom to reveal themselves as they 'really were'. They wanted no distinction between work life and life *tout court*, as they believed this kind of distinction to be a remnant of the old economy. In this sense, YalaYala was narrated as a very totalized space embracing whole individuals in a way that stood in stark contrast to their idea of extreme individual freedom and minimal ties to the community. As such, the tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces seemed inherent in the ideal of free agency in itself, and gave the community aspect of YalaYala a rather fuzzy status. What were they really to do together? However, only shortly after their existence, after some two months, the members of YalaYala were forced to insist upon what YalaYala should do as a company, as they quite

suddenly initiated a dialogue with a large, international company, which had communicated an interest in buying YalaYala.

A WORLD OF SUDDENLYS

The company did not really know YalaYala, and wanted a business plan from the members. To YalaYala, it almost seemed overwhelming:

> Our first milestone came, when already in January we were offered to be bought by a big, Swedish Internet company. We were terribly flattered and sat laughing about the fact that one could be starting . . . we had formed the company the preceding month, that was when we became registered as a company, and now someone was knocking on the door. And somehow, we thought this was extremely fascinating, and we were a bit . . ., we had dollar signs in our eyes, wow, now we were going to be millionaires a month later.

Even though the situation was surprising, there was also a sense in which it fitted into their story about performing in the new economy: 'Apparently, we made a good first impression, because they wanted to buy us just like that'. Perhaps, then, it was all about first impressions!?

For the members of YalaYala, this meeting only seemed to reinforce the impression of the importance of the rhetoric of speed and of seizing the moment. In fact, it brings to mind Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler* that Morson (1994) and Sennett (1998) both discuss. In *The Gambler*, the hero lives for the moments where he is waiting to see the result of the roulette. He doesn't wait for the result per se, because when the roulette has finished turning, all the excitement is gone, all the thrill of not knowing what will happen next will be over. Thus, whether he wins or loses is not of too great importance, because that has got to do with the bearings on the prosaics of everyday life, and to the gambler, these two spheres are fundamentally separated. Instead, what he lives for is the intensified present, the dramatic possibility of going either way. I have a very particular reason for drawing upon such an extreme temporal orientation as that of gambling. Thus, what was common to the ecstatic behaviour of the gambler and the way that YalaYala defined their existence was the scant attention to the prosaics of everyday life. When YalaYala started a business that they were going to develop, they didn't seem to gain the opportunity to get a grasp on the temporal flow of their existence before they were interrupted (by a possibility, not an actual offer, of getting bought) that the prosaics of everyday life might only be of very little importance. It was a bit like an impression that there wasn't a story to be lived, only a shiny surface to be performed. This interruption from the potential buyer to their still very nascent sense of

normal condition seemed to involve such a high state of energy, that before and after was pushed away in favour of a desire to reach this intensified present, the present of all presents (Morson, 1994, p. 106 and pp. 201–4; Sennett, 1998, p. 83). They were ecstatic by the apparent speed of the new economy, and by the prospect of becoming rich as if a whirlwind motion had carried them way forward as compared to a normal, incremental line of development that one might expect from more 'traditional companies'. As such, the experience seemed to reintroduce the possibility of radically distinguishing themselves from the slow way of the old economy, of viewing themselves through the eyes of a time that was radically other. At a time where members somehow felt it to be difficult to explain to friends, family and business partners what they were up to, what was their raison d'être, they were nonetheless looking at a potential offer to be bought for somewhere in the neighbourhood of some 20 million DKK: 'Sometimes one does get a bit annoyed not being able to explain to others what YalaYala is all about. Friends are asking, my family sometimes asks and we get a lot of questions from our network in general'. As such, the sudden possibility of being bought by the international company buttressed the impression of speed, and also of doing impression management vis-à-vis the outside (Goffman, 1959). The fact that others showed signs of believing in YalaYala who hadn't 'proven' anything as yet only seemed to reinforce the very radical sensation of becoming while performing in the sense that they had to invent themselves on the spot in a business plan vis-à-vis the potential buyer. Life seemed instantaneous, indeed, and even though it did create a bit of panic in YalaYala, the panic was of an ecstatic nature, one of seizing the moment.

ESCAPING PROSAICS

The process of writing a business plan revealed itself as a very concrete actualization of a hypothetical mode of time (Morson, 1994, pp. 214–27). Ironically, producing a business plan was one of the things which the members had been trying to avoid from the very beginning: '. . . if you look at a business community, then you have to create a business plan together, which become a kind of a raison d'être, but it is very complicated and it takes a long time, and it is perhaps not that fun, it becomes very homework-like . . .'. Boring and time consuming or not, the members of YalaYala found themselves in a situation, which demanded a business plan. Besides the fact that they weren't sure as to how to define their working areas more in detail, nobody had any firm sense of how to go about such a task. As such, it revealed another paradoxical feature of their existence even more

clearly. Hence, one of the things that nascent companies face very early in their process is the challenge to write a sound business plan able to persuade the participants in the company itself and possibly also potential investors that the company is based upon 'healthy' business considerations. In this sense, when trying to persuade nascent companies that they should hire YalaYala to help them do the necessary work in a start-up process very radically placed YalaYala ahead of themselves (Carr, 1986, p. 81). They were to do for others what they hadn't done before, not even for themselves. A bit ironically, then, one might agree that time was indeed the devil in the becoming process of YalaYala.[13] However, it seemed a rescue plan was in sight, as YalaYala got a new and sixth member, who in the name of equality also became a partner. There was some disagreement as to why they needed yet another partner, but the potential opponents didn't insist upon their points of view. YalaYala still seemed like what Sartre has called a group-in-fusion (Carr, 1986, p. 136), that is, a movement of people that act as one. Besides, there seemed no time to dwell in this potentially centrifugal line of movement. They had to work on their business plan. They had to define themselves on paper even though they had no clear sense of who and what they were. What was demanded was a centripetal movement that could narrow down what YalaYala was all about in a manner that could be communicated to the potential buyer and possibly also to the rest of the audience of their organizational life.[14] However, most of their ideas had to do with the kind of way they wanted to work, that is, as free agents in a transparent organization, and whom they wanted to work with, that is, people they liked and people that also shared the ideals of organizing. As to their area of expertise, they had great difficulty getting closer than working with ventures and consulting. But then again, if they could get an offer to be bought on the basis of a very improvised story about what kind of difference YalaYala would be able to make in the world, perhaps it didn't really matter. Perhaps what really mattered was in fact the freedom to become whatever the moment deemed necessary. Perhaps there was no need to do anything else than pretend (Bakhtin, 1993), being a company in the new economy. Anyhow, they started working on a very hypothetical business plan that was mostly about what could be in the future and was, as such, both a way of escaping the prosaic present and of trying to make a sell by producing potentiality disguised as actuality. Thus, YalaYala presented itself as an organization that did consulting on a strategic level in organizations, even though they hadn't any such projects and lacked the contacts necessary to get them. They especially emphasized working with new ventures, and they did have a lot of contacts to new entrepreneurs. Ventures seemed to be the star of their existence: 'We are all pretty crazy about working with ventures, being there in the building of something

brand new. It is so close to what we do ourselves'. Often, members would state that YalaYala as a whole was moving towards ventures. The area of ventures was something they could easily identify with, being a venture themselves, and YalaYala seemed to enjoy the status as risk-willing and action-oriented that this connection seemed to imply. In this regard, ventures seemed almost a chronotopic motif (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 97) signalling a kind of kinship, risk-willingness, and perhaps, most importantly, difference vis-à-vis the company they almost became part of. The speculative dimension of it all became even more accentuated by the fact that the new partner took, and was allowed to take, the role as leading author of the business plan, since none of the others had any strong desire to go through the demanding, existential self-disclosure this might prove itself to be. One might wonder, then, if the sixth partner became an alibi for being (Bakhtin, 1993), a buffer shielding a hypothetical mode of being from the messiness of everyday life. But perhaps these remarks are too hasty? After all, getting another to look at yourself, at the community you belong to, can obviously also be a speedy way to borrow that vantage point, which a more peripheral participant might provide (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

A FAST ALIBI

In any case, they managed to escape the prosaics of everyday life, notably of getting new clients and selling projects. In the ecstatic and flattered atmosphere they produced a feeling that prosaics did not matter. Prosaics somehow became 'less real' than the forced definition of potential actuality on the particular kind of shiny surface that a business plan was. Hence, defining and orienting themselves in the direction of new ventures seemed to make their own becoming a very fragile one. It seemed capable of creating a particular sense of time, namely a time of high moments where the prosaics of everyday life became the sideshadow. Intuitively, it seemed like a desire for a dramatic narrative of risk (Sennett, 1998), of going out there on the edge, taking a kind of pleasure in the open road that might lead to sudden greatness or sudden nothingness. They could easily become a company placing their bets on the wrong horses and losing it all within a very short period of time. This seemed to be the connotations that the space of ventures produced. Yet, if there was such a desire, it was overshadowed by their less emphasized area of consultancy. Thus, doing the consultancy necessary to generate a minimal turnover proved a seemingly more humble means of survival 'behind the scenes'. It was the least emphasized but the most necessary for survival. It was a bit like a 'working man'-sideshadow always-already there to pave the way for the star of their existence, namely

that of working with the ventures, the adventurous sphere where anything might happen. As such, consultancy made possible the lofty rhetoric about being in the venture business. In fact, working with ventures seemed to inspire them to such a degree that they were almost sitting on the edge of their chairs when talking about their visions of working with ventures. When talking about it, what was a vision for the future and what was their everyday life seemed to fuse in a blurry mist. They were keen users of the language of 'just about to', of always coming closer to venture business in a movement away from traditional consultancy.[15] As such, they expressed a firm belief in what might be referred to as an alchemy of becoming, always haunting and hinting at the transformation on the verge of materialization. As it turned out, the maximally intensive period of having to deal with these issues of self-definition and potential belonging to the international company was not to last for long, since the relation with the company faded. The international company became involved in another large buy-up process and suddenly did not respond to the questions about the potential buy of YalaYala that the members posed by e-mail. Apparently, the 'semi-offer' didn't stand. All of a sudden, the members of YalaYala found themselves forced back to the prosaic details of their own existence, which had largely been neglected in the temporal density of rush hour. In a sense, it was back to small thoughts, small movements through time, which stood in stark contrast to what was envisioned for a brief period, namely becoming a part of a large international company, working as a team in it, building an 'in-house greenhouse' for new ventures and potential spin-offs inside the company, as one of the members called it. In the aftermath of rush hour, everything seemed a bit heavy, a bit less glamorous, and perhaps also a little overwhelming in the dim sense of the word. Most importantly, they seemed to have experienced a lapse into a virtual time-pocket, one having nothing to do with, or at least a very ambiguous relationship to, their practical existence. Coming back to practical existence proved to be a coming back to less than the same, of no progression in time: '. . . now we are back where we started, a couple of months has gone by, we have used quite a bit of energy on it, we haven't had a lot of jobs in the meantime . . . we were still on the same level as three months earlier'. As such, the members of YalaYala were forced to deal with the fact that they had to sell some projects in order to get things moving.

As time passed by in YalaYala, the great pathos of freedom inherent in the talk about a space of free agency seemed to be sideshadowed by another more lurking storyline, namely that of entrapment (reacting to what comes along as if trapped by the demands of the moment) that cannot gain any place in their narrative as they seduce themselves into the language of freedom. Thus, a lot of the jobs they had virtually flowed into the

organizations by the telephone and the members simply reacted quickly. Usually, it was people they already knew from their network of chaos pilots. And the jobs that would come from this source were typically of a very short duration. In fact, it was exactly in this regard that the sideshadow of the potential problems with their characteristic 'way of the moment' was able to cast a darker shadow upon the somewhat ecstatic enthusiasm about the freedom of the moment: 'One of our problems is the bunch of short-term jobs we get. We want big projects, but our network seems best at providing smaller jobs'. It was also these glimpses of frustration that opened a window to another, more concealed function of the language of freedom. Thus, it made it possible for the members of YalaYala to stay so firmly tucked in the realm of mere possibility, without a sense of playing with the already actualized, that even the freedom of the present moment could also be interpreted as an excuse not to define a path in the sand. Nowhere was the ideology of the freedom of the present moment more obvious than in the constant evocation to the 'leads' that might be followed: 'We spend more than half of our time at smaller and potentially greater leads, things that might lead to big stuff or nothing at all'.[16] As it were, leads seemed the primary chronotopic motif (Bakhtin, 1981) in their process that accentuated just how important the chronotope of the threshold actually was. Hence, freedom was never just freedom to do that special kind of thing they really wanted, because they couldn't and didn't. They took the jobs that came their way in order to get bread on the table, the most prosaic of things. And there was no time to waste on precious considerations as to whether it was the right kind of job. It was food on the table, and the weekly morning meeting always brought up the question of the economic state of the company here and now. Survival seemed to be an undercurrent of this description. In this regard, they always lived with the sense of urgency that made it difficult to see in what way they could really be seen as free (agents). The fact that it was the same jobs YalaYala got as the ones they associated with the consultancy company, the radical other of the absolutely closed time of the old economy, was pushed aside in favour of the great value and decisiveness they put into each moment and each lead in the name of what it might lead to. In short, their narration made a virtue out of necessity! If they were forced to react each time they got a job opportunity at a specific moment in time, at least the pervasiveness of the threshold-thinking in YalaYala endowed these moments with a more exciting aura than 'having to do it in order to survive'. However, insisting upon this interpretation of their process would surely have been a downright betrayal of their sense of what really moved them, of the freedom that YalaYala praised regardless.

ACTING OR MOVING ALONG?

There was also a sense of irony at play that had to do with their tendency to narrate themselves in the active mode. They believed themselves to have a competency for acting, a feature that they occasionally contrasted with the more contemplative analytical skills 'typical' of theoretically schooled people: 'What this organization does not have is analytical, more theoretical skills. We are good at acting. We just do things. We don't always worry whether we have the right kind of prerequisites for doing what we do. We just do it.' However, a certain element of passivity also seemed built in to their process. Thus, YalaYala seemed to be killing time in the sense of waiting. Thus, for a long period of time, various leads were able to raise the atmosphere to new peaks at the prospect of where they might lead. It had a romantic aura, because YalaYala had very few concrete thoughts as to how they might lead their company somewhere. Rather, it seemed they were to be led somewhere, taken away when something exciting came their way. However, one kills time when waiting for something important to happen. One kills time when what comes after appears to be more significant than the time one is submerged in. Indeed, there are many ways to kill time, and I mean this in the double sense of the word. In one sense, the nostalgic yearning for the momentum felt at the encounter with the consultancy company, the insistence on free agency and meeting the demands of the moment, and the lapsing into hypothetical time, are all ways of circumventing the narrative grasp (Carr, 1986, p. 41) promising to hold together the story of becoming YalaYala. By avoiding this, they tended towards involving themselves in idle chatter, in the frantic pursuit of the demands of the moment, where every project might have a small and isolated meaning in itself, but where the potential, interrelated meanings of different projects escaped any articulation. To be sure, one cannot demand a call of consciousness of the 'we' of YalaYala in the early days of YalaYala's existence. But somehow the same tendency towards a fragmentary temporal existence managed to subsist for a very long time. In fact, it was difficult to perceive the narrative time of YalaYala as anything but atomized. It seemed that there was this belief in the possibility of becoming anyone through the great promises of leads, and very little effort of acting to become someone. However, signs that the prosaics of everyday life perhaps did matter emerged when the potential offer for being bought fell apart. They tried to continue their daily business, which had hardly started before they were interrupted. They were a bit tired by the experience, as one can always become tired subsequent to an emotional peak time. However, their notion of free agency and of building a fundamentally different work place with space for the whole human being stayed with them as a principle that was

not to be questioned. And for a very long time it didn't become questioned as a principle endowing, perhaps even saturating, their process with meaning.

THE SHOPPING MALL REVISITED?

Around the time the offer from the potential buyer fell to the ground, the sixth partner who arrived last decided to leave after a couple of months' membership: 'It went so fast', as one of the members remarked. The rest of the members of YalaYala were very disappointed and had some difficulty letting go of the incident. They tried to talk it through with the partner, and make him express why he didn't want to be a part of YalaYala. They had taken him in, made him an equal partner in a project they thought would be of a longer duration, and he disappeared just like that:

> 'Well, we have discussed it a lot and why and what it has meant for the company . . . when X announced that he would withdraw, our first reaction was disappointment that we had not been included in the decision at all. We kind of had a hope that if anything was wrong, then you come and say it, because in this way we might work towards something that satisfies all parties'.

There was some hope that they would be able to make him change his mind on leaving, but it turned out to be impossible. His decision was final, unalterable.

Reflecting a bit upon this turn of events, the members were suddenly faced with their own ideal, namely that of extreme, individual mobility and freedom to do whatever, whenever. With no prospect of being bought, they were forced back to the zone of familiar contact (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 14) that appeared virtually empty. After some four months of existing, it was like starting all over, albeit with less energy. Thus, there was a feeling that they really needed to race forwards to pick up upon the lost time. Speed was there again, this time in the guise of what YalaYala seemed to make sense of as the wasted time of writing a business plan. Thus, there was a feeling that this business plan couldn't offer them much, and none of the members paid any attention to it. This also fitted the kind of storyline they created for themselves as to the last partner's disappearance: 'He wasn't really cooperative'. They reasoned that he never left any space for the other

members to enter into the process of writing the business plan. Perhaps it was no wonder, then, that the rest of the members didn't really feel for it? Yet, a different interpretation also seemed possible. Thus, there might also be some sense in saying that the members of YalaYala were looking for a double alibi for being in the way Bakhtin (1993, p. 40) talks about the matter. First, they let the last partner become the lead author of a project that they had been thinking about for more than half a year,[17] which was basically like having someone else author their company's evolving life. Second, they retrospectively criticized the fact that he didn't leave a space for them to come in and be co-authors. In short, they didn't undertake the responsibility of self-definition, and then they were looking for someone outside themselves to be responsible for this state of affairs, thereby inventing an alibi for the alibi. I guess that in this latter line of argumentation, the last partner truly had to be defined as someone outside the ideological community of YalaYala, even though their ambitions implied a different kind of self-reflectivity: 'We want an organization with room for self-realization, therefore no clauses and fixation . . . one of the fundamental thoughts about newly employed is that if the person would like to leave the company again, then it is the company that is wrong'. Still, they made sense of the actual event in a different way:

> I think we just had to face that X wasn't really an entrepreneur like us. He wasn't ready to deal with this kind of risky life, in an ugly basement with cheap furniture . . . he wanted a large salary, that we weren't capable of providing, safe employment conditions that we weren't capable of giving him either. He wasn't really committed to this kind of life, he wasn't truly an entrepreneur.

In this way, one might say that the remaining members attempted to neutralize the eventness (Bakhtin, 1993) of his disappearance by placing him in a world, which was somehow radically different to their own. Being another, it was fundamentally for the best for him to disappear, because sooner or later, he would have found out that he was in a universe of strangers. Still, all the talk about his disappearance, the extent to which it occupied the members also hinted at the fact that it was an interruption to their monologic (Bell, 1998, p. 53) narrative of individual mobility and freedom, which they struggled to become able to ignore.

Furthermore, they also criticized his inability to 'show' himself in the authentic, human space that YalaYala was supposed to inhabit. He was playing a closed game that was foreign to the ideal of public exteriority. Instead of telling the members that the first grains of doubt as to his continued participation in YalaYala had emerged, he delivered his message suddenly and in a monologic fashion that wasn't open to other voices.

Hence, the ideal of public exteriority, and the rather strong demand for living on simultaneous planes, was completely sidestepped.[18] Yet, the reflection that they didn't undertake was whether the ambition of an extreme individual mobility was too radical and suspenseful for maintaining any sense of community. Moreover, no one from YalaYala began pondering whether the ideal of public exteriority in an intimate environment was really the right ideal at all. It might not only prove itself to be suffocating, but also downright dangerous to any sense of community, because of the pressure to confess (Usher et al., 1997) that it had built in. The long discussions over his disappearance hinted at another relation between individual and community than the ideal of mobility represented. Maybe it did matter if members committed themselves for a longer time. As one member said: ' When I think about YalaYala, I become damn proud. And the most important . . . it is the human beings, the personalities and competencies they have'. Maybe, then, it was a problem if the community was nothing but an apparent external resource to the becoming process of individuals. Maybe, then, YalaYala was more than a shopping mall, and what they wanted to do together more than consumption (Bauman, 2000). If the above reasoning hinted at a community that very ardently hung on to a story about a community that cherished individual freedom, not the least by making space for 'total expression', they later came to realize that it was a plane of their existence which had acquired a life of its own. As it were, these had little to do with their experience of their everyday life.

THE VANISHED INDIVIDUAL

From day one, there had been an overwhelming focus upon the individual, and it was quite a shock to members when they realized that virtually everybody had a strong feeling that there wasn't any room for the sacred individual at all, they always had to 'think YalaYala'. As one member mentioned: 'In the beginning, there was no room for thinking about the individual. YalaYala was in focus, fighting tooth and nail to succeed, it had to be an experience of success.' The chronotope of the threshold, the temporal density of the time of freedom, had become a bit like residing in an everlasting state of the kind of fragility and restlessness that comes from always thinking potentiality, of always experiencing time as a discordant experience (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 129). With so much energy invested in a new start up like YalaYala, so much identity at stake by virtue of the fact that YalaYala was narrated as a space of the whole, authentically present human being, YalaYala appeared to be everywhere at all times. In this respect, there seemed to be a strong yearning for being able to narrate the

clear 'we' of YalaYala (Carr, 1986), of coming to terms with the centripetality of their movement, which was also reflected in YalaYala's tendency to define 'identity-seeking' meetings (mission and vision; strategy; core competencies), and the communal refrain of asking whether they were 'close enough' by defining their working areas as entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship (consulting and ventures). Yet, what also became clear was that the members had great difficulty bringing into the meetings the experience from their everyday work life that was by and large closed to the gaze of other members. As it were, they had to rely upon very general descriptions of the projects undertaken by members, and even more vaguely the kinds of leads telling members what might potentially be in a future that was never too far away, but neither was it ever imminent. It didn't make matters easier to deal with that they were constantly evoking the image of the threshold (Bakhtin, 1981) in their manner of talking. It always appeared that they were moving towards a moment, where things would become clear. With such a pervasive sense of restlessness, perhaps the individual just had to wait. Or perhaps some kind of action had to be taken. YalaYala went for the latter solution and by so doing, avoided betraying the aesthetic whole of their narrative process, which had an underlying insistence upon an agentive existence. The beloved and almost fetishized individual had vanished and they somehow had to find a way to bring it back in. Thus, YalaYala did a 'culture session' with two psychologists supposed to help YalaYala focus upon the individual and come closer to self-definition. Every member was fed up with the fact that a lot in their way of doing things wasn't as transparent as they would have liked it to be, that every action, every phone call, every little experience potentially demanded the attention of everybody, since they were all responsible for everything, or nothing, as some members stated when hinting at the consequences of this impossible demand for hypersensitivity. In short, it was as if they no longer wanted that which they had together to be a no-man's-land. As a consequence, they decided to define some roles for the different members, and most importantly according to themselves, they decided to make one of the members a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) even though his position was thought of as an ephemeral one. He should work to disappear, that is, make the very role of CEO superfluous, create the right kinds of mechanisms that would make spontaneous self-organizing possible.

FACING THE DIALOGIC OTHER

Nobody really knew in any great detail what the others were doing. Often people had their jobs saved on their own portable computers, for which

reason they strictly relied upon a short, oral briefing at morning meetings once a week or the kind of briefings/discussions they had at more spontaneous meetings. However, it was often unlikely that all persons would be able to attend these meetings, since members might as well be working with clients. In sum, the members knew very little about the substance of other members' past assignments and their immediate jobs. Hence, the intensified present of reacting to the job that came their way was often that of an isolated individual. While celebrating the alleged freedom of every moment that this temporal orientation was said to make space for, a stage also seemed set for a possible rebellion. Thus, as time went by, members still more often recalled their ambitions when establishing the company: moving together, a space for the individual voice, working with companies on long-term projects, whether it was new ventures or large, established companies. They were quite far from fulfilling this ambition, and from time to time, slightly annoyed voices interrupted what had practically turned into a monologue of freedom[19] that made members reluctant to obligate each other to define a more concrete path to follow. Defining themselves was mostly thought of as a problematic limitation, and the drive to become someone never seemed strong enough to stifle the automatic ideal of the many 'free' voices. Yet, their way of practising this ideal failed to take into account that voices don't become voices in a community until they do something to each other, until they move each other in a dialogue. Until there is friction, that is. In a bizarre, paradoxical vein, what seemed in fact to be an ambition of living out an ideology of symmetric relations and of everybody getting a voice in the process, and, consequently, a view of a community living on the plane of a polyphonic dialogue, where no particular author holds the 'ultimate semantic authority' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 238), had become something else in the process. It had become a smooth and anonymous plane between them that did not leave much space for going beyond the fragile existence of good intentions. It had, in itself, become the ultimate semantic authority of their existence and, as such, the almost perfect alibi for being (Bakhtin, 1993). All five members were also founders and perhaps it was easier for them to reproduce an ideology that got part of its momentum in a moment of a strongly felt otherness than it would be for people who hadn't experienced it first hand. Somehow this was to be 'tested' with the introduction of two new employees that came respectively in the late spring and summer of 2000.

The founders of YalaYala hoped that the introduction of both members might help YalaYala move. They were both hired because the founder liked them, not because they had projects lined up for them. And, importantly, they were both hired as employees, and they didn't gain partner status, which was a consequence of YalaYala's experience with the disappearance

of the sixth partner, an event which apparently had moved them to become other. As the first employee already knew the members, was also a chaos-pilot, and had been there for a couple of months, his socialization wasn't thought to be that big a challenge. However, it was different with the second employee, who seemed to be everything YalaYala deemed they weren't, but which they in flashes of time believed they needed. She was a woman (of which there was only one among the five founders); she was not a chaos pilot; she already had experience of a large consultancy company with the kind of consulting that YalaYala aspired to; and she had a 'heavy theoretical background', as the members referred to repeatedly when highlighting the fact that she had a Masters degree from a Danish University. Somehow, her arrival seemed an interesting turning point in YalaYala, because this employee was clearly also seen as someone who had a more traditional background, education-wise and job-wise. It might only be a first move towards opening up to a new kind of member that would probably have more legitimacy in relation to the kind of long-term consultancy projects on a strategic level that they were aiming for, but hadn't really been able to get: 'Today, our company is strong in terms of generating ideas. But we need the ballast, the ones that can consolidate, the ones that can document . . . the prerequisites for realizing our ideas'.

They hoped to learn a lot from her, and even arranged for her to do a cultural analysis of YalaYala as a rite of passage (Trice and Beyer, 1993), but eventually they didn't find the necessary time. Once again, time was the devil. She was busy enough learning the way of going about things and talking in YalaYala, which she deemed to be quite a big challenge, since she had never experienced a work culture like the one she saw there. As she mentioned herself: 'these persons just talk as if anything was possible. I think it's a bit difficult to decode what is behind all this, but I suppose I will learn. I am more used to very "slow" and a bit more dusty cultures, so I am really trying to find my place in this'. It soon became somewhat clear that both parties really had the experience of two worlds meeting: 'It is two worlds meeting. She comes from there, an enormous theoretical foundation, she looks at us as play-men . . . that is a big advantage. The difficult thing for her is that we just do things without having the theories behind it. We move fast. But we try to meet each other.' Even though she was clearly seen as a stranger, it was as if she was an uncomfortable stranger in themselves (Steyaert, 1997, p. 9) in the sense that it was another, which they apparently had to address when they spoke of themselves. On numerous and very different occasions when they tried to characterize what YalaYala was all about, they emphasized their strong propensity to act as opposed to being more contemplative. Thus, it seemed that the strangeness of the employee was always-already their dialogic other (Bakhtin, 1986). It should

be remembered that YalaYala, from the very beginning, had wanted to escape the kind of short-term consultancy jobs they were familiar with as chaos pilots. They had wanted to do large consultancy projects on a strategic level, and had, sometimes a bit too insistently perhaps, tried to convince themselves that they already had what it took. Interestingly, she had no prior experience with new ventures, only with consulting. Maybe, then, the story of YalaYala had moved a bit towards consultancy, the area that kept them alive while only being a more anonymous sideshadow (Morson, 1994) in the official narration of YalaYala? When asking the members this question, it did not seem so. On the contrary, members still talked about moving 'closer to ventures', but still this area could not provide a steady source of income, and the voice of profitability seemed to gain in force along the way. Apparently, YalaYala was telling a persuasive story about themselves, since the second employee very rapidly became what appeared to be a fully-fledged member of the new economy buzz of speed and change and the fuzzy teleology of creating a more human space of organizing and the duality of working with ventures and consulting. Why specialize in a certain type of product, in a specific sector or whatever? As she mentioned herself; fascinated: 'I think it is pretty impressive, there is such a positive spirit and confidence in this company. It seems they just do things, if I should judge from the talk going on in this organization'. Thus, she clearly seemed thrown into an organizing process, where members seemed inclined to think that pretending, being in no particular place at all (Bakhtin, 1993), was the way of life in the new economy. One might easily suspect that this radical otherness may have pushed forward an urge to belong, an urge to throw aside what she had been beforehand in order to quickly learn to become that particular same, who was no one in particular. To be no one in particular seemed a defining characteristic of what it meant to be in a no-man's-land, where every idea and thought floats around as if it was no man's thought (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 93). In such a space, nobody can obligate other members on a particular path, as this would already be a violation and trespassing on individual turf. This feature of no man's thought in no-man's-land had a concrete, empirical address in the often-evoked emphasis on making products that were supposed to be elaborated and materialized in writing, but which seemed forever deferred. Members of YalaYala excused themselves by evoking the fact that it was a very oral culture, which didn't bother to go through the lengthy process of writing. Obviously, this made words in YalaYala more fragile, less capable of entering into contact with the jobs people did in their everyday lives, with prosaics that is, and less capable of holding back time and insisting upon a particular path. Obviously, one might suspect that nobody bothered to make detailed, written descriptions of products, because they themselves suspected that it

wouldn't make a difference, that nobody in a space of free agency would feel obligated. Even the aspect that everybody seemed obligated to, the venture part of their story, seemed to take a peculiar turn in their process. Thus, one day the CEO mentioned that their first employee had posed an intriguing question to which he had no clear answer: 'How come I always have to work with ventures when having a cup of coffee in the evening. How come I don't do it during the normal working day?' This was like a Bakhtinian (1981)[20] 'character' asking from a position on the edge, a demasking hinting at a possible self-deception in YalaYala. At the time, the CEO had said that they had two money-generating ventures in the company, both of which produced a small income and both of which were created before YalaYala started as a company.[21] Could it be, then, that the space of ventures was close to being an empty space? Could it be, then, that the enthusiastic source of centripetality uniting them (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) was really nothing but a movement towards emptiness? It seemed that the lofty and fascinating rhetoric about ventures had also shielded them against the prosaics of their own existence that seemed to tell the unofficial story of the type of short-term projects that was associated with their anti-fixation point. Thus, faced with the interruption of their monologue of moving towards ventures, it seemed that they were faced with themselves, with what they didn't want to be and had been trying to escape from since the threshold encounter, their genesis. Paradoxically, YalaYala who narrated themselves as fast movers were suddenly faced with a temporal stand-still, a seemingly innocent question that sucked them into their past. Confronted with this friction to their story of being a company working with ventures, and thereby facing a subtle proposition that the real shadow of their existence was rather ventures as opposed to consulting, a space had to be created for the venture part of their existential self-narrative. As it turned out, the members of YalaYala engaged themselves in a paradoxical movement of simultaneously making room for and fighting the venture space that had suddenly entered the prosaics of their existence.

FRICTION EMERGING

As such, YalaYala was moved to become what they, all along, had said they were moving towards, namely a company making space for working with ventures. More energy had to go into this, and it was encouraged by the fact that YalaYala landed a large venture project where they became responsible for 'building' (develop the concept, recruit members) a network arena in Copenhagen called

United Spaces. This quite resembled their own initial idea/ideology when starting: free and highly mobile members, the network as a resource and platform for individuals, members that cared and helped each other, etc. Members of YalaYala talked about this project as if they were coming full circle, and they were to move into this 'network arena' themselves as well. Generally, it was notably the second employee and one of the founders who became more explicitly focused upon doing venture work.

Things were changing in YalaYala. Now, working with ventures took time away from other activities, most notably from activities that generated an income, and it was in this sense that YalaYala was faced with their own story in a manner that prosaically mattered. As it were, working with ventures was risky in the sense that the return on the invested time was highly uncertain. This was most notable with the first employee, who started working on a venture that aimed at developing a new wireless game for the Mobile Internet, an area that was largely unknown to the rest of the members. Somehow, this lack of knowledge seemed a problem, suddenly everybody hungered for a more detailed knowledge. This was highly unusual, a bit like committing a Garfinkel[22] in YalaYala, where members generally avoided insisting upon critical questions in the fragile in-between space of members. The second employee observed this very clearly after she had been there some months: 'I have come to realize that being a member of YalaYala means that one cannot argue with each other . . . or it's extremely rare anyway. It is as if everybody has to be nice to everybody . . . It simply isn't legitimate to say to another that what he is doing is not ok'. It was unusual and, as such, it altered the atmosphere in a way, which I could not help noticing while attending meetings. To diminish the knowledge gap, they all agreed that the first employee should give a small lecture educating the rest of the members, but it only resulted in still more questions. Thus, with the venture space 'taking on flesh', the chronotope of the threshold (Bakhtin, 1981) took on a new meaning in YalaYala's existence. It made their existence a bit more nervous, as the threshold thinking had acquired a concrete address that created an occasion for a moving dialogue.

However, most of the questioning that followed was mediated by what may be referred to as a 'technology of suspicion'. Thus, the CEO developed a small technological device that dictated every member to codify his or her use of time. Allegedly, it was to create a transparent space more in line with the original ideal of a network of free agents that were there as authentic persons with nothing to hide but a lot to share. As a device, though, it did

create a space of doubting, of making people answerable to what they did in their everyday life, which was largely invisible to other people. However, most importantly, it created a legitimate channel for everybody to ask questions of the first employee related to the 'profluence' (Randall, 1995)[23] of the venture with the wireless game. When would investors come in, what did the market want, was it progressing, were all questions that the first employee had great difficulty answering. Obviously, the narrative temporality of this venture was fuzzy since it only provided a sense of a beginning and little sense of an ending, but in this way it resembled YalaYala's own story. At least the other members could say that they did sell projects and, thus, contributed to the survival of YalaYala, which seemed to be the implied context of the meetings on 'time consumption'. In this movement, a division between consulting-oriented and venture-oriented members gradually emerged. And the venture space seemed inhabited by the first employee and one of the founders that were then identified as venture people. Ventures had moved from the status of everybody's space to their personalized space, and it was becoming a problematic space by the same stroke. In other words, the move from happily embracing the rhetoric of 'anything can happen with this' to 'tell me exactly what is happening and what will happen with this' seemed to be the emerging dialogue. This emergence of a problematic venture space only seemed reinforced by the fact that the venture partner almost never registered his use of time. What did he really do all day? Suspicion as well as suspension was mounting. It was in this movement that members began a more focused sensemaking as to their way of being together. In their own way, members started questioning whether there were some problems in the way they related to each other: 'Maybe we have given each other too much room, maybe we just feared conflicts too much . . .'. What was articulated then was the lack of friction in the becoming process of YalaYala, the lack of defining creative limits in the social space, a certain yearning for the kind of dialogue that would prove able to unsettle an in-between social space into which there was no 'live entering' (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 1), a communal narrative space that left little or no trace at all, except for the still more fragile, temporal pocket and limit of their genesis.

In parallel with the tendency to marginalize the venture space without directly articulating that this was the movement they were in, 'ordinary' consultancy also came under increased pressure, because everybody had to run a bit faster and sell more, now that the venture space had become, dare I say, something else than a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994). With this increased pressure towards selling, the mantra of following leads for what they might lead to lost some of its appeal. The chronotope of the threshold seemed to turn slowly into something else. 'Don't follow futile leads',

seemed to become a concern in their movement, a concern that was also accentuated in the emerging distinction between good and bad sellers, which took on a particular significance in relation to the second employee, the radical other. The time of selling that grew still stronger in YalaYala seemed to be a time of an isolated individual in an isolated present. All ambitions of doing a long-term project on a strategic level were cast aside in order to sell sufficiently to keep a decent salary for everybody. To be sure, landing a large project would obviously mean more time used, but it might also mean more money that would buy them time before they had to sell new projects again. In any event, the time of constantly selling proved itself to be a rather frantic time, because selling basically meant using time to try and land a project. If the project wasn't landed, time was obviously lost in the sense of not being equal to money. And if time didn't equal money, time would indeed prove itself to be the devil, but this didn't mean that 'speed was God'. Rather, speed was the remedy for the most banal of matters, namely that things take their time, a seemingly very trivial wisdom that YalaYala nonetheless never really made any space for. Life in YalaYala was instantaneous, and the second employee came to suffer from this, because her time was that of thorough preparation, of a certain slowness that might produce a postponed acceleration once a project was landed, and the time of slow preparation was utterly foreign to the members of YalaYala. They clearly had a more improvisational style.

It was interesting to see how the second employee had moved in and out of the rhetoric going on in YalaYala. In her first months in YalaYala, she had generally accepted the new economy hype as performed in YalaYala, the instantaneous way of the moment. Thus, she had thrown the style of her past experience aside quite abruptly, as if her biographical time was one of radical discontinuity (Bakhtin, 1981). Yet, the slow and thoroughgoing style gradually emerged again. The space for her as other proved very fragile, notably because it became increasingly clear that the language of speed, which YalaYala continually performed, had been reinforced by the fragile situation they found themselves in. Yet, and more significantly, she had largely remained another. A dialogic relationship requires that both parties in a dialogue change to become someone else (Clark and Holquist, 1984, notably pp. 64–69), but this didn't seem to be the case. Throwing everything away in her first period, however illusory this was in the long run, she almost instantaneously and inadvertently tried to copy the temporal existence that YalaYala performed, namely the idea of being able to cross a threshold that would make her past fade into oblivion, in a whirlwind motion, as Bakhtin (1984, p. 28) vividly depicts. She didn't plan to do this. It just happened. This situation very much reminded one of the two strategies that according to Lévi-Strauss (see Bauman, 2000, p. 101) were

ever deployed in human history to deal with the otherness of others: either otherness is dealt with by means of the 'emic' strategy of vomiting, that is, by spitting out the other in a way that secures the community from contamination. Or one deals with otherness by means of a 'phagic' strategy of ingestion, of making the other the same. For a while at least, it seemed that it was the second strategy that characterized the second employee's interaction with the community of YalaYala. Moreover, if she tried to become other, YalaYala seemed to be doing the opposite. When they talked about her (to be sure, in a very friendly manner, because there was this atmosphere of being friendly), she remained someone who was other, someone who went about things in a radically different way with her 'heavy knowledge' and thoroughgoing style. Obviously, it was slightly paradoxical, as she had been invited into their community as someone who could make a difference, someone who held the promise of eventness (Bakhtin, 1993), a promise of movement in self-understanding. However, if YalaYala were faced with their boundaries in themselves (to the extent that she already represented the stranger in themselves, the dialogic other, who had been there from their start) by inviting her into their community, I had difficulty seeing how they actually transcended them as they 'interacted with difference', as Bell (1998, p. 53) would express.

I should probably add that YalaYala had made it extremely difficult to actually transcend their own self-understanding, since they had virtually defined YalaYala in a way that came very close to pure movement. They were ready to become anyone as opposed to becoming someone. As such, it appeared a more or less permanent alibi for being (Bakhtin, 1993), a permanent pretending, and a form of self-narration that in all its preaching about being fast movers had remained rather frozen. Moreover, in the movement of focusing the attention of selling here and now, almost regardless of the kind of project they took in, even the ideal of movement and freedom seemed to have faded quite a bit. Preparedness to become anyone seemed replaced by preparedness *tout court*. And in the sense that this preparedness was defined, the most abrupt of temporal orientations, because there was no sense of teleology whatsoever in this time of tiny fragments, the second employee was defined as someone who couldn't sell in the same manner that other members could. In short, she wasn't able to perform the 'YalaYala way', and this was a 'fact' that was articulated by her and them both. However, on the whole, it was very difficult to see what characterized the YalaYala way. They talked about moving fast and being change agents, but as their one-and-a-half year birthday slowly approached,[24] it was really difficult for them themselves to get a sense of their own movement. And for the second employee, it might have been even more difficult. As she mentioned on one occasion:

I think everybody in YalaYala has welcomed me, and I couldn't help noticing the good atmosphere in YalaYala . . . everybody was very nice, and it was easy to feel welcome in a way. But it was extremely difficult for me to understand what was going on in this organization . . . there was so much talk, and questions always led to more talk . . . they were generally talking a lot in Yala Yala . . . as was I, because it kind of grows on you.

In fact, the degree to which the talk of moving fast was fuzzy became a bit clearer at a meeting I held with two founders (the CEO and another of the first five) and the second employee. In this meeting, I asked the CEO how far they had got with their ambition of only taking in long-term projects. It seemed a bit as if he hadn't thought about this before, but on his estimation, he guessed that YalaYala had gone from two-hour projects, perhaps half-a-day, to two-day projects. That was a big difference, as he emphasized, although he also admitted that perhaps it wasn't as big as they might have expected given the time that had gone by. But with the second employee looking at him, slightly surprised, he admitted that it had been more difficult than he had expected, than everybody in YalaYala had expected. In spite of all the important events in YalaYala that I have been referring to, the members of YalaYala still talked about coming home, when they talked about the time of moving into the network arena. They still talked about moving into a form of organizing that was essentially theirs. And, at first glance, I could easily appreciate what they meant by it.

THE ADVENTURE TIME OF COMING HOME

One partner who was co-responsible for the project of developing the whole concept of the United Spaces had an interesting remark referring to a conversation she had had with the architect of the new place they were to move into.[25] Talking about the kinds of decorations to put on the wall, the architect was very determined not to put anything on the wall, no pictures or the like. As she said, she didn't want anything to hold back time. In fact, the architect, YalaYala, and the people behind the concept in the first place, wanted to design an open, transparent space. All this was thought out in the name of social creativity and increased possibilities for networking amongst the free agents. Moreover, United Spaces was to be filled up with moveable tables so that the individual agents inhabiting the space could move around, talk with different people, be mobile *tout court*.

That seemed close to YalaYala's initial idea. Close enough, anyway, for them to be plotting (Ricoeur, 1984) their movement as one of coming home, although there was also an element of narrative seduction (Shotter, 1993b) in this narration. They were making their own existence timeless, as it were, narrating their community as if everything in between their beginning, where they talked about a network of individually mobile free agents inhabiting a transparent space, and the time of moving into the new space, was like an extra-temporal hiatus that had to be overcome in order for them to coincide with themselves, that is, become what they had been all along.[26] The great paradox of YalaYala's narration was that this sense of adventure time (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 87),[27] a temporal existence that totally killed the in-between of the narrated moment of the genesis and the moment of total and absolute coincidence, had in fact become their last refuge against prosaic existence. As already indicated, it was a sense of an ending that had very important sideshadows (Morson, 1994), not only in the light of all their small prosaic moves on the way, but also in the light of what happened during my last phase of investigation. They moved into the new premises in May 2001, and it was around this time that the pressures towards selling made YalaYala define two important consequences. For one, the temporal horizon of the venture on the wireless game that the first employee had been working upon for a long time was narrowly defined. If he couldn't raise any money for this venture by the summer of 2001, the venture would no longer be a part of YalaYala. As the employee had explicitly articulated that working with ventures was his 'drive' and passion, it was difficult seeing how he could remain in YalaYala if the project didn't get any money. In fact, he was already in the margins of their existence, and when the project failed to raise money, everybody thought it was the right thing for him to leave YalaYala. As to the second employee, the categorization of her as someone who wasn't a good seller got the upper hand well into the summer of 2001. In the name of survival, the other members of YalaYala told her that she couldn't remain there. In the story about improvising in order to survive, she had not only remained another, she had become, however sadly everybody thought it was, an antagonistic character. As a consequence, she had to, in the words of Levi-Strauss (Bauman, 2000, p. 101), be vomited, spat out of the community. She simply wasn't a fast seller, and that was apparently the only thing YalaYala had room for in their quest for survival.

Thus, the five founders remained, but the one founder who had oriented himself towards working with ventures, had told the others that he needed some time off, which he planned to take within a couple of months. When the others asked him how much time, he wasn't really sure. He wanted to travel a bit, escape the rather frantic time that faced YalaYala. Before departing though, he promised the rest of the members to 'sell like hell', but

he failed to perform in a time where YalaYala was struggling. Over the summer, he left nonetheless, which was a huge disappointment to the rest of the members, but they had some difficulties confronting him with their disappointment. In the course of this development, they did come to a decision to let go of the venture work altogether. In fact, the difficulty confronting the founder who wanted to travel a bit[28] also seemed a difficulty confronting the story they were still inclined to tell about YalaYala. It was still the story of realizing and coming home to the space of free agency they had envisioned all along. To be sure, I have to admit that stepping into United Spaces seemed an immense challenge, as United Spaces as a project was filled up with the hype about free agents in a fashion that resembled the way they had started their own little community. Perhaps it was a bit like becoming timeless. Yet, I also sensed that the sideshadows could become something more than mere shadows of their existence. Hence, there was some talk about the challenges of the future: 'I really think we have changed in our process. We are no longer the same, and perhaps we have to modify some of our ideas . . . I'm not quite sure how we should go about this, what we should change and in what way . . . we'll see'. There had been a series of events that had done something to the members of YalaYala, something that, in a certain sense, was irreversible and so part of their movement.

They had been very disappointed with the disappearance of the sixth partner that came in and quite rapidly disappeared again, highlighting the paradox between individual mobility in a shopping mall community and an ideal of public exteriority demanding the ultimate and transparent presence of every member: They had experienced a situation where the highly praised individual had virtually vanished in the pressure towards thinking 'YalaYala', never the single individual. They struggled with the question of aboutness, the common action of YalaYala. They struggled with the lack of transparency. They had been moving away from ventures, which in the official, monologic rhetoric was that which they moved towards. As a consequence, the past moment of meeting their radical otherness more than ever threatened to reveal that what their radical otherness did (small consultancy jobs of a very short duration), was very close to what they did themselves. Maybe, then, the past threshold moment wasn't what it had seemed to be. They had come to a situation where survival seemed all that really counted. In this movement, the chronotope of the threshold virtually faded. The way of the moment was no longer that of a praised potentiality, it was a moment of relentless pressure towards selling, life becoming 'one damn thing after another'. In this movement, they ultimately came to define themselves as exclusively oriented towards consulting. Even the ambition of doing long-term consulting on a strategic level had disappeared. Selling to survive also meant that the stranger in them, the dialogic

other of 'heavy, theoretical knowledge', had to be vomited, because she embodied the voice of that dialogic other. They became disappointed once again with the departure of one of the five original founders, although he simply seemed to act upon the ideal of individual, unrestrained mobility of free agents. Thus they seemed; as it were, to expect more of the in-between of members, but they had difficulties articulating what this 'more' was. In the light of the development, there were good reasons to say that the story of coming home was indeed a way of sliding into the adventure time that seemed a perfect alibi for not going into a dialogue with what they had become, the new boundaries of existence that had emerged with the traces they had left. Adventure time seemed to be a way of killing the time in the middle, a way of securing that the plane of the moment where they came up with the vision of a network of free agents could coincide with itself, become what it had always been. However, important changes had clearly emerged with the eventness of the events depicted above, and it was in the light of these events that the story of coming home resided in a very tension-filled environment. It was also at this time that I stopped my investigation of the becoming process of YalaYala. Thus, it was in this tension-filled environment that they were challenged to grasp together a new story about YalaYala, challenged to undertake the responsibility of moving away from pretending and into a dialogic narration that had room for becoming. Time would probably show if they had succeeded in doing this because time was, after all, still open.

3. Driven entrepreneurs: a case study of taxi owners in Caracas

Monica Lindh de Montoya

Anthropologists have written relatively little on the subject of entrepreneurship, although students of the subject would agree that at heart it concerns human cooperation, and is thus deeply embedded in cultural practices. Most anthropologists who have given attention to the subject have discussed the entrepreneur as an innovator who takes advantage of the differences in cultural values (Barth, 1967) or knowledge and networks (Barth, 1963) to set up profitable market niches or for political ends. Others, such as Greenfield, Strickon and Aubrey (1979), Long (1979), Long and Roberts (1984) and Greenfield and Strickon (1986) have examined particular enterprises, often focusing on the use of household labour or the intergenerational changes in business configurations within a more general discussion of the role of entrepreneurship in economic development and social change.[29]

Additionally, one might consider anthropological work on markets and marketing as of some interest to entrepreneurship, including that of Plattner on peddlers in Mexico (1975, 1985), Babb on women in markets (1989) and Geertz (1979) on the economic mechanisms, such as bargaining, at work in a Moroccan marketplace, or *suq*. Yet despite these interesting contributions, anthropological writing on entrepreneurship as such is scarce, although people engaged in all kinds of business activities and negotiations fill our ethnographies. There are, for example, the sharecropping peasant who rents land and mobilizes a team of neighbors and kin to contribute the elements needed to raise a crop and bring it to harvest (Cancian, 1972) and the artisan who develops particular handicraft skills or new techniques to remain competitive even in the face of industrial production (Gudeman, 1992). There are transporters (Wilson, 1984; Alvarez and Collier, 1994; Lindh de Montoya, 1996) who develop enterprises in rural-urban trade, or trade between different markets. Nonetheless, such studies rarely address entrepreneurship per se; they do not focus specifically on the challenges inherent in constructing and running a business operation, or on how entrepreneurial strategies and options are embedded within the cultural context and provisioning systems of a particular society.

The majority of the anthropologists cited above have worked with ethnographic material from Latin America.[30] In this region as in others, studies in entrepreneurship focused on the themes of social change and economic development (Stewart, 1991), with the entrepreneur seen as an agent of social change, and entrepreneurship, a potential recipe for economic development. While anthropologists are generally interested in how entrepreneurs move between, and make use of their access to different social worlds, and how they put resources together into viable business ventures, studies in disciplines that dealt more specifically with entrepreneurship tend to be descriptive and prescriptive. Written with the aim of fomenting and improving business activity in developing economies, they often concentrate on uncovering the source of entrepreneurial characteristics and abilities, seeking to define the essence of the entrepreneur and the economic and social circumstances encouraging innovation and risk-taking.

Studies of entrepreneurship as such tend to center on more formal, large-scale endeavors, rather than the small business activities that individuals may set up in the course of their lives as they devise survival strategies, decide to invest a windfall, or try to diversify their income possibilities. Yet such small business endeavors proliferate in Latin America as in most of the developing world, often occupy a substantial portion of the owner's time and energy, and sometimes they do grow into larger, sustainable companies. In developing countries, a substantial part of the economy is made up of such small businesses, formal or informal; and as Hernando de Soto (1989, 2000) has noted, they face immense challenges in both formalizing their activities and gaining access to capital. A closer examination of them can reveal how they accumulate and focus resources, and the constraints under which they operate.

This article discusses entrepreneurial activities within the taxi sector in Venezuela, and focuses particularly on small-scale entrepreneurs in Caracas, the capital city. It examines the strategies of six individuals who own taxis, and rent them out to taxi drivers, called *taxistas*, for a daily fee. I will also relate some of the business strategies used by these drivers, who set off each day to traverse the streets of the city in search of the clients and income necessary to provide for themselves and to pay the rental fee.

In popular literature, as in numerous academic studies, entrepreneurs are portrayed as heroic figures, occupied in realizing a personal vision. They are celebrated as builders, as innovators who produce new, value-creating combinations out of previously existing elements of the society. There is little recognition in the literature of the social base – created over many years by the community – on which their endeavours rest (Gudeman, 2001). The maximization of trust and the minimization of risk through a stable political and economic system, including the rule of law, well-functioning

public and private institutions, efficient financial entities and their regulation, as well as social policies which make the entire population stakeholders in the future of the nation are hard-won communal gains which provide a base for entrepreneurial enterprise. Where they are lacking or inadequate, the basis for entrepreneurial action is very tenuous indeed.

Yet even the most benign of business environments is constantly in flux, and entrepreneurs must be able to recognize and accommodate continuous change. In the best of cases, they can be primary figures, central characters who have the power to mold the environment to their needs and ends, or can find opportunities to turn the unexpected to their favor. But they are far more likely (even in developed economies) to be obliged to process the events that flow around them, adapting their businesses and strategies to perpetual transformations in the economic and political scenarios in which they operate. And just as much, strategies are embedded in the entrepreneurs' own personal beliefs and life philosophy, social milieu and position within it, their experiences, and the narratives they create in making sense of them. In the following, I will show how six taxi owners with very similar backgrounds and general point of departure develop quite different strategies to cope with the problems inherent in managing a small-scale taxi business.

BACKGROUND

One of the world's major petroleum-producing countries, Venezuela has experienced substantial economic difficulties during the last two decades. The country's political life and economic well-being fluctuates with the rise and fall of oil prices, oil income providing for at least half the national budget. Long neglected in governmental initiatives, many Caracas taxicab drivers had been unable to acquire new vehicles or even to adequately maintain their cabs due to the steady devaluation of the Venezuelan currency and the consequently escalating prices of vehicles and spare parts – a situation which eventually resulted in decrepit and unsafe cabs serving the city of four million inhabitants. But this branch of the transport industry has recently undergone a semi-spontaneous process of reorganization, in which new vehicles and different actors entered the marketplace, leading to a dramatic increment in the number of taxis in circulation.

Toward the end of the 1990s, the Venezuelan government instituted a program whereby it was intended that taxi drivers would be able to acquire new vehicles, and potential *taxistas* would be able to buy a car and enter the market. In 1998 the mayor's office in the *Libertador* municipality in central Caracas enabled people to obtain financing for taxicabs through the *Instituto Municipal de Crédito Popular* (Municipal Peoples' Credit Institute),

and the popular program soon spread to other parts of the country, with other financial institutions also offering easier financing for taxicabs. The vehicles were exonerated from the 15 per cent value-added tax, and the dealerships offered a 5 to 6 per cent discount, lowering the price of cabs about 20 per cent (Bastardo, 2001). The first of these taxis on the market were Fiats and Hyundais, but eventually all the assembly plants and distributors in the country entered into the program, with Daewoo, Kia and Nissan being the most popular brands. The basic, low-cost, four-door white sedans with the characteristic yellow-and-black checkered taxi stripe along the side quickly became an integral part of Caracas street life, and new taxi dispatchers such as Taxco (started 1998) and Servitaxi came into being. To make sure that the comfortable, modern, new taxis were bought by owner-drivers, the paperwork necessary to complete a sale required the purchaser to submit a copy of their fifth class taxi drivers' license.

Yet for a number of reasons few taxis are sold to veteran taxi drivers. For some, the initial 30 per cent down payment required is an insurmountable hurdle. The steep interest rates on loans are also a large contributing factor to the situation: they oscillated between 32 and 40 per cent during the period of this study, to reach 60 per cent in March of 2002. Also, few taxi drivers, and fewer of those eager to initiate themselves in the branch, have bank accounts – much less with the cash flow history that would allow them to qualify for an auto loan.

Those who do have savings, bank histories, and credit cards are the middle class, and they have not hesitated to avail themselves of the new possibilities opened up by the taxi financing plan. During the 1990s, and particularly in the last years, the Venezuelan middle class was hard hit by rising unemployment as multinational industries left the country due to increasing economic and political insecurity. Many local industries were also forced to downsize or to close because of the difficulty of competing with imports made cheap by an overvalued currency. With the political transformations brought about by President Hugo Chávez' ascent to power in 1999, as well as his leftist rhetoric and unconvincing economic plan, the job market continued to contract. Thus a growing pool of people looked for new means of employment and sources of income, and some saw the taxi sector as an area in which they could apply their managerial and administrative skills in a dynamic business venture of their own.

Few members of the middle class who purchase taxis actually enter the market as drivers, or *taxistas*, however. While they can, for a modest price, easily obtain the fifth class drivers' license required to purchase the vehicle, they do not have the information or practical knowledge necessary to make a living within the very competitive taxi sector – nor do they aspire to do so. Rather, the practice is to rent out the taxicab for a daily fee to someone

who will drive and maintain it.[31] The rule of thumb in 2001 was that one taxi, well administrated, would leave its owner with an income of $1,000 per month, a rate of return that made it possible to pay off loans even at inflated interest rates, and to add to one's pool of vehicles fairly rapidly – depending on the number of taxis owned, and the owner's other sources of income and expenses.

If many individuals who own taxis hope to expand the activity into a fleet of cars or a taxi line, drivers, on the other hand, are motivated to rent the new cars with their own entrepreneurial plans in mind. After making the money to pay the rental fee, the remaining income produced is the drivers', and those who know the marketplace and are acquainted with the tumultuous life of the city can make sizable earnings. *Taxistas* are eager to acquire permanent clients who can guarantee them a basic income, and distribute business cards with their cell phone number, and make the social overtures that may lead to gaining repeat clients. Most are hoping to eventually negotiate an *opción a compra* (option to buy contract) with their cab owner, which will allow them to pay off the purchase of the cab gradually, while working it. In this way they, in turn, may become independent owner-operators.

Obviously considerable risk is inherent in this kind of venture, most of which derives from the weak institutional structure of the country, the social chasm between the middle-class owners and their lower-class drivers, and their consequently diverging economic goals. Generally speaking, the owners are relatively well-educated and live in the urbanized, more affluent eastern neighborhoods of Caracas, while the drivers have had few opportunities in life and live in the vast, labyrinth-like, western *barrios* (marginal neighborhoods) of the city, or in peripheral 'dormitory' towns. The demands of making a living with a taxi – a typical day starts between four and five in the morning – makes it necessary for the driver to have continuous access to the car, parking it in a safe place near his residence. So, when the owners watch their shiny new entrepreneurial investment speed off with a driver at the wheel, they have limited control over when they will see it again and, despite assurances to the contrary, over the point in time when they will be paid for its use. For the drivers, there is the risk being unable to find enough customers to both pay the fee and make some profit, of accidents, and the constant fear of violence: of being robbed or killed on an unfortunate venture into a *barrio*.

Elements that should be mentioned because of their importance in making this collaboration between strangers possible are inexpensive gasoline, cell phones, and vehicle security systems. Many of those who rent taxis are *ruleteros* (drivers who do not belong to a taxi line, but circulate throughout the city in search of customers), which would be economically impossible without low gasoline prices. In March 2002, gas prices stood at

less than $0.10 a liter, a cost that was easily borne by the drivers. Most *taxistas* own a cell phone, which is the vital link between cab owner and driver; a way for the driver to get in touch with the owner if problems arise, and for the owner to check up on him and exhort him to deposit his payments. Vehicle security systems come into play when trust, faith and hope break down. Many cars are equipped with so-called satellite systems by means of which the owner can immobilize the car, but he is then faced with the task of locating it. The more complete global positioning system (GPS) that also locates the vehicle was not yet available as of 2002, and was also considered by most owners to be far too expensive to warrant installation.

The structures of ownership and work that have emerged, then, require the collaboration of members of the middle class, who have invested in taxicabs, with the lower class, who drive them. Unused to dealing with each other, and equally inexperienced in coping with the continuously changing business climate, these groups have goals and devise strategies that are frequently at odds with each other. Their social worlds and life courses can be fathoms apart, yet as collaborators in a business venture their ambitions and futures become intertwined. They develop narratives about the marketplace and about each other as a way of explaining, of understanding things that happen, and of justifying their business strategies and decisions. The people that appear in these pages were constantly occupied with, and talking about their businesses; waiting for drivers who had promised to come by with a payment, looking for new drivers, comparing notes and exchanging information with other owners, buying spare parts, and spending time with mechanics and insurance company representatives. A considerable portion of the time and talk was imbued with frustration and confusion, and stories were continuously exchanged with other taxi owners, recounting experiences lived and conclusions drawn. It was through such shared accounts that they constructed themselves as businessmen, the 'market' as their arena of operations, and the 'other' with whom they were working. An examination of such narratives reveals values and beliefs regarding work, contractual relationships, entrepreneurship and the nature of doing business, as well as the cultural embeddedness of managerial techniques. It also reveals the narrators as less than heroic, as secondary figures attempting to swim in rather turbulent economic waters.

OWNER'S STRATEGIES: DISTANCE, CONTROL AND MOTIVATION

The focus of this article is the activities of an extended family in Caracas, all of whom currently own taxis that they hire out. They are three sisters in

their fifties, Lourdes, Magally and Ana, and a brother of theirs who lives in the USA, Armando. A younger cousin of theirs, Henry, also owns taxis; as does Raimundo, who is Ana's brother-in-law. All are college-educated, and have previously worked either in professional careers and/or in other independent business ventures. However, they have different strategies and perspectives in regard to their taxi ventures, and do not cooperate economically, although the sisters do help each other out in solving practical problems. I collected the data for this article primarily by talking to Ana and her husband Jorge, who were neighbors of mine when I lived in Caracas for a few months in the spring of 2001 and 2002. I also met, and informally interviewed, the other members of the family; and I frequently rode with a number of their drivers on my errands around Caracas, taking these opportunities to speak with them. The fieldwork was conducted during a total of six months, and was originally undertaken with the aim of investigating the feasibility of doing a longer study.

I will begin with Henry, the cousin, who is in his late forties. He is an engineer and is presently employed on a construction project in the city, but he has previously been unemployed or semi-employed for extended periods of time. He bought his two taxis via bank loans, paying 40 per cent of the price as a down payment and paying off the loans with the rental income. He became interested in owning taxis because his cousin, Lourdes, had one, and she was, at the time of writing, living entirely off the income of four taxis. Henry first bought one car, and seeing that it did produce income, decided to buy another. His wife, a part-time sales clerk, helps him monitor the taxi payments. She has set up a savings account for each car into which the driver is supposed to make deposits every three or four days. Henry is hesitant to acquire a third vehicle, however, saying that the taxi market won't last long:

> This is a very risky business. Every day there are more of these new taxis in the streets. Before long, the market will be saturated. Already the drivers are complaining about not getting enough fares, and there's a lot of violence – last week, three drivers were killed in robberies. And what if the government raises the price of gasoline? I figure this business will last a year or two at the most, and then taxis won't be profitable any more.

Felipe, a thin and serious man in his early twenties, drives one of Henry's two taxis. He belongs to the Evangelical Church,[32] which occupies a good part of his spare time, and lives at home with his mother. A few months earlier he drove for Lourdes, who fired him when he had an accident. Henry decided to take him on when he had fired one of his own drivers for nonpayment, and the taxi had been out of circulation for a time because he could not find anyone else. Felipe is hoping to be able to earn money to continue

his religious studies, and he also anticipates a chance to buy the car he now drives through the *opción a compra* system.

Henry keeps long hours at work and sometimes calls Felipe and asks him to give him a ride home, particularly when the driver has not paid him for a while. This is one pretext he uses to be able to talk to him about catching up on his payments, and also to check on the condition of the cab:

> 'I'll say one thing for that guy,' he commented one evening after having ridden home with Felipe. 'He's always behind on his payments, but he keeps the car in great shape. When I get mad and want to fire him, I try to remember that; it's not every chauffeur that takes such good care of the car. But he certainly does prattle on – as soon as I got in the car tonight, he started telling me one of his endless stories, about how an alcoholic uncle of his who is living in his mother's house had stolen some of his things, and that he had decided to move out, but didn't have anywhere to go. 'Don't tell me about your life,' I said, 'I'm not interested in your problems.' I call my drivers every day or so and ask if they have deposited the fee, and that's that. They have a different world, *es un mundo aparte* . . . there is no way you can know why they do what they do, nor should you worry about it. If you let them get you involved in their lives, there's no end to it. You won't even be able to demand they pay what they owe you. No, the worst thing you can do is listen to them go on about their troubles.

Henry, who has considerable experience dealing with workers in city construction projects, tries to keep his relationship with Felipe distant and strictly professional, and to limit their communication to what is relevant for their working agreement. He tries to keep the upper hand in the relationship by cutting off social and personal talk, and therewith the driver's possibilities of establishing a degree of intimacy and arousing sympathy, or creating the social obligation of sympathy, the upshot of which might well entail flexibility in making payments, and eventually perhaps the upper hand in the owner-driver relationship.

Henry's cousin Lourdes, whose enterprise originally gave him the idea of buying a taxi, is about 50 and is a sociologist. She is divorced with two grown sons, and worked in the banking sector for several years but quit to start a company, a small factory producing clothing that she sold in popular markets. When this business finally became completely unprofitable in 1998 she closed it down, and with the profits of the sale of two market stalls she bought two taxis. She also had her own car repainted and rented it out as a taxi.

Lourdes has also been disturbed by the personal side of her relationships with her drivers, and has taken measures to maintain distance and avoid becoming drawn into their lives. She has hired Freddy, who has been working in different capacities in the transport sector for many years and is also one of her drivers, as a go-between. He collects cash payments and

deposits them in the appropriate bank accounts, or collects the vouchers if the driver has already made the deposit. He makes sure the taxis are being kept in good condition, sees that the drivers carry the necessary documentation, and verifies that the vehicles are brought to the garage for service as their guarantee policies stipulate. Lourdes pays him two days' rent per car per month for these services. If one of the drivers fails to make payments, Freddy is also in charge of retrieving the vehicle, and finding a new driver for it.

> 'Sra. Lourdes doesn't like to have any contact with her drivers,' Freddy explained to me. 'She thinks the drivers try to take advantage of her because she is a woman living alone, and doesn't have a husband to back her up. She thinks that it's easier for me to get the drivers to pay on time, you know, easier for me to be tough on them, and that they will pay attention to me when I tell them to take the car in for service.

When Lourdes' widowed father passed away and the family home was sold, she received part of an inheritance and bought a fourth taxi, and her older sister, Magally, also entered the branch, buying two taxis of her own with her part of the inheritance, and a third in association with a brother, Armando. She and Armando have an oral agreement that he will receive Magally's share of the income from this taxi until she has paid off her share of it, and then it will be hers. They expect that it will take her 18 months to pay her share. Although Magally is also divorced and lives with her teen-aged daughter, her manner of dealing with drivers is very different from Lourdes'. While Lourdes wants as little contact as possible, Magally demands that her drivers pass by her apartment and pay her the rental fee in cash every day, or every other day. She does not hesitate to call them when she needs to run an errand, and often accompanies them when repairs or adjustments need to be made to the cars. She has no compunctions about hearing about drivers' lives; on the contrary, she wants to know all about them, and she sometimes becomes acquainted with their wives and families. As she is a talkative, emotional person, the drivers also find out quite a lot about Magally's life and problems.

> 'You can't trust any of them,' Magally told me one afternoon as we were having a snack in a shopping mall. 'Every one of them is two-faced. They seem so wonderful when you meet them, telling you what experienced drivers they are, assuring you they'll pay every day – they're the wonder of the universe. But when they have your car, you find out who they really are. They don't come by and pay, they don't answer their cell phone when they see your number and know who's calling. I don't know how many times I've had to go and call my drivers from a pay phone, in order to trick them into answering. I've had some who have picked up the car and not come by for over a week, and me worrying to death that something has

happened to them . . . and then when I repossess the car it's got a dent, and inside it's filthy and smells to high heaven – and that's a week's rent lost, and a dent to fix. Or worse, they have an accident and that's the last you see of them, and you're not only out a week's rent but also stuck with a huge bill to fix the car before you can rent it to someone else. It's just incredible, how irresponsible these people are.

Most of Magally's interest in the lives of her drivers speaks to her wish for control over them. Like many owners, she has had some bad experiences with drivers. She distrusts them, and seems to believe that the more she knows about them, the more power she has to keep them from cheating her. She generally demands a ten-day rental deposit (300 000 Bs.) before hiring a new driver, something few potential drivers have, or agree to give. Magally gets around this problem by demanding that her drivers deposit 5 000 Bs. extra per day for 60 days, until a total of 300 000 Bs. has been accumulated, a procedure resented by her drivers. Few of Magally's *taxistas* last for 60 days, and she usually keeps the deposit to make up for the days they owe her when they turn in the car.

Her distrust leads Magally to keep drivers on a short rein, demanding frequent payments, insisting that drivers call and ask permission before taking the car out of the Caracas area, and quickly threatening to dismiss any driver who falls a few days behind in his fees. She frequently calls the satellite service to have her cars immobilized so that she can repossess them from insolvent drivers, something seldom done by the others in the family, who prefer patience and negotiation when possible. She has had a large number of different drivers during the time she has had her taxis. Her unwillingness to grant them leeway is, to an extent, a reflection of her own economic vulnerability, as her only other income is a small government pension that is insufficient to support the quality of life to which she aspires. Usually behind on economic obligations herself, her anxiety about her economic situation finds its outlet in her relationship with the *taxistas*, who in turn find her demands a nuisance in the development of their own economic strategies. Because of her demanding personality and frequent change of drivers, she is unable to depend solely on referrals through other trusted drivers or taxi owners, and has resorted to putting in advertisements for drivers in the local papers. Advertising in this way produces a wide group of potential candidates, but seldom one with a 10-day deposit – nor any that have reliable recommendations. Despite her desire for control over her investment, Magally seems to take a greater risk in changing drivers frequently, than Lourdes or Henry, who give their drivers a bit more individual responsibility and liberty in payment schedules.

The sisters, Magally and Lourdes, and their cousin, Henry, all work their businesses by renting taxis, and do not offer cars in the *opción de compra* system, in which the driver signs an agreement with the owner confirming

that he will buy the car by paying an agreed-upon fee for between 24 and 40 months. Henry and Lourdes feel that there is no need to sell the vehicle to the drivers; on the contrary, the best way to maximize profits is to rent the cabs and make repairs to them as they become necessary. Magally adds that there will always be a need for taxis, even if the market becomes more competitive in coming days. Why sell a car that can be rented?

Another sister, Ana, takes a completely different view of the business. She previously ran her own company in the retail clothing business, an enterprise that has taken a number of forms. She began by selling fashionable clothes that she bought on trips abroad to family and friends, then opened a boutique specialized in children's clothing in a mall near her home. When she lost the contract on the shop, she eventually began to buy clothes wholesale in the USA, selling them to major department stores and clothing chains. She abandoned each of these enterprises as they became unprofitable with changes in the business climate (primarily the currency exchange rate), and eventually she decided to invest in a taxi. Today she owns four:

> 'Lourdes beat me in buying a taxi,' Ana says. 'She was the first in the family. But ever since I can remember, I've wanted to own a taxi, though I don't know why. I was so involved with other things that I never got around to it. But now, taxis are one of the few ways left to make a profit'.

After a few months of administrating her taxis and continuously facing the problem of drivers who failed to make payments, Ana decided to work exclusively with drivers who take her vehicles on an *opción de compra*. She tries out a new candidate for about three months, telling him that they have to get to know each other before entering into a long-term contract, and if he keeps his payments up-to-date and takes good care of the car she agrees to sell it to him over a period of two years. During this time the driver continues to pay the daily rental rate, but also makes extra payments in lump sums once every four or six months. The actual price of the car is worked out in agreement with the buyer, and the deal is formalized in a written and registered contract:

> 'The *opción a compra* is really the best way to manage the taxis,' Ana told me in the spring of 2001. 'One can't work the way Magally does, and even Lourdes, changing drivers every couple of months or sometimes even every couple of weeks. When you take back the car you lose what they owe you, and the car suffers, too, with a lot of different drivers. I'm in the process of negotiating to sell two of my taxis, and now I don't have to call and ask if the drivers have paid or not – they come to see me and pay me in cash every Sunday. They want me to come down and check the condition of the car and everything; they're really thankful for the opportunity to be able to buy their own vehicle and want to sign

the contract as soon as possible. But I tell them they have to be completely up-to-date in their payments if we are going to sign. It's the only chance they have, they don't have bank accounts or credit cards. Once I asked Carlos (a driver) if he had a bank card and he said, 'Are you kidding, *señora*, not even to the blood bank!' I really prefer to work this way, I don't like the idea of running a business where I'm the only one getting ahead; this way the drivers are getting something, too'.

I asked Ana how she figured out the price to charge for the cars:

> Well, you have to think about a lot of things. First, there is the price of the car; about ten million.[33] I paid for this car in cash, with the inheritance from the house, but if I had borrowed in the bank at 40 per cent interest it would have cost me 14 million, and more than that if I were to pay it over two years, say 16 million. It would have been even more expensive if I had used my credit card. And then I have to consider that if I kept the money in the bank, I would be earning at least 25 per cent interest on it, or if I had been working with it in my old business, I would have been earning about 30 per cent a year on it. I also have to be able to buy a new car with the income from this one, because at the end of two years, the car will be his . . . and then, it's a risky business, working with taxis, so you have to remember that, too, when you decide to sell.

Ana came to the conclusion that a fair price for the car, considering the situation in the marketplace, the gradual devaluation of the currency which made new cars more expensive, and the risks she was taking by having 10 million in the street – *en la calle* – would be between 28 and 30 million *bolívares*.[34] It is interesting to note that she compares the new activity's earnings with her previous ones (selling clothes retail or wholesale) and with what she would be earning in a bank, and that she includes the probable cost of inflation. The final sum emerges from a cocktail of activities, experiences, economic probabilities and the way she perceives the market at the moment. Another part of her information, which she did not mention, but which undoubtedly enters into her calculations, is her idea of what the market can bear. *Taxistas* currently pay 195 000 Bs. a week to rent a car from her, which over two years (with no days off) amounts to 20 280 000 Bs. In order to buy the car, they should logically be willing to pay more, but this increase in price has to be tempered with the increase of taxis in the market, which decreases clients and lowers fares, and the currently poor economic outlook for the country as a whole.

Also, once the *opción a compra* agreement goes into effect, the buyer takes on the economic responsibility for the necessary overhauls and repairs to the car. This was a fact that Jorge, Ana's husband, an accountant, put emphasis on. As time passed, the cars would require more and more service and repairs – new tires, brakes, and bodywork – and, by using the *opción a compra* system, Ana was freeing herself from these costs, as well as giving the driver a big incentive to comply in paying his fees and taking

care of the car, which would become his. If he failed to make his payments, the car would revert back to Ana.

Armando, a brother of Lourdes, Magally, and Ana who lives and works in the US, took the *opción a compra* system one step further when, observing his sisters' activities, he also decided to invest part of his share of the family inheritance in a taxi of his own, along with the car he bought in association with Magally. A few months later he also refinanced his home in the USA and used the money to buy three more taxis. Armando continued to live in Florida, where he owns a landscaping business, but his sister Ana and Jorge administrate his taxis for a monthly fee, checking on the condition of the cars and making sure the drivers make their payments. Armando uses the *opción a compra* system; but with the added incentive that the driver may, six months before he finishes making the payments for the car, rent it out to a second driver of his choice, and obtain a brand-new taxi from Armando to start paying off again. In this way, Armando gives his drivers a chance to become capital-owning entrepreneurs, too; and he can do this because of his relatively stronger economic situation in the U.S.A., and his access to credit.

Recently Armando and Ana have discussed starting a taxi association with their cars, or entering the cars into an existing association, giving the drivers the benefit of receiving calls via a radio system, which would likely increase their clientele and also increase safety. They are concerned that the country's declining economy and increasing number of taxis will lead to a market glut and price competition that will make it difficult for drivers to pay their rental fees, while the continuing devaluation of the currency increases the costs of both new vehicles and repairs. They predict that a number of owners will have to get out of the market with time, and believe that being part of an association will allow them to better compete in the market.

Another member of this family group, Jorge's brother Raimundo, is involved in the taxi business in yet another way. A retired university teacher, he obtained a low-interest state loan to construct an upper floor on his home with the aim of renting it for extra income. When an architect advised him against construction because the base of the building did not appear strong enough to support another floor, he invested the loan in several taxis. The agency from which he bought them helped him locate a driver interested in *opción a compra*, and to draw up a contract. Raimundo's contracts span three years, during which the driver pays a lower fee, 22 000 Bs. per day, for a total of just over 24 000 000 Bs. This driver quickly recruited three other *taxistas* interested in vehicles, and now Raimundo has income from four cars. He has minimal contact with the drivers, all of whom work in established taxi lines and pay him twice a month. His role in the market

appears to be much like that of a bank, but it is questionable how much profit he will make considering the low fee, the length of the contract, and the recent rapid devaluation of the Venezuelan currency.

PATRONAGE AND CREATING SPACE: STRATEGIES OF DRIVERS

If cab owners seek to establish neutral, businesslike relationships with drivers (Henry, Lourdes, Raimundo), or to win their goodwill and loyalty through social exchange (Magally) or special incentives backed by legal documents (Ana, Armando, Raimundo), the goal of the taxi driver is somewhat different. First, of course, it should be noted that drivers are a heterogeneous group, and therefore goals, needs, and strategies differ. They may be unmarried like Felipe, or married with four small children, like Carlos, Ana's driver. Some of them are veteran drivers who have been traversing the streets of the city for many years; perhaps driving one of the ubiquitous minibuses that traffic specific routes. Others are new to the business, having taken it up for lack of other employment. They may come from the poor *barrios* of Caracas, from the middle class, and, often, from another nearby city where work is even more scarce. Thus their knowledge of the profession – of the city, where to find clients, where traffic jams are likely to develop and how to circumvent them, how much to charge – also varies, as do their preferences for working during the day, with its many traffic snarls, or the night, with its increased danger. A new driver is likely to have difficulties and fall behind in payments, but he also has few contacts within the sector and is thus less likely to quickly gain access to another car to drive if he leaves his current boss; something which can make him try harder to comply, working longer hours, or demanding less income for himself.

The amount of money that drivers make from day to day is an incognito to the owners, whose share of the deal is the fixed rental fee. Cab fares in Caracas are negotiated between driver and client prior to the ride. There are no taximeters or posted rates. The drivers are not employees but free agents, and are thus entitled to charge what they like and to work the car as much as they want to and are able, but they are not allowed to use a second driver without the knowledge of the owner. Owners are not likely to accept a second driver without raising the fee because of the wear and tear on the car, which is then in constant circulation.

Yet a second driver is a strategy some *taxistas* use to earn more money, or to be able to comply with payments while they are occupied with other jobs. Guillermo, a man in his thirties who drives for Armando, starts every day at four in the morning, when he picks up four men at different addresses

and drives them to the radio station where they work. Thereafter, he has two more steady clients, one at 6:30, and another at 8:00. He then turns the car over to the second driver, who pays the rental fee and uses the car during the rest of the day. Guillermo receives it again in the evening, and if he feels up to it (he sometimes works days with his construction company, and is also part-owner of a microbusiness that prints slogans on tee shirts) he works again in the evening; but usually he works the car weekday mornings and on weekends. In order to avoid discovery, Guillermo never answers his cell phone if Ana (who administrates the car) is calling and the second driver has the cab, since she might ask to see him immediately. He, as many other drivers, also avoids answering calls from the owner when they are behind in payments, hoping that they will be given more time to pay up, or hoping to use the car as much as possible before being stopped. This is a maddening situation for cab owners, who are not infrequently counting on the rental payments to cover day-to-day expenses of their own. When a driver 'disappears' for a time, they are also concerned that something might have happened to him, or that he has made off with the vehicle, and they will have difficulties recuperating it.

While drivers want freedom from the surveillance of the owner in order to be able to pursue their own goals, they simultaneously seek a more friendly relationship with the owner. This is on the one hand quite natural in the context of Venezuelan society, which is characterized by somewhat higher social mobility than other Latin American countries, and different social groups mix readily in the routines of daily life. However, drivers tend to couch such friendships in the terms of a patron-client relationship. While owners view drivers as free agents renting their cabs in order to carry out their own business enterprises, drivers in practice often act as employees of the owners, negotiating half-days without payment when they turn the car in for service, extra holidays free, or Sundays off – although they may well work on such days. Nor is it unusual for drivers to ask for free days or leniency in late payment because they need to resolve complicated personal problems: deaths in the family, unfaithful wives, and seriously ill children often figure in such accounts. A friendly, but subservient relationship with the owner makes such requests easier to make and more likely to be granted, and the subscript operating in these conversations is that of the insecure and vulnerable situation of the driver/client, and the relative power of the owner/patron. Occasionally a driver will have an accident that is not covered by the insurance policy,[35] or he will be robbed of part of his days' earnings, and a good relationship with the *patrón* also makes it possible for him to broach the topic of exoneration for such losses. Thus there are many ways for a driver to profit from projecting himself as beset with problems, while taking care to not appear entirely problematic as a partner in the taxi business.

The majority of drivers do come from vulnerable social and economic circumstances; indeed, one might say that everyone involved in the sector (including owners) perceives themselves as having economic problems. Manipulation of this social status within the business relationship is a conscious strategy among some, while others never say anything about their private lives while they fall behind in payments because of multiple family necessities. When unable to comply with payments, a driver may ask for a special arrangement, such as paying a little more per day to catch up with his 'debt' with time, or for the owner to wait a week or two while he works extra long hours to make the outstanding sum. Or the driver may play the situation in another way, turning off his cell phone and disappearing, working for as long as he can before the owner or the police track him down, or the car is immobilized via a satellite tracker.

ENTREPRENEURS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FLOWS

What can be said about the complexity and profitability of these business arrangements? Both owners and drivers seek to profit from their efforts, but are frustrated – owners by what they consider the irresponsibility of the drivers, and drivers by the huge physical demands of the work and the constant economic demands of their families. If rental contracts are problematic, what about *opción a compra* contracts? Do they, as Ana and Armando hope, hold the solution to labor relationships?

Ana has, so far, 'sold' two of her cars. One buyer is doing fine, paying regularly if a bit late. The other, in debt for over 1000 dollars, recently returned the taxi, which was dented and had several parts damaged. Jorge reported that when he examined the vehicle he found that it had several poorly done and temporary repairs, such as a hose tied up with rags to keep it from leaking. Apparently the buyer/driver was unable to bear the costs of repairing the car, and decided to forget about the contract and just use the car for as long as he could.[36]

It becomes evident, as one listens to the narratives of both owners and drivers, that resources from far afield are – and perhaps must be – mobilized in order to make these option-to-buy ventures profitable. Additional incomes and networks developed in a variety of activities are marshalled in the interest of maintaining contracts operative and keeping the business running. Thus entrepreneurs frequently draw on the labor and resources of people far outside the business itself.

Repairs and the cost of re-insuring vehicles become a big burden for owners after the first year. These new taxicabs are more expensive to repair

than older models, because they are constructed in modular units, and it is often necessary to buy a major spare part in order to fix a minor problem, which increases expense for owners (and profits for the dealerships). Jorge, who spends a considerable portion of his spare time aiding his wife and her sisters with their taxi repairs, told me about an experience with a self-taught mechanic, Wilmer, who also worked as a driver for Lourdes.

Wilmer's method of working was to bring his very basic tools to the spot where the taxi was parked, and make a diagnosis. He then removed the parts that he deemed needed repair and left them at a repair shop (in another city two hours' drive away, he used Lourdes' taxi to get there) run by an uncle of his. Because of the family connection, he could get the parts fixed very cheaply at this shop, and could still charge Jorge a price below the market rate. Through the use of his uncle's repair shop, then, Wilmer was able to make a bit of money on the side as a mechanic, a part of which at times found its way into the fees that he paid to Lourdes for the cab rental. The possibility of using his cut-rate services led Lourdes to keep him on as a driver although he fell behind in payments, until he overstepped the unwritten, but negotiable bounds of her patience by disappearing with the cab for about ten days.

In this way, the auxiliary skills, capacity for work, and personal networks of the drivers they contract become an important factor in the profit of cab owners. While eventually the cost of repairs reduces the profit margin for the owners, certain drivers (but not others) have the networks to carry out repairs cheaply and can thus keep costs down. Drivers – and by extension owners – depend on these resources, goodwill, and work of drivers' family and friends in order to make their deals profitable. Paying market rates in a dealer's repair shop is prohibitively expensive, and consequently, social relationships are transformed into capital, or replace capital where possible. These relationships are located at a social distance yet further removed from the owners of the cars, yet through them they can extract labor at sub-market rates, and add to their capital.

The profitability of taxis may be subsidized in yet other ways. Hernán, one of Ana's drivers who had a cab in *opción a compra*, one day described in detail a *conuco*, or plot of land he owned outside the city limits, from which he harvested a substantial amount of the basic foodstuffs and fruits consumed by his family. He regularly drove the Caracas-Puerto La Cruz route that passed nearby the plot, and was able to see to it regularly. His wife sold cooked food in a stand at a Caracas marketplace. It was evident that this plot of land and his wife's work served as a base on which he could found his own ambition to become the owner of a taxi, and that in an economic pinch income from the food stall went to meet rental payments.

Thus multiple resources – social skills, kin, moral imperatives, and a

variety of incomes in cash and kind crisscross in the lives of small entre-preneurs.[37] Depending on the skill and consistency of their accounting practices, they will be able to determine whether their enterprise is moving ahead or is in retreat. Accounting is a subject that seldom surfaced in dis-cussions, however, other than in conversations about upcoming expenses and drivers being tardy with payments, while drivers might mutter that 'this business is only good for the owner'. Yet the many factors that had to be considered in appraising the viability of the business might well have given rise to more sophisticated discussions. My conclusion is that although everyone I spoke with kept some kind of economic account of their activi-ties, most of them had only a rudimentary knowledge of how one might calculate and provide for the long-term profitability of their endeavors. Mostly, evaluations of profitability appeared to be related to domestic needs; if the business was providing for these comfortably, it was consid-ered to be profitable. Yet as Gudeman and Rivera (1990) have pointed out, in daily life people adjust their belts to their means of the moment, and the question of profitability is resolved through time.

NARRATIVE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES AND IN ANTHROPOLOGY

In the preceding I have shown how entrepreneurship is socially situated and embedded in the individual's social situation and world view. Six family members with similar backgrounds who are in frequent contact with each other approach their seemingly identical business endeavors with widely diverging strategies and end goals. Drivers, too, adapt different strategies vis-à-vis the challenge of earning a living circulating the streets of Caracas, which depend on their needs, preferences and additional repertoire of income-generating possibilities. In the process of realizing their objectives, owners and drivers may, in turn, annex and profit by the work and resources of a much broader range of individuals whose productivity flows into the taxi enterprise.

  None of the owners or drivers in these pages portrays themselves as hero-entrepreneurs in their accounts of their activities; rather they tend to see themselves as victims, warding off the claims of their counterparts. Owners and drivers are tied to one another by a combination of need and oppor-tunity, but also by the traditional cultural values and social mores of the society, and their beliefs about, and tenuous hopes concerning one another. The working alliances that are established are far from unproblematic, and turnover in the branch is high. What is the typical *taxista* 'really like,' what motivates him, owners wonder, and how can I get him to take good care of

the car and deposit the rental fee regularly? Drivers, on the other hand, use traditional social conventions and the rights and duties involved in the concept of patronage to win concessions from owners, and to stretch the economic leeway available to them within the alliance. The elements of raw experience, and both ignorance and knowledge of each other are at play in the narratives owners and *taxistas* construct about each other's reasoning and motivations, and in the strategies they use and decisions they make.

The six taxi owners in this study more or less unconsciously made constant use of narratives, as did the *taxistas*. My neighbor Ana told me many stories about her own and her siblings' drivers, and about her future plans, not only as a way of passing time with a new friend but also, I felt, with eagerness to hear my reactions to the accounts. When she met her sisters or talked to them on the phone, business problems were the main topic. In these conversations useful information was being exchanged, about different drivers and their doings, and about ways to deal with problems. Evaluations of particular situations were corroborated or refuted, doubts voiced, reassurances sought. A body of knowledge was thus being built up mutually through narrative exchange, while the entrepreneurs defined and positioned themselves in relation to other actors, and characterized themselves as businessmen.

Narratives are designed within the bounds of the moral praxis of the society, and thereby become efficient tools in interaction between groups; as can be seen in Henry and Lourdes' aversion to being drawn into their *taxistas*' lives, since drivers' representations of their reality threatened the profitability of the alliances. Magally sought to turn the content of narratives to her own ends to control her drivers, while Ana and Armando hoped to put an end to their moral power by defining their drivers as economic equals through a legal contract, the *opción a compra*.

What, then, can we learn about entrepreneurship by using a methodology that makes use of narratives? Time-consuming and convoluted, the use of a narrative approach in social research involves following people and documenting their talk and actions in routine daily activities as well as at important turning points. One must follow new leads, listen, question, interview, record, and think about what people say in a way that strives to see beyond the words, to read between the lines. Narratives challenge us to seek connections, to discover the larger picture, and to make intuitive, interpretive leaps in reasoning that may not always be easy to back up with the collected data. As such, it may be academically riskier than using quantitative methods that more neatly define, delimit and document; for a narrative strategy immediately plunges the researcher into the chaos of life, the seeming impossibility of obtaining reliable information as one succumbs to the inevitable selective memory, perspective and subjectivity – both of

oneself, and of each informant. But such are the mindscapes in which businesses develop and decisions are made.

A narrative method offers an excellent way to get at the emotional content of entrepreneurship, at the rationalities and irrationalities that drive business activity, the role and use of information and misinformation, of incentive and coercion. It will reveal the cultural codes and moral stuff of the society, the content of concepts such as work, capital, bargaining, commercial ethics, and success.

In the business configurations that the members of this entrepreneurial family design, one sees different positioning in regard to the unknown mass of drivers: attempts to remain distant from them, to control them, to encourage them, or to 'empower' them with a car of their own – if at a high price. Among all the owners one perceives the desire to construct an enterprise that they can run 'by remote control', where they do not need to drive the taxis themselves, and where drivers are responsible, make payments on time, take care of vehicles, and do not try to enmesh owners in their lives or bargain for better terms. The most extreme example of this is Armando, who tries to run an enterprise via his sister Ana while working in the USA Work is to be done by the drivers; the owners are to collect income on their investment. Establishing this kind of a business might be seen as the measure of success. Instead, however, taxi owners are drawn into an unending round of negotiation and renegotiation with wayward drivers, garages, insurance companies, and with bureaucratic state institutions, in order to complete taxi registration and paperwork. This continuous process of confrontation and concession is something that they lament, seeing much of it as needless headaches brought on them by the inadequacies of the state bureaucracy and the actions of their irresponsible allies. The ethics of owners vary, but all seek to in some way sever the moral patron/client bond by defining the *taxistas* as free agents, as businessmen in their own right.

Narratives also provide an entry into an understanding of the business environment in the society at large, because informants are always interacting with and against counterparts, institutions, and the socioeconomic environment as a whole; and do at times come to transform the environment of which they are an integral part. Here one can uncover factors that encourage or limit entrepreneurial activity, as well as incentives, costs, and rewards that are more difficult to see with other methods. One may discover economic connections, networks, and flows that entrepreneurs are not themselves aware of, or prefer to suppress, such as, for example, the role of self-educated mechanics and car parts makers in the *barrios* in keeping the liaisons between cab owners and drivers profitable, and the taxis on the streets instead of in the workshop. Apparent in the case of *taxistas* in Caracas, too, is the high cost of capital for the disenfranchised, and the

consequences of the lack of a social support system. Even if a driver can obtain an *opción a compra* contract, the probability that he will be able to carry it through as written, working every day for two or three years, appears slim; although chances rise if other members of the family are gainfully employed, or if, as one driver indicated, a portion of the family food is provided by a *conuco* outside the city limits. Here, again, one sees how income from one sector of family activities flows into making another sector possible, and profitable.

Interesting in this context, too, is the pricing of rental fees. While the cost to drivers may seem excessively high, and one might conclude that this is the reason so many of them fall behind on payments and eventually lose access to the cars, the high rate of return on capital is seen as a necessity for the owners, who are subject to constant devaluation of the national currency and therewith their capital, and are apprehensive over the frequent changes of government policy. In this insecure business atmosphere with few incentives for investment, owners feel they must recuperate their capital quickly or risk losing it. The weak institutions in the country preclude many of the capital-preserving mechanisms available in more developed economies – such as ways to get debtors to pay up. Perhaps one could say that the *taxistas* who do pay their rents also pay for those who leave their taxis and a debt behind them. It is amply evident that rather than being entrepreneurial heroes, those who remain in the branch over time are survivors of a very volatile business environment.

It is important to keep in mind that even the simplest narratives are complex constructions, selective accounts of selective events. As experience is filtered through the observer's senses, its representation is also filtered by perspective. Organization analysts collect and analyze narratives in different ways, as Czarniawska (1998) has pointed out. In writing entrepreneurship, there are many levels of 'telling', all of them riddled with interpretations and representation, each a further step in narrating the events. Any collected story includes the words of others. This collected mass of subjectivity brings with it that of the researcher in collection, and again in representation. The ways in which we shape and filter our representations have been thoroughly examined by anthropologists (Marcus and Fisher, 1986; Clifford and Marcus, 1986), and perhaps this has been one of the more useful contributions that anthropology has made to the use of narrative in social science. In my tale of entrepreneurs and the taxis of Caracas, I am combining stories of individual negotiations of a difficult economy with other stories I have previously collected, consciously and subconsciously, including those of what a business venture ought to be, what entrepreneurship is, and of how anthropological fieldwork should be carried out. The result is a new story, a new construction, bearing some

resemblance to what might be 'out there' in the world, ever unfolding, and inviting interpretation.

POSTSCRIPT

Since I left Venezuela in early May of 2002, the country has gone through conflictive and trying times, which have had considerable consequences for the transport sector. The currency has been severely devalued.[38] In December 2002 and January 2003 a two-month long general strike called by the political opposition to President Hugo Chávez disrupted oil exports and domestic distribution, resulting in an acute lack of gasoline. During this period, drivers had to spend up to eight to twelve hours in line waiting to fill their tanks.[39] Soon after the strike, currency controls were put in place to put a stop to capital flight, affecting the cost and availability of spare parts, many of which are imported. The number of cabs in the streets has decreased, because many remain in workshops awaiting spare parts, but more people are also taking buses and the subway to save money. Violence has increased considerably due to the deteriorating economic situation, and drivers are more frequently robbed of their day's take, cars are stolen more often, and more drivers are killed at the hands of assailants.

In the middle of May 2003, I received an e-mail from Ana and Jorge, which recounted the changes in the family members' enterprises. Henry has left Venezuela for a job in France, and 'sold' his two cars via *opción a compra* before he left. He is happy with the deal despite the devaluation, and the drivers are complying with their obligations; the cars are being administrated by Ana. Lourdes had one car stolen, recuperated, and then stolen again; and another car was totally destroyed in an accident. Since her insurance had lapsed she did not receive any reimbursement from the insurance company. She continues to work with two cabs. Magally had one taxi stolen and was reimbursed by the insurance company, but decided to sell the other taxis due to the high cost of maintenance. She is currently looking for another area in which to invest. Ana continues to work with her four cabs. One of them is in *opción a compra*, but the driver is very remiss in meeting payments. She wants to cancel the deal, but refrains because of the high legal costs that she would have to meet in order to do so. Raimundo had one car stolen and returned to him in very poor condition. He sold it at great loss, but continues to work his remaining two cabs. Unfortunately the drivers do not meet their payments regularly. Armando asked Lourdes to put his cabs in a garage in the autumn of 2002 (about a year after he started his enterprise), when he felt that repairs were eating up all the income they produced. He planned to sell them, and did sell the one he

shared with Magally, but shortly afterwards the general strike broke out, and was soon followed by currency controls. At present he has no way of getting the proceeds of an eventual sale out of the country, and he is thus undecided about what to do.

The economic crisis, then, has affected the owners negatively. Again, the cab owners have made different decisions as to the advisability of remaining in the business, departing from their own personal circumstances. Yet as the communal achievements of rule of law, a stable currency and free trade and financial flows disintegrate in the country, these individual enterprises become more vulnerable, and those who run them can merely hope to stay afloat in choppy seas.

4. 'Going against the grain . . .' Construction of entrepreneurial identity through narratives[40]

Lene Foss

INTRODUCTION

The focus in this chapter is entrepreneurial identity, a theme that has not been mainstream in entrepreneurial research. My aim is to explore the relation between entrepreneurial identity and individuals' life course. The research field has, to my knowledge, paid scant attention to theories that relate the 'entrepreneurial self' to events in the life of individuals and to the cultural context in which they live. In a recent study it is argued that entrepreneurial stories facilitate the crafting of a new venture identity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). I am interested in exploring how life stories facilitate the construction of entrepreneurial identity. Life is lived in places and where people have some sort of history. Identity is therefore culturally linked. My approach to entrepreneurship is that it is more of a cultural phenomenon than an economic one (Hjorth, Johannisson and Steyaert, 2003). I believe that an approach linking the 'self' of the individual to entrepreneurial activities can reveal how entrepreneurship is culturally situated. Stories, or narratives, may facilitate a better understanding of how life-course experiences matter for revealing entrepreneurial identity. My question is therefore: What does a narrative – a life story – tell us about entrepreneurial identity?

My methodological approach is to narrate identity through the autobiographic genre (Bruner, 1990; Davies and Harré, 1990). I seek to make a methodological contribution to the narrative genre in entrepreneurship studies by letting the narrator have the main voice in the chapter. I have listened to a storyteller, Bente, a 42-year-old female entrepreneur who started a theatre ten years ago. My role has been to edit the text according to life-course sequences I have found in her story. The chapter is organized as follows: first, I lay out the conceptual framework of identity construction and life-course theory; second, I describe how identity may be narrated and I give an account of the autobiographic genre of narratives; I then give a brief introduction to the regional context of the case. The main part of the

chapter – the narrative – is organized as five parts or sequences, followed by an analysis and a conclusion.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND LIFE COURSE

Accounts of identity are related to the concept of 'self'. The early key theorists in this field, like Mead (1934) clearly stated that the notion of self is constructed through interactions with other people. According to Cerulo (1997) microsociological perspectives dominated identity theory in the 1970s, when the focus was on the formation of 'me', exploring the ways in which interpersonal interactions mould an individual's sense of self. Whereas the early humanist theories assume a unitary model of self which is based on the principles of continuity and consistency, newer post-structuralist theories advocate principles of the fragmentary, shifting and dynamic nature of self (Hollway, 1989; Tong, 1989). Jackson and Warin (2000) find that post-structuralists approaches fail to resolve the problematic nature of the relationships between different facets of self and devalue the 'organizing' function of self (p. 377). In a critique of approaches that assume that individuals act like 'chameleons', Marsh and Hattie (1996) argue for a perspective that enables us to account for the ways in which individuals integrate and absorb information into their existing framework of self-beliefs. For them 'self' is 'an active, organising, individual consciousness' (p. 441). My approach in this chapter is to make a synthesis between the post-structuralistic and the humanistic view. I see the entrepreneurial 'self' as a multifaceted and dynamic one that evolves over the life course of an individual, but I also view the human creation of 'self' as a process of constructing patterns of consistency and coherence with regard to the nature of their identity in relation to others.

In exploring the entrepreneurial identity and life course I use the term 'transition'. Transitional points are particularly rich events for exploring changes in a person's construction of self. Jackson and Warin (2000) state that 'Entry into a new social context entails a reappraisal of self-beliefs and may act as a catalyst for significant changes . . . there will be certain contexts that will be critical in terms of bringing self-beliefs to consciousness and making adjustments and changes to them . . . Transitional phases require a person to "cope"' (p. 378). I am specifically concerned with how the entrepreneurial identity is linked to transitional points in the life course of entrepreneurs – how the dynamic element in a person's identity is constituted by a variety of human experiences over time. In line with the recent focus in identity theory (Cerulo, 1997), I approach identity as a source of mobilization rather than a product of it. This means that I view

the narrator's identity as a driving force in entrepreneurial activities and venture creation. I thereby view transitions in the life course as an analytical tool to reflect on how entrepreneurial identity is created. Transitions in a way reflect how an individual copes with the changes in biological and historical time. This is related to the concept of agency in life course research. Agency refers to people's ability to make informed choices about the future as well as their faith in personal possibility in situations requiring important choices (Elder and Shananan, 1997). To concentrate on ambitious objectives is more likely to appeal to young people with faith in their own abilities than to those who lack self confidence (Elder, 1974; Bandura, 1995).

Life-course theory synthesizes historical and individual elements in one common research field. The perspective includes both time, social space and individual development (Elder and Shananan, 1997). In life-course theory the assumption is that individuals' developmental processes, and the consequences thereof, are decided by the life course which people follow, be it marked by good times or bad (Elder and Shananan, 1997). The life courses of individuals are then determined through an interplay between historical conditions, local situations and individual agency. I aim to analyse the entrepreneurial identity in the narrative with these issues in mind.

Whereas the mainstream life-course theory is macrosociological and quantitative in its character, more hermeneutical, narrative, biographical and life-history approaches seem to develop within the field (Cohler, 1982; Bertaux, 1981; Bertaux and Kohli, 1984; Clausen, 1998). According to a state-of-the art article there are few studies on how cultural life scripts shape retrospective views (Hagestad, 1990). I want to take on this challenge by linking the study of entrepreneurial identity to an autobiographic genre of narratives, so that the narrator's own reflections over the life course can give us knowledge of the role of 'self' related to a cultural context. This also fits well with newer identity theory which sees identity construction as a process of self-reflection as a person moves through time and space, and through different organizational and institutional environments (Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). I see this self-reflection as a story, and I follow Bertaux (1981, p. 9) in preferring the term life story to life history, when I deal with an individual's subjective retrospective report of past experiences and their meaning to that person.

The cultural contextualizing of entrepreneurship and the linking of identity to life course, invites us to pay attention to ethnicity. The notion of ethnicity can be defined as a sense of belonging to a community (Bradley, 1996, p. 12). On the North Calotte where the narrator in this chapter comes from, there are several ethnic groups like saami,[41] and kven[42] in addition to Finnish and Russian immigrants.

Hence, I subscribe to the view that identity both has spatial and temporal

dimensions (Anderson, 1994). The spatial refers to individuals' attachment to place, communities and regions whereas the temporal dimension refers to the lived life from childhood to grown-up. This view makes it possible to draw on recent work in human geography where the concepts of space and time are linked together (Taylor, 2003; Thrift, 2003). I view entrepreneurial identity as unfolding between these two dimensions. Entrepreneurship research needs to focus on the significance of place has also been called for in recent contributions (Berg, 1997; Berg, 2002). A sense of place derives from the need to belong and for somewhere to call 'home' rather than conceiving of oneself as 'just' a member of society (Pietikainen and Hujanen, 2003). In satisfying this need for roots, people make commitment to places (Sennet, 1999). I specifically draw on the concept as it has been developed within the humanistic (cultural) geography, where sense of place refers to individuals' subjective perception and attachment to places (Agnew and Duncan, 1989). My contribution here is to connect the construction of entrepreneurial identity to what place has meant for individuals through their life.

NARRATING IDENTITY AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIC GENRE

An autobiography is a self-narrative of identity (Czarniawska, 1997). Through autobiographies individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim their identity and construct their lives (Riesman, 1993). Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) argue that autobiographical research interviewing is an appropriate instrument for empirical studies of narrative identity, because it unites three crucial features that lie at the heart of any conception of 'narrative identity': its life-span perspective, its constructivity and its social foundation. Let us examine the constructivity of narratives and their social foundation more closely.

Bruner (1987) takes a constructivist approach to autobiographies, based on the premise that 'world making' is the principal function of mind. He argues that autobiographies should not be viewed as a record of what happened, but rather as a continuing interpretation and reinterpretation of personal experience. Polkinghorne (1996) echoes that in a simple way: 'the identity story as it is lived, and the story as it is told'. Autobiographies, according to Bruner, then become a set of procedures for 'life making'. The narrative achievement is in the end a selective achievement of memory call. In following this line the narrative in this chapter is not to be viewed as Bente's explanation of what in her life contributed to her choice of becoming an entrepreneur. It is better viewed as a story of how she identifies central elements in her life as important for her to share with me. To cite

Bruner: 'eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life' (p. 15). As I see it, the telling of the story and Bente's life cannot be disconnected: how she tells about herself to me is her conception of herself. In this case I knew from prior interviews that Bente would be a good narrator. She enjoyed talking and reflected in a direct and spontaneous way on my questions in face-to-face conversations and over the telephone. She enjoyed the opportunity to tell a long story. Her openness must, however, according to Bruner, be seen in relation to a culturally shaped processes.

As Riesman (1993) points out respondents narratize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society. I am, as said, interested in looking for breakpoints that represent transitions in life. Riesman further states that human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. That leads us to a claim that narrative interviewing is a dialogical, pragmatic activity (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann, 2000). These authors further state that the interpersonal relationship between narrator and researcher is made up of institutional, imaginative, sociocategorical and other communicative frames which are enacted by both partners during the interview (p. 199). Polkinghorne (1996) stresses that told stories are directed towards an audience, whose roles, needs, and moral stance must be observed in the transformation into speech.

Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) argue that research in which one works with life stories underestimates a) the performative and positioning aspects of the narrative situation and the narrative product, and b) the particular autoepistemological and communicative tasks that arise over the course of a narrative interview. Narratives resulting from research interviewing must therefore be considered as scientific artefacts, demanding particular reflexive and communicative activities and skills. It is important to state that Bente and I knew one another from two prior projects, where I had interviewed her. I therefore knew Bente as a woman that was up-front, direct in her talk, not shy and very accommodating in sharing her experiences with a researcher.

The second aspect of Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) deals with how we feel obliged and bound to the person to whom we present ourselves in social contexts, our reliability and responsibility as social beings. This makes the narrator, when presenting a story to a researcher, bound by a social context that may affect how the story is told. With regard to the communicative aspect of the autobiographic narrative I view Bente as the main

character, the narrator. The way she told me her story may be a result of her enjoying the situation – having someone listening to what she found important in her life. Being an open person she truly found a close relationship with me from the first time. That, however, does not mean that she is excluded from the issues discussed above, i.e. the pragmatic and positioning aspect of being the narrator. The way she told her story and the elements she put in there are not only dependent on time and context. It is also a result of how she wants herself to be portrayed.

In a more concrete way the conversations between Bente and me went thus. My first question was 'How did you get the idea of starting a theatre?' Bente's answer to this was very rich and indicated several issues of life-course concern such as childhood and upbringing and the regional connection. In following the guidelines in narrative interviewing (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984, p. 224) the rest of the conversation went like this: Bente talked about what had mattered to her, and I intervened only when each of the storylines seemed to come to an end. My questions were sort of following up the different threads that were interwoven in her 'grand story'. In transcribing the first interview I searched for underlying themes related to transitional points in her life course. I followed Riesman (1993) guidance and structured the narrative 'from the inside', from her meanings encoded in her talk. This strategy privileges the teller's experience. The five sequences of her narrative are the result of that.

The following three telephone interviews were performed as I worked with the text. I needed time to transcribe each interview and connect parts of it to the rest of the text. My questions in these conversations were geared to fill out the framework that was laid in the first interview. I sort of followed Mishler's (1991, p. 277) point of arranging and rearranging interviews and the text in light of my own discovery of clarifying and deepening my understanding of what was happening in the discourse. The questions for the three subsequent interviews were carefully selected after having worked with the text. For example, more knowledge was created around each sequence, issues were clarified, some double-checking of statements was done, and more information was produced. In a way, the narrative was a 'clearing-up' experience for both of us. For her, as she felt comfortable by being allowed to tell somebody about her life and to reflect over issues that clearly matter for her self-understanding. For me it was an opportunity to let her narrative sink in as time allowed me to reflect and write between the interviews. The methodological approach taken here was a result of how this process worked between us.

THE CONTEXT OF THE REGION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SØR-VARANGER COMMUNITY AND KIRKENES

With its geographic location to the north, bordering Russia and Finland in the east, Sør-Varanger has a unique history, ethnicity and culture. Archeological findings show that the first inhabitants, the Komsahunters, came from the East about 10 000 BC (Lunde, Simonsen and Vorren, 1979). Fishing, hunting and later agriculture constituted the economic backbone of the region – rural reindeer-keeping became important in 1500–1600. The early inhabitants, the saami people lived as nomads and migrated back and forth between the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish areas.

The first merchant trade between Norway and Russia, the so-called Pomortrade, started in the latter part of 1700 where the Sør-Varanger population traded their excess of fish against wheat and rye with Russian merchants from the White Sea in the summer months. This ended with the Russian Revolution in 1917. The large areas between Norway and Russia where there never had been a national border, the 'joint areas', were divided between the countries in 1826 and made conditions for good neighbour relations between Norway and Russia and later Finland. Sør-Varanger was therefore the last part that was given Norwegian sovereignty, 12 years after Norway was established as a nation state. After 1826 a steady immigration took place, especially from Finland. The ethnic groups were Norwegian, Saami and Finnish, each with their own language and culture. Sør-Varanger was in this period a cultural melting pot where the new population began to take form.

The main thing that came to shape Kirkenes' industrial development was the discovery of iron ore in the mountains outside the town in 1906 and the creation of the mining company Sydvaranger Ltd that followed. From then on Kirkenes developed rapidly into a modern and well-organized town with a major industrial company serving as a cornerstone and driving force in developing the community. The population increased rapidly, with people moving in from other regions in Norway and from Sweden, Finland and Russia. In 1910 their population was 3329, in 1920 4798, in 1930 7590. In addition to the influx of blue-collar workers, a managerial class of officers and managers employed at Sydvaranger AS developed. The town also benefited from the establishment of public, government-funded services such as the postal service, customs service and telegraph service. A middle class of white-collar employees became the basis for a more 'sophisticated' culture. Compared to other parts of Finnmark, Kirkenes in the early 1960s had roads made of asphalt, floodlit ski-tracks, tennis courts, a swimming pool and a revue theatre.

Sør-Varanger was a front-line area in World War II. The Germans made

Kirkenes into a main harbour for supplies in order to facilitate their attacks on the Murmansk front (Lunde, Simonsen and Vorren, 1979). They feared an Allied Soviet invasion of Finnmark and started a desperate building-up of fortifications on the Finnmark coast. Sør-Varanger was made into 13 defence areas. The Soviet response was to destroy this in addition to German storage buildings and naval traffic. As these were located close to Norwegian settlements, the following three years of air raid attacks against Kirkenes almost destroyed the town completely. The German troops were not successful at the Murmansk front and after Finland made a truce with the Soviets in 1944, the German retreat from Finnmark started. They burned everything behind them when retreating, making it impossible for the Russians to use any infrastructure. Kirkenes became occupied by the Russians, who liberated the area on October 25th 1944. To everyone's surprise the Soviets did not use their power to gain the territory of Sør-Varanger and the rest of Finnmark, but marched out at the end of the war, on September 25th 1945.

World War II changed the border between Norway and the Soviet Union, back to the borders during the Empire of the Tsars before 1920. The Petsjenga area, given to the Soviet Union by Finland in 1944, was now closed towards Norway and put under continuous surveillance. In 1947, the 195.7-km-long border was drawn in accordance with the 1826 convention. The treaty was ratified by Norway and The Soviet Union in 1950. The treaty put several restrictions on the inhabitants on each side of the border in the two countries. This was likely to be affected by the foreign policy climate that came about in the last part of the 1940s. 'The Cold War' was the era after Norway joined NATO in 1949 and became a close ally of the US.

A new period of collaboration between Norway and Russia started after the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991, in the period of glasnost and perestroijka. A renewal of the relationship and trade between Kirkenes and their Russian neighbours took place. Today there are 9000 inhabitants in Kirkenes. The town has airport facilities and is the final port of call for the Coastal Steamer. The main industries are ship repair, service and various enterprises directed towards Northwest Russia. The close relationship between Kirkenes and Northwest Russia is being reestablished now that the business community and people in general have become competent in their cooperation with Russia. Fifteen years of regional cooperation has established an extensive political and industrial-commercial network and accumulated experience in interacting with Russia. Russians constitute the largest group of foreign settlers in a town that houses 42 different nationalities and has been officially designated the national junction for Northwest Russian cooperation. A saying runs in Kirkenes among the inhabitants: 'We are the Russian town in Norway' and people on the Kolapeninsula also call the town 'Little Murmansk'.

In 1995, after the bankruptcy of the city's major employer, Sydvaranger Ltd, Kirkenes became part of a national scheme to revitalize the economies of a selected group of Norwegian municipalities. Starting in the mid-1990s, this special status made it important for the community to generate new ideas and to establish firms and activities that could employ those made redundant by the closure of the industrial plant. With regard to new venture creation 'Forum for entrepreneurs in Sør-Varanger' is a business network for newly established businesses and the business community in general based on informal cooperation, network coordination, shared profiling and common courses to increase the qualifications of participants. A business and real estate company called 'Kirkenes Development' works for industrial growth in Sør-Varanger. As the activity at Sydvaranger Ltd. is winding up, external companies and local entrepreneurs are invited to cooperate for the best possible working conditions, with the aim of maintaining a viable community with no more than average unemployment. Developing Sør-Varanger into an international commercial interface between Northwest Russia and Western Europe is part of such a strategy.

The Barents Cooperation is a Norwegian initiative, formally established in Kirkenes in 1993, with the aim of establishing a stabilizing pattern of cooperation between the Nordic countries and Russia, and of reinforcing Russia's role in general European cooperation. Another aim is to promote a sustainable development in the Barents region, primarily Russia, which faces serious political, economic, social and environmental challenges. The 'Barents Secretariat' is an inter-municipal institution and constitutes an extensive network that possesses significant experience in dealing with Northwest Russia. Improvements in the Russian economy and economic policies have boosted the Barents Cooperation through increased interest in trade and investment. Norwegian initiatives to produce gas in the Barents Sea foreshadow the expected Russian activities in petroleum in the area, implying a growing demand for on-shore activities and infrastructure. The Barents Cooperation is of high regional priority, and the expressed wish is that Norway shall control exploitation of resources together with Russia.

To sum up, the historical and cultural context of Bente's upbringing and the locality of her business are both challenged by being far north in a peripheral region, seen from a national point of view. However, the region has a strong multiethnic and collaborative culture and is challenged by a deeper mutual interdependence with Russia after the fall of the Soviet imperium. The community is facing the challenge of being transformed from a typical industry work place to a community where new initiative is needed for employment of the inhabitants.

GROWING UP, MOVING OUT AND COMING HOME – FIVE SEQUENCES IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STORY

First sequence: 'I am used to having to struggle for everything'.

I think I was living in a world of my own for a long time, and to a larger extent than others. I was in fact quite sporty, played handball and all the rest of it, as well as doing dog-sledging and stuff like that. But when I went sledging I would be in a Jack London sort of world. I would be in Alaska. And I think I played like this for a longer time than others did. During my childhood, my mother worked at the police station, before she took up work at a school. During the whole of my childhood, she has been concerned with theatre and sports. She was awarded a project in 1985, in Alta, in which she worked with unemployed youth and theatre. In the wake of this project, a position was erected by the county – revue and amateur theatre instructor – which she occupied until she retired.

She was a mother who would be away quite a lot. She travelled extensively, and she was very active and committed. She was the kind of mother who always said that whatever we did we should come home. We would be welcome no matter what had happened. I had a sister who explored more things than I did. She did all kinds of things, as kids do, but everything was alright as long as she came home. We were given trust as long as we were responsible. Ours was a very open and lively house. My mother was very committed to whatever she did, and she was into sports. She played handball until she was 42 and when my sister joined the women's team, the two of them played handball together. She spent a lot of time on this.

My mother was born in 1934, and was the only girl of six children. She had five brothers, and her birth was quite a happening. They sat her on one of those old-fashioned rocking chairs, and her brothers fetched all their friends to come and look at her. She was never pampered or spoiled, I don't think post-war children were, but she received a great deal of attention, and this gave her confidence. She was in a way cheered on because she was a girl, and this must have shaped her personality in both positive and negative ways. She was quite pronounced in her ways. Yet she has always taken people seriously, whether they be adults or young people. I consider this a very good quality.

Of course there is a parallel in occupational careers between my mother and me . . . It's all about being introduced into the theatrical environment at an early age. I was 17 when I first worked at Hålogaland Theatre Company in Tromsø. During my adolescence it seemed natural to do this. Being part of a milieu of amateur theatre was for me part of growing up, and I was sort of hooked and wanted to try more of it. One of my most important supporters worked with theatre here in Kirkenes when I was 12 years old, and he used to live at our house. And now he works at the Samovar theatre.

My father worked at Sydvaranger all his life, as a transportation manager. We received all the models of the cars and the cranes from the plant and used to play with them. As he died when I was 15 I never knew him in adult age.[43] [44] But I know that he was very creative. He had amazing drawing skills, and he made incredible things. I have found drawings and other creations of his youth, but he never really realized these talents to the full. I guess it was a sign of the times; you were supposed to start work at Sydvaranger, and if you were smart you

would climb the career ladder and be promoted to new appointments. He belonged to a small family and was an only child until the age of 15, when he got a brother. I don't know how old he was when he met my mother, but he was a couple of years older than her. Coming into her extended family must have been quite a shock to him. He always gave my mother the time she needed to live out her own life. He was not involved in sports or amateur theatre groups or anything like that. He was into hunting and fishing, that was his 'thing'. Thinking back though, I realize that he must have watched us when we were kids, that he must have been there for us.

My sister, who is two years younger, and I are very strong in many ways. The idea of having to make your own choices and be able to stand by them . . . We could do whatever we wanted as long as we educated ourselves and made some choices in our lives. We have always been able to try things out, been allowed the liberty of doing things. I went to Portugal when I was 15 years old. We have always been allowed to travel.

My sister was six years old when she knitted me a doll's dress. My parents were very concerned that we did individual things. The sewing machine was always available. We were allowed to bake, we have always been allowed things like that. But we were quite strictly and conservatively raised. We had to do dishes every day, we received weekly pay, and all the rest of it. We were never permitted to leave projects halfway. We had to complete everything we started, such as making recorder bags with embroidery, an activity that became boring after a while. I think this might be a disadvantage for me now that I have children of my own. I recognize this feeling in relation to my own children – being able to put the nine-year-old on my knee and just fool around, and taking the time to do such things. I know that this is something I have to work on. I am very conscious of these things. I don't believe I experienced a lot of this when I grew up. We didn't have these tender relationships if you know what I mean.

I am dyslexic and at school I didn't do very well in the written disciplines, but did better in the creative ones. I remember coming home one Christmas with a 'can do better' in all subjects. I felt terrible; I cried and was very depressed and frustrated. I remember my mother comforting me: 'But, Bente, we can always do better in everything!' But my sister, who barely ever opens a book, has always received top grades. I realized at an early age that I would never have anything for free. I am used to having to struggle for everything. I think these are experiences I carry around in life. In school I had to sit in a special group where we had to build with lego blocks. In the end I refused to do it and I managed to skip away. The wilfulness: 'You can do it if you want and you can move mountains if you only believe you can' has given me much in my professional life. I have learned to learn text fast. I see the text as pictures. I make up pictures in my head and memorize pictures in order to learn. I took the gymnasium in Oslo in only two years, and learned English by having to memorize the whole book. Now I have realized that because I had to work so hard at school I have been used to hard work and to not giving up. It leads to something in the end.

Stories have always meant much for me. I realize that I was hooked on telling my story for a while. I think telling stories has been my strength in a lot of areas, especially during the last years, and I believe I have had them in me all the time. But I have been on and off telling these stories. I think that the theatre as a form of expression or an art form or as a profession is broad enough to allow people to develop – it has no limiting ceiling so to speak. You constantly grow. One has

to go back and view where one has been in life, childhood, upbringing and adolescence. What happens when you get children yourself? Why are you particularly vulnerable then? I am sure I use these things pretty consciously. It is not like I say to the audience that in order to portray this character, I have used parts of my life which went from there to here. But I do think that I use much of it.

Second sequence: 'Daring to apply to the theatre academy'.

I actually planned to become a nurse, but then I thought that, once in a lifetime, one should dare to apply to the Theatre Academy in Oslo. There were three admission tests, and I reached the final one. I was then told to go home, take up 'stage plasticity', diet and apply again next year. I felt that the Theatre Academy did not constitute my idea of a theatre. I went home and discovered the meaning of 'stage plasticity', which, by the way, is mobility on stage. I should dance ballet, they said. Till then, I had only played handball. Ballet was not on offer here . . . I went home, and worked for a year in Hålogaland Amateur Company.

That year was an immense boost for me because I constantly received positive feedback. First of all it was an easy job for me. I worked a lot, and was home about once a week. Yet it was a prosperous year for me: being appreciated, and managing my work, provided me with the secure feeling of mastery and a sense of having found something in which I might excel. I applied anew, but this time in Denmark, at the Theatre Academy in Copenhagen. By the time I had finished, I had made a choice, and my idea of what a theatre should be had materialized.

You went to school to become an actor, to become attached to a theatre where others would tell you what to do. But I worked very hard at school – after hours too. We did our own things on the side. We also spent a great deal of time at the Norwegian seamen's church where we worked in the afternoons when we couldn't work at school. I initiated my own activities, as when we staged a witch cabaret – a wonderful show, with which we toured here in Finnmark.

I did not want to be merely an employed actress. Upon completing my education, I was offered a job accompanying one of my teachers to Canada. I declined, I longed to go back north. I worked for a year in Tromsø, and discovered I did not want to be a mere actress. I felt that, should you establish something, you had to start from scratch. I also knew that a large and well-appointed theatre building 'Malmklang' with all the facilities was vacant in Kirkenes. I simply said I was starting up, and I received 5000 – Norwegian Kroner from the municipality. I moved here where I had not lived in ten years, and established a theatre school and a theatre. I wanted to work with all aspects of theatre, and this place provided me with that opportunity.

These years in Copenhagen gave me an opportunity to justify the mental choices I had already made. They confirmed my choices, put my competence in perspective and extended it professionally. Personally I believe these were good years. I got the feeling that there really are no national borders. I think it is good to bring impulses such as these back to Kirkenes.

I had a background; I grew up in Kirkenes where people were aware of what made the wheels of society turn. Many of my fellow students had never been to a real industrial work place. They are not visible in the city. Industries are seldom situated in the middle of a city. This background made me feel different, in addition to coming from a dull little place like Kirkenes.

Third sequence: Running a theatre up in the far north: Finding an Arctic niche

> I named it 'the Samovar theatre' because I saw a theatre as a Samovar, a Russian tea maker: A beautiful thing that you can fill up, tap off, and that simmers all the time. A theatre should be like that. The Samovar theatre undertakes various activities: we stage our own professional productions, we run a theatre school for children and youngsters, and we cooperate with other cultural institutions and with the region's businesses. These are the premises on which the Samovar theatre's philosophy is based, and we have embodied it.
>
> With regard to employing staff, I chose the people in the staff on the basis that they had my kind of energy, or shared my theatre philosophy. I wanted people who were not just actors, but who set themselves aims for what they did. These issues were particularly important during the first years, when offering the children a proper theatre school was most important. You can't frown and insist on your needs as an actor in situations like that. We had to work with the children and be actors at the same time, based on an idea of having something to communicate. The stories you choose must be significant enough to make it on stage, and this means that staff must be committed. This is perhaps what I mean by energy. We spent a great deal of time, years, to lift these people to a level of scenic competence, a level needed for the stage.

Bente moves into the details about the premises of the Samovar theatre and describes three elements or objectives as crucial:

(1) 'I want to educate youth'.

> We started a theatre school in 1991. Sixty students between the age of 7 and 18 have been educated there. The educational principle is to meet the challenges at the level of each individual. For us it is important to meet the challenges at the level of each individual. For example we had a student enrolled in 1997 who is both blind and deaf. My colleagues worked with him continually, following his development closely. The work proved successful: he was able to fence in the last show of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
>
> The theatre school was a rather smart move; in time it became part of the culture school. We have discovered numerous opportunities in the other areas of the culture school. The fact that we stage our own productions, in addition to this theatre education, has provided us with a different goodwill. Anything goes as long as your children are in it. From the very start we have had, and still have, long waiting lists of children who want to join us. Our efforts with the theatre school have yielded results on a national level: today four people from the National Theatre have been trained at the Samova theatre. In addition one girl just made it to the production line at the Drama Institute in Stockholm, where they only have an intake of four students every fourth year from the Nordic countries. When I meet elderly people in the street they sometimes approach me and say: I don't know much about your theatre but what you do for the children is good!
>
> In this country, professionals who work with amateurs are not regarded as

true professionals, and professionals who work with children are marginalized. The professional milieus have not entirely accepted the way we work. In my opinion, we cannot live in Kirkenes and claim to work only with professional performances, and not take part in, for example, working with children. I have been very concerned with this issue ever since 1990. For this reason, the funding was very important to us. First of all it gave us greater economic leeway. Secondly it gave us a measure of recognition: 'We can't avoid them, because they won't give up, so we might as well let them run their theatre the way they want to'. We have never tried to hide the fact that we work with children and young people.

(2) Literary classics and historical roots: 'Such things are important to tell!'

Our objective is to present Norwegian contemporary literature in a scenic form to children, youth and adults. Equally important is the promotion of classic dramas from world literature, especially when the dramas reflect current events. Since the start in 1990 the Samovar theatre has produced 17 full-length shows mostly based on contemporary dramas.

Our professional productions are our most important activities. They constitute the enterprise's locomotive. This is where we find the strength and will to carry out the surplus activities. We have chosen the histories and the region that surround us as our point of departure. It is important to us to make a theatre for the people of Finnmark, for the people of Northern Norway. We cannot stage productions that cannot be held in a tiny gymnasium. We have tried to find stories that would be of interest to the people who live here, and we have had to use stories or things we have heard. This is what interests us, this means something to us.

One example of such a story is 'The Swedish kids'. The idea came from my mother who together with 359 other children were sent to Sweden in 1944. Kirkenes was bombed during World War II and there were only eight houses left at the end of the war. No single kid was left in Kirkenes; they were all sent to foster-parents in Sweden to 'be fattened up'. On 17 May 1945 the boat with the 'swedekids' docked in Kirkenes. Such things are important to tell.

For making the play we started to interview people who had been sent to Sweden and from this we made a play based on two stories; one from my mother and one from another woman, whose father had been a partisan in Russia throughout the war. In other to 'neutralize' the play where the two women played their own roles, a dance was added, a collaboration with a theatre in Hammerfest, in the western part of Finnmark.

Another example is the 'Groove' play, a play I originally wanted to call 'The smell of coldness and the sight of the sea'. I got the idea when I wandered on the quay in Kirkenes and saw the Russian trawlers. I began to talk to the crew and was touched by their personal stories. Many of them spent half a year on the boat before they could return to their families in Kasaksthan. I hired a writer and they interviewed the crews on the Russian boats. They made a story and contrasted it to another story of Finnish immigration, based on a story from my great-grandmother. In the end, a third element, a Norwegian story, was put in the centre of the play and the other two spooned around it.

The professional productions are the core element of the Samovar theatre and

still represent something new in the enterprise. The professional productions motivate us, develop us, make us think creatively and develop ideas. It is during the theatre productions, when we play, that ideas are developed. But they are also the locus of all the frustrations related to mediation. At the end of the day, this is where we find the energy for everything else.

(3) The Northern Peninsula as a collaborative frame of reference: 'We feel like inhabitants of the Northern Cap'

I think the theatre relates more to the Northern Cap than to Finnmark or Sør-Varanger. It is important to me that we tell stories that concern the Northern Cap, such as stories from Finland. We feel like inhabitants of the Northern Cap. We have cooperated extensively with Russia and Finland. It has been exhausting and difficult at times, but we have carried through. Because of our geographical situation, it seems natural to create a east-west axis instead of a north-south axis. Finland and Russia represent different artistic levels and sources of very exciting knowledge traditions.

This cooperation is also facilitated through the theatre school: in 1994, we made our own festival with 220 participants from Norway, Finland, Russia and Sweden and from the Saami areas. Two Russian groups of children were accommodated in families in Kirkenes and the Norwegian and Russian children linked up with one another. We have hosted this international festival for children and youth since 1994 and received the Barents festival prize for this effort. In 2000 our school was given national responsibility for hosting an internationally celebrated children and youth event.

We are currently cooperating with a theatre school in Murmansk. They used to have culture schools in Russia, such as piano schools or dancing schools, but they were eroded after pérestroijka. They couldn't afford the schools anymore, and as a result we have lost contact with a lot of people in the area. But now, Murmansk has established a theatre school, which is very much like ours and where children ranging from 5 to 19 years of age and of different levels of ability attend. The manager is an educated actress. The old culture schools used to have pedagogues, but this actress produces very atypical performances with these children, and she thinks in atypical ways. We visited them in November with two of our groups of 12- to 19-year-olds, and we staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We wanted to stage a production with the oldest children from their school and ours. Because of the visa fees and the insurance involved, such productions are expensive. We won't be able to cover the charges, so I think we will have to find external funding.

The concept of the border is physical in the sense that you live so close to the Russian and the Finnish borders. You actually see the social changes because Russians are walking the streets of Kirkenes. I use to think: He's Russian, now why do I think he's Russian? In the past, we didn't see people we didn't know unless we travelled. The feeling of being close to the border is also personal in the sense of exploring one's own borders. I would never be satisfied if I knew exactly what I would be doing for the next two years. Of course I have made plans for the future of the theatre, but I know that they may change. My goal is not to predict the future.

I have to admit that I realize the importance of taking the performances to

Oslo. I have always been very persistent in saying that 'well, sooner or later they will have to come here'. But after we staged the story of 'The forgotten colony' in Oslo, and representatives of the granting authorities came to see us, I have had to acknowledge the importance, both for the present and the future, of going south. Although not an admission of failure, I feel a bit uneasy about the fact that we are forced to travel south. Yet there is no use in being stubborn, we just have to accept the fact that the authorities are down south.

Fourth sequence: 'I hope the theatre does something with the people here' – the enterprise as an agent of change

The Samovar theatre differs from other theatres because of its geographical situation, and because we have managed, over the years, to establish cooperation with both Russia and Finland. We are also different because we work with children and young people, a task I consider important. We don't establish borders between professional work and the rest, or limit ourselves to pure acting. On the contrary, we try to erase such borders. We feel that working with amateurs is alright, and signal that there is no harm in cooperating with Russia. It takes a little longer – sure it does. We are different from other free groups and theatres in the sense that we erase borders and claim to manage anyway. We are also different because we thematize some of the unknown stories, and because we choose to work on projects that may not be economically profitable. We choose to stand by our beliefs no matter what, at whatever cost.

We experience that we provide children with security and a firm platform in life. They dare to stand up in the newspaper and say: we are against larger schools! Young people who have moved on to other types of education return to testify that their years with us were absolutely wonderful. Sooner of later they will occupy positions where they will see the importance of culture. Meeting young people their age from Russia will also be profitable in the long run.

I hope the theatre makes a difference to people here at the municipality of Sør-Varanger. I hope we can. We are not good enough, but we will be. We will become more visible now on the 'city stage' more than the theatre's 'Tuesday in march' program. Our visibility should not depend on arranging large festivals or stage productions.

Since 1994, the Samovar theatre has cooperated with the high school. The students are offered the opportunity to stage a paper instead of writing it. In this work we encounter a lot of 18-year-olds in their last year of sixth form. The municipality arranges meetings for people who return home. I have been to a couple of them to inform about our theatre. I have talked to these people, and I have had the pleasure of discovering that increasingly more people have the courage to choose differently, as opposed to the time I chose to apply to the theatre academy. This is how it was: you will never succeed, you will starve to death, and what will you become and all the rest of it. When considering the occupational choices made by the young in Kirkenes today, and the young people we meet, we discover that they think differently. Several have the courage to go for an artistic education, creative types of education within music or theatre, having to do with creative art.

After Sydvaranger was closed down the company's 'housing stock' was sold to the inhabitants in Kirkenes, and all the parks were put in the hands of the

municipality. This municipality has not been used to running anything at all. After all these years with industry as the main area of employment, they have had a hard time coming to terms with the fact that the community has to create employment in other sectors.

But I also believe that these things are about to change, although it is a mean battle to fight. One woman, who is a year younger than I am, is putting herself forward as a candidate for the mayoralty. She is criticized by her own party, by the grumpy old dogs. They hassle her because she represents other values, the so-called soft values such as culture, while the old boys talk of quay constructions and the like. This is how it is.

Fifth sequence: An unusual enterprise in a small place: the feeling of city ache

I am the kind of person who has to be on the move all the time. I cannot be in just one place. I always search for new milieus, new possibilities. I have the theatre craft as my tool and I am confident of my competence. You are more visible in a small local community and you get feedback – both good and bad. In a city you are one among others. It is easier to discover things in the country-side. I remember being very frustrated for a while when, wherever I went, people greeted me not as 'Bente' but as 'the Samovar Theatre'. I was going nuts because I was constantly associated with the theatre. Why couldn't anyone see the real me, and see that I was more than the theatre? Wherever I went, the Samovar Theatre was constantly at my tail, because all people could talk about was theatre. I suppose they thought that if they wanted to talk to me, they had to talk about theatre. It was very tiring for me, but I have become more relaxed now. When *I* was my only concern, I became very frustrated, but now that I have children my focus is on *them* rather than *me*. I cannot waste time being frustrated any more.

I actually think the identity of the theatre has changed over the years, at least in relation to the local community. It took some time for the local community to cherish the presence of the Samovar Theatre, and to become proud of it. I don't think they realized the purpose of the theatre at first, and lots of people still believe the theatre is run by the local county. In a way, having a theatre in Kirkenes is now taken for granted. It is something to be proud of. We have never officially threatened to close down or asked people to fight for us, but we have actually received extra grants in times of great economical need. When times have been really hard, we have been able to manage because we receive operating subsidies from the county of Sør-Varanger.

When you get city ache you simply have to go to a city. The definition of a city is a street that never ends, or a place where you can drink cappuccino, or be where nobody knows you. I get it when I have been here a little too long, or when I have worked a lot and have been very visible. Visibility is when there has been a lot of publicity in the papers and when people come up to me to tell me how nice they think it is. Of course this is pleasant but when there has been too much of it I get city ache.

Sometimes I become fed up with being in this place, and then I know I have to get to a city. In these situations, and especially during the first years, I consistently went to Copenhagen. Now I travel to Finland. I travel to recharge the

batteries, and in order to experience a more pulsating life, to observe people I don't know in the streets.

Sometimes, it becomes too safe here in Kirkenes, and then I think: Well, there has to be some excitement too. You need challenges! When it gets too safe, I have gone wandering behind Kværner Kimek. You may suddenly get the urge to see something different from the streets you have been wandering; or suddenly think: Is there a street in which I have never wandered here in Kirkenes? There is no such street, and that makes me panic.

'I CANNOT REMEMBER WHAT MY IDENTITY WAS WHEN I MOVED HERE, BUT I BELIEVE IT HAS CHANGED'

A shift from the narrator's voice to my own reflections ought to be respectful both of the narrator and the need for theorizing. I choose first to move through a reflection on each sequence before relating the narrative to some more specific themes within the research field of identity and life course.

The first sequence involves transitional points in life where upbringing and socialization form Bente's norms and values. This part of the narrative traces memories from an early point of identity formation. Her parents and her upbringing with 'freedom with responsibility' are portrayed as important elements in giving a 'boost' to choosing an unusual education that later ends in starting an artistic business. Choosing theatre as a work place seems related to the cultural milieu in which her mother worked and an upbringing where creativity and chores were emphasized. The sense of place is also emphasized: by growing up in an industrious and production-oriented culture where a cornerstone factory plays the major role in the small community, she experiences 'what makes the wheels of society turn'. In addition she learns hardship by taking care of a sick father, being raised to be independent and not to leave work unfinished. Her entrepreneurial identity seems to be constructed with reference to values like hardship, sobriety, creativity/inventiveness and independence.

Time and place shift in the second sequence, where we see transitions with regard to choice of education and work life. This takes her to Oslo, Tromsø and Copenhagen, all large cities compared to Kirkenes. Talking about 'no national borders', she places her education and career in a wider Scandinavian context. Drawing on her childhood memories from Kirkenes she looks at theatre education with different eyes from her classmates. *Her* theatre shall be something different and becoming an entrepreneur involves more than acting on stage. With regard to her sense of place she draws on her heritage. She uses the opportunity to establish her enterprise at a historic location, 'Malmklang', a building which since 1909 had served as a

culture house, starting off the revue tradition in Kirkenes. To 'go back north' seems to be a part of Bente's entrepreneurial vision; she returns to Kirkenes with a conscious idea of how to combine resources and ideas into a novel business.

The third sequence moves Bente's thoughts to designing the premises of the new business. The construction of the mission of the theatre seems to be related to the first two parts of the narrative. Bente chooses three main visions that seem to be related to what she has experienced as a child with a mother who worked in the theatre milieu, stories that reflect the cultural heritage of the area where she grew up, and a collaborative element that revolves around what she labels 'no borders' in her sense of place. In creating the theatre, the 'self' is clearly visible. Bente wants to build up competence in working with amateurs and performing 'stories that count' to inhabitants scattered all over the small villages in Finnmark. By rooting the professional productions in a mixture of world literature and local history, the plays become both global and local at the same time. The heritage of the people on the Northern peninsula is the historic theme that frames the reference for creating the identity of the theatre. The role of cultural entrepreneurship is prevalent, as the identity of the theatre is built on stories from different cultures: Saami, ethnic Norwegian, Finnish, and Russian. This exemplifies Hawley and Hamilton's (1996) claim that objectives of entrepreneurship are culture-specific in that the entrepreneur cannot be separated from the cultural context. In this case the role of ethnicity and diversity becomes prevalent in the creation of a cultural enterprise. Her theatre reminds us of a travelling ensemble – copying the nomadic way of life that has long traditions among the Saami people in Finnmark. To me Bente seems to integrate the two tasks Lett (1987) says that humans address through culture: the maintenance of human life and the maintenance of human identity. She maintains a modern cultural enterprise, a free scenic theatre, while at the same time preserving the cultural heritage of humans living up north: a nomadic pattern of living.

Her theatre also breaks down national barriers by acknowledging the knowledge and expertise of Finland and Russia. By drawing on these resources, she manages to carve out an Arctic – not just a Norwegian – vision of a small theatre. Her networking seems to remind us of the characteristics of community entrepreneurs where personal networks enable them to communicate identity and pride to community members (Johannisson and Nilsson, 1989).

The identity as community entrepreneur also comes through in the fourth sequence. Among other things a community entrepreneur 'can be seen as taking advantage of and improving the interrelationships between social and economic aspects of communal life' (Johannisson and Nilsson,

1989, p. 6). The vision that 'the theatre shall do something with people' is revealed. The role of the business as an agent of change can be viewed in the light of the fact that Kirkenes is an 'adjustment community'. The enterprise becomes a vehicle for Bente's wish to improve the local community. Bente and the Samovar Theatre become important in the transition from an industrial and production-oriented culture to a community where people can also make a living from 'creative' and artistic work. Both the third and the fourth sequence show how cultural processes in the community and the region serve as inputs for the entrepreneurial identity as well as being an obstacle to change due to the existence of Bente's work. The entrepreneurial identity is both mobilized through the cultural context as well as becoming a strong mobilizer for her action.

The transitional point in the fifth and last sequence is a reflection of the personal challenges of being a visible person in a small community. In people's eyes Bente's personal identity melts into that of the theatre. Her sense of place becomes different – it is too small to offer her any anonymity. The last sequence speaks more than the others to the future.

The transitional points, connected to childhood, education, start-up of the business, visions of the business and reflections of living in a small community make up a storyline in Bente's narrative that speaks to how she coped with the personal past, the present and the future. The life story then resides at a level of identity where the developing self seeks a temporal coherence (McAdams, 1996). Growing up – moving out – coming home is the underlying dynamic in her narrative. We see that the story integrates the individual's reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future – rendering her lifetime in terms of a beginning, middle and an ending (McAdams, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1988). In using McAdams (1996) framework for analysing life stories I see that its ideological setting is clearly cultural and community-oriented. Starting a theatre seems to be a life-long project, where its ideology is founded in childhood. It contains crucial episodes, scenes that stand out in bold print in the life story. Such episodes are for instance the professional that stayed at Bente's house when she was a child, who later turned out to be one of her strongest supporters as adults. Another point is her failing to be admitted to the Theatre Academy in Oslo. A third is the success with the theatre school which culminates in being able to have a blind and deaf student playing in a Shakespeare play. The importance of these episodes is not so much what actually happened but what the memory of the key events symbolizes today in the context of the overall life narrative (McAdams, 1996).

The humanistic view on identity creation explains parts of Bente's narrative. Her story contains identity development that reflects continuity and consistency, where pieces in prior periods in life are used to explain events

in the next sequence. For example, I interpret Bente's utterances in the first sequence where she uses her childhood (not so tender relationships) as an explanation for thoughts in the present time (being conscious about cuddling her nine-year-old on the lap) as an example of the need for portraying consistency and rationality in life. The organizing function of self (Jackson and Warin, 2000; Marsh and Hattie, 1996) becomes prevalent in Bente's story. She integrates information from various periods in life to tell a story that gives meaning to her choices in life, seen as an adult. Her entrepreneurial endeavour comes out as a coherent picture: as a child she got hooked on the amateur milieu theatre. The place for 'working with all aspects of theatre' was Kirkenes. It had a suitable locality and was surrounded by a culture and history that provided her with stories to tell. The consistency in her entrepreneurial identity deals with social change: to relate her artistic side of her business to a social context where the stories matter to people.

Also the post-structuralistic perspective explains the narrative. The dynamic nature of self comes especially through with regard to her sense of place where the physical living between national borders becomes a tool for expanding her own personal borders. The ultimate goal becomes to not predict the future. The shifting nature of self between a 'placebound' to a 'placeloose' identity becomes prevalent. The multifaceted nature of her identity seems to be related to what Thrift (2003) writes about the modern idea of space as undergoing continual construction through the agency of things encountering each other in more or less organized circulations (p. 96). This relational view of space fits the dynamic nature of Bentes' identity. She shifts from using the strength of the local community, the ties to Russian and Finnish theatre milieus, and the anonymity of being in a large city. The post-modern characteristics of her entrepreneurial identity becomes the fluid transparency between regions, countries, languages and cultures. Her business becomes an artefact of that.

Going against the grain is a metaphor that highlights her story. It is my interpretation that Bente goes against the grain in different ways: firstly, she fits the classical 'hard-headed' entrepreneur that goes against the wind. Secondly there are different grains in her story: her past, her life story, the cultural context of the theatre. Thirdly, she has an innovative way of doing theatre: the Samovar is not a classical repertory theatre, and Bente builds concrete relationships with her context, with people she meets during her teaching, at the places where she moves and in the community of Kirkenes. She blurs the boundary between theatre, education and community development. The narrative constructs entrepreneurship 'against the grain', which demonstrates that parts of entrepreneurship deal with cultural change, and requires the passion to cling to social anomaly, to use the words of Hjorth,

Johannisson and Steyaert (2003, p. 101). Bente's identity as an entrepreneur 'going against the grain' shows itself as a multiply-oriented endeavour.

The entrepreneurial identity as going against the grain is clearly an action-oriented metaphor. Identity becomes a source of mobilization. Her identity construction involves choices that over time lead to entrepreneurial decisions. The five sequences contain transitional points in this movement: (1) a childhood with cultural foundation and hardship in upbringing; (2) creativity and independence in choosing an education; (3) creating an Arctic niche as the basis for the theatre; (4) using the theatre as an agent of change; (5) experience of city ache in a small community. These transitional points become markers of Bente's moves forward in developing herself and her business. There is progress in her story, the transitional points reflect how Bente copes with challenges and overcomes problems. Her identity is developing over time – it becomes a force that mobilizes action. The entrepreneurial identity is negotiated, fluid and contextual (Howarth, 2002). Its temporal dimension over the life course contributes to the entrepreneurship literature – identity evolves over time and is related to handling transitions in life.

The narrative also demonstrates the spatial dimension of identity. Bente's life course is embedded in a multicultural history which seems to make her a visionary entrepreneur. This finding is in line with identity studies which claim that culture cannot be eliminated from identity construction (Howarth, 2002). Bente's entrepreneurial identity is rooted in various cultural and historical inputs – also made through moves between rural and urban areas – of the Northern peninsula. Travelling between places – signifies the spatial dimension of the entrepreneurial identity. The nomadic aspect of the theatre seems to reflect her philosophy: 'My goal is not to predict the future'. It reminds us of what Hjorth, Johannison and Steyaert (2003) name the 'entrepreneurial lifestyle', which is a destabilising of normalities so as to create the need for new organisations and new styles of living. The challenge of place also becomes credible as it has a clear north-south axis: Bente's small free scenic theatre in the peripheral north seems to work as a regional opposition against the established state theatres in the urban south. To be an entrepreneur for Bente is to oppose existing norms for running a theatre, to do something different.

In reflecting on Bente's story I marvel over one stunning theme: Why has Bente become a person whose goal is not to predict the future? Why does she seem to look at the theatre education in Copenhagen with different eyes from her classmates? Why is she always 'on the road', always seeking challenges? Drawing on life-course theory, we can interpret her childhood as pretty tough with a mother who was often absent and a sick father who needed care before dying when Bente was 15. Bente copes with this in a

way that stimulates her agency, which seems to be in line with findings in life-course research; individual reactions to social change affects agency in later life (Elder and Shananan, 1997). Her narrative reflects the fact that she in later life does not seek safety and structure, but rather an ambitious career which requires individual decisions, creativity and extrovert behaviour.

Bente's entrepreneurial identity is a result of a reflexive process where transitions over the life course have been dealt with retrospectively. The findings in this chapter can be related to newer findings in identity theory, where individuals search for identity in a multifaceted and boundaryless manner (Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). The entrepreneurial identity in this chapter seems likewise – it is both temporally and spatially complex. Lindgren and Wåhlin (2001) point out that the identity construction is a process and a travelling between different discourses. In Bente's narrative there is not one factor, such as profession or gender, that seems to colour her identity construction. On the contrary, she seems to reflect with reference to both internal processes of becoming an adult and how to improve society through her entrepreneurship. The transitions seem to mobilize reflections on how her life has evolved. It reminds me of how Lindgren and Wåhlin (2001) argue that crisis or other important changes force people to develop a more complete view of themselves and to listen more to their own voices (p. 373). I conclude that the identity construction in this chapter deals with an ontological aspect – a theory of being (Somers, 1994). I find that an analysis of identity construction and life course contributes to the entrepreneurship field in that a narrative contributes to the understanding of becoming an entrepreneur. It further contributes by the fact that the life stories produce exercises in self-interpretation (Baumeister and Newman, 1994). When entrepreneurs in dialogue with researchers tell their life stories, it is as much to satisfy their need for making sense of their experiences. This aspect of identity construction can give us insights into the nature of entrepreneurial thinking and reflection.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The narrative in this chapter represents a delicate mosaic of utterances of how entrepreneurship is socially and culturally situated in a person's life course. 'Going against the grain' serves as a metaphor when reading the identity formation in the narrative. Bente's entrepreneurial identity seems always to be the 'odd woman' or the 'ugly duckling'. She never seems to behave in a way that is socially expected of her. Going against the grain also becomes a picture of how she survives. Her entrepreneurial identity is to

search for challenges, something that she finds when living on the North Calotte with geographical space, a rich history and ethnic diversity.

Her agency is a mobilizing factor for coping with transitions as shown in the five sequences in the narrative. The sequences give meaning to the development of entrepreneurial identity over time. They cut across different parts of her life path and show the temporal aspect of identity. The sequences are also relational in character. In constructing her identity Bente involves central actors in her life. The narrative is clearly embedded in a societal context. The sequences seem to draw a connection between life course and choices leading to an entrepreneurial career. Life-course theory insists on the dual identification of age with both people's lives and the surrounding social structure (Riley, 1998). The life course perspective emphasizes the significance of a person's upbringing, adolescence, education and work life. Bente's narrative story certainly develops from her reflection on her 'self' in the two first sequences to a more organizational identity in the third and fourth sequence. The fifth seems to involve reflection about whether Kirkenes is a place to age.

'Going against the grain' also captures the moving out and coming home process in her story. Her identity is to be on the move, she never makes the task easy for herself. Her life is both settled and unstructured at the same time. The narrative is an opportunity to communicate this ambiguity. The strength of the narrative is to convey how entrepreneurship both is a result of consistency and inconsistency. The contribution to the entrepreneurship field is to uncover the nomadic lifestyle through a life course. The narrative shows the potential of life-story research for identifying more detailed processes in human life that matter for entrepreneurial decisions. The contribution is also that this happens through the stories of entrepreneurs themselves and not through the vocabulary of researchers.

I claim that constructing entrepreneurial identity through life stories – as reflected in the narrative in this chapter – can enhance the entrepreneurship field in at least three ways. Firstly, it may add a new dimension to theorizing about entrepreneurship. It gives us knowledge of how transitional points make individuals grasp new directions in life, breaking patterns and choosing their own way. Breaking with conformity is a highly relevant issue in the entrepreneurship field and I claim that life stories and life-course theory is an interesting track for entrepreneurial scholars to follow. Secondly, I claim that entrepreneurs' own voices have been missing in entrepreneurial research. Experiences, reflections and discourses from the entrepreneurs themselves have been an unused potential in research so far. My approach builds on experience with action research where practitioners' knowledge is considered equal to that of the researchers (Pålshaugen, 1992).

With reference to work on enterprise development projects my urge for future entrepreneurship research is to take advantage of the situated knowledge of those being studied. Life-story research and also memory work are good approaches to do so. Thirdly, I see the need for paying more attention to the construction of entrepreneurial identity through life stories, as they are far too few in the present research agenda. Future studies should choose cases as different as possible in order to demonstrate the variety of entrepreneurship as culturally situated and as located in time and space. The research field needs the richness of stories by people who constitute the field we are studying.

5. Storytelling to be real: narrative, legitimacy building and venturing

Ellen O'Connor

INTRODUCTION

> Emerging organizations are elaborate fictions of proposed possible future states of existence (Gartner et al. 1992, p. 17).

Before a company exists, it is a story about an imagined future. As the company comes into being, it still remains largely fictional although the entrepreneurs 'act as if' the imagined future is at hand (Gartner et al., 1992). But entrepreneurs are in the business of business, not storytelling, which depends on others' believing and 'buying in' by investing money and/or other resources, for which they expect a return when belief becomes product and profit. Sociologists and organization theorists describe this as a process of legitimacy building (Suchman, 1995; Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). Suchman (1995, p. 582) emphasizes that in order to provide legitimacy, accounts about a company's activities 'must mesh both with the larger belief systems and with the experienced reality of the audience's daily life'. This chapter presents this 'meshing' as a verbal process of intertextuality (see below). Entrepreneurs operate in a world of long-standing conversations. To achieve legitimacy, their conversations must engage with these pre-existing, ongoing, and encompassing conversations.

The study answers calls for research on (1) the earliest phase of venturing (Schoonhoven and Romanelli, 2001b, p. 403; Aldrich, 2000, p. 14; Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, p. 664); (2) knowledge about the entrepreneur's day-to-day work (Gartner et al., 1992, p. 238; Aldrich and Baker, 1997, p. 394; Katz and Gartner, 1988, p. 433); and (3) the processes by which an entrepreneur makes meaning (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, p. 666). It focuses on legitimacy building during the initiative phase of a startup. Although entrepreneurship studies state the importance of building legitimacy, and researchers have identified claim-making as a key part of the process at the industry level (Rindova and Fombrun, 2001; Rao, 2001), little is known about legitimacy building at the individual-entrepreneurial level and at the vital stage of initiation.

What stories do entrepreneurs tell to build legitimacy at the initiative stage, and how do they formulate and develop these claims? In particular, how and to what extent do they modify them as circumstances change – especially if key audiences do not accept the claims as legitimate? This study examined the narratives of an entrepreneurial team pursuing acceptance and legitimacy over a critical 12-month period, from January 1999 to 2000, that included (1) the recruitment of the team, (2) the legal incorporation of the company, (3) the securing of angel funding, (4) the building of two prototypes, and (5) the first sales calls for the first test product. The timing of the study coincided with the Internet boom and bust, which dramatically affected the legitimacy-building storytelling as detailed below.

The study departs from the premise that the fundamental action in human organizing is speech (Winograd and Flores, 1986). Legitimacy building emerges in conversations that entrepreneurs have among themselves, their audiences, and their environments. In narrative terms, legitimacy building may be defined as the pursuit of intertextuality (O'Connor, 2000), or the grafting of the story line of the new company onto existing relevant, generally accepted, and taken-for-granted story lines. The study presents a case in which entrepreneurs first decided what they wanted to build, then how they would legitimize it in the eyes of others. This is a frequent occurrence in high-technology innovation (O'Connor, 2000). They engaged in many conversations with actual and prospective partners, advisors, and investors. Additionally, as noted above, the background circumstances of these conversations changed significantly over a period of several months, making the 'taken-for-granted' aspect of legitimacy more fluid than the phrase suggests.

The primary theoretical contribution of the study is to reformulate legitimacy building as a highly observable social and linguistic activity, thereby making the practice of legitimacy building easier to study empirically. The primary practical contribution is a case study of legitimacy building as a social and linguistic practice conducted in a dynamic, experimental, and improvisational way. The study supports and illustrates Gartner et al.'s (1992) description of the emerging nature of entrepreneurial behavior. It lends insight into legitimacy-building processes in the context of significant 'turnover and turbulence' (Aldrich and Martinez, 2001, p. 43), the 'bubbling cauldron of organizational soup' (Kaufman, 1985), and situations of change, ambiguity, and equivocality that are the ongoing context in which entrepreneurial action is embedded.

The study has three main parts: (1) a literature review and clarification of the contribution; (2) a description of the research methods used and the research context; and (3) the presentation and analysis of data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The entrepreneurship literature states the importance of building legitimacy (Aldrich and Baker, 2001) and securing buy-in (Schoonhoven and Romanelli, 2001a, p. 389) for ventures suffering from the liability of newness. Founders of 'entirely new activities, by definition, lack the familiarity and credibility that constitute the fundamental basis of interaction' (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, p. 647). The life of the new enterprise may hang in the balance (Aldrich and Baker, 2001, p. 213). Literature has focused on legitimacy building at the general and theoretical levels (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994; Suchman, 1995) or at macro (industry) levels (Rao, 2001, Rindova and Fombrun, 2001), but little is known about individual entrepreneurs in the process of building legitimacy.

Suchman (1995, p. 574) defined legitimacy as 'a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions'. He delineated three main types of legitimacy: pragmatic (self-interested), moral (a 'prosocial' logic whereby the activity is collectively deemed to be right and proper), and cognitive (based on collective, cultural, and 'unspoken orienting assumptions'). Entrepreneurship researchers have modified Suchman's original classification somewhat, for example, as per Aldrich and Fiol (1994), Aldrich and Baker (2001) associated pragmatic legitimacy with organizational learning and focused primarily on cognitive and sociopolitical legitimacy (a modified version of moral legitimacy). Aldrich defined cognitive legitimacy as 'the acceptance of a new kind of venture as a taken-for-granted feature of the environment', the highest form of which is acceptance 'as part of the sociological and organizational landscape' (Aldrich, 1999, p. 230). This chapter focuses on pragmatic, or exchange, legitimacy as per Suchman (1995, p. 578), meaning that the entrepreneurs used legitimacy-building narratives to raise money from self-interested parties. However, it also focuses on cognitive legitimacy in that in order to secure the buy-in, the entrepreneurs had to mesh their company narrative with pre-existing, ongoing, and encompassing story lines.

According to Suchman, the first two forms of legitimacy 'rest on discursive evaluation,' the last, cognitive legitimacy, does not; in fact, vigorous defenses of endeavors actually undermine their taken-for-grantedness (Suchman, 1995, p. 585). But constituencies need to comprehend and trust the new venture (Aldrich and Baker, 2001, p. 213), and founders accomplish this through speech and conversation. A significant part of this entrepreneurial work is verbal. To secure legitimacy, founders must concentrate on 'framing the unknown in such a way that it becomes believable' (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, p. 651); they must 'engineer consent, using powers of persuasion

and influence to overcome the skepticism and resistance of guardians of the status quo' (Dees and Starr, 1992, p. 96). Legitimacy 'involves the existence of a credible collective account or rationale explaining what the organization is doing and why' (Suchman, 1995, p. 575 referencing Jepperson, 1991). But apart from these general references to founders' use of verbal strategies such as issue framing, symbolism, rhetorical techniques, and charismatic leadership styles (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, p. 651), there is little empirical research about what entrepreneurs say to whom in their pursuit of legitimacy.

Industry-level studies have, however, unpacked some of the dynamics of legitimacy building. Rao (2001) noted the importance of contests for legitimacy building in the automotive industry. Rindova and Fombrun (2001) constructed a typology of claims made at the superstructure, sociostructure, and infrastructure levels of the coffee industry: identity and expertise claims, leadership claims based on network position, and resource claims. But they did not address the pivotal importance, role, and workings of claims at the individual-entrepreneurial level. For example, in telling the story of the evolution of the specialty coffee niche, the authors reference the history-changing work of Alfred Peet. However, apart from a general allusion based on first-hand reports as to Peet's 'intense personality and his conviction that his practices were "the right way" of doing things' and the example of his insistence that Starbucks founders learn how to roast coffee, no detail is provided as to how Peet actually did frame issues, make claims credible and compelling, or use powers of persuasion and influence. Finally, the literature does not address the relationship between the mere assertion of claims and the practical acceptance or rejection of them by others. At some level and with respect to key audiences, Peet's claims must have 'made sense', 'had value', and at the very least, assured 'against impending nonsense' (Suchman, 1995, p. 575). If legitimacy is socially constructed and develops from verbal actions such as claim making, with the result of cultivating others' trust, then researchers must look closely and carefully at founders' speech and interactions.

RESEARCH METHODS AND CONTEXT

The primary method used for data gathering was participant-observation (see below), and the primary method used for story analysis is Burke's pentad (1969). The pentad is a useful analytic device in that it permits a highly condensed summary of the rhetorical force of a narrative (O'Connor, 1995) according to the key dimensions of act (what the organization is doing, in this case, telling stories), agent (those building legitimacy), agency (how legitimacy is built, in this case, through intertextuality), scene (the

background context in which legitimacy building takes place), and purpose (to build legitimacy but also to succeed with other personal or organizational objectives, such as to make money). The distinctions set forth in pentadic analysis clarify the rhetorical and social force of particular story lines and are especially helpful when data are gathered and interpreted in context, meaning field-work methodology.

Field-based work provides a grounding in the unique, emerging contexts in which conversation takes place. Being on the scene day after day enables observation and contextualization of the direct and indirect social consequences. This contextual base is especially important and appropriate in business, where organizational members have shared histories and implicitly shared futures (O'Connor, 1997).

Furthermore, this study takes a narrative approach to the gathering, analysis, and presentation of findings. By this I mean the adoption of a theoretical stance that posits the narrative form as an essential logic used by human beings – social actors as well as researchers – for self-presentation, account-rendering, and sensemaking (Johnson, 1993; Linde, 1993; MacIntyre, 1981). In terms of research methodology, this narrative theoretical perspective leads to an emphasis on gathering stories in natural settings as people do their jobs (Orr, 1996), and more subtly, at the interpretive level, to a recursive contextualization process in which the researcher locates a story (for example, an account rendered in a research interview or told at a business meeting) as interrelating with other stories, for example, other historical accounts about or bearing on the same event (O'Connor, 2000). In naturally occurring business conversation, a research subject may reference events leading up to the telling of a story or may tell a story as an argument for a particular plan (Jameson, 2001). Because of the extent of shared history, the story could be as simple as a phrase, such as a reference to 'the meltdown of 2000', which invokes the shared memory of a dramatic rise followed by a perception of hype and great loss of economic value. Although this is a mere sentence fragment, its meaning and experience are so well known and widely shared that no detail is needed. Organizational speech has many such references (O'Connor, 2000) and this research is itself recursive in nature in that there are only fragments; however, following a narrative theory and logic, these relate to one another and to what may be conceptualized as overarching story lines.

Based on this narrative approach, and the perspective of intertextuality, this study positions the entrepreneur in an overarching story line of legitimacy building accomplished through dialogue. As interactions occurred and especially as legitimacy claims were deemed to have failed, the legitimacy-seeking story line was rewritten three distinct times. I was engaged both as an observer and an actor (see below) in this process closely for ten

months, from January '99 until January '00, spending about 20 hours per week onsite at the company and supplementing these hours via regular e-mail and phone conversations. I had a functional role, and all data were gathered and produced in this context. Primary data were conversations noted by hand, e-mails subsequently printed out, successive drafts of business plans and the investor 'sales pitch', and personal notes summarizing daily events.

My involvement in the company came through a former coworker, whom the founder had recruited to join his team as Chief Technology Officer (CTO), in which capacity he would oversee the technical architecture of the product. He approached me about helping to launch the company on account of my experience and contacts in the nonprofit sector. Based on my previous work experience with the CTO, my availability, and the considerable startup activity going on about which I knew nothing but thought I should know something, I agreed. There was no salary but only equity (repurchased by the company in 2001).

Within just a few weeks, due to new leadership and changing circumstances (see below), my role was changed to focus on strategic and market research. The founder had observed my habit of extensive notetaking and asked me to attend and document important meetings with key prospective constituents. I then would circulate the notes among the cofounders for informational and feedback purposes, the latter being especially important when meeting with prospective customers and investors. So, although this study was never a formal research project, the nature of the work I did and the documentation I produced in my work role naturally led to a corpus of data directly relating to legitimacy building. In fact, from my earliest involvement, I formulated my contribution as writing a story for the company – a credible, persuasive, and worthy story – the basic definition of legitimacy. Thus early on, I implicated myself in the legitimacy-building plot through (1) my entry into the company, which came by virtue of a high level of trust in a former colleague, and (2) my story-writing work.

Thus, concerning the preparation of this study, the research, including the background reading on legitimacy building, was retrospective. My project is itself narrative in that it involves grafting the story of my work with the venture onto currently relevant theorizing about legitimacy building in entrepreneurship. This may be seen as both a strength and a weakness: the latter, in that at no moment in real time was I doing academic research on legitimacy building; the former, in that my central task was to secure legitimacy with investors through story writing in the conventional professional sense (market and strategic research and business-plan writing). However, in now analyzing these data with an academic lens, a distinct pattern is observable: From start to finish, the venture went through

four different stories, each marked by changes registering at each level of Burke's pentad (see Table 5.1, end of chapter). These changes highlight the dynamic, experimental, and improvisational nature of pragmatic legitimacy building in the initiative stages of a venture.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Founding Story and Legitimacy

The following detailed account of the startup and its pursuit of legitimacy building is based on my notes documenting (1) an account of historical events about the company's founding given to me by my former colleague, Morgan, shortly before I joined the company; (2) an account of the company's purpose as told to me in an interview with Bart, the initial CEO, in which he was persuading me to join the company; and (3) a planning meeting in which my contribution as network-builder in the nonprofit sector (my initial role) was discussed. These occurred in January and February of 2000. The founding story includes the following main parts: Harry's (the founder's), reason for founding the company, his vision for where the company was headed, and his plan for executing that vision.

In introducing me to the company, Morgan explained that he had met Harry at a party and that the two of them spoke extensively about Harry's idea for a startup. Morgan said that in the fall of 1999, Harry had a series of frustrating experiences in which he became increasingly disgruntled with his cell-phone company. He had problems with poor reception, dropped calls, and lost messages. Then he tried to cancel the service but it did not stop and bills kept coming. Harry thought that he could not be the only customer with this problem and speculated that individual frustrated customers represented an untapped force that could be harnessed by the Internet. If other frustrated customers could 'band together' (Harry's original expression), sending one strong (backed by numbers) message to the company, then they could 'get results'. But acting individually they could never be heard. In essence, Harry envisioned an Internet service whereby users could click on a particular social issue, see what postings were there (for example, petitions being filed, complaints being registered), and add their name to this cause or support that particular campaign. The idea was that over time potentially huge numbers of people could be mobilized to exert pressure and effect change.

Morgan was a software developer. In the year that I had worked with him, he had twice passed up chances to join a startup and felt that he couldn't wait any longer ('Everyone I know is doing a startup', he said).

Also, he said he liked Harry's idea. Once Morgan was on board as CTO, Harry sought a proven CEO and tapped a former colleague of his, Bart, whose e-commerce company had just been acquired. From the stories that Morgan told me about Bart (for example, how much money he had made and how, whom he knew), I gathered that his primary job would be to raise capital. When I first met Bart, he told me that he wanted to do something that could help change the world. He had a close friend who had a charitable cause, 'Save the [sea] Turtles'. Bart said that he saw a use for the Internet in which he could link his friend with people elsewhere in the world who shared this same cause. They could band together and do good things. Bart's friend knew Woody Harrelson and also a famous activist who had a track record mobilizing environmentalists on college campuses. He lived in Los Angeles, and Bart was going to try to get him to move to northern California and join the company. Bart's plan was to go to his wealthy friends and get a few hundred thousand dollars from each of them based on his successful track record. In March of 2000, when I met with him, he estimated that he would be able to raise 'a few million' in a few weeks.

The company would adopt a membership-acquisition business model and the main revenue would come from advertising. The goal was to get 10 million members in one year (Hotmail had 12 million users in 18 months, and its success was held up by Harry as both an example and a goal). The primary target was activists. There was debate about the number of activists, how to find them, and how to organize them; but the prospect went unquestioned. Eventually the membership acquisition strategy called for signing up (1) big nonprofit organizations, where the presence of significant numbers of activists was assumed; (2) proven activist e-mail networks; and (3) high-profile individual activists. The growth strategy was described as 'viral', referring to word-of-mouth and extensive e-mail forwarding. In essence the story was about an Internet application to organize people by common causes, and the business would succeed based on high visit rates and advertising revenue from 'eyeballs' (see Table 5.1, end of chapter).

Over the next several weeks, I contacted members of my local network to gauge interest levels and assess the viability of the story. I learned that e-mail activism was not well developed. Online donation mechanisms were just beginning and were not proven; also, a significant number of members were not online and business was still done the old-fashioned way. More importantly, I learned that the biggest nonprofits were more preoccupied with getting their desired message out than with either hearing from their membership or facilitating their membership in taking on other or even related causes. The assumption that nonprofits were activist havens was virtually discredited. Although activists were the target market, it was almost impossible to come up with a credible figure as to the number of activists

in the world; and the question as to how to reach and influence them was even more difficult. Finally, questions as to the compatibility of the nonprofit and activist world with the world of dot-coms were raised. One memorable occasion was during a lunch with two well-known e-activists in Berkeley, who cautioned that the '.com' suffix would immediately raise eyebrows: 'How do you make your money? In what potentially corrupt scene are we participating by virtue of doing business with you?' The activists advised us to build a viable for-profit business first and then return to them for partnering after the money matters were resolved.

In the meantime, Bart failed to raise capital. It was March of 2000. The Internet 'bubble burst' has been subsequently located at this time, but at that moment, all that was known was that e-commerce was exposed as unprofitable, that Internet startups were losing vast amounts of money rapidly ('bleeding') with no basis for hopes of return in the foreseeable future, and that the prevailing business model based on 'clicks', 'hits', 'land grab', and 'eyeballs' was discredited. The NASDAQ (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation system) and the NYSE (New York Stock Exchange) fell sharply. During March, Bart raised only $50,000 from a personal friend who had become rich by investing in Bart's previous company. Bart said that his colleagues were very nervous about giving money and that some of them had lost vast amounts of wealth. Bart also said he was tired of doing startups and that he wanted to take on a more advisory role.

Several months later, in the fall of 2000, I needed access to a protected document and asked Morgan to give me the password. He said it was 'PMiHBaMga'. He explained to me that this represented the first letter of each word in the sentence, '[Company name] is Harry, Bart, and Morgan's great adventure'. I thought this helped plot the company and its founders into a romantic, epic-heroic plot about changing the world, as is typical of many high technology companies. It also had a fraternal twist to it and recalls the young-men-on-an-adventure plot evidenced elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 2 by Boutaiba). Also, one day over coffee Morgan shared with me that Harry's true motive was 'subversive, to overthrow capitalism'. Although this was probably an exaggeration, Harry's storytelling about his reason for founding the company always emphasized consumers banding together to fight and remedy corporate irresponsiveness.

The entrepreneurial team was still forming. Harry and Morgan were joined by Rich, who became VP (Vice President) of Engineering. His role was to oversee the building of the product. Harry and Rich had worked together at a previous company. When I asked Rich why he joined the company, he said that his wife had wanted to relocate from Austin, Texas to the Bay Area, where her family lived. He also told me a story of having

been 'cheated' out of his last project, an IPO (Initial Public Offering), and wanted 'do one right'. Rich did not seem interested in activism, organizing, or related topics. Harry also recruited Emil, another colleague from a previous company, who became Chief Operations Officer (COO), overseeing administration and operations (office space, equipment, payroll, legal matters, etc.). In addition, the founder's brother, Howard, was leaving his sales job with a major defense company in Japan to join the company. Harry said that Howard would be in charge of business development. In his story about joining the company, Howard said that he had been talking on the phone with his brother for months about the startup idea, and he finally decided it was something very exciting that he wanted to be a part of; also, he wanted to leave Japan and return to the US while his children were still very young. With Bart's failure to raise money and statement that he no longer wanted to be CEO, Howard took this role within just a few weeks of his arrival.

In my early conversations with Howard, to whom I was assigned to report, I was struck by his corporate-like manner. He spoke of the need for plans, targets, and above all, a convincing value proposition for the company. He also decided within a few weeks that the founding story was not viable. He had asked me to identify three specific nonprofit channels that would take us to at least one million members. Although I could find very large nonprofits, such as the YMCA (Young Mens Christian Association) and the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association), most of them had relatively weak Internet presence. I could not come up with the numbers. He also rejected the idea of viral-based growth, saying that investors disliked the unpredictability of these models. He began work on a business-plan document and especially on a believable way of generating significant returns. So as the first version of the company story line was scrapped, it is important to note (1) the background circumstances changed dramatically, that is, the belief that making money was not important and that the main factor in Internet success was 'real estate' was wholly discredited by the market; and (2) the CEO was unable to raise funds and stepped out of the role.

Ironically, the CEO, whose contacts, prior experience, and wealth were expected to confer virtually automatic legitimacy on and investments in the company, was himself discredited during this time. It is easy to dismiss his failure by saying that the business climate changed so dramatically, that obviously the founding story would not work. However, there is more to say. The Internet bubble burst aside, my research had shown major flaws in the story line. Activists were not easy to locate. They did not trust for-profit organizations. Viral campaigns could not be predicted or managed. However, most of us wanted it to be the case that activism could be facilitated, that positive social change could be accomplished through this

device, and that organizations really did care what their members thought. Certainly the founder remained fixed on his original story (which he continued to tell upon introducing people to the organization) that, based on his own frustrating experiences with big companies, he would build a product allowing people to 'band together to get results'. Perhaps this explains why the second version of the company story retained the founding story even though it was discredited.

Legitimacy has been defined as a meshing with relevant, taken-for-granted story lines. In the founding story, the company was grafted onto several plot lines. With Bart, Morgan and Harry as the key authors, the company was going to become a key player in a larger story about using the Internet for social change by grouping together people into masses with power rather than unorganized units. The principal researched and seemingly validated story lines for this were: (1) increasing consumer activism, even driven by corporations in developments such as customer-driven marketing; (2) the rise of the Internet and particularly prophecy-type stories about how the Internet would change business ('the new frictionless economy'), society (new and closer communities would form), and politics (democracy would be enhanced); (3) the idea that users could be accumulated en masse and that this mass could be readily converted to revenue dollars; and (4) the concept of the Internet as the new gold rush and that rapid movement into the market was more important than strategic movement. Along with these externally focused plot lines were the personal story lines of each of these founders in which the company figured as a secondary element. For Bart, the company was a means to help his friend and to do something for a good cause rather than just to make money. For Harry, it was a way to change the power dynamic between corporations and consumers and to rectify a past mistake (see below). For Morgan, it was a way to ride a compelling wave.

First Transitional Story and Legitimacy

The first transitional story, or first revision of the founding story, was authored by Harry and Howard; and the primary changes in intertextual references were the shift from eyeballs to profits and from consumer focus to business focus. In essence, the new story emphasized money-making by the company and fundraising by the entrepreneurial team. However, the founding story was kept in place as Morgan and Harry said they feared a 'loss of the vision'. In my opinion, the fact that Howard and Harry were brothers facilitated this rewriting, as Harry was distrustful generally but appeared to trust his brother. (Cautioning me not to say 'too much' about the company, he told me once, 'I don't trust anyone in this Valley.') Harry

had also contributed to his own problem, for he was still upset by the fact that, he claimed, he had invented the Web Shopping Cart but had failed to patent it and thus lost, in his estimation, great wealth. In essence, the transitional story was made up of two sub-stories: (1) the founding story, and (2) a business story, in which the product would facilitate communication between companies and customers. The link between the two was that the money derived from the latter would be used to subsidize or even fully support the former.

Howard began his work as CEO with a highly focused effort to find a demonstrable clientele for the product and investors to fund the company. He asked me to research the viability of the idea and write the findings in a persuasive manner for incorporation into the business plan. Bart had never asked for research or PowerPoint slides, but Howard insisted on having a professional, appealing package for prospective investors. This and the following section, about the second transitional story, draw mainly from the initial and numerous rewrites of both these documents.

Harry and Morgan wanted to keep an activism-oriented story in order to 'keep the vision'. Along with Howard, they eventually agreed on the following new story line: The company would have two parts and the product, two versions, one consumer-affiliated, the other, business-affiliated. The latter reformulated the product as an off-the-shelf customer service application that would appear on a company's website. By using the product, companies could learn what numbers of customers had complaints about what kinds of problems. The value proposition was the ability to retain customers efficiently by knowing exactly how to satisfy them. Howard and Harry described the latter as a 'dumbed down' version of the original idea because customers would not talk with one another, only with the company. The former, however, preserved the activist heart of the system in that consumers would be pursued through various means: opinion-registering (such as Epinions.com), complaint sites (for example, untied.org, the complaint site for United Airlines), chat rooms, and (once again) nonprofits. The governing logic, however, was still to achieve critical mass; only this time, the business-affiliated version was formulated as a financial vehicle for supporting the take-off of the consumer-affiliated (mass use) version. (The assumption, based on information provided by a friend who did market research for a large consulting company, was that companies would pay a few hundred thousand dollars for this capability.) Critical mass would be achieved by getting the capability installed on so many sites that the company would have the unique capability of aggregating these data and using them to build large consumer groups. There was a (described by Morgan as) 'subversive' element in that Harry in particular believed that if the company achieved the sought-after reach, then it would

have the ability to sell back data about groups of consumers to interested companies. 'We'll have the biggest network of G (groups) to B (business) sites,' he claimed, 'We'll be the G to B marketplace!'

But as the new story was being formulated, money was running short. Howard and Harry decided to pursue angel investors because the target amount of funds was considered too small for venture capitalists. Also, Harry was nervous about his idea and felt that VCs could not be trusted. He gave me strict warning not to describe the company to anyone without getting a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). The best angel prospect was deemed to be Greg, a former coworker of Rich's, the VP of Engineering. The two had worked closely together for a couple of years, Greg a salesman and Rich his supporting sales engineer. They were now personal friends. I thought it was interesting that when Greg met with Howard and Harry, he then went to lunch – alone – with Rich (Rich did not want to participate in the fund-raising effort; he said he wanted to focus on building the product. Nor did he attend any management meetings with Harry, Howard, Morgan and Emil, saying that meetings were a waste of time.) For about two weeks after the meeting, all I knew was that Greg was performing due diligence on the company. I subsequently learned that this meant he was running the idea by Bev, a former coworker of his from Sun Microsystems, who was now an independent consultant specializing in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. Bev approved the company's idea and Greg gave the company $500,000 – enough to make it to the next major milestone, which was to build a saleable product.

Howard asked me to meet with Bev in order to develop the story line for the business-affiliated version. Bev was viewed as an invaluable resource due to her CRM experience and contacts. (At and before that time, the company had no advisors, partners, or employees with any professional experience in customer relations, customer service, or related functions.) In addition, by meeting with her and incorporating her ideas, the founders felt that Greg would be reassured about his investment. Bev agreed to provide consulting services in exchange for equity. My job was to meet with her, run ideas by her, get her advice, and document her recommendations. In our first meeting, Bev argued that the product was really a CRM offering and that it was compelling because it filled a lack in the marketplace. Existing customer e-mail handling systems did not allow customers to help each other. Bev believed that this capability would not only relieve companies of significant time and labor burdens in replying to customer queries but also would get customers their answers more accurately and quickly. Bev illustrated this idea with a picture of a reverse pyramid showing that no one was serving a big midsection between the idiosyncratic, one-to-one inquiry (top of the pyramid) and the commonly held, mass-level, auto-reply issue

(bottom). This graphic was immediately incorporated into the investor pitch and the business plan along with a direct quote from her as an expert in CRM systems as to the uniqueness of the opportunity.

In the meantime, Rich and some programmers he had hired had built enough of a system to begin to demonstrate it. I was asked to accompany the founders on visits to potential users. Leads were obtained from personal networks, including my own. Whereas the founders saw these as sales calls, Greg viewed them as feedback opportunities. Harry persisted in his view of a system that would change the way business was done. Greg, on the other hand, saw this as a waste of time. 'People don't know what this is. They've never seen anything like it before. You can't sell it to them yet, but maybe you can pique their interest.' More colorfully, he added, 'Just forget this power to the people bullshit.'

My role was to listen and document the interactions carefully. Since not everyone could attend the meetings, my notes were distributed by e-mail and feedback was elicited. How did people react to the idea? What objections did they raise? Would the system solve their problems – why or why not? Naturally reactions varied, but in reviewing my notes from these sessions, there were a few common denominators: Audiences feared (1) that the system would operate in a suggestive, self-fulfilling manner to give customers complaints where they otherwise might not have had any; (2) that the system would obligate them to or lead customers to expect satisfactory resolutions to problems; and (3) that the system would create more work for them in terms of volume of contacts and need to address issues creatively. I had a difficult time when running the idea by some of my former students from business school. One, a VP of Marketing for a major wine company, told me quite frankly that his company was not interested in any mechanism that would increase communication with customers. I felt quite naive upon hearing this. And another former student of mine, a VP of Customer Relations for a major fast-food company subsequently told me the same thing, but a little worse: He said his company spent millions of dollars getting information about customers, only to ignore it in the end.

The dual versions of the story continued to be told. On the consumer-affiliated side, Howard decided to give the product away just in order to obtain a beta site. I approached several of my contacts from the nonprofit sector. They were brutally honest. One said that she was tired of high-tech companies approaching her as a guinea pig (apparently, many others had the same idea as Harry did) and that the issue was one of support – they could not afford the resources to either begin or continue a new Internet service. Even if they had help in the beginning, they knew that help would not be long-term or ongoing. Another contact stated that she wanted to see the concept proven by a paying customer before she would adopt it herself.

The largest contingent of e-mail activists that I could find belonged to an environmental organization that had its own proprietary Internet application – which it was in the process of selling to other nonprofits. Finally, phone interviews with executive directors indicated similar responses as the for-profit community: fears as to increased workload, implied promises, and a reluctance to increase member interaction. In short, we could not even give the product away to a nonprofit or to an activist. The transitional story, particularly the sub-story containing the founding story, became completely discredited. Of more concern to me, though, were the signs discrediting the business-focused story line. However, Bev's argument had proven persuasive with Greg; and it also convinced several friends of the entrepreneurial team – $750,000 had been raised.

This first version of a transitional story incorporated the original story line but added a pragmatic, revenue-generating component. In essence, the business-affiliated story would support the consumer activism story until a sufficiently critical mass was formed on the consumer side, allowing the company to fulfil its vision. In this way, although a profit motive was emphasized, the governing logic and anticipated outcome was still groups, mobilization, organizing, and change.

Second Transitional Story and Legitimacy

In the meantime, the market continued to drop; and it was clear that significant value and confidence in Internet startups, and high-tech as a whole, was not a temporary blip but rather a new economic state. In the fall, Howard decided to abandon the two-sided story and, with Bev's help, to concentrate on the business-affiliated version. In this story line, authored primarily by Howard and Bev, the product would replace existing CRM systems. This story line required extensive research on CRM companies, customers, products, and shortcomings. I looked into the history of Siebel, a long-time player in the market, and Kana, which was relatively new but had an advantage over Siebel by having started with Web applications (where Siebel was playing catch-up). I was humbled to learn that the Kana developers had spent one year researching e-mail handling processes at a major dot-com – whereas we did not even have a single person on the entrepreneurial team who had ever worked in customer relations, customer service, or related functions.

I interviewed several heads of customer service in local dot-coms. I learned that customer service was not considered to be a strategic part of these companies; rather, it was something of a maintenance function. Also, these individuals were not in senior management, and the personnel were considered to be low-level. This posed some problems because our system

was oriented to decision-making, action, and change. In fact, in an interview with a head of customer service at a major software company, I was told that the system would require completely new roles for customer service representatives (CSRs) and could ultimately completely recast the customer service function. Also, there were questions as to how the system would integrate with Siebel and Kana; and the truth is, we had no idea, nor did Harry take the question seriously as he envisioned the product as a complete replacement for these (however, most of the companies we talked to had at least some existing CRM product in place). In December, we came close to making a first sale, only to learn that the prospect company was being deluged by customer phone calls and that this, not e-mail, was their 'pain point'.

This second transitional story line plotted the venture squarely into existing territory, that is, the CRM marketplace. However, in my opinion, we never really planted ourselves in this story line. We had an armchair perspective at best and lacked in-the-trenches stories and experience necessary to bring this story line to life. Also, there remained a residual investment by the founders in the original change-the-world/save-the-world story line. Greg could not afford to put any more money into the company. Harry and Howard were becoming increasingly disenchanted at what they perceived as the excessively risk-averse climate. Yet Harry still talked about the system as a superior offering to and ultimately a replacement for existing products. He saw them as inferior because he felt that they did not exploit the many-to-one communication capabilities of the Internet and thus represented an impoverished technological vision. Harry went to Andy, a colleague and mentor of his who had advised a number of successful startups. Andy agreed to put money into the company and essentially save it – on the condition that he would have full decision-making power.

Saleable Story and Legitimacy

This final version of the company story line was authored strictly by Andy. It positioned the product within the existing set of CRM tools and as an add-on to an existing product line. This development occurred after my work with the company ended (Andy brought in his own team). For Andy, the dominant story line was integration – technical integration with the existing status quo product line and organizational integration with the existing corporate CRM function and the traditional corporate CSR tasks and role. This is also a classic interpretation of legitimacy building in a startup context. As I write this chapter, a CRM company has expressed interest in buying the intellectual property and in bringing the software writers, including the VP of Engineering and his team, on board; and

Morgan reports that this is generally viewed as an exciting development since the money is almost gone and there are no other active prospects. Harry estimates that the purchase price will repay Greg, the friends of the team who put smaller amounts (about $50,000 each), and himself. Given the outcomes of many dot.coms, he considers this a successful result.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Legitimacy building is a highly complex process involving multiple audiences and actors. While the 'act' of legitimacy building, in the abstract sense, may be held constant for analytical purposes, Table 5.1 (end of chapter) shows the hectic dynamics (note all versions were formulated within a period of ten months) of this process. At four distinct points, the story of the company was authored by different individuals, with different purposes, toward different audiences, amid virtually opposite scenes.

Some patterns are worth highlighting. First, the continuous search shows that the legitimacy-building exercise was highly deliberate: the company story was successively reshaped and retold in the interest of establishing legitimacy, in this case pragmatic legitimacy, meaning the securing of confidence to win capital. Second, the process was retroactive, meaning that the story was provisionally accepted and then revised based on research, feedback, and testing. Third, the founder's authorial role diminished with each version, although his original story retained staying power until the very last version, over which he had no authorship whatsoever. In my opinion, this reflects the fact that Harry had a clear idea of what he wanted to build and he saw stories as a means to the means of money. Up through the very last meeting I had with him, the only story Harry told with any passion was his story of using technology for social change. This illustrates a paradox about legitimacy seeking in that although Harry and his team had to take legitimacy relatively seriously in order to write a credible or potentially credible story, Harry himself maintained a fundamentally radical vision developed outside the status quo of story lines pertaining to CRM technology, CSR job descriptions, and the low strategic value of corporate customer service. The concern for legitimacy is a conservative one; but he plotted his idea into an overarching story about overturning rather than supporting the status quo. This was particularly evident based on the interviews with (1) marketing heads who questioned and even disputed the extent of managerial interest in customer issues and (2) customer service managers who, given a look at the demo, began rethinking the basic CSR job description and even its hierarchical placement within the larger organization. It is noteworthy that the final version of the company story subsumed

the product into an existing and fully legitimized (in the sense of taken-for-granted/status quo) product line, technology suite, job description, and corporate philosophy about customers and customer service. That this plotting was so very far from Harry's starting point indicates the wide disparity between the original founding story and the achievement of legitimacy.

Yet Harry and the team were obliged to seek legitimacy in that they were expected by prospective investors, customers, partners, and others to tell a convincing story about why and how they were in business. From the outset, they were embedded in a very conventional story line having to do with approaching potential investors and the rules or standard practices by which one typically convinces them. They had to talk them into the story of the company. But the most important investor, Greg, told me bluntly that he found Harry's story to be 'bullshit'. In his opinion, the company had another, more legitimate and valuable story that mainly he and Bev could see. Bev made fun of Harry when, on one occasion, he garbled her story. Morgan giggled and expressed disbelief when he first heard Bev's story for the company, exclaiming 'Can you believe it? We might be a real company!'. Greg viewed the meetings with prospective customers as feedback opportunities. He told me that he saw the company story as emergent, particularly in relation to the needs and concerns shared by this audience. So the legitimacy of the story, in the sense of 'buy-in', was subject to the eyes of the beholders.

Some of these conflicts may be explained by a larger, overarching story line prevalent in high technology, that of evangelism, that is, the mixing of business and idealistic or ideological story lines. Harry was a man on a mission. Morgan, in retrospect, described Harry has having a 'high reality distortion factor' (a phrase first coined to describe Steve Jobs's effect on customers, employees, and audiences and meaning that he could convince people of very unrealistic things). I certainly thought that Harry had an exciting idea.

However, his enthusiasm, perhaps fanaticism, blinded him to some fundamental realities of the business world, including the fact that companies had already invested considerable sums of money in what they considered to be comparable systems and that they also had an investment in the past, present, and future story lines about the CSR role and tasks. (Harry was insulated from some of these realities by having his brother as his partner.) As long as Harry appealed to corporate audiences who were embedded in these story lines, I could not see how to graft this story onto one that featured consumers as the main characters. The ultimate irony is that, while pitching a highly customer-focused application, the entrepreneurs themselves dwelled more on telling their new story than incorporating it into the ones they were hearing.

The case shows the dynamic and chaotic nature of legitimacy building amid external and internal change. The pursuit of legitimacy described in this chapter foregrounds the turbulence and 'bubbling cauldron' of new ventures. It gives insight into, and I hope provokes further research on, vastly understudied aspects of entrepreneurship such as the critical first phases of venturing and the everyday preoccupations and foci of founders from the moment they seize on an idea. How founders succeed and fail in the complex, constraining, and life-sustaining activity of legitimacy building is a story with much at stake for researchers as well as entrepreneurs.

Table 5.1   Pentadic analysis of acts of legitimacy-building narratives

Narrative One:	'Band together to get results'
Story:	Our system will mobilize people with shared agendas. Starting with opinion leaders, we will eventually accumulate millions of users who will grow exponentially through viral communication. We will have so many users that advertisers will sustain us
Agents/Authors:	Harry, Morgan, and Bart
Agency:	The investment capital of personal friends, especially dot.com millionaires
Purpose:	Empower people, change the world
Scene:	Internet boom
Narrative Two:	Get the money to fulfil our vision
Problem with other story:	Our vision will not pay for itself as we thought. We can't rely on viral communication and rapid growth. The eyeballs model has been discredited
New story:	Have two separate businesses: the original vision and a moneymaker. The latter will be a product that we sell to companies who want customer feedback
Agents/Authors:	Howard and Harry
Agency:	Investment capital of venture capitalists known by our personal networks
Purpose:	Make money and change the world at the same time
Scene:	NASDAQ crashed. Short- and long-term views highly uncertain. Will it rebound or not?
Narrative Three:	Forget the vision, we need money
Problem with other story:	We can't even give this product away. Activists don't trust us because we're a for-profit company. Nonprofits accuse us of using them as guinea pigs

Table 5.1 (*continued*)

New story:	We are positioned in the corporate marketplace. Our product replaces and outperforms all other CRM products. We will solve customer service problems for large to medium-sized companies
Agents/Authors:	Howard and Bev
Agency:	Mainstream venture capitalists
Purpose:	Solve corporate problems and make money
Scene:	Internet and high-tech bust
Narrative Four:	Recoup our investment
Problem with other story:	Investors and customers not coming in. Product does not mesh with existing practices of CSRs. Many companies want less, not more customer interaction and fear that system will create more work. Most companies already have a major investment in an existing CRM product
New story:	Sell the technology
Agents/Authors:	Andy and Howard
Agency:	Existing CRM companies
Purpose:	Get our money back
Scene:	The rubble heap

6. The devil is in the *e-tale*: forms and structures in the entrepreneurial narratives

Robert Smith and Alistair R. Anderson

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we explore the genre of 'Entrepreneurial Tales', which we refer to as e-tales. The title is an obvious parody of the proverb, 'The devil is in the detail', and reflects the power of entrepreneurial narratives, a power that stems from the normative detail embedded in the moral content of the e-tale. We use the term 'tale' in preference to other descriptors, as the word tale is associated with imaginative creation and even fiction, and also because tales explain themselves. Tales encompass morality and immorality. The purpose of the chapter is to show how moral details play an important role in communicating values as a framework to entrepreneurial actions. We demonstrate that morality is an important detail of e-tales and forms a common master theme. The chapter explains what we mean by e-tales and shows how they form narratives which exhort entrepreneurship. We attempt to illustrate how they operate, essentially as instrumental examples – ways of showing that entrepreneurship can be done. We also show how these examples are set in a moral context, one which appears to promote an entrepreneurial ethos replete with an underpinning of moral values.

To develop our argument the chapter opens with a section on narrative as a cultural dialogue and how narrative provides a legitimizing frame of reference which is both sensemaking and sensegiving. We then explore the entrepreneurial narrative and show how e-tales confirm the righteousness of entrepreneurial actions by signifying a moral framework and a legitimizing context. E-tales are argued to promote entrepreneurship as practice by emphasizing independence, perseverance and the value of success, especially in the face of adversity. They affirm a 'right' way but, the devil in the e-tale, also demonstrate the fall from grace when appropriate ethical conduct is not maintained.

Several examples of narrative are then considered. First the classic hagiographic tales of Horatio Alger and Samuel Smiles and their historical

antecedents are presented as stereotypical examples of e-tales. Next we find confirmation of the same elements in both biographies and novels about entrepreneurs. We also note the similarities in academic commentaries about the use of metaphor in narrative. Finally we explore personal e-tales and distinguish between familial fables and memorial tales. We conclude that e-tales have a definitive structure which emphasizes the twin virtues of morality and success.

THE VALUE IN UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURIAL NARRATIVES

An understanding of entrepreneurial narratives is useful, not least because they are a central means of communicating the entrepreneurial message. So for many, narrative provides most of what they know about entrepreneurship. This implies that from an academic perspective, understanding narrative enables us to appreciate the social construction of enterprise. However, what really intrigues us about the e-tales of entrepreneurial narrative is their form and structure, how they share common patterns of structure and content; how they carry a moral framework and how they espouse particular codes of action. They are not only ideological standard bearers for entrepreneurship, but are lived examples, rich in metaphor and idealized typifications. For us, this is the reason why e-tales are such effective ways of explaining and communicating culture; they are 'familiars', so that we begin to recognize them as well-known stories, we become comfortable with them. The e-tale becomes naturalized, rather than being seen as contrived propaganda. What is extraordinary about this process is that entrepreneurship itself is extraordinary, because there is no formula for entrepreneurship and there is no rule-book to follow. Each entrepreneur, by definition, is different; each entrepreneurial act is novel, yet the framework of the e-tale forms entrepreneurship into a friendly face of capitalism. Moreover, they do so with moral aforethought, they emphasize moral codes and debunk ideas of freebooting amoral capitalism. Through e-tales, entrepreneurial narratives have, arguably, become a discourse of dominant ideology.

We suggest that there is a primary relationship between storytelling and entrepreneurship because the communication of value is obviously central to the practice of entrepreneurship, because the entrepreneur 'takes between' creating and extracting the value of their product or service. Storytelling is very similar, in that it recounts tales to communicate general values such as the benefits of enterprise and specific values such as appropriate behaviours. It does not seem coincidental that successful entrepreneurs such as Tony O'Reilly have developed a reputation as being 'raconteurs' and 'storytellers',

indeed, Roddick (2000, p. 4) stressed that every entrepreneur is a 'great story-teller'. The operational link may be that entrepreneurial stories offer both a sensemaking and a sensegiving opportunity (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1995). Stories re-*present* (tell 'about' entrepreneurship in specific contexts) social and entrepreneurial knowledge, so that stories can bridge the gap between explicit and implicit knowledge. People willingly tell stories that reflect their basic values, norms, emotions and theories about how and why events take place (Callahan and Elliot, 1996). Pitt (1998), for example, explains this is why entrepreneurs are motivated to tell their stories. Such stories are effective because the listener can identify with the components of the tale and can engage with the enactment, so that storytelling is linked to subjective interpretation (McKenna, 1999).

As sensemaking tools, e-tales provide a rational for the arguably irrational risks of enterprising. Rae and Carswell (2000) propose the life story narrative as a technique for entrepreneurial learning. Rae (2000) and Rae and Carswell (2001) also suggest that the narrative can be a way of understanding the practice of entrepreneurship. In contrast, Fiet (2001) argues that the particularity of storytelling cannot explain different contingencies and resources in entrepreneurship, so that 'war stories' can only lead to average returns with the loss of any first mover advantage. Nonetheless, such war stories do provide instrumental examples of what can be done. Importantly as Buckler and Zien (1996, p. 394) argue, stories also provide, 'an elegant way of transmitting values'. Stories are, of course, only examples of narratives. However, narratives in more general terms have become increasingly recognized as a mechanism for providing meaning. The following section considers this broader role and moves to explore the specifics of the entrepreneurial narrative, in particular the embedded sets of values.

Narratives

As an example of the wider role of narrative, Gergen (2001) notes how narrative has shifted from a minor role in scholarly deliberation to a concatenation throughout the humanities and social science. Most recently it has emerged within the study of management so that storytelling is now an accepted method for communication (Collinson and Mackenzie, 1999; Morgan and Dennehey, 1997; Buckler and Zien, 1996). Narrative is unique because it provides a fundamental method of linking individual human actions and events with interrelated aspects to gain an understanding of outcomes. This means that it has the capacity to present the relatedness between interdependencies. It works by creating individual stories and histories and presenting them for direct observation. Narratives can include personal and social histories, myths, fairy tales, novels or everyday stories

that are used to explain or justify our own, or others, actions and behaviours. Such tales derive meaning by identifying how human actions and events contribute to a particular outcome, components of the stories configured to present a whole outcome (Agostino, 2002). According to Barry and Elmes (1997, p. 3) narrative serves as a lens through which 'apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence are seen as related parts of a whole'.

Narrative cannot explain events under any set of scientific laws – instead it seeks to explain by identifying the significance of the events on the basis of the outcome that has followed. We must accept that narrative rarely allows us to prove anything. Rorty (1991b) discusses the subjective, shared nature of truth to argue that we should shift from a rational, objective notion towards notions of significance and meaning. Moreover Etzioni (1988) shows how value and non-rational considerations are most important in appreciating how concepts are significant causes of behaviour. Callahan and Elliot (1996) note how Bruner (1986, p. 12) emphasized narrative as an alternative mode of thought from the logico-scientific. Instead of being preoccupied with truth, we should be asking how we can endow 'experience with meaning, which is the question that preoccupies the poet and the story teller'. For Gergen (2001) truth and objectivity in the narrative are not significant. This is because 'objective' appraisal is a communal achievement, the language of description does not mirror what is the case, the language functions to index a state of affairs for all practical purposes within a given community. Accordingly, Steyaert and Bouwen (1997), argue the epistemological support for entrepreneurial narrative lies in the contextuality and meaning of entrepreneurial stories.

Bamberg (2002) claims that narratives configure space and time and employ cohesive devices to create a relatedness of actions across scenes. This point is similar to that made by Foss in Chapter 4 and Damgaard et al. in Chapter 8 about the theatrical and the dramaturgical. Stories are a natural vehicle for relating events (Buckler and Zien, 1996), creating themes and plots and in so doing, make sense of themselves and social situations. Narratives are flexible and carry messages that anchor 'reality' in context. Narratives require to be interpreted and the symbolism of stories allows an interpretative understanding by the listener. Accordingly the complexity of the entrepreneurial process is made simpler, more tangible for the listener because it allows a selective interpretation around those elements with which the listener is familiar. The listener's role is not passive but active and consequently a richer, shared learning experience. Robinson and Hawpe (1986) see narrative as a cognitive process, a heuristic to organize perception and allow perceivers to generalize from one instance to another (Callahan and Elliot, 1996).

Narrative is important as a regenerative mechanism and, as Fleming (2001) notes, individuals and organizations must construct and reconstruct meaning. Polkinghorne (1988) argues that as humans we are immersed in narrative, which is the human activity of making meaning and narrative is the primary form by which experience is made meaningful. For Sarbin (1986), humans think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structures. Narrative fiction focuses on the motivation of a central figure who harbours problematic yet achievable goals. In fact, Campbell (1956) claims that there is but one, monomyth, that concerns the hero who has been able to overcome personal and historical limitations. Propp (2001) makes a similar point in his discussion on the classification of folktales. The components of one tale, he argues, can readily be transferred to another. The functional aspects of tales are always similar, but the dramatic personae can have infinite variety.

Gold and Watson (2001) show how narratives are shaped to ensure that valued practices are given prominence. As Gergen (2001a, p. 7) points out, narratives function both to reflect and to create cultural values:

> In establishing a given endpoint and endowing it with value, and in populating the narrative with certain actors and certain facts as opposed to others, the narrator enters the world of moral and political evaluation. Value is placed on certain goals (e.g. winning, as opposed to non-competition) certain individuals (heroes and villains as opposed to communities) and particular modes of description . . . the culture's ontology and sense of values is affirmed and sustained.

MacIntyre (1981) makes a similar point, when he argues that humans are storytelling animals and that we make sense of our lives in narrative form. Indeed the psychologist Bruner (1986) proposes that there is only narrative, that there is no difference between life as lived and life as told. So narrative offers both a method and a meaning system – stories tell. They tell about events, instrumental examples, but also identify and promote specific meaning systems, appropriate cultural norms or values. As Lodge (1992) argues, a narrative holds the interest.

Entrepreneurial Narratives

Understanding of the entrepreneurial process, entrepreneurology if you like, is an interpretative science. It must involve understanding the meanings that subjects use. In turn, this calls for a commitment to the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions of idealism, that the things that exist in our entrepreneurial life world are defined by culture and language. Rae (1999) suggests that entrepreneurship is a living theory, but one which can be expressed and understood through personal narratives. In this section we

therefore set out to explore the nature, content and purpose of the entrepreneurial narratives. We argue that because the concept of entrepreneurship is nebulous, even obscure, narrative provides a heuristic method of reducing complexity by illustration and example. Narrative produces an encapsulated instance as an instrumental exemplar. By couching stories about the exotic in a familiar context, narrative can bring distant things closer, make the obscure clear and simplify the complex. This is essential, given that so few members of society directly experience entrepreneurship. Thus the 'entrepreneurial spectacle' is exotic because it is, of necessity, unfamiliar.

Although e-tales are often didactic in nature, narratives do not tell the entrepreneurial story but relate *an* entrepreneurial tale. This is because, almost by definition, each entrepreneurial event is novel, different in some particular from all that has gone before. Even entrepreneurs themselves, as Hill and Levenhagen (1995) suggest, operate at the edge of what they do not know. So narrative enables the filling in of details about this unknown. In capturing the movements of entrepreneurship, narrative seizes essences, confining them in a familiar form. Narrative thus acts as a creative carrier of information and values between the sender and the receiver, hence narrative, like entrepreneurship, is a boundary-spanning activity. The epistemological underpinning for narrative is that stories lie at the epistemological boundary of entrepreneurial praxis. Entrepreneurship is about creating value and new realities and narrative enables these values to be transmitted and perhaps even to be transformed into new entrepreneurial realities. Narrative provides form and substance to the essence of entrepreneurship and there is an obvious circularity in the relationship between the two. Traditional entrepreneurial narratives communicate a friendly version of the entrepreneurial process, one rendered simpler and more transparent. They often tell a tale of 'Nice Entrepreneurship' as suggested by Rehn and Taalas (2002) in Chapter 7. Narratives thus perform the entrepreneurial spectacle.

The Values Within the Entrepreneurial Narrative

The foregoing has shown how narrative upholds entrepreneurship as a valuable practice. Discourse itself is a mode of action, so that it does not simply represent reality, but serves to construct versions of reality. In so doing the entrepreneurial narrative confirms and asserts the righteousness of entrepreneurship. As a result of the Enterprise Culture (Cohen and Musson, 2000) the discourse of enterprise has achieved considerable currency as a righteous practice. It is clear that the entrepreneurial narrative produces a friendly face of individualized capitalism. We might speculate that this promotion of enterprise results from a social and economic need for entrepre-

neurs. However, we cannot know the purpose of the entrepreneurial narrative, because outside the limited notions of Parsonian functionalism, societies do not have needs and responses. However, agents within societies do recognize needs and act to promote particular practices. Accordingly we can see both a social and a personal rationale for propagating the e-tale.

This explanation accounts for the general promotion of e-tales, but doesn't explain why they have a moral loading. But MacIntyre (1981, p. 456) argues, 'narrative requires an evaluative framework in which good or bad character helps to produce unfortunate or happy outcomes'. Gergen (2001) claims this requirement is in fact a demand for a valued endpoint in narrative. Life is rarely composed of separable events, but in narrative the end point and its value are determined by the teller of the tale. E-tales seem to fit this rather well, so much so that we want to argue that entrepreneurial narratives can be understood as modern parables. Deacy (2002, p. 66) describes biblical parables as 'short fictional narratives to reveal religious symbolic and transcendental truths and values about the human condition, its aspirations and potentiality . . . the parable is meant to provoke us, challenge us, and transform us, reminding us of our limits and limitations, and laying the groundwork for the possibility of transcendence'. E-tales certainly reveal these issues, but do more. They seem to offer a particular moral framework for entrepreneurial actions.

Morality is about the goodness or badness of character or behaviour. Judgements about goodness or badness are necessarily subjective, but are normally based on some generally socially acceptable norm. Values are the underlying principles of morality, the personal judgements of what is important and right or proper. In this sense morality is socially constructed and consequently socially judged; values are more personal but inform character and behaviour. Narrative, as we have seen, provides both a social framework of morality and sets out values as specific commendable acts. Thus narrative provides a legitimizing context, both personal and social for entrepreneurship. Suchman (1995, p. 574) defines legitimacy as the 'generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions'. What is significant about e-tales is the way that they legitimize entrepreneurial actions, because they are couched in a moral framework, which espouses these ethical values.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF E-TALES

It appears that regardless of the form of narrative, personal, fictional, autobiographical even journalistic stories about entrepreneurship, there is a

common moral theme presented. We see two elements within the theme, first the social promotion of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship, with overtones of independence, perseverance and success is promoted as a good thing to do. The second theme is the promotion of values for entrepreneurship, the detail. This secondary theme emphasizes how this entrepreneurship should be ethical. It presents sets of personal values as appropriate codes of behaviour, the right way. The sting in the 'e-tale' is usually about hubris, the fall from grace if entrepreneurial conduct is not ethically maintained. To illustrate our argument we consider the historical antecedents of the narrative and examine the classic hagiographic story, exemplified in the tales by Horatio Alger. This is followed by an overview of recent examples of entrepreneurial biographies and fiction. Then we review e-tales in entrepreneurial studies exploring metaphors, folklore, myths and fables. Finally we review some personal e-tales, stories told by entrepreneurs about themselves. Although these are very different mechanisms for narrating, they all appear to share the common themes described above.

Hagiographies and the Historical Antecedents of this Classical E-tale

The classical hagiographic entrepreneurial narrative is a fusion of three powerful complementary narrative components, 'Morality', 'Success' and the 'Entrepreneurial Dream'. This third component embodies success within morality to present the end point. These pervasive and recurring themes have become embedded in the texts. The moral aspect is to be expected given that the entrepreneurial narrative was influenced by and perhaps evolved from the genre of 'Puritanical Goodly Books' and the writings of Benjamin Franklin. Indeed, religion was important to the evolution of the entrepreneurial community. Religion also had a significant influence upon the formation of the entrepreneurial spirit, as Weber (1930) explains in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber's account is particularly helpful in understanding the genesis of the e-tale because, as he argues, the emergent form of Calvanistic capitalism was highly individualistic. Rather than emphasizing a communitarian value set, Calvanism supported a self-monitored code of ethics and appropriate behaviours. In this way, morality became relatively detached from conforming to the social codes of the social contract. It became individualized, liberalized in the political economy sense that Adam Smith alludes to, and embodied into individual action. Importantly, success took on a material, rather than a spiritual form.

In the e-tale, 'success' is often portrayed as the poor boy making good, but what differentiates this from simply achieving the archetypical 'entrepreneurial dream' is the overcoming of difficulties, disadvantage and obstacles,

usually by dint of effort and perseverance against adversity. Such entrepreneurial narratives commonly begin with examples of poverty and marginality heroically overcome in childhood. In this way the entrepreneurial dream is realized. Thus we see the process and outcomes as discussed earlier; that success is achieved in overcoming adversity, by dint of moral effort.

The classic Horatio Alger 'rags to riches' stories published by a number of official and unofficial publishers (see http://www.washburn.edu/sobu/broach/algerres.html for details) provide an excellent, and prototypical, example of the form. Alger's books sold over 200 million copies, so providing evidence of the pervasion of the theme. Kanfer (2000) notes how the classic Alger plot seldom varied; a youth of humble origins makes his way in the city by virtue of grit and toil. Luck usually plays its part, but to Alger, fortune was something to be enticed and manipulated. In Alger's view, square dealing and independence formed the basis of the American experiment and realized the American Dream. Kanfer comments on the cultural underpinnings of this moralized individualism. He notes that Benjamin Franklin wrote, 'God helps those who help themselves' and that Thomas Paine observed, ' When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary'. Similarly Abraham Lincoln stated that, 'Truth is the best vindication against slander' and Ralph Waldo Emerson instructed, 'Discontent is the want of self-reliance, it is infirmity of will'. Kanfer argues that Alger's novels aimed to instil the idea behind those phrases into America's children. What is particularly interesting is the way that these homespun stories encapsulate the American way of self-reliance in a moral framework.

Sarachek (1990) examined the Horatio Alger myth and demonstrated that the common formulaic storylines offered several variations on the 'rags to riches theme'. These included:

- The hero's humble origins in urban or rural poverty;
- His status as an orphan, or perhaps the son of an invalid, or a poor but honest hard-working father;
- Often native born and bred, although occasionally a hero of foreign birth was allowed;
- Working-class extraction or alternatively the son of either an impoverished middle-class family or had been orphaned unknowingly from a rich family;
- The influence of his parents as staunch upholders of the Protestant Work Ethic;
- They were invariably forced to start work at an early age to be the family breadwinners;
- The hero is often aided by an older well-intentioned male benefactor.

Taken together we can see how these storylines create moral tales of overcoming difficulties by hard work, by remaining decent in the face of adversity and, most importantly, of achieving the American Dream of material success. We see cause, hard work; we see process, overcoming obstacles, and we see the outcome of success.

The historical British equivalent of Alger was Samuel Smiles, a Scot whose works on self-help also achieved best-seller status. For Smiles, the moral framework was self-reliance, industry, thrift and self-improvement. Many of his works recounted famous entrepreneurial individuals who achieved success by hard work and industry. Interestingly, whilst Smiles' works focused on individual effort as the gateway to success, he placed less emphasis on the ultimate 'dream', and was more concerned about the realization of a fairer society based on these values.

Recent Entrepreneurial Biographies and Novels as E-tales

Having established the cultural roots of the e-tale, we now consider some more recent manifestations of narratives. These examples are not comprehensive, but are offered as exemplars to illustrate our argument. Table 6.1, below, provides an overview of some of the typical storylines in e-tales identified by Smith (2002). Smith reviewed biographies of entrepreneurs and also novels in which the entrepreneur was the hero. As in the classic tales discussed earlier, some common themes were discernible across both literary genres. The biographies examined were those of Tony O'Reilly (Fallon, 1994); Kjell Inge Rokke (Gibbs, 2001) and Sir Richard Branson (Jackson, 1994). Tony O'Reilly is a legendary Irish entrepreneur whose career spans the American Corporate Dream rising to become President of Heinz. Kjell Inge Rokke is an incredible poor boy made good story of a dyslexic youth who ran away to sea and rose to become a successful entrepreneur in his native Scandinavia. The charismatic Sir Richard Branson needs no introduction, being known worldwide. As can be seen from table 6.1, these themes were plotted onto the biographies of entrepreneurs. Typical themes in biographies included:

- The entrepreneurial child prodigy figure;
- The classical narrative of the poor boy made good;
- The heroic entrepreneur;
- The villainous entrepreneur;
- The entrepreneur as an outsider;
- The entrepreneur legitimized;
- The entrepreneur castigated.

Table 6.1   Typical storylines in entrepreneurial narratives

Storyline	Thematic Descriptions
The classical narrative of the poor boy made good	This category is central to the construction of entrepreneurial narratives being rooted in reality. It is invoked with regularity (Fallon, 1994) (Tony O'Reilly, Kjell Rokke). It involves the mythical element of the *hegira* – the flight from oppression in its many formats. A sub-theme is serendipity. A dominant entrepreneurial paradigm.
The entrepreneurial child prodigy figure	A dichotomous narrative in which the child is either blessed with a special gift (Tony O'Reilly) or conversely has to overcome learning difficulties (such as dyslexia – Richard Branson) or societal prejudices. Sub-themes include overcoming marginality, poverty, race discrimination, etc. A classic but optional entrepreneurial paradigm.
The heroic entrepreneur	The entrepreneur eulogized. Sub-themes are the entrepreneur succeeding against all odds, the entrepreneur taking on the establishment (Richard Branson, Kjell Rokke), and the development of hubris. During this stage the entrepreneur creates new value or organizations. Sub-themes are empire building and a change of stature from entrepreneur to baron, tycoon, industrialist, mogul and oligarch. It has become a dominant paradigm of mythical proportions.
The villainous entrepreneur	This is the traditional narrative of the likeable rogue or rascal (Richard Branson, Kjell Rokke). The entrepreneur is frequently cast in this nefarious role and as such any success is assumed to be the fruit of wickedness. Sub-themes include wickedness, empire building and a change of stature to criminal entrepreneur. An alternative entrepreneurial paradigm.
The entrepreneur as an outsider	This narrative is invoked by entrepreneurs either at the beginning or end of their narratives, or even at both ends. This category includes such demographic elements as class, marginality, ethnicity, etc. It is the broad societal category for differentiating all those entrepreneurs who do not achieve legitimacy or heroic status. It includes the ethnic entrepreneur, and the entrepreneur as an eccentric, and the anti-establishment entrepreneur (Rokke, Branson). A classic entrepreneurial paradigm.
The entrepreneur legitimized	Sub-themes are – becoming immortalized, achieving a change in stature to tycoon, magnate or baron (Rokke and Branson); philanthropic acts (Branson and O'Reilly), societal

Table 6.1 (*continued*)

Storyline	Thematic Descriptions
	recognition, for example, knighthoods (Branson) or acceptance into fraternal orders, etc. The homecoming is also part of this process. This dominant entrepreneurial paradigm invariably involves a return to where it all began.
The entrepreneur castigated	This theme is discernible in most entrepreneur stories. Tony O'Reilly is castigated by the Irish people for being a corporate émigré, whilst Richard Branson and Kjell Rokke are castigated by their respective establishments as being considered dangerous to the established business order. Subthemes are the humbling, hubristic payback, a general fall from grace [the Icarus narrative], a descent into madness, betrayal by significant others or overstretching one's capabilities or a debilitating scandal. This theme is particularly prevalent in novels. It is a peculiar form of *Schadenfreude* – where the public takes pleasure in the misfortune of others. This is a preferred paradigm.

Note: For further details on Tony O'Reilly, Kjell Rokke and Richard Branson, see Fallon (1994), Gibbs (2001) and Jackson (1984) respectively.

Individual biographies and novels only use some of the themes, but nonetheless create a heroic formulaic structure infused with moral undertones. The very words *child*, *poor*, *good*, *heroic*, *villainous*, *outsider*, *legitimized* and *castigated* all have moral connotations. Moreover, when all the themes are placed together in a framework, they create a very powerful narrative pervaded by issues of morality.

Looking in detail at four novels, Millhauser (1988) Martin Dressler*: The Tale of an American Dreamer*; Caldwell (1972) *Captains and Kings*; Fast (1983) *Max Britsky* and Broat (1978) *The Entrepreneur*, we found that the formulaic structure identified in e-tales was similarly embedded in these novels. The fictional entrepreneur was found to be a skewed construct generally portrayed in a historical, romanticized context, laden with myth. Other themes in novels included empire building; an inability to form meaningful relationships; overstretching credibility; overcoming educational disabilities; tutelage from mentor figures; a love-hate relationship with a vengeful conspiring establishment; and personal human frailties. However, the dominant themes are heroic struggles and morality.

These storylines of biographies and novels reiterate and contextualize the same themes presented in the classic Alger tales. In the contextualiz-

ation, a typical entrepreneurial narrative may contain fairy-tale elements, so the entrepreneur conforms to the basic tenets of a good story, that is, the entrepreneur must be virtuous or villainous, and the story must have a moral or a purpose. Accordingly the virtuous entrepreneur, having struggled to achieve legitimacy, receives a knighthood, becomes a philanthropist and endows the less enterprising amongst us with an institute of learning. However, and this is the devil in the e-tale, since many entrepreneurs may genuinely have a fatal flaw in their basic human characteristics, or merely because as readers we crave alternative endings, the outsider entrepreneur must receive 'hubristic payback'. The entrepreneur, who dares to be Godlike and fails, has only one way to fall – downwards. Perhaps the years of marginality and childhood privation have left a legacy of social coldness on the adult persona, or perhaps he merely dreamed a dream too far and thus overreached himself. In the hubristic ending, the devil in the e-tale, the poor boy despite having made good may – lose his fortune and live in penury; die of unrequited love; be exposed to treachery or chicanery from trusted colleagues; or simply go insane. It is a familiar 'old old' story of mythical proportions not least in its moral detail.

The E-tale in Entrepreneurial Studies

As evidence of the pervasion of these themes in the narratives, Table 6.2 indicates recent academic work exploring the role of metaphor, folklore, myth and fable. These narrative formats are often interrelated with myth and fable being regurgitated as metaphor. What is evident from most of these studies is the underpinning role of moral actions within entrepreneurship. This is demonstrated most spectacularly in the 'metaphor' studies where newspaper articles represented metaphors about entrepreneurs. Although a key theme was the rags to riches transition, descriptive words like hero, giant, are followed by Icarus, feet of clay and fallen heroes. Thus we see a different potential outcome to the entrepreneurial process. If moral codes are ignored, the sweetness of success is transformed into the bitterness of defeat.

These studies demonstrate how metaphors, as part of the entrepreneurial narrative, often convey moralistic messages. A secondary theme is the masculinity of the narrative; rarely do we find the feminine aspects of the entrepreneur promoted in the narrative. The accepted notion of morality in entrepreneurial narratives is patently a 'masculine' gendered form. Interestingly, Biddulph (1998) has questioned the macho structure of manhood by challenging the five central precepts of manhood: the notion of the self-made man; action; competitiveness; the quest for approval [legitimacy]; and hard work. These structural elements echo the precepts of e-tales, perhaps reinforcing the masculinity of entrepreneurial narratives.

Table 6.2   Examples of the narrative approach in entrepreneurial studies

Author(s) – Year	Title and brief description of the work
McClelland (1961)	The seminal *The Achieving Society* contextualizes achievement tales into formations for economic development. In this instance, achievement is a metaphor for entrepreneurial success with the tales possessing a highly moral texture.
Casson (1982)	Casson's fictional fable of the heroic Jack Brash is an instrumental and inspirational story. It dealt with some important moral points about entrepreneurial character, which were tackled by fictionalizing the hero. For instance, Jack Brash was a black marketeer and a suspected arsonist.
Brockhaus (1987)	This influential exploration of *Entrepreneurial Folklore* considered entrepreneurial narratives as folklore. Folklore traditionally has a high moral standpoint.
Koiranen (1995)	Koiranen's 'North-European metaphors of "Entrepreneurship" and "Entrepreneur"' demonstrates the social construction of entrepreneurial metaphors.
Hill and Levenhaugh (1995)	The study 'Metaphors and mental models: sense making and sense giving in innovative and entrepreneurial activities' shows how entrepreneurs use metaphors to develop and communicate mental models to make sense of their experiences, perceptions and plans.
Cosgel (1996)	'Metaphors, stories and the entrepreneur in economics' discusses the exclusion of the entrepreneur from neoclassical economics due to a mechanistic rhetoric.
Perren and Atkin (1997)	'Women-manager's discourse: the metaphors-in-use' conducts a metaphor analysis to examine entrepreneurial decision-making, noting that many metaphors in use are masculine.
Steyaert and Bouwen (1997)	The seminal article 'Telling stories of entrepreneurship' is important because it demonstrates the importance of storytelling and narrative to entrepreneurship, setting metaphor in a wider context.
Hyrsky (1998)	Hyrsky's work on metaphor and entrepreneurship was highly original. His works include 'Persistent fighters and ruthless speculators: entrepreneurs as expressed in collocations' and 'Entrepreneurship: metaphors and related concepts'. The study emphasizes the excitement associated with entrepreneurship but highlights a prevalence of

Table 6.2 (*continued*)

Author(s) – Year	Title and brief description of the work
	immoral characteristics used as a descriptor of entrepreneurial propensity.
Pitt (1998)	'A tale of two gladiators: "Reading" entrepreneurs as texts' examines metaphors used by entrepreneurs to make sense of their roles.
Busenitz et al. (2000)	'Country institutional profiles: unlocking entrepreneurial phenomena' examines contextual differences in entrepreneur metaphors across nationalities.
Koiranen and Hyrsky (2001)	The study 'Entrepreneurs as expressed in collocations: an exploratory study' examines words (including those with a negative connotation) used in conjunction with the word entrepreneur.
Ljunggren and Alsos (2001)	Ljunggren and Alsos' 'Media expressions of entrepreneurs: frequency, content and appearance of male and female entrepreneurs' demonstrates the bias towards the heroic masculine imagery and metaphor associated with entrepreneurship.
Nicolson (2001)	This study 'Modelling the evolution of entrepreneurial mythology' considers the entrepreneur as being metaphorically possessed of feet of clay. The identification of numerous negative metaphors associated with entrepreneurship reiterates the importance of morality to the entrepreneurial construct.
Åkerberg (2002)	'Changing identities in changing societies' examines the gender bias of entrepreneurial narrative.
de Koning and Drakopoulou-Dodd (2002)	'Raising babies, fighting battles, winning races: entrepreneurial metaphors in the media of 6 English-speaking nations' explores some negative aspects of entrepreneurial metaphor, thus demonstrating that morality permeates even entrepreneurial metaphors.

Personal E-tales

Thus far we have reviewed the presence of the e-tale in the historical antecedents of the classic form, in biographies, in fiction, and in academic work. We have noted the similarity of the messages embodied in the different narrative forms. In this last section of examples of narrative forms we present

the very personal narratives of entrepreneurs, not just stories they tell about themselves but stories they tell about their inspirations. This was a study conducted by the authors to establish if and how the entrepreneurial narrative impacted upon their actions, and what if any narratives were used. The data were collected by unstructured informal interviews with eight businessmen known to the authors. We employed convenience sampling, using respondents we already knew a little about. This had specific advantages; we knew that they had stories to tell; we could augment and clarify by our own knowledge of the respondent's lifestyles and business practices gained over time; and perhaps most importantly we knew that they would be prepared to tell us about their life histories and what influenced them. We make no claims of generalizability; these are only examples, but they are very real and vivid examples of personalized e-tales.

General narratives, the parables, myths and stories found in the public domain may find their way to raise entrepreneurial awareness, but we found that the personal e-tale acted as a directly inspirational and directive device. A striking point emerging from this work was that although such personal e-tales were inspirational, because they were so very personal, they were also very limited in exposure. Respondents made comments such as, 'I've never actually told anyone about this before . . .'; 'Only a few folks know this about my father . . .'; 'Actually, he kept this very quiet, he was a modest man'. Nonetheless it was made clear to us that these e-tales had been very influential in shaping conduct. In categorizing the content of these personal e-tales we found two types of e-tale and we identify these emergent categories as the familial fable and the mentorial tale.

Familial fables

We categorized this group of e-tales as familial fables because these e-tales embody the couthy wisdom which is shared in narrative about the family and about business practices. More formally, we could define them as 'eulogistic narratives about the exploits of a specific individual which act as a role model, embodying the themes of success and morality to inspire other family members to emulate them as role models'.

The originators of the familial fables were all charismatic, enterprising individuals who generated stories in abundance. These personalized stories frequently refer to success in the face of adversity and embody the twin themes of success and morality. They were inspirational as role models but also acted as dispensers of practical business advice. This advice was packaged in the manner of moralistic 'couthy, pithy wisdom' or sensible folklore – what MacIntyre (1981) refers to as 'home-spun philosophy'. Examples of the advice embodied in the narratives include 'They don't shoot you if you go bust'; 'Dinnae be a thief, but take your profit', 'Make a profit, everyone

expects it'. They inspired others by virtue of their basic honesty, character and kindness, and propagate the work ethic by personal example. The fables are replete with examples of stubborn pride, of hardship faced in the early years, for example, of searching jacket pockets for money to pay bills on time; of facing hunger rather than create the impression they could not pay a bill; of overcoming financial losses. They are tales of morality and success. Their nuggets of advice are reminiscent of classical parables or proverbs and are characterized by moral precepts. The essence of the familial fables lies in their power and ability to inspire others within the family group.

Mentorial tales

We also found another mechanism for perpetuating and propagating entrepreneurial 'knowledge' which we classified as 'memorial tales'. These differ from the family fables only because they were told outside the ties of family. These stories were largely about encouraging, by actively mentoring, entrepreneurship. They, like all the other narratives, espoused a moral framework for action. Like the familial fables, these narratives are highly personal, a one-to-one transference of lived experiences. We found two dramatic examples of the moral reward for good behaviour. In these cases small businessmen, who, having no children to inherit the family business, chose to practically gift their business, in a fairy-tale manner, to a competent favoured employee. Perhaps they did so because they were prevented from perpetuating familial fable so instead engage in a process of benevolent entrepreneurial transference. Nonetheless, the e-tales show a direct relationship between morality and reward.

What these current personal e-tales described have in common is that they are cohesive devices (Bamberg, 2002) which make sense of entrepreneurial activities in particular circumstances. They also confirm Sarbin's maxim (1986) that narrative influences moral choice. The personal e-tales are nevertheless variations on the narrative theme identified earlier. We believe that these e-tales influenced, perhaps justified, the entrepreneurs who told us these stories. In the process of imaginative recreation of entrepreneurial awareness, these stories were highly influential. Given that identity creation is often constructed via storytelling and the narratives we create about ourselves, such e-tales establish the values that were important to these entrepreneurs; they appeared to create new sets of entrepreneurial dreams.

CONCLUSIONS

The chapter demonstrated that entrepreneurial narratives have a definitive form and structure that stresses the twin virtues of morality and success. Thus the entrepreneurial spectacle is narrated to promote entrepreneurship and to propagate specific moral frameworks. We have explored the relationships between storytelling, communication and entrepreneurship. Our discussion described the important role of communication and storytelling in shaping the entrepreneurial construct. It considered the nature, content and purpose of the entrepreneurial narrative and focused upon narrative sensemaking in the entrepreneurial process. We found that there are several common themes in entrepreneurial narratives. These emphasize morality and hard work and associate these as causal factors of success, irrespective of whether couched as fiction, biographies or personal stories. We suggested that a purpose of entrepreneurial narrative was to make the complex simpler and to particularize the general. Narrative seems uniquely able to manage this process. This also seems to signal the power of the elements of the narrative.

We are convinced that the imaginative recreation of entrepreneurial narratives fulfils a secondary purpose beyond the espousal of entrepreneurial attitudes. This is to reiterate and reinforce the importance of the moral precepts behind success and legitimacy. It appears necessary because these rather nebulous concepts have to be renewed with each generation because subjective interpretations may change over time and space, as, indeed, does public perception and awareness of them. This process of perpetuation, regeneration and consolidation requires constant renewal. Whilst the capitalist engine of growth is anonymous and amoral, entrepreneurship is personal and thus capable of moral and immoral action. This leads us to argue that it is no coincidence that the basic linear formula of morality, success and legitimacy occurs in that order and is so perpetuated in narrative. This appears as a 'necessary' social formula for shaping authentic enterprise. The moral message was first perpetuated in a more generalized format as proverbs and parables, and in time these became embedded in the narratives described in this chapter. The Puritans had their 'Goodly Books' but these have evolved into secular forms. Yet our findings show that, irrespective of the form of narrative structure, these e-tales perpetuate the same basic linear message of Hard Work + Morality = Success = Legitimacy. This basic formula is open to criticism for its simplicity, but as we stated at the beginning, tales have to tell themselves.

We suggest that narrative approaches can and should inform entrepreneurship research practices, because narrative permits the contextualization of the general to the particular. Narratives allow subjective and

individualized knowledge to be transformed into generalized and objective knowledge. Through listening to the narratives of entrepreneurs, we can begin to grasp the enormity of entrepreneurship that has so far defied complete explanation or definition. We can make sense of the entrepreneurial process within narrative. Moreover in analysis we can observe the formulas with which we can compare the actions and moralities embedded within the story. Adoption of the narrative approach enables engagement in a rich and thought-provoking process.

We conclude that there is a form and structure that permeates the many variants of entrepreneurial stories. We suggest that regardless of their origin or era, these narratives can be collectively referred to as e-tales because this descriptor encompasses all forms of such tales expressly designed to exhort the listener to emulate the heroic feats embedded in the story. Although e-tales are arguably a variation of an old theme, repackaged under a new label, they appear to fulfil a social moral purpose. They also serve to embody the imaginative re-creation and propagation of the entrepreneurial narrative to a new generation. Inevitably, new e-tales will emerge to accommodate emerging entrepreneurial typologies that are perhaps more consistent with contemporary reality than of historical or fictional fantasy. It is a literary tradition that all good narratives end with a moral; thus we end this one with the message implied in the title that the devil is truly in the e-tale – morality is an inseparable component of authentic entrepreneurship.

7.   Crime and assumptions in entrepreneurship

Alf Rehn and Saara Taalas

INTRODUCTION

William Gartner (1988), in his influential ' "Who is an entrepreneur?" is the wrong question', has suggested that there is a simple definition of entrepreneurship, namely 'the creation of organizations'. Deftly arguing that there can be no generic definition of an entrepreneur, as such a search for traits common to entrepreneurs assumes an essentialism that is suspicious both analytically and philosophically, he then suggests that studies of entrepreneurship instead should focus on how organizations are created. The notion would resolve the issues with knowing what the field should study, as the creation of organizations has been defined as the best way to approach entrepreneurship. It corresponds well with the defining belief of this text: that one has to, in order to understand a field, look at what is empirically studied within it. What is stated in the high theory of a field is less interesting, for on such levels of abstraction the very nature of the studied will by necessity become subsumed into the greater project pursued by the social scientist. In other words, a field of inquiry is, for all intents and purposes, created through inquiries in the field. But if one looks at what actually becomes studied in the field, one will note certain tendencies regarding the choice of subjects. One of the most widespread of these is one almost never addressed, namely the bias towards judicial delimitation. It is this unconscious legalism that is interesting here. And this is in no way resolved by the suggestions of Gartner.

The grand project of William Gartner, that is, the creation of a valid and encompassing definition of entrepreneurship, obviously cannot be reduced to a single statement. He has duly noted the difficulty of such monolithic notions and the discursive nature of such a project (Gartner 1990, 1993), and further discussed the fact that entrepreneurship can be seen as a set of behaviours and ways of world construction (Gartner et al., 1992). What is interesting, however, is that Gartner's view is so clearly fixed on a particular segment of potential organizations/organizing(s) in the world. More to

the point, scholarship that purportedly studies entrepreneurship usually, even in more reflective moments, takes the law for granted, as a given rather than as a contingent variable. For example, in an article with the promising subtitle 'Blind assumptions in theory development', Gartner (2001) goes very far indeed in analysing the wide areas over which entrepreneurship theory has spread (and their incompatibilities), but never past the one border that thus implicitly gets to define the area, the letter of the law. Illegal behaviour or, more generally, behaviour that does not fall within the boundaries created through a 'business mindset' simply makes no appearance in the overall theorizing of the field (even though some have addressed the issue, for example, Hobbs, 1988; Myers, 1992; Smith and Anderson, 2001). Even though an authority such as William Baumol (1990; 2002) has shown that entrepreneurial activity can be identified in a number of contexts and function in destructive and unproductive ways, the theoretical development in the field still seems to be defined through the nexus of law and the market, even though neither can be viewed as necessary restrictions on human (economic) behaviour.

The underlying discourse of the field in general that posits that the thinking should deal with specific forms of legally delimited economic actors (companies and corporations engaged in legal endeavours), is what we call an unconscious legalism. However, this should not be seen as a concept that only refers to legal boundaries and staying inside/outside these. In our use, legalism refers to a set of ideas that spring from the ideology of capitalism and the market economy, so that the letter of the law should be seen as existing in and emerging out of specific ideological notions regarding economic action. Unconscious legalism, as a concept, thus does not only blind us to the entrepreneurial aspects of criminal endeavours, but also restricts the ways in which more mundane and social settings can exhibit enterprising qualities. Succinctly put, when Gartner (1988) talks of emerging organizations he does not talk of such in general. It is difficult to fit in, for example, the ways in which working mothers arrange for a system of baby-sitting or the arranging of a shoplifting-ring in such a theory. Likewise, it is also impossible to sustain a theory of the market that would be based on giving legal determinants an ontological status. Consequently, theories in entrepreneurship normally exist within the ideologically delimited law/market nexus, whereas entrepreneurial activity knows of no such purely legal boundaries. Although entrepreneurship in part exists only through our definitions thereof, this does not mean that we should accept it as permanently in flux. It is not a pure entity, existing in an outside world, completely outside of the researcher, but neither are we dealing with merely a linguistic artefact. But we do not see this as a problem, for what we are interested in here is the interplay between these two. Similarly, the market

economy and the law within which it operates constitute each other, but not in a way that would make social action outside the frameworks of these impossible. This concern is primarily related to theory development and its shortfalls. However, there are even more profound issues that are directly linked to the field of study, the phenomena it embraces, and to what rhetorical resources are employed in the making thereof.

Even though the suggestion that entrepreneurship is the creation of organizations is pleasing in its simplicity and commonsensical discourse, it is not very persuasive as a scientific argument. To begin with, it merely upstreams the essentialistic notion from behaviours to organizations, for even though the notion of emergent organization shies away from fixed notions of organizations as pre-existing entities (for example, Gartner et al., 1992), it still views these organizations as describable through a fixed set of characteristics. Further still, it assumes, counter to arguments in modern organization theory (for example, Cooper, 1986; 1992), that we could identify organizations as simple phenomena in the world. Even further, it confuses analytical perspectives, as of course almost anything can be viewed as an organization if one holds a sufficiently abstract level of analysis. By postulating the existence of 'organizations' as a given in the social world, we miss out on the nature of social phenomena as dynamic processes, and never escape the essentialism that plagued the analysis of entrepreneurship as virtue and trait. To be more precise, we oppose the notion that entrepreneurship studies by necessity should limit themselves to definite entities such as entrepreneurs and organizations, and contend that Gartner's definition of emerging organizations is insufficient to deal with phenomena such as organizing. As an example, a network of friends helping each other out is no organization, not even an emerging one, but a case of organizing, fluid and tentative. And as studies of entrepreneurship within the field of economic anthropology showed early on, in, for example, Finney's article from 1968, 'Big-fellow man belong business in New Guinea', entrepreneurial activity may well be more about advancing a system (of, for example, kinship) than about the limited organization upon which the focus often fallaciously is put. Likewise, by focusing on the modern notion of an organization, which is fundamentally a judicial notion (Marx, 1894/1974; Desai, 2002; Parker, 2002), one is unconsciously choosing to limit one's analysis to something as contingent as the letter of the law – and not only that, the letter of the law *as one knows it*. As Salisbury (1973, pp. 90–91) states in his anthropological critique of Barth's definition of niches where entrepreneurship can develop (brokerage and conversion):

> Entrepreneurship, in short, is an ability that is extremely widely dispersed and is by no mean restricted to monetary societies or joint stock corporations. The

innovative organizer of production or distribution must adapt his enterprise to his existing social milieu as much as to existing nonsocial resources, and what one empirically finds is a wide range of organization forms.

Consequently entrepreneurship studies, as a discursive field propagated in journals and text books, is a field defined not by an analytical category named 'entrepreneurship' but by the textual replication of ideologically founded ideas about what words such as 'business' and 'organization' means. Viewed analytically, entrepreneurship, particularly if one can show that it has ignored phenomena that are structurally identical to those one chooses to discuss, is a form of writing that panegyrizes capitalism – that is, not science but eulogistic punditry. As Marshall Sahlins (1976, pp. 166–204) has observed, the Western mindset is quite capable of constructing mythologies as intricate as those of primitive societies, whose stories of living gods and transmogrifications Westerners tend to find amusing and non-rational. One such mythological creature, popular in Western capitalist mythology, is 'the entrepreneur'. A vital part of the bourgeois notion of capitalism as a dynamic and developing system, the entrepreneur stands as a powerful creature capable of summoning the energies of the market society through sheer willpower, creating the magic of entrepreneurship. This is supposedly a good thing, or at least highly encouraged. Obviously entrepreneurs as phenomena do not merely produce a specific product or service, for then we would call them 'weavers' or 'entertainment purveyors'. Instead, entrepreneurs seemingly do entrepreneurship. Depending on whom you ask, particularly if your sample is taken from those within the academic field of entrepreneurship or business studies, the answers as to what this means will range from the minimalist 'start businesses' via the moralist 'create value' all the way to the holistic 'make things happen'. Other possible answers could be 'deploy their creative energies in the market society', 'actively pursue business projects', or, succinctly, 'enact entrepreneurship'. Seemingly nice things all. If we look to entrepreneurship studies as a literary genre, it is a form of heroic drama, where the protagonist is usually portrayed as a hero or a saint. We would rather write a more twisted tale.

The aim of this text is thus to discuss the possibility of developing entrepreneurship theory into a social science, unhindered by methodological assumptions derived from a specific judicial and economic system. To do this, we will address two cases that in differing ways exist outside of the law/market nexus, and that still build on qualities such as those championed within the field. By doing this we strive to point to a theory of entrepreneurship as the enactment of social networks, rather than as a set of pre-defined actions within a framework of bourgeois capitalism. By firstly showing some of the weaknesses in the assumptions of 'normal' entrepreneurship

theory, and then presenting two cases which are difficult to fit into these limited schemata, the chapter ends with some suggestions as to how entrepreneurship theory can be developed beyond its present, legalistic, boundaries, and how a methodological step back to economic anthropology could constitute a leap forward for entrepreneurship.

So what do we want? We would like to open up the discussion regarding entrepreneurship as dealing not with an abstract field but instead with distinctly observable phenomena. We intend to do this starting with the question of what is needed for a field to be, what the necessary ingredients for this thing called entrepreneurship might be (for example, Gartner, 1988; Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991; Ucbasaran et al., 2001; Grant and Perren, 2002). So, we return to a consideration regarding the premises of entrepreneurship: the motives for enterprising, the structures of markets and the legitimacy of business. We are here not even trying to be abstract and general, but explicitly specific. What can we say about whether entrepreneurship was or wasn't possible in the Soviet Union (even though the very notion was illegal)? How is crime organized? Why not use the (analytic) possibilities of the drugs trade? Do we want a tidy field of entrepreneurship or an expansive one? This text tries to deal with these questions. It has two aims, even though these are interwoven throughout. Primarily, the text discusses the moralizations inherent in entrepreneurship research as a field of inquiry. Arguing that ordered and complex economic behaviour exists in a wider domain than is usually analysed within this research community, and that the choice of research subjects has been artificially narrowed, the text identifies the field of entrepreneurship studies as the product of specific moralizations. Continuing from this, the text discusses what happens with those cases that do not fit into this morally delimited field, specifically drawing upon cases which present entrepreneurial behaviour in criminal settings. Utilizing insights from such cases, the notion of non-serious entrepreneurship is then expanded upon. This entails both remarks on the way in which the word 'entrepreneur' is used to convey a specific idea about how one wishes business and the world to be, and a discussion of the quagmire a limited use of this concept will lead into when confronted with the multifaceted nature of economic activity (broadly defined).

It is further argued that a more inclusive understanding of 'entrepreneurialism' can make the theory developed thereof applicable to a wider array of problems. The theoretical contribution attempted here is thus partly a critique of current preconceptions of what constitutes the studied field, and in addition an attempt to outline the theoretical development inherent in an extended perspective. Furthermore, the analysis into a set of moralizations of the current field of inquiry could be viewed as a contribu-

tion to the very definition of the field of entrepreneurship studies in itself. Here, we must pay heed to the fact that entrepreneurship might, in fact, be a phenomenon that cannot be defined. We can describe it, on different levels, but as the discussion above goes some way towards showing, it is extremely difficult to create a definition that covers all of entrepreneurship and still retains some analytic use. Rather we can talk about different kinds of actions in the world (descriptions) on one hand, and definitional statements regarding the field and the selection of research subject on the other.

Generally speaking, researchers in the field of management and organization studies have been quite unwilling to study anything besides morally acceptable forms of business. Although there have been studies of organizational misbehaviour and unethical behaviour in organizations, illegal business is largely ignored as a field of inquiry (though there are exceptions, for example, Volkov, 1999; Meirovich and Reichel, 2000; Fadahunsi and Rosa, 2001; and the previously mentioned examples in entrepreneurship theory). This is of course theoretically troublesome, as there is no evidence to support the implied notion that, for example, entrepreneurial behaviour among drug-dealers would be less analytically interesting or innovative than the same in the production of knitwear. In fact, there is anecdotal evidence, not to mention rich data from fields such as criminology and urban sociology, to support the claim that economic and entrepreneurial behaviour in semi- or illegal activities will be more distinct than in more institutionalized settings. Some might think this is due to crime being an easy way out, a lazy solution. There is very little to support such claims. In fact, the criminal life (for example, Scott, 1993; Sabbag, 2002), might very well be far more demanding, not to mention far more dangerous, than that of the lawful entrepreneur – who for instance is less likely to be beaten up and/or killed. Anyway, there is a lack of analytical studies both of such a phenomenon and the bias towards 'nice entrepreneurs' in the study of the same. This text seeks to combat this myopia. It is thus both a 'thinkpiece' on the (often unexamined) moralizing basis of the field and a theoretical contribution regarding the extent of the same.

A broader theory of entrepreneurship would thus be one that replaces the implicit notion of the law/market nexus as definitional with the more general aspect of entrepreneurship as enacting social networks. While the fact that market entrepreneurs 'work' their networks – both social and material – in order to create value is well known, economic anthropology has long shown that value-creation takes many forms, and that social exchange in general is about the creation and upkeep of organizing, even when aspects such as profit and pecuniary interest are missing. Whereas the current state of the art in the field of entrepreneurship is limited by the ideological boundaries created by the market economy, we want to discuss

the possibility of extending theorizing beyond such dependencies – towards a social science of enterprising activity.

WERE THERE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE SOVIET UNION?

The unconscious legalism that pervades the field is troublesome for two reasons. One, it confuses acceptable behaviour with behaviour that can be studied, and thereby replaces analysis with moralization. Two, it makes reflection regarding the basic phenomena impossible, as these get inextricably connected to the specific socio-cultural structure that the field emanates from (in this case, bourgeois capitalism). Let us continue with an example, namely the *blat*. The *blat* is the name for an interwoven system of influence and favours that existed in one form in Tsarist Russia, grew to become an economy unto itself during the era of the Soviet Union and still pervades most of Russian, Belo-Russian and Ukrainian economic life. The term becomes central due to the rigidity of the planned Soviet economy, forcing individuals to adapt to a system where official channels might be practically unusable (Ledeneva, 1998). Arguably, the Soviet Union was the most entrepreneurial country and economy that the world has ever seen, for the very structure of control and long-range planning (coupled with terrible inefficiencies due to informational asymmetry) forced the individual Russian to enact an entrepreneurial mindset. To caricature the situation only very slightly, every resident in the Soviet republics seems to have been an entrepreneur, utilizing the niches and crevices of the state economy in order to secure economic benefits. Barter, selling cigarettes by the railway station, dealing in pickled herring at the market, trading in favours, enacting ad hoc coalitions (to bid on products on the black market), *et cetera, ad absurdum*. Looking at the actual economic life of the Soviet citizen one will find an array of entrepreneurial behaviours (for the continuation of which, in the market economy, see Randall, 2001). A crucial part of this system even had a name, the aforementioned *blat*.

In one way, the *blat* is the art and structure of using personal influence and networks in order to gain access to what otherwise is thought of as public resources. As the Soviet economy viewed most resources as public, all should have had similar access to them. Impossible even in theory, this was subverted through the use of *blat*, so that the wiliest and most entrepreneurial individuals (or the ones who happened to have political connections) could extract more out of the system than others (securing, essentially, a profit). Formally subverting the 'real' economic system, the *blat* still had its place in it, as it introduced efficiencies unavailable in the

original system. In extension, this system grew into an economy unto itself. Not quite a gift economy, but not a market economy either, the informal use of social networks, barter and similar structures created a hybrid economy with rich possibilities of finding 'profitable' niches. But can we call a particularly efficient utilizer of the *blat* an entrepreneur? Granted, she would not necessarily even see money in her dealings, as much could be handled through the scope of social bonds and barter. Still, securing resources by activating the possibilities allowed by the system does seem to correspond well with what common usage refers to as 'entrepreneurial'. For instance, realizing that one has an alcoholic uncle that could access building materials (the example is made up, but verified as possible and even probable by a former Soviet citizen), a person could see to it that he got his hands on these materials for a limited amount of vodka and hospitality. These materials could then be traded at a fairly high profit, for example, food, which might be the area of expertise of another *blat*-player. What is important to note is that although our culture might look favourably, even amusedly, upon such goings-on, this points to both a cultural bias and disrespect for the law. The *blat* might seem charming to us, as we are culturally conditioned to approve of this kind of 'smart behaviour', but it was in fact highly illegal. If we were to agree that a *blat*-exchange was entrepreneurial, we at the same time would agree to a view of entrepreneurship that is not limited by legal boundaries – as this was a phenomenon in the Soviet Union (and that this, lest we forget, was accepted by the world community as an independent nation), and therefore subject to Soviet law. But if we don't see this as entrepreneurial behaviour, we cannot explain the development of an efficient economy within the framework of entrepreneurship studies, and thereby hamper the field by making a moral standpoint as to what should be allowed as a field of legitimate studies. A scholar in the field might answer that we, in fact, don't need to explain it, but this is an ideological standpoint – and particularly dangerous if it is done in an insufficiently reflexive manner. To ignore systems like this is to willingly ignore the makings of markets and the basis of opportunity formulation. Incidentally, the *blat* has been seriously studied by anthropologists and Slavists, never (to our knowledge) by business scholars. (Note, however, that the similar phenomenon of *guanxi* in China has received some interest.)

To view this as entrepreneurial behaviour takes away one more dimension that normally exists as an implied essential aspect of entrepreneurialism – the money motive. Although there have been studies of similar phenomena in fields such as non-profit organizations, and although all cases of 'intrapreneurs' by no means have a profit-hungry individual in the main role, entrepreneurship is quite definitely tied to the notion of the market economy and/or bourgeois capitalism. Other, more 'primitive' economic systems

assumedly have no entrepreneurs, or if they do, that is because these individuals have 'developed' into economic actors (Graeber, 2001). Note that we are not here referring to archaic societies, or an imagined aboriginal and isolated tribe. As shown by Yang (2000) and Gibson-Graham (1996), for example, the myth of capitalism as total hegemony is untenable, and we in fact operate with a number of economic orders. In the case of the *blat*, where an informal economy of favours complements the formal economy of plans, we are presented with a case where the analytic notion of a distinctly market-oriented network society (Castells, 1996) is perverted through the incursion of gift-giving as a fundamental aspect of human nature.

The way in which the *blat*-players enact their networks in order to enjoy material or social benefits thus resembles entrepreneurship greatly (Rehn and Taalas, 2004), and it is only through a specific delimitation that one can disregard it. If we postulate that abiding by the law and having a clearly (legally) constituted institutional organization is a requirement for entrepreneurship, then the *blat* can be ignored. But, in presenting such a limitation, we have thereby made explicit the fact that we are not interested in empirical phenomena in general, but only in those who fit our ideologically created preconceptions. In other words, we have stated that entrepreneurship is not a scientific endeavour, but a tool of a specific ideology. However, if we do not postulate such blinders, a number of paths towards the study of entrepreneurial activity open up.

BAD BOYS INC.

The *blat* is interesting since it exists in a borderland between legal business and crime. Most would not define it as explicitly illegal, mainly since it took place within the mundane setting of everyday life. Still, it was not a legal endeavour, and could result in repercussions. It also existed within a wider range of activities, ranging from relatively minor misdemeanours such as the *blat* and pilferage through small-scale profiteering and the black market all the way to the *vory v zakonye* (thieves-within-law) and the *Mafiya*. The borderland between legal business and criminal endeavour is thus not a clear-cut one. Still, it can be fruitful to compare the *blat* with more explicitly illegal behaviour.

James Morton, in his voluminous *Gangland International* (1999, pp. 412–13), tells the tale of Butch Jones and Raymond Peoples, specifically their venture into the drug business. Forming what was to be known as 'Young Boys Inc.' on Detroit's West Side in the late 1970s, these two are seen as early role models for the more business-minded drug dealer. Eschewing traditional setups, they re-arranged the retail sale of heroin extensively, and

are best known for their successful emulation of best business practices from the outside, 'legit' world. Introducing salary structures, career paths and bonus systems were less radical moves, even though the added security and perceived fairness of these probably bolstered motivation in the organization. More original was their approach to marketing, complete with modern notions such as branding, with drugs marketed under names such as 'Bad News', 'Atomic Dog', 'Whipcracker' and 'Freak of the Week', and sales promotion. Remarkably, they also saw the business acumen in using children (who are less vulnerable to being targeted by police and often shielded from prosecution) of age ten and upwards for their workforce. By introducing such structures Young Boys Inc. became a major force in the heroin trade of Detroit, and Morton writes (ibid. p. 412):

> Although granted they killed people, they put drug dealing on rational business terms and wound up controlling the heroin market throughout the city. Subsequent organizations did the same, but YBI were the role models to be emulated.

Obviously this is not a story with a moral. The good guys did not live happily ever after, and quite a number of bad guys lived merry, while sometimes short, lives. But it might be a tale that can teach us something about business. Simply put, it shows that in unorganized areas with business potential a little business knowledge goes a long way. In this sense it could be seen as a business case for teaching entrepreneurship and/or management. In an environment where chaos reigns, where if any few institutional economical barriers exist in the market, there obviously is room for organization and (if one likes to call it that) improvement. Just as in 'normal', 'vanilla' entrepreneurship, one localizes a segment of the market that has hitherto not been utilized optimally, and goes on to extract a profit from this discrepancy.

If we look at crimes such as drug dealing, we can thus find that they in fact are more conducive to entrepreneurial behaviour than many legitimate markets. There are no real economical barriers to market entry, once one has got hold of a bulk supplier of narcotics – the market demands no certifications or other documentation for dealing. Although the institutional restrictions can be severe and physical in the form of police and the legal system (lengthy terms in prison if caught and convicted), there are few threats outside the market actors themselves. Aggressive business tactics are *de rigueur* and almost any means (as long as one doesn't get caught) are feasible, including literally killing the competition. In other words, there is ample room for trying out new things. Historically, new entrepreneurs have had great success with all of the following business practices: competitive pricing, finding new markets (for example, selling ecstasy to rave goers), monopolistic behaviour (such as

wholesale elimination of rivals, for example, the Jamaican posses), branding (particularly so in the marijuana trade), the introduction of new products (for example, crack cocaine) and many more.

And it is not that the notion of crime as a business is unknown. Popular notions of organized crime have created a belief in the existence of an oligopoly of crime, with a limited amount of global players: the Colombian cartels, the Cosa Nostra/Mafia, the Chinese triads, the Japanese Yakuza and the Russian Mafiya/Organizatsiya, to mention those with the highest brand recognition. Such a view, crime being controlled by huge central agencies, would argue against the notion of the criminal underworld as fundamentally entrepreneurial, and instead view it as a mixed system of oligarchs and minor upstarts.

But, as James Woodiwiss (2001) has shown, this popular view is simply wrong. By analysing historical patterns in, for example, the drug business, Woodiwiss shows that organized crime is both less organized and less enveloping than is popularly thought. For instance, the price of cocaine has in fact dropped steadily since the 1970s, a fact that can be attributed to the high degree of competition and low degree of cartels in this field. However, we will not further bore the reader with a plethora of cases regarding the ways in which entrepreneurialism can be found in criminal undertakings (as this is, mainly, a conceptual piece), and instead refer the interested reader to the extensive literature on, for example, drug dealing (an easy starting point is the biographical *Snowblind* by Robert Sabbag, 2002).

So, to return to the question: where is entrepreneurship possible? Was it possible in the Soviet Union – where it, obviously, was less of a crime than drug dealing, but a serious crime nevertheless? Was it possible in the heroin trade in Detroit – where one at least could be wildly successful by emulating it? In other words, if it looks like entrepreneurship, and it sounds like entrepreneurship – could it possibly even *be* entrepreneurship? But again, we must return to the issue outlined at the beginning of this text, namely the formation of the field by what is studied. So what does an entrepreneur look like?

The reader should note that it is of little consequence merely to claim that a particular phenomenon exists in several fields on inquiry, even if the fact that it can exist in fields that are usually seen as each other's opposite – communism vs. capitalism, legal vs. criminal – is empirically rather interesting. But it is the way in which this detail plays out in the discussion of the phenomenon that is of interest here, the way in which it can affect the study of entrepreneurship. In other words, how can we talk about our shared phenomenon if it refuses to stay confined to those areas within which we wish to find it? A simple way out would be the pragmatic turn. If we can find ways to improve legal entrepreneurship by studying the illegal

variety, then we need no other arguments. Unfortunately, we do not claim to be able to make such a contribution. Another possible way out of this conundrum would be to state that by expanding the area of inquiry one can create a more suitable definition of what entrepreneurship is, and it is to this we will turn.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN ETHICS AND AS DISEQUILIBRIA

What is central here is not the crime itself. We all know how morbidly fascinated our society is with crime. What is far more interesting here is that the organized crime is not as organized as one should think. Our crime fiction is much more organized, developed and versatile. What we can see looking at the not-so-legitimate business venturing is twofold. First, entrepreneurship sprouts where there is some market opportunity, demand and possibility for providing a supply. Whether there is a structural, legitimate or proper market as we know from our textbooks in business studies is merely scenic, not essentially something that needs to be. Since we have studied hardly anything of the 'not-so-morally-right' fields of entrepreneurship, we have no way of knowing if our normal, non-criminal entrepreneurs are in fact operating on fields that hold actual market opportunity or if such 'opportunity' in legal markets simply consist of fictional constructions provided by policy makers and scientists (cf. Baumol, 1990). Rhetorical construction of such kind is no problem for us, as such. The last decades of the previous century should have taught us that much, if nothing more. But this leads to a much bigger problem from our point of view. The second problem is something that cannot be waved away simply by referring to a moral backbone or general ignorance. What we can see here is that moral judgments regarding our field of inquiry are blocking our view of what we pursue. And this is always a problem of the most important kind to a researcher. Note that we are not talking about a pure analytics, nor are we trying to create a new kind of dogma. What we are talking about is the need for scholars, even in entrepreneurship study, to critically and in a reflexive manner evaluate the moral standpoints behind the choices made in research. To stick one's neck out is a political movement, and we know we are making such statements here, but so is blissful ignorance, the choice not to take research further, not to deterritorialize.

Crime and the *blat* – both analysable as entrepreneurial, and largely ignored by entrepreneurship as an academic field of study. What unites them is that they represent law-breaking, activities undertaken in a field outside of the legally delimited. What further makes the *blat* stand out is that it can

be understood as a variant of the archetypal 'gift economy' (Mauss, [1924] 1990; Berking, 1999) insofar as it does not function through the easy mechanisms of the market economy (for a critique, though, see Gell, 1992). Also, they both function through disequilibria. The honour economy of the *blat* is dependent on the existence of hierarchy and will cease to operate if participants stop returning favours – that is, the relations are kept unbalanced, with someone always left 'holding the bag' or put in a position where honour demands them to reciprocate. In crime another disequilibria exists, so that participants always try to get more out of the exchange than they are 'owed' – market economy gone haywire. It is in fact the case that entrepreneurship in both these cases is based on the possibility for disequilibrium, a space where an additional favour can be gained. In much the same way . . . nay, in *exactly* the same way as an entrepreneur on the market finds possibilities to profit from unfulfilled needs or underutilized resources, the actors in these cases have found ways to create efficiencies based on the specific institutional, social and/or technical context within which they operate.

The *blat* players found ways to enact entrepreneurship in the space between enforced plans and social networks and criminals can find ways to profit from the discrepancy between what people want and what they are allowed to get. What one has to keep in mind – and this can be seen as the main theoretical point of this text – is that we do not propose to derive normative models from these cases. Instead, we wish to show that there are a number of ways in which entrepreneurial activity can take place, and that the social barrier of law does not restrict this in any way. We do not wish to argue that drug dealing or misappropriation of state property are good things, things to be emulated, quite the contrary. What we do wish to argue is that they are existing phenomena, and that there is no logical reason to ignore them only because they are morally reprehensible. Furthermore, they represent successful systems, particularly if we keep in mind the cultural specificities of their internal workings. One might say that it is convenient (and thus logical) to ignore them, since they might be troublesome to study, even dangerous, but this is a statement about laziness among researchers, and convenience is hardly a valid argument for the limitation of a field of research. And if such an argument is used, there are a number of other things that one could ignore on similar premises: gendered groups, other ethnicities, diverging cultures and groups, microbusinesses, etc.

All this has led us to formulate a tentative field for the study of entrepreneurship, one that is not restricted by attachment to an ideology. Entrepreneurship, as has been approached in this text, can now be seen in terms of: the intentional utilization of system disequilibria, regardless of system makeup (cf. Kirzner, 1989). This can further be explicated through viewing entrepreneurship as the enactment of social networks, networks

that take different shapes in different systems. This is not presented as a definition, mind you, but as a way to think about the field. Note the absence of individual aims. Although our modern thinking is mired in the belief that everything in the world happens due to individual desires or goals, there is little to say that this would be anything besides a local fact, applicable in (sizeable) parts of the Western economic sphere. There is nothing to say that this would be a necessary universal case. Further, note that 'utilization' can mean a number of things, and to fully comprehend this in specific cases one is required to understand the logic of the local system – for example, the *blat* players, for whom it is fully rational to utilize influence networks maximally in order to gain access to that which should be common property. Crime, which can be defined as 'business without restraints', will of course utilize the discrepancies between what is possible and what is allowed, all in order to gain profits. These cases represent differing logics, sometimes even incommensurable logics, but they do not represent ungraspable phenomena.

As William Baumol (1990) has shown in his historical piece 'Entrepreneurship: productive, unproductive, and destructive', the difference between the supply of entrepreneurship in a society and the allocation of the energies represented by this supply is often ignored. Since the writing of entrepreneurship as heroic tales is more in line with the genre of business writing, the very possibility of individuals allocating their entrepreneurial energies to unacceptable fields has been ignored by the rhetoric device of limiting the analysis to those modes of allocation that are in line with policy. This, specifically, makes entrepreneurship a literary genre, as it retells the world only insofar as the phenomena therein can be fitted into the literary rules of the field. As Fadahunsi and Rosa (2001), for example, have shown in their study of Nigerian cross-border trade, economic actors in the real world will ignore such discursive borders, and instead navigate a wide spectrum of economic possibility. A trader will target business opportunities according to a complex set of negotiations where the legality of goods is only of partial interest and easily ignorable if profit margins are high enough. Whether this behaviour will make it into the heroic epics presented in entrepreneurship journals is of no interest to them at all. (An ironic and quite amusing result of the study by Fadahunsi and Rosa is that illegal trade had created both hundreds of jobs and a stable working environment for the traders, making the moral justification of economic benefits for studying only legal business somewhat problematic.)

In part, this is in harmony with the thinking about exchange between different economic and social spheres as has been developed by Fredrik Barth (1963; 1967), but in a way that radicalizes which spheres are taken into account. In the case of drug dealing, we have legal and illegal spheres, and an economic sphere that overlaps both. In the case of the *blat*, economic and

social spheres overlap, as do political and everyday ones. From the perspective of these two cases, entrepreneurship in business spheres is not a major phenomenon, but a similar case that belongs under the more general notion of 'getting by and doing stuff'. A developed field would in this perspective look to enterprising activity regardless of the field, be it legal or illegal, driven by social or monetary sentiments, be it *laissez fair*e or highly political. At the moment, entrepreneurship is legitimized through the benefits the entrepreneur brings to the market economy (Machan, 1999). While we do not wish to argue against this, we find it insufficient as a *general* methodological starting point. While entrepreneurs, defined in a particular way, may benefit the system of capitalism, defined in a particular way, this is not enough to develop a theory of entrepreneurship *in general*. What such an assumption does is define the subject within one system, that of the market (further delimited by the law), after which the rhetoric is fixed in a way that writes entrepreneurship as a moral tale. We will not here go further into the tangled issue of how economic and legal systems are embedded in ethical systems and cultures, and only wish to note that theoretically the view in which a particular brand of entrepreneurship would be a natural phenomenon of economy is seriously flawed. However, it may be important to note that the common entrepreneurial discourse is as morally loaded as it is.

Our alternative tale can thus be seen as the extension of the notion of entrepreneurship beyond the mythology of Western bourgeois capitalism, beyond the image of the entrepreneur as a fixed economic actor with a most amiable character. It could be a step back towards the anthropology of entrepreneurship, a field of study that will not force specific and context-bound rationalities upon the figure of the entrepreneur. In addition, this would make the production of cookie-cutter models and normative statements regarding, for example, 'best practice' in entrepreneurship impossible, and to us this would be a good thing. By approaching entrepreneurship in this way, objectively and without an ethical bias, one could make far more interesting observations than by reifying the doctrines of capitalist ideology – where entrepreneurs always have to be true, good, and just.

But one has to be wary of making the same mistake one attributes to others. Where our contention is that Gartner (1988) tries to introduce analytic stability by moving essentialism from organizational actors to some imagined definable entity named 'organization', and that 'common' entrepreneurship studies try to discursively stabilize the field by delimiting it according to moral preference, we might be caught in another act of essentializing writing. We try to claim that the narrations of entrepreneurship studies have been tainted by the myths of bourgeois capitalism, but what is our own ethical standpoint? Are we, in fact, claiming to be able to escape the moralization we ascribe to others? Are we essentializing any form of

economic action as a valid area of inquiry for entrepreneurship studies, thus effectively undermining the very possibility of a discipline? No, at least we do not think so. What we have tried to show is that there is a need for an anthropological sensitivity when studying economic behaviour. Even if this produces uncomfortable results, and slightly more twisted tales. And even if the entrepreneurs one writes of do not come out as heroes and saints.

8. The dramas of consulting and counselling the entrepreneur

Torben Damgaard, Jesper Piihl and Kim Klyver

INTRODUCTION

It was late afternoon at campus. Everyone had left for the weekend, except three persons sneaking into a meeting room. In a plastic bag they carried a few beers, which they had defined as 'instruments aiding data creation'. Once they were seated one of them brought out a tape recorder and they agreed on who should perform which role. One had to perform the role of a consultant named Claus. Another should perform the role of Ernest – an entrepreneur, while the last one should perform the role of Ralph, who was a researcher. They imagined that they were guests at a wedding party and were seated around the same table – and otherwise had never met before. When the tape recorder was turned on, they slowly started to small-talk – but after a while the discussions heated up.

After a while there was a knock on the door. A watchman opened it and looked into the room. 'Are you allowed to be here?' he asked harshly. 'Yes!' one of the three replied. 'You are actually disturbing us in the middle of a research process – we are performing a drama!' he continued as if it was the most natural thing for a researcher to do at campus a late Friday afternoon. The watchman seemed confused, and determined by his facial expression the scenery he witnessed didn't quite fit into his expectations concerning the content of a serious research process.

The chapter you are now reading is one of the outcomes of the strange events that afternoon. Looking back, we find it reasonable to see these events as a fire fuelled by three wells. First, we have participated in several research activities involving entrepreneurs and consultants making use of different types of more traditional research methodologies. At that time we drew our attention to the more tacit understanding we felt we had built up as participants in many meetings, business planning activities and discussions of daily-recognized problems faced by the entrepreneurs, we found it difficult to benefit from this valuable insight through these methodologies. Second, post-modern thinking argues that it is impossible to represent

reality through texts. Instead of interpreting this as an argument for stopping the production of research texts, we see it as an opening for constructing other kinds of texts. Furthermore Phillips (1995) encourages us to use novels, plays, poems and other kinds of fiction within the study of management and organization – and then why not do the same within the study of entrepreneurship? The word 'drama' in the topic is an indication of this interest in what we could call 'serious fiction': a research text as a piece of serious fiction rather than a mirror of reality, and the use of other genres of serious fiction within research processes. The third well fuelling the events that afternoon is a fascination for the idea of forum theatre.[45] Forum theatre is sometimes used as a way of counselling within business, and one of the authors of this chapter got an opportunity to follow a Danish performance group performing in a major Danish company facing a restructuring. Asked how it was possible for the actors to improvise and act out situations based on inputs from the audience, one of the actors gave the simple answer: 'we know our roles thoroughly!'

The title of this chapter 'The dramas of consulting and counselling the entrepreneur' indicates both the two ambitions and the main structure of the text. Under the heading 'The drama of *consulting* the entrepreneur', the primary ambition is to present how we have worked with the use of drama – that is serious fiction in the form of an improvised play – within a research process within entrepreneurship as an alternative way of bringing the voice of the entrepreneurs into a process of theory development. Our use of serious fiction is illustrated – or rather performed – by means of an 'embedded article' called 'The drama of *counselling* the entrepreneur'. 'The drama of counselling the entrepreneur' is a short article in its own right discussing different relations between entrepreneurs and consultants. The section 'The drama of consulting the entrepreneur – revisited' closes the article by indicating the different roles of drama in research texts.

THE DRAMA OF CONSULTING THE ENTREPRENEUR

Before we illustrate the use of drama in an entrepreneurial setting through the embedded article, we shall present how we have worked with drama in a specific research process. We have found it meaningful to represent our work process through a three-phase model. The three phases are illustrated in Figure 8.1 and then briefly described. It should be noticed that the model reflects our work with the genre 'improvised play' – but we believe it would be the same overarching process if we had also chosen other genres of serious fiction.

Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3
Constructing basic play		Developing specific paper		Finalizing specific paper
Theme		Selection of play sequences		Final play
Improvised play		Use: Pedagogy Ambiance Method Data		Audience
Reflection				
	Basic play		**Play sequence**	
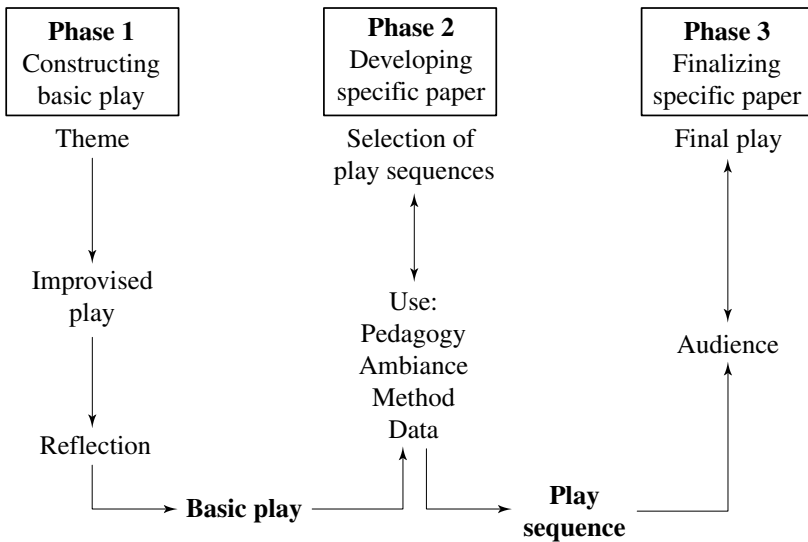
Figure 8.1   The 3-phase model

Starting with the first phase, the process described here relates to work we have done on the *theme* of 'entrepreneurial change processes'. This theme was rooted in different research perspectives and activities. As researchers our experiences and interests inevitably influence the research themes we develop. Based on our experience of projects involving interaction among researchers, consultants and entrepreneurs, and the fascination with forum theatre we decided to develop our serious fiction as an *improvised play*. Furthermore we decided that the roles to be performed in the play should be the roles of a researcher, a consultant and an entrepreneur.

To improvise a trustworthy play it is necessary – as a professional actor told us – to 'know the roles thoroughly'. As our aim is to contribute to discussions of research practices within entrepreneurship studies, we emphasize both our field experience from different projects as well as our reading of others' research texts as our background for 'knowing the roles'. Furthermore in a more detailed preparation for the improvisation, we rehearsed through making up a stock of characteristic lines for each role that could be drawn on when improvising the play. The play was then improvised, tape-recorded and transcribed. But the play is not finalized after these procedures. We think it would be naïve to believe that we really did 'know our roles thoroughly'. Therefore we entered a sub-phase of *reflection*. The reflection element involved partly a critical reading of the raw material by us and partly a critical reading by colleagues and by other

persons involved in the empirical arena, in this case a few consultants involved in counselling Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs. For practical reasons we did not get comments from entrepreneurs although we surely would have benefited from it.

An example of a comment we received was that the researcher acted as if all the truths were on his side. Furthermore, we received comments on the lines of the consultant in relation to what a consultant would and would not say in certain passages of the drama. These comments and reflections led to a rework of the raw material into that which in the figure above is termed *Basic play*.

The second phase involves the analyses and theory developments aimed at a *specific paper*. In this phase sequences of the basic play were selected according to the concrete focus of a specific paper in question. In this way the basic play can result in different papers with different angles and different theoretical ambitions, but it is obvious that these papers have to be related to the theme of the basic play. The double-arrow between *selection of play sequences* and *use* in Phase 2 illustrates a dialectic relationship between on the one hand the selection of sequences and perhaps minor modifications to fit a specific purpose, and on the other hand the use of the play in analyses which might call for modifications or reselections of sequences from the basic play. This process can be thought of as a parallel to analyses from qualitative data.

In the third phase the play has to be put into the context of a publishable research paper and finalized according to the content and the audience of the paper. In the embedded article below – 'The drama of counselling the entrepreneur' – the main purpose is theory development. Therefore the 'text' consists of a state-of-the-art of the literature on the subject, more specific theories attached to the play and finally the theoretical considerations developed.

WHY USE SERIOUS FICTION INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL RESEARCH PROCEDURES?

Above we have discussed the different phases in our work with an improvised play, but the question why we should use drama instead of interviews, observations or other established research procedures remains unanswered. First of all it should be noted that we consider drama as complementary to other qualitative research activities. One of the forces is communication; in a narrative language it brings visibility to voices and to social processes. Furthermore it is a means to shift between empathy and distance in a research process, a way to shift between the interpretation based on theory and more

intuitive and spontaneous reflection. Secondly the use of drama is a way to give voice to experiences gained from fieldwork which from traditional data collection methods and scientific criteria might seem unstructured and random – but nevertheless influences our way of thinking about our subject.

Searching for a way out of the traditional dichotomy of reductionistic generalizations vs. sensitivity to local complexities, the ultimate goal in our case is not the improvised play in itself, but the play as a means to develop abstracted concepts. That is, concepts which are abstracted – or detached, so to speak – from the local complexities that provoked them, believing that abstracted concepts travel more easily to benefit other situations than the situation studied. But abstracted concepts are not generalizations in a 'theory as mirror' perspective, but rather concepts that somebody might find useful in making sense of his or her local situation.

The article embedded below illustrates the use of drama in developing abstracted concepts. We present this embedded article to give a more precise image of the contribution of drama to entrepreneurship research. The theme of this article is 'counselling the entrepreneur'. This part is written as a piece of research in its own right, in a way that could be read separately from the rest of this article.

THE DRAMA OF COUNSELLING THE ENTREPRENEUR

In many countries much money is allocated to counselling entrepreneurs. America has the Small Business Development Center Program, the United Kingdom has the Small Firm Counselling Service, and Denmark has the Free Consultative Programme, and so on in lots of countries in the western part of the world.

This area is interesting from different perspectives. First of all it is interesting to investigate if society gets value for money. From the perspective of the entrepreneur it is interesting as it can enable him to make better (not necessarily more) use of counselling. From the perspective of the counselling profession research on the topic might again help to develop their services.

The literature about counselling entrepreneurs is rather scarce and focuses predominantly on the effect of counselling on either societal or individual level (for example, Atherton et al., 1997; Chrisman and Katrishen, 1995; Chrisman et al., 1987; Chrisman, 1989; Chrisman, 1999; Nahavandi and Chesteen, 1988; Robinson, 1982). All in all, the main conclusion, especially from American literature, is that counselling is important for both the performance of the entrepreneur and the economic growth and development of society. European literature is on the other hand more sceptical and

more focused on the content of counselling or the context in which it takes place (Elkjær and Lysgaard, 1998; Johansson, 1997; 1999; Mønsted, 1985a, 1985b; Storey, 1994). Still, the current literature does not pay much attention to the process of counselling – the interaction between the consultant and the entrepreneur at the 'moment of truth' (Norman, 1991). To increase the understanding of the interaction between the consultant and the entrepreneur we have used the methodological procedures described in 'the surrounding article'.

The play

At a wedding party Ernest, Claus and Ralph have been placed at the same table. The planner might have expected that they would have something in common to talk about, though they have never met before. Ernest is an entrepreneur starting a new venture. Claus is a management consultant entering the market of counselling entrepreneurs. Ralph is a researcher within the area of organizing and entrepreneurship.

Ernest: You tell me that you are a consultant advising entrepreneurs. That sounds pretty trendy . . . but what can you do for an entrepreneur like me?

Claus: Well, mostly I help entrepreneurs to develop a healthy business plan – a business plan strong enough to survive the thunderstorms of the marketplace.

Ralph: Fair enough . . . but how come that you are in a position to tell an entrepreneur what to do . . . I mean, it's his ideas and dreams that are at stake here . . .

Claus: Yes exactly, and that is why he often needs some advice. You see, first of all I'm not involved in the ideas and dreams related to any new venture, therefore, I'm in a better position to evaluate realism. Secondly, I have a formal education within business areas as well as considerable experience in these matters.

Ernest: (. . . get off the high horse, Mr Over-smart . . .) Yeah well, the other day, I talked to a woman starting a venture – she went to one of your colleagues and all she got was a so-called business plan printed on nice paper and wrapped in cellophane – the next day she got an opportunity to deliver a special variant of her services to a huge company, and once and for all the expensive paper of the business plan was as relevant for her venture as the ashes from her cigarette. The lesson I learned from this is that you should only consult a consultant if you have a very specific problem . . .

Ralph: . . . and if you go to a consultant without a concrete problem, the consultant will soon give you one – and of course one that he can solve . . .

Claus: Hey . . . this is unfair . . . what do you mean by that?

Ernest: I agree with Claus that it's a real researcher comment – detached from real life . . .

Ralph: Hmm, what do I actually mean? First of all it was intended as a joke – but anyway . . . sometimes I actually doubt if consultants help their clients . . . how should I put it . . . when an entrepreneur goes to a consultant, then the consultant has all kinds of questions. And each question creates a new room furnished with potential problems demanding solutions. Problems and solutions that might have been forever irrelevant if the room had never been created in the first place . . . (I bet that they wonder why I don't talk about rooms to which a door is simply opened – but that's a philosophical discussion, which will miss its point here . . .)

Claus: Okay, but as long as we are talking new venture creation, then the door necessarily has to be opened to some of these rooms (I wonder why Ralph talks about creation of rooms, but like other researchers he surely has some irrelevant philosophical arguments). Some problems and potential solutions have to be faced in order to create a vigorous venture with the potential of growing into a large-scale economic success.

Ernest: Large-scale economic success . . .? Of course that'll be nice – who wouldn't agree on that one – but on the other hand I don't want to end up as CEO wearing suit and tie all day and only touch the products through the mediation of sales statistics and accounting numbers – no; I start this venture to fulfil a dream of creating, to fulfil a dream of a life where I get an opportunity to be involved in every activity from order to delivery, to fulfil a dream of a life where I really see the differences that I make . . .

Ralph: To change the subject slightly, I have noticed that some consultants ride a wave of narratives and storytelling . . .

Claus: Yes, that's right. But that's not really my business. I'm more in the business of concrete advice on the business plan and the areas that are included in this plan, like strategy, marketing, product development, production processes, finance, etc.

Ralph: Well, I think of narratives and storytelling in broader terms. Narratives are not just like fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen. No, narratives are means for people to ascribe sense to unfolding events. Let's take this particular event

as an example . . . at this particular moment we are sitting three men around a table placed in a huge room. Around us there are more people. And that's it!!! But to ascribe sense to this strange event, we write it – so to speak – into a narrative of a wedding party. This wedding-party narrative places this particular event of three men around a table into a story of love, trust and future for the two people in strange clothes up there . . .

In the same way new venture creation can be thought of as the construction of a narrative. And here I talk about the *construction* of a narrative, as the narrative of new venture creation has not necessarily as many standard plots as a wedding-party narrative . . .

Ernest: Please . . . stop voodooing . . . What does that mean to me and my reality?

Ralph: You see, in relation to venture creation at least two different narratives with different plots sometimes collide. And our authors have actually made us illustrate this point through our discussions up to this point. First of all there is what could be called a managerial narrative. A narrative with plots like growth, profit, efficiency, planning, etc. This narrative is brought into the scene by, for example, the business plan and the standard plots or solutions that'll survive the 'thunderstorms of the marketplace' as Claus figuratively phrased it. Secondly, there is what could be termed an entrepreneurial narrative. A narrative with plots around creation, playfulness, curiosity and experiential learning.

Here we have two different narratives available to ascribe meaning to the events of new venture creation. Two different narratives that point towards different actions, emotions and outcomes . . . or to phrase in another way: we have two sets of plots available to write and live the unique narrative of your venture, Ernest.

RE-DEVELOPING A TYPOLOGY OF CONSULTANT-ENTREPRENEUR SITUATIONS

The intention of this 'article in an article' is to contribute to the very scarce – or virtually nonexistent – literature on the relationship between consultants and entrepreneurs. As point of departure for the journey into this new area a safe and known harbour is chosen in Johansson's work on the relationship between consultants and SMEs (Johansson, 1997; 1999).

Although, Johansson in his work on the relation between the consultant and the client refers to a small-business owner, and we in our research are focused on the entrepreneur, we will anyway elaborate on his model. Looking into the literature, especially through the 1990s, there seem to be significant differences between what constitutes a small-business manager and what constitutes an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs are often labelled as being driven by opportunity, being growth-oriented, having high self-efficacy in innovation and risk-taking, and as being especially creative. But these differences are not important in relation to Johansson's model. The significant points in Johansson's model are the relationship between consultant and client and the level of complexity in the advice situation. Therefore, the model easily 'travels' to inform other kinds of counselling situations.

Johansson constructs a two-by-two matrix based on the dimensions: degree of complexity in the subject under consideration in the advice situation, and the degree of asymmetry between consultant and client.

Table 8.1   Types of advising

The client-consultant relation / The complexity in the advising situation	Low degree of complexity	High degree of complexity
High degree of asymmetry	1) Professional knowledge transfer	4) Manipulation
Low degree of asymmetry	2) Exchange of experience	3) Dialogue

Source: Johansson (1999).

As examples of the first type – *professional knowledge transfer* – where there is a low degree of complexity and a high degree of asymmetry, Johansson (1999) provides the example of tax advising while Johansson (1997) gives the example of advice concerning owner structure of a company. As an example of *exchange of experience*, he points towards a manager asking a colleague to share his experience of using maintenance suppliers for a certain machine. The type called *dialogue* is exemplified by a well-educated small-business manager meeting a consultant experienced in counselling small businesses and with a reflective distance to his own professional claims. The last type – high degree of complexity and high

degree of asymmetry – is exemplified by a well-educated consultant presenting himself to a self-educated small-business manager as an expert in strategic planning and company turnarounds. This situation is labelled *manipulation*.

In the following sections, this typology is developed and translated into the area of consultant-entrepreneur relationships through discussing the two dimensions. The first step is to reflect upon the *level of complexity* dimension in discussing the sources of complexity in new venture creation and to discuss how different ideologies/narratives simultaneously hide and ascribe sense to the complexity. The second step is to develop the *asymmetry dimension*. Johansson focuses on the level of education as source of asymmetry. This perspective is developed through combining it with his own discussion of different client identities.

Rethinking Complexity

Some situations can be thought of like a game of chess. The goal and the boundaries are clear: to capture the opponent's king on the battlefield of 8×8 squares. Cause and effect relationships are clear too: every chessman can make certain moves known in advance. Situations like this are low-complexity situations. The goal is clear and unambiguous and cause-effect relationships are known. But characterizing such situations as low-complexity situations is not the same as saying that they are easy to see through. Some people will – due to experience, formal education, position in networks, etc. – be in a position to see further into the game and therefore be in a position to advise others.

Other situations are not that clear-cut but rather characterized by ambiguity. Following McCaskey (1982) ambiguous situations are characterized by unclear, or multiple and conflicting goals or even that the nature of the problem itself is in question. Furthermore ambiguity is characterized by a lack of or poor understanding of cause-effect relationships. In a critique of operational research, Ackoff characterizes managerial situations as messes and states that:

> Managers are not confronted with problems that are independent of each other, but with dynamic situations that consist of complex systems of changing problems that interact with each other. I call such situations messes (Ackoff, 1979).

According to Ackoff problems are abstractions extracted from messes by analysis, rather than something obvious and inherent in the situations. And following Weick (1979; 1995) ambiguity is an occasion for sensemaking. But how are problems extracted from messes or how does one make sense of

ambiguity? Without going into details here, Weick (1995) argues that a piece of sense is created based on a cue related to an existing frame of reference. Referring to the play, Ralph exemplifies this point through the situation in which the three men found themselves. Pointing towards the 'physical appearances' around them, he extracts the cues of a huge room and people around them – and two people in different clothes – and relates these cues to a narrative of a 'traditional wedding party' as frame of reference.

Looking at entrepreneurship the question then arises which existing frames of references are dominant? By taking small-business research as point of departure once again, Johannisson (1999) argues that three different ideologies intersect in the medium-sized family business: an entrepreneurial, a managerial and a family ideology. For the purpose of this chapter we can consider such an ideology as a narrative with legitimated plots and as frames of reference to which cues can be related. Focusing on the entrepreneurial and managerial ideologies – or narratives – the entrepreneurial is a narrative with plots around creation, playfulness, curiosity and experiential learning, while the managerial ideology contains plots like growth, profit, efficiency, planning, etc. The family dimension is left out here, as Johannisson's model is concerned with family businesses where certain issues can be raised as family members have certain roles in the organization which may raise issues concerning prioritizing between family values and managerial values, for instance in relation to promotions, etc. These issues are not yet that relevant as long as the focus is on entrepreneurship rather than management.

The point here is that the same cues, the same mess, the same ambiguity take on different clothing when they are inscribed into different narratives. We prefer to think of these frames of reference as narratives, as a constituting feature of a narrative is concern for sequentiality (Bruner, 1990). Relating a single event to a narrative, places a single event into a stream of events, a stream of events that relates the current event to past events and – of key importance here – relates the current event to future events. Relating an event of venture creation to a managerial narrative may relate it to future events of increased economic wealth while relating the same event to an entrepreneurial narrative may point towards increased freedom and playfulness.

Looking at the high degree of complexity column in Johansson's model, it can now be summarized to consist of situations where there are no clear goals or where the problem itself is at stake and where there are no clear or known cause and effect relationships. In these messy or ambiguous situations, sense is not inherent or obvious within the situations, but rather created through relating cues to existing frames, and there is a risk that a consultant – especially if there is a high degree of asymmetry – does violence

to or *manipulates* the entrepreneur's narrative. Looking at the play, different or conflicting frames of references, or narratives, became visible where Ernest did not necessarily agree that the ultimate goal of his venture creation was to turn it into a large-scale economic success, as suggested by Claus.

Following this way of developing Johansson's level of complexity dimension in his typology of advice situations, the low complexity column can be thought of as a result of one dominating narrative to make sense of cues, a narrative so dominating that it is (almost) impossible to question it, and this in itself is the reason why the situation is experienced as a low-complexity situation.

Rethinking Asymmetry

In discussing the vertical dimension in his typology of advising situations, Johansson, places great emphasis on formal education. But this dimension can be developed further if it is related to his identification of different client identities. The idea is that the level of asymmetry is not something built into a relationship as something natural, but rather something performed, or enacted, as the relation unfolds.

Through interviews with nine SME managers, Johansson (1997) identifies three client identities. The first identity is labelled *anti-client* and characterizes a client who considers advice taking as disqualifying the manager as a manager – especially if the advice is offered by a consultant. The second identity is labelled *consultant-modifier*. To the consultant-modifier, it is important to maintain an impression of control over the consultant rather than the opposite. The last identity he identifies is labelled *ideal-client*. An ideal-client is a client who acknowledges that he is in need of counselling and accepts that the consultant is an expert, whose advice is worth adhering to.

Linking these identities to the degree of asymmetry dimension in the initial typology opens for the idea that the client identity influences the level of asymmetry performed in a consultant-entrepreneur relationship. If the entrepreneur is an anti-client, the level of asymmetry is non-existent, as the relationship will never be established in the first place. On the other hand, the ideal-client identity constructs a high degree of asymmetry in the very way it enters the relationship. Last, the consultant-modifier is likely to perform a low degree of asymmetry no matter the level of education of the consultant.

From a 'level of education' point of view, the relationships at stake in the play are likely to suggest high levels of asymmetries. First a high level of asymmetry between the researcher, Ralph, and the consultant, Claus, second between Claus and Ernest and then of course between Ralph and

Ernest. But the way these relationships are performed indicates that the persons 'lowest' in the level of education hierarchy perform something resembling consultant-modifier identities – sometimes akin to anti-client identities. For instance, Ernest asks Ralph and Claus to stop 'voodooing', and Claus gives his own thoughts concerning Ralph's tendency to philosophical mumbo-jumbo.

Rethinking Counselling the Entrepreneur

Returning to Johansson's typology and now focusing on both dimensions simultaneously, several points are developed through these discussions. These points are illustrated in Table 8.2 and explained in more detail in the following.

Table 8.2   Johansson's typology revisited

The complexity in the advising situation / The client-consultant relation	Low degree of complexity – One dominant narrative	High degree of complexity – More competing narratives
High degree of asymmetry – Ideal-client identities performed	1) Professional knowledge transfer	4) Manipulation
Low degree of asymmetry – Consultant modifier identities performed	2) Exchange of experience	3) Dialogue

Source: Based, in part, on Johansson (1999).

First the complexity dimension was developed to be a result of the narratives at stake in the relation between a consultant and an entrepreneur. Some situations resemble a game of chess while others are messy and ambiguous, characterized by acknowledging that the goal or the way the problem is defined is negotiable and by unclear cause-effect relationships. In these situations, narratives are important in order to place events into streams of experiences making sense of the past and pointing towards future actions. Furthermore it was suggested that situations might be characterized as low-complexity situations as an effect of the presence of only one (practically unquestionable) narrative in the relationship. In the table, this point is

shown by emphasizing that the degree of complexity is a result of the narratives at stake in a given situation. If there is only one dominant narrative at stake, the situation is likely to be performed as a low-complexity situation and the contrary if more narratives are at stake.

The level of asymmetry dimension was developed by suggesting that asymmetry is something performed, or enacted, rather than something inherent in the situation based on differences in educational background. In Table 8.2 this is indicated by adding client identities performed in a given relation to the degree of the asymmetry dimension.

By combining these two 'rethinkings' of the dimensions, it can be suggested that consultant modifiers will most likely perform situations of high complexity since they will insist on introducing narratives competing with the consultant's narratives. On the other hand, ideal-clients might be more likely to produce low-complexity situations, as they are more ready to accept the consultant's interpretations of the situations.

At a meeting for consultants advising entrepreneurs during the startup process, one of the authors was invited to discuss the role of the consultant, and presented some of the ideas of this chapter. The presentation inspired primarily two responses. First, they did not agree that they had manipulated the entrepreneurs – the primary argument was that they did not have any economic reasons for doing so since they were publicly funded. But one in the audience raised the point that they did not necessarily manipulate on purpose, and that the effect seen from the entrepreneur's point of view was the same regardless whether the manipulation was intended or grounded in lack of empathy. This indicates that situations of high complexity and high asymmetry are not necessarily performed as manipulation, but that manipulation may be hidden from both participants in situations performed as something else.

Another reaction brought forward at that meeting was a consultant who, in one of the breaks, argued that entrepreneurs are most likely to think they benefit most from situations like professional knowledge transfer. 'They often want to be manipulated; they do not want to pay for a dialogue.' This suggests that instances of manipulation from time to time might be performed under the guise of professional knowledge transfer – and probably to the great satisfaction of the 'manipulated' entrepreneur!

Therefore, looking at the situation of high degree of complexity and high degree of asymmetry (manipulation) in Johansson's typology these developments taken together suggest that this situation will either be performed as an instance of professional knowledge transfer or be performed as a dialogue. If the client is an ideal-client, he or she may acknowledge the consultant as an expert and accept the advice given without ever considering the possibility of being manipulated, and just accept that the narratives are

placed in the background. If, on the other hand, the client performs a consultant-modifier identity, he or she will engage in a dialogue without accepting that the consultant could be more right based only on the consultant's experience and formal education. In the table, the arrows pointing from the manipulation box towards either professional knowledge transfer or dialogue indicate these moves.

The key lessons suggested by these theory developments are that both the consultant and the entrepreneur should be aware of the levels of asymmetries performed. Especially in situations with high degrees of asymmetry and complexity there should be an awareness concerning these issues to prevent the consultant violating, or manipulating, the entrepreneur's reasons for starting a new venture which might risk killing the engagement necessary to being successful – according to whichever narrative success is determined.

Returning to the play in the beginning, the situations and relationships at stake are not likely to turn into situations of manipulation – that means the situations are not likely to be performed as instances of professional knowledge transfer as more narratives are brought forth and none of the actors seems to perform ideal-client identities. Instead the relations hopefully turn into dialogues of mutual benefit among men of equal status.

Returning to the existing literature on counselling entrepreneurs, it is revealed that it is dominated by a managerial ideology in searching for effects of counselling on performance measures, which the arguments of this chapter indicates is not necessarily what is at stake for the individual entrepreneur.

THE DRAMA OF CONSULTING THE ENTREPRENEUR – REVISITED

Through this chapter, we have suggested the use of drama – that is serious fiction – as a bridge giving more informal experiences gained from field studies – or, as Van Maanen (1988) phrases it, experiences that are 'unlikely to be found in the daily records' – a shortcut for entering theory developments. These points have been illustrated through an embedded article titled 'The drama of counselling the entrepreneur'. In this embedded article, a drama consisting of a dialogue between a researcher, a consultant and an entrepreneur gave the authors' informal experiences from working with entrepreneurs and consultants a role to play in theory development. Concluding the chapter, this section points out four roles which we see drama can play in research processes within entrepreneurship – and of course other areas.

Drama to Give Visibility to Everyday Life

On its own, drama can contribute to insight into the entrepreneurial situation. Through a recognizable story people without a conceptual understanding of entrepreneurship and narrative research can obtain insight without actually using theoretical concepts. The drama gives visibility to everyday life. The drama dialogue in this chapter contains a debate between a consultant, a researcher and an entrepreneur on how consultants can contribute to entrepreneurs. This can for example give entrepreneurs a more tangible idea about what to expect from a consultant and give them some insight into a potential pitfall in a relationship – namely the risk of different perspectives concerning a new venture.

Drama to Inject Life into Theoretical Concepts

In drama the researcher, Ralph, describes the wedding party in which the three partake as an example of saying something about the relationship between pure events and narratives to make sense of events. Abstract concepts as 'event' and 'narratives' can be given life through the use of the drama. It gives another meaning to the concepts than a definition. Through a recognizable situation the concepts become livelier for the readers. In this way the use of drama can have a pedagogical ambition – for example in relation to university classes or counselling situations.

Drama to Provoke Theory Development

Through drama we get new ideas to the critics of existing theories. As a researcher you can find new arguments for or against concepts and theories in the literature. In the article on counselling the entrepreneur, the use of drama in theory development is emphasized. Rethinking the dimensions in Johansson's matrix illustrates how drama can be helpful in developing and deepening theoretical concepts – in this case the concepts of asymmetry and complexity.

Drama to Help Evaluating New Theories

In the introduction, it was argued that we distance our approach to theory development from approaches seeking ultimate truths. But that does not mean that we argue for a kind of 'anything goes' approach to drama in the sense that any drama will do, as it is the reader's responsibility to make use of it in relation to his or her projects. Rather, a heavy burden is placed on the shoulders of researchers using drama, as we have to convince an audience

that our theories are useful – and it is not possible to refer to the idea that they are useful because they are well grounded in data and substance. They are useful if the audience finds them so. In this way, 'anything does *absolutely not* go'. To evaluate new theories we emphasize that drama is a construction made in a way that makes theory evaluation possible.

9. Masculine entrepreneurship – the Gnosjö discourse in a feminist perspective

Katarina Pettersson

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs are commonly stereotyped as men, in general, and in particular in research on entrepreneurship (Sundin, 1988; Sundin and Holmquist, 1989; Holmquist, 1997; Gunnerud Berg, 1997; Lindgren, 2000; Ahl, 2002). It is argued that mainstream entrepreneurship research and writings on entrepreneurship in general have a male bias. In this chapter I show that this is true for texts – both research texts and others – concerning entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Gnosjö, Sweden.

Gnosjö is a place in Sweden which is commonly associated with prosperous entrepreneurship and a large number of self-employed. The entrepreneur in Gnosjö is most often represented as a man, dressed in a blue working outfit with a tool in his hand. This is the case even though 33 per cent of the entrepreneurs in this municipality are women.[46] The purpose of this chapter is to apply a feminist perspective and critically examine how gender is implied in the Gnosjö discourse, particularly in the context of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs.[47]

I see the texts, which I analyse in this chapter, as making up the *Gnosjö discourse*. The concept of discourse implies a strong association between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 1993). The masculine bias of the Gnosjö discourse can be seen as a product of constructions of gender embedded within power relations. Even though women entrepreneurs in Gnosjö are seldom mentioned in the discourse on Gnosjö, the discourse is still perceived of as interesting and accurate knowledge about, for example, how entrepreneurship is created and sustained, and who has the drive of becoming an entrepreneur. Gnosjö is both seen as an 'atypical' place, since it is perceived of as 'more entrepreneurial' than many other places in Sweden, and it is seen as a role model that other places should try to copy, in order to enhance or create economic growth. In both cases the knowledge created is regarded as exhaustive and proper. This is highly questionable

since the 'knowledge' created is masculinist. What is perceived of as knowledge only includes knowledge about male entrepreneurs and excludes testimonies on one third of the entrepreneurs – the women.

According to Spilling and Gunnerud Berg (2000) there are few studies examining female, or female versus male entrepreneurship, even though the number has increased over the last years. The studies carried out have in many cases taken a quantitative approach, simply documenting differences and similarities between men and women as entrepreneurs (cf. Gatewood et al., 2003). Ahl (2002) argues that a large number of these kinds of articles overestimate the differences between men and women. The authors thereby 'make a mountain out of a molehill', as they stress small differences while ignoring similarities between men and women entrepreneurs. There is hence a need to use a feminist perspective in order to examine the gendering of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, and not simply regard gender as a variable in quantitative investigations.

Feminist researchers of entrepreneurship have for the last 15 years paid attention to, and criticized, the invisibility of women entrepreneurs (Sundin, 1988; Sundin and Holmquist (eds), 2002). They emphasize that women entrepreneurs are invisible in academic research on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2002), as well as in statistics and among business advisers (Sundin and Holmquist, 1989).

A feminist perspective is thus necessary in studies on entrepreneurship in order to avoid taking a prevalent masculine norm for granted and to be able to make women entrepreneurs visible. Applying a feminist perspective implies problematizing constructions and representations of gender in, for example, texts, research and practices concerning entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. This not only implies an attempt to question the marginal position of female entrepreneurs, but also to question and problematize the superior position of male entrepreneurs.

Holmquist (2002) argues that questions concerning *what* and *who* within the entrepreneurial field are of importance to avoid making women entrepreneurs invisible. She also argues that there is a need to critically examine existing theories on entrepreneurship, in order to integrate gender theories with them.

The contribution of this chapter is to apply a feminist perspective and critically analyse how research – and other texts on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Gnosjö – are gendered. In other words it implies making the implicit gender perspective of the Gnosjö discourse explicit. Who is seen as a Gnosjö entrepreneur and how are the entrepreneurial activities in Gnosjö characterized from a feminist standpoint?

By pursuing this aim I question how Gnosjö is put forward as a role model, for example in mainstream studies on regional and economic development,

since women's contribution to this region's prosperity and economic growth is erased and thereby not examined. The importance of the women entrepreneurs is thus probably underestimated. One can hence question the accuracy of the explanations and experiences drawn in male-biased studies on Gnosjö. The women entrepreneurs are perhaps a forgotten or hidden explanation to Gnosjö's economic prosperity.

The chapter begins with a brief description of Gnosjö. Then follows a discussion of the theoretical perspectives adopted. I define the concept discourse and ground it in one possible interpretation of the Foucauldian tradition as tightly associated to knowledge and power. I understand this as a way of analysing and discussing the discursive limits to what is and is not said about Gnosjö. The discourse on Gnosjö has its own logic concerning what is included or excluded. And even though the discourse about Gnosjö, from a feminist perspective, focuses on entrepreneurs who are men, it is generally regarded as proper and exhaustive knowledge.

In the following sections of the chapter I outline the outcomes of the analysis of the Gnosjö discourse. The material analysed consists of around 65 media reports published between 1978 and 2000, and around 25 studies on Gnosjö published between 1912 and 2000.[48] Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are the main denominations of the discourse, and entrepreneurs are primarily represented as men. Even though women make up one third of the entrepreneurs in Gnosjö they are not seen as such and in the last section of the chapter I demonstrate how women are constructed as 'helpmates' and wives of entrepreneurs.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO GNOSJÖ

Gnosjö is often used as a metaphor of successful entrepreneurship by other places and regions, since its name has strong positive connotations and is widely recognized. Despite the fact that Gnosjö is a quite small municipality with around 10 000 inhabitants (in the county of Småland in the south of Sweden), it is discursively produced as a prime example to be 'imitated' by other places. Places like Stockholm and Taiwan are in this vein said to 'be Gnosjö' (10 May 1983, *Svenska Dagbladet*; 2 October 1996, *Affärsvärlden*).

Gnosjö is sometimes represented as the 'most industrialized' municipality in Sweden, since there are many persons employed in the manufacturing industry and since a large proportion of the inhabitants are self-employed. There are around 350 active enterprises in Gnosjö. The manufacturing industry dominates both among the firms in Gnosjö and on the labour market. It is often said that the industry has long-standing

traditions and that it is rooted in metal wire-drawing and metal wire production of things like hooks and eyes, nails and knitting needles.

Typical things produced today, in the often small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in Gnosjö, are products made of metal wire and/or plastic: wire-netting, shopping trolleys, nuts and bolts, and clotheshangers (Ridderberg, 1994; *Made in Gnosjö*, 2003). Around 65 per cent of the workforce are working in the manufacturing industry, and of these nearly one third are women (12 February, 2001, www.gnosjo.se). Both these figures represent larger proportions than the figures for Sweden as a whole. In Sweden less than 20 per cent of the workforce is employed in the manufacturing industry (2 December, 2001, www.gnosjo.se) and women make up around 25 per cent of them (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2000). The unemployment figures for Gnosjö are extremely low with a proportion of 1–2 per cent of the working force, compared to Sweden's unemployment of 5–6 per cent (12 February, 2001, www.gnosjo.se).

Since Gnosjö has low unemployment rates as well as a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises, other places, municipalities and regions with high unemployment figures or poorly developed entrepreneurship are sometimes said to lack the entrepreneurial spirit – the Gnosjö spirit – which is seen as the explanation of Gnosjö's success. Gnosjö is thus often put forward as the role model of successful economic and regional development. The Gnosjö region is seen as providing the answer to questions like: How is Sweden and its regions going to maintain or create economic growth? How can problems of unemployment be solved? The answer that Gnosjö provides is that there should be a large number of small enterprises, and that traditional manufacturing industry is a possible way in which to generate economic growth.

THE GNOSJÖ DISCOURSE

There is a plethora of texts constituting the Gnosjö discourse. The discourse is thus produced and reproduced in different genres: media reports, entrepreneurial research, economic research, regional development discussions, and regional policy-making. The fact that there are many and diverse sources producing the discourse on Gnosjö means that it is well established and widely dispersed in the Swedish context. One example of this is that the expression *Gnosjö spirit*, which is said to explain Gnosjö's successfulness, has become an entry in the encyclopaedia of Sweden.

> Gnosjö spirit, name for entrepreneurial spirit which prevails in the municipality of Gnosjö in Småland and its neighbour municipalities. Self-employment is the

> way of life which dominates society; this implies, for example, that the munici-
> pal administration, banks and unions adapt their working patterns to the enter-
> prises. The district has a unique portion of employment in the industrial sector
> for Sweden and a low unemployment rate (*Nationalencyklopedin*, 1992, Vol. 7,
> p. 539, my translation).

Despite some differences between the texts they all deal with entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in one way or another. The differences for example concern from what ideological perspective they are written, as some of them are arguing for what is seen as better political conditions for firms in a neo-liberal sense. Other texts are primarily concerned with what characterizes the entrepreneurs as individuals and as a network in Gnosjö. The statements and arguments brought forth in the texts are, however, from a feminist perspective, relatively unanimous. I therefore conceive of the texts as 'threads intertwined into a weave', which in other words can be called the Gnosjö discourse. A discourse is according to Gregory (2000) defined as: 'A specific series of representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced, connected into networks and legitimised' (Gregory, 2000, p. 180). And this is the definition adopted in this text.

According to Foucault (1977, 1993) the production of power and knowledge is intertwined. What is considered as knowledge is associated to power, and this means that there are discursive limits to what one can and cannot say. There are different 'procedures of exclusion' which characterize the production of discourses. The procedures which Foucault (1993) discusses are the prohibition, the oppositions between the true and the false, and reason and madness. Certain discourses are thus regarded as true and reasonable, and they are therefore separated from the false and what is prohibited to say.

The Gnosjö discourse can in this vein be seen as constructing limits for what is conceived of as important, interesting and relevant knowledge, and what is not. Power is also expressed in the sense that the discourse has its own logic concerning what is true and false, and thereby what is included or excluded. The knowledge produced in the discourse about Gnosjö is regarded as proper and exhaustive, even though it, from a feminist perspective, focuses on entrepreneurs who are men, while women entrepreneurs are largely invisible. The production of the Gnosjö discourse is thus embedded in gendered power relations, and it produces a specific knowledge about Gnosjö which is characterized by a masculine bias.

However, within the discourse the successful picture of Gnosjö is challenged by a handful of researchers using a gender perspective. One of these is Forsberg (1997) and she indicates that women have had to pay a high price for the successful development and that the Gnosjö region is characterized by a traditional 'gender contract'. This conceptualization implies

that the gender relations are relatively unequal in Gnosjö in comparison to the rest of Sweden. According to Forsberg the municipality, compared to Sweden, has the lowest share of women in the local political assembly, the greatest gender segregation on the labour market, the largest gender wage gap, and the lowest proportion of children in public-sector child care.

In discursive terms Forsberg's picture of Gnosjö can be seen as a move away from the mainstream picture. The discourse is thus heterogeneous (cf. Gregory, 2000), which means that there is space for a feminist analysis of Gnosjö (developed in Wendeberg, 1982; Hedlund, 1997; Hedlund, 1998; Johansson, 2000). Interestingly enough, however, these feminist texts are largely excluded from the rest of the texts producing the discourse.

Wendeberg (1982) has carried out a large number of interviews with entrepreneurs in Gnosjö. In one chapter of her book she problematizes that the concept of entrepreneur primarily signifies men, even though women to her seem to have contributed greatly to the establishment of many of the firms in Gnosjö. Meanwhile interviewing the entrepreneurial men, Wendeberg realized that their wives were of great importance to the building-up of many of the enterprises. The conclusion that Wendeberg draws is that women as entrepreneurs are invisible. Wendeberg's book is cited in some of the texts producing the Gnosjö discourse (see Andersson et al., 1984; Edmundsson, 1986; Kolsgård et al., 1987; Sollbe, (ed.) 1988; Örjasaeter, 1989a; Örjasaeter, 1989b; Gummesson, 1997; Berggren et al., 1998; Fölster, 2000). None of these mentions Wendeberg's discussion on the male bias of the concept of entrepreneur, even though a handful briefly comment that the wives of entrepreneurs are important, but often invisible. These comments are, however, not grounded in a feminist discussion, nor do these statements further influence the texts or the usage of the term entrepreneur. One explanation to this exclusion of Wendeberg's feminist discussion is that it is not seen as interesting knowledge about Gnosjö.

The dominating impression of the analysis of the discourse on Gnosjö is not greatly challenged by the feminist studies on Gnosjö. Entrepreneurs are still represented primarily as men on a general level and women are largely invisible. It is also worth pointing out that the researchers using a gender perspective have not analysed the male norm in the discourse on Gnosjö. There is thus a need to, from a feminist perspective, go more into detail on how the discourse is produced. The results from my analysis of the Gnosjö discourse are discussed in the following sections, but first I outline the feminist perspective applied.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER

I view gender as a social construction, and this means that gender is a historically, geographically and discursively specific construct. What is seen as typically masculine or feminine traits, behaviours or activities hence vary between different times, places and discourses. Perceiving of gender as a social construction also means applying a non-essentialist perspective. The construction of gender is, in my perspective, characterized by the separation between, and categorization of one masculine and one feminine part. At the same time as this can be perceived of as a hierarchization between the masculine and the feminine, men and women are constructed in relation, or by association, to each other (cf. Hirdman, 1988; Hirdman, 2001). Holgersson states that the relational construction implies that at the same time as women are largely invisible, they function as a 'necessary periphery' (Holgersson, 1998) for the construction of men.

This definition of gender implies the simultaneous construction of the masculine and the feminine. The masculine is hence the opposite of the feminine, and the marginalization of the feminine is a prerequisite for making the masculine superior. Millard (1989) describes woman as a kind of 'mirror' for man, in line with such an argument. This mirroring is necessary in order to construct a male identity. Millard writes '. . . woman is man's "specularised Other", her function to reflect back man's meaning to himself, becoming the negative of this reflection. Woman is thereby forced into a subjectless position by the patriarchal "logic of the same".' (Millard, 1989, p. 159).

The concepts of separation, categorization, hierarchization and association also work as analytical concepts in this study of the Gnosjö discourse. They are used to analyse for example who is associated with the concept of entrepreneur and who is not. The production of the Gnosjö discourse – and hence what is seen as interesting and accurate knowledge – is embedded within gendered power relations. The discourse on Gnosjö can according to this be seen as being created in a masculinist perspective. A masculinist perspective is defined by Rose (1993) as '. . . work which, while claiming to be exhaustive, forgets about women's existence and concerns itself only with the position of men.' (Rose, 1993, p. 4). According to Haraway (1991), a masculinist perspective can also be conceptualized as a 'god trick' since it implies a gaze from nowhere, which sees everything. Haraway's alternative to the god trick is the embodied creation of situated knowledge. This means that knowledge is always actively constructed by way of using certain perspectives and making certain interpretations of what is seen. This also implies that knowledge is partial.

ENTREPRENEURS AS MEN

The construction of the success image of Gnosjö, created in the context of discussions and research concerning regional development, has a male bias since gender is not discussed in the texts. There is also evidence of a separation between a productive and reproductive sphere, with the productive sphere in a superior position. The separation between these spheres has for a long time been criticized by feminist researchers, since what takes place in the private sphere of reproduction is closely related to the organization of production (MacKenzie and Rose, 1983).

The explanations of the success of Gnosjö in terms of economic and regional development pay a lot of attention to the fact that people work together as a collective or in networks. People are seen as sharing common values and knowledge, which in turn leads to a successful entrepreneurship, which then again is seen as a hotbed for new entrepreneurs. It is not everyday people that these texts have in mind; instead, the persons who are distinguished in the discourse are the male entrepreneurs.

'The entrepreneur of Gnosjö loves his business more than his wife and likes to hear the noise of the machinery. He participates in everything that takes place in the firm where he takes on different roles – from manager to delivery boy' (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 October 1996, my translation). Entrepreneurship is one of the most obvious denominations of the discourse on Gnosjö. This quotation takes for granted the masculinity of the entrepreneur. This is also true for the discourse in general where entrepreneurs, the members of family businesses and 'family trees' are represented as men.

Another example, where entrepreneurs are represented as men, is a text about an excursion through Gnosjö, which is described as 'A tour of entrepreneurial Sweden in two and a half hours'. Forty-four different firms are described in terms of ownership and succession between generations. Thirty-three men – grandfathers, fathers, sons and sons-in-law – are mentioned. In the following quotation some examples of the representations of family trees consisting of male members are obvious:

> The next stop is Bårebo where Malcolm Johansson-Baureus created Bårebo Industrifabrik in 1883, which later on became Bårebo Metallvarufabrik, one of the earliest and most important companies in the region. In Bårebo there is also a firm called Sveico which was started up by Sven Johansson on his father's land and further afield there is Davids Metallfabrik AB, grounded by Malcolm Johansson-Baureus' son-in-law (24 August 1996, *Svenska Dagbladet*, my translation).

Even in the discussions on family businesses in the discourse on Gnosjö, the focus is placed on the sole male entrepreneur. And the family is seen as a kind of appendage, or extension, to the male head of the family, who is

regarded as the entrepreneur (developed in Holmquist, 2000). This in turn constructs family businesses as masculine, since masculinity is associated with business and femininity with family.

The construction of entrepreneurs as men is also evident in the Gnosjö discourse when the theme of Gnosjö in historical times and its industrial development over time is brought forward. In the discourse Gnosjö's history and tradition in producing metal wire are central explanations of the successful entrepreneurship in Gnosjö at present. The weight put on the history and propositions concerning 'once upon a time . . .' serves to provide the success image of Gnosjö, and Gnosjö as a regional role model, with authenticity and trustworthiness. The historical 'roots' of Gnosjö's current success is often represented in the form of a factual text, at the side of the main text. One example is the following quote:

> Already in the beginning of the 18th century sons of farmers from Gnosjö learnt industrial work in the arms factory in Jönköping. The stony allotments at home could not feed them, but there was a boom in the arms industry because of the wars during the reign of Karl XII. The factory, which later became Huskvarna Arms Factory, needed a workforce. There people from Gnosjö were taught to become barrel makers, musket makers, bayonet smiths and thread makers. When the king was shot and the wars finally ended many became unemployed. It was then that smithies, thread makers' workshops and all sorts of workshops were built around the farms in Gnosjö. The first spin-off had taken place. The people living in Gnosjö became experts on producing metal thread from iron bars which was carried from the iron factories through the forests by iron movers. From the iron thread the small business pioneers produced hooks and eyes, hairpins and hatpins, pins and sewing needles as well as a lot of other things (12 January 1997, *Dagens Nyheter*, my translation).

Even though mainly men are represented as promoters of industrial development in Gnosjö, some women who were active in the production of metal thread and metal thread products, like hooks and eyes, are visible in the historical representations of Gnosjö (Eneström, 1912; Johansson, 1972). However, the authors who mention women are not focusing on them. And the historical theme in the discourse is most often constructed currently (see Rydén, 1987; Gummesson, 1997). The construction of Gnosjö's history is thus as masculinist as are the representations of entrepreneurs as men.

ENTREPRENEUR – A MASCULINE LABEL

The question is why it seems obvious to represent entrepreneurs in Gnosjö as men, when statistics indicate that 33 per cent of entrepreneurs

in Gnosjö are women. In real figures 165 women are self-employed out of a total of 500 (2 December 2001, www.gnosjo.se).[49] One of the reasons for representing entrepreneurs as men is that the concept entrepreneur has masculine connotations (Sundin, 1988; Sundin and Holmquist, 1989; Holmquist, 1996; Ahl, 2002). The same goes for phrases like businessman and small-business owner. The word entrepreneur is a word borrowed from French, and it has a masculine ending. The feminine ending, –euse, is seldom, if ever, used in English (or Swedish) (Javefors Grauers, 2000). The symbolic representation of an entrepreneur is thus a man (Sundin, 1988), most often running a business in the manufacturing industry (Danilda, 2001). But, at the same time the expression male, masculine or man entrepreneur is never used. If gender is mentioned in relation to entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship it concerns women (Javefors Grauers, 2002).

According to Gunnerud Berg (1997) theory and research on entrepreneurship are characterized by a 'gender blindness', as they have focused on male-owned enterprises and the male entrepreneur. Empirical studies on entrepreneurship centred on men have focused on men in an unreflective way, which in turn means that theories on entrepreneurship are constructed in the same vein (Mulholland, 1996, Javefors Grauers, 2000).

This is comparable to Baker et al. (1997), who say that women business owners are invisible in mass media and scholarly journals in the USA, even though they have experienced spectacular progress. This is according to Baker et al. due to androcentrism, which is defined as '. . . the taken for granted notion that the traditional male-centered business model is the "neutral" or "normal" model' (Baker et al., 1997, p. 222). Another associated explanation of why entrepreneurs are represented as men is that male academics see men and write about them (Sundin and Holmquist, 1989; Gunnerud Berg, 1997; Lindgren, 2000; Ahl, 2002).

The explanations of why entrepreneurs are primarily seen as men will be elaborated further, with a discussion concerning entrepreneurship research stemming from a neo-classical economical perspective. But in the next section I will discuss how a particular entrepreneurial masculinity is produced in the Gnosjö discourse.

SELF-MADE MEN

Not only are the entrepreneurs on Gnosjö represented as men in the mainstream discourse on Gnosjö, but entrepreneurship as practice is also constructed as a masculine activity (cf. Attwood, 1995; Green and Cohen, 1995; Karlsson Stider, 2000). Ahl (2002) argues that the pronoun used to describe the entrepreneur, in theories on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, is

male. Besides, the way the entrepreneur is described also leads one to think of a man.

The construction of entrepreneurship as an activity in the Gnosjö discourse can thus be said to create a specific entrepreneurial masculinity. By analysing the production of this masculinity I address a significant lacuna in the literature, namely to make '. . . an explicit attempt to develop a gendered analysis of men and their economic class position' (Hearn and Collinson, 1994, p. 100).

Characteristics of the entrepreneurs in Gnosjö that frequently occur in the discourse are a drive for independence, expressed as 'working for oneself', 'being one's own employer' and a drive to be self-employed. This is also sometimes expressed in terms of being 'a master of his own', where the gender of the entrepreneur is clearly masculine. The nature of entrepreneurship in Gnosjö is often described as marked by small-scale enterprise, slow – but steady – growth, freedom, excitement and hard work. The construction of entrepreneurship as masculine is evident in the following quote: 'Here [in Gnosjö] there was a chance for the little man to take a step forward, despite the fact that he came from a so-called poor background. Here, drive, work and endurance sufficed' (Wendeberg, 1982, p. 95, my translation).

The aim of masculinity research is to problematize men and masculinities in order to emphasize that man and men are not gender-neutral concepts (Connell, 1996). What is constructed as masculine traits 'in men' is the focus of analysis. Research on masculinities generally emphasizes differences between men and masculinities. Holmquist (1997) characterizes research on female entrepreneurship as still marginal, even though it has attracted more interest in the last few decades. This is to my understanding also true for the topic of masculinity and entrepreneurship. Even though the largest part of research on entrepreneurship is conducted on men, by men as Lindgren (2000) notes, there is still a lack of studies that make explicit the maleness of the entrepreneur and the masculinity of entrepreneurship.

One exception is Mulholland (1996) who examines two different entrepreneurial masculinities: the 'company man' and the 'takeover man', in the context of the richest entrepreneurial families in a Midlands county of England (see also Reed, 1996). The company man is the representation of an approach to wealth creation which focuses on technical expertise, pride in the product and company, internal growth, and a low interest in financial management. The takeover man represents an approach to wealth creation which emphasizes quick profits achieved through financial manipulation, and where growth is made possible by way of takeovers. Mulholland compares two entrepreneurs she has interviewed, which represent the two approaches towards entrepreneurship. One of them is 'Mr M', representing the company man. 'In some ways Mr M conforms to the model of the

'self-made', self-educated, 'hands-on' practical man of the post-war industrial sector, whose prior commitment is to product development as opposed to quick profits' (Mulholland, 1996).

The entrepreneurial masculinity constructed in the discourse on Gnosjö is comparable to the concept of the 'company man' coined by Mulholland as it emphasizes slow growth, pride in the company and technical, practical skills. And the entrepreneur is thus imagined as a 'self-educated' and 'self-made' man. The construction of entrepreneurship as a way of becoming a 'self-made' man is particularly obvious where discussions on employees who start their own businesses as 'spin-offs' take place in the Gnosjö discourse, and it is emphasized by the use of terms like 'self-employment' and 'being one's own boss'. One example of this discursive construction is a young male entrepreneur who is quoted as saying: 'I want to build this [firm] on my own and not be helped by anyone. It is a lifetime achievement that I will create' (25 October 1996, *Svenska Dagbladet*, my translation).

In Gnosjö the manufacturing industry with production of basic plastic and metal products dominates. This is a sector of industry traditionally associated with men (Holmquist, 1996), technical knowledge and skills, which in turn have masculine connotations (Sundin and Berner 1996; Mellström, 1999). Hard work and long working hours, which are described as characteristics of entrepreneurship in Gnosjö, are also associated with an authentic masculinity, characterized by working away from the private sphere of the home (Mulholland, 1996; Sundin, 2002).

In the Gnosjö discourse emphasis is also placed on entrepreneurship as a collective, described in terms of a network (see Johannisson and Gustafsson, 1984; Hjorth and Johannisson, 1998). However, this does not challenge the interpretation of entrepreneurship as masculine in the discourse, since this collective is represented as all male. This is explicit in the following quote, whereas the collective of entrepreneurs is signified as a 'unique brotherhood':

> Researcher on networks believes in the unique brotherhood of the district [Headline]. . . . The vitality of the region of Gnosjö is not to be found in individual firms, is not explained by solely economic and technical skills, he [Bengt Johannisson] says. It is entrepreneurship as a collective, also embedded in a particular life form, which is the explanation (1 October 1996, *Svenska Dagbladet*, my translation).

WOMEN – WIVES AND HELPMATES?

The women who are entrepreneurs in Gnosjö are to a large extent invisible in the Gnosjö discourse. Women are very seldom called entrepreneurs, or the like, in the material analysed. Instead they are called wives of entrepreneurs/

self-employed, or 'helpmates'. This is evident in the following quote: 'But a range of people have been crucial in the industrial history of the county: founders of businesses and – managers, innovators and constructors, skilled workers and employees aiming at opening up their own businesses – and not the least women as supporters and helpmates in the family-owned businesses' (Rydén, 1992, p. 340, my translation). At the same time it is reported that women work in the firms in Gnosjö, both in the production on the shop floors as well as with administrative tasks (Wendeberg, 1982).

The women entrepreneurs in Gnosjö are hence invisible in the discourse. This is a common feature in other contexts as well. Sundin and Holmquist (1989) argue that women entrepreneurs are invisible. They, in their pioneer study on women entrepreneurs, say that women who are entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group, contrary to popular belief. Sundin and Holmquist therefore conclude that women entrepreneurs are invisible, varied and adaptive.

A representation of entrepreneurs as men, which in turn makes women entrepreneurs invisible, can lead to problems for the women in practice. They can, for instance, be treated in a cavalier and dismissive way and sectors of business where it is more common for women to have firms are often perceived of as less important and less valuable than 'male' industries like manufacturing (Holmquist, 1996). Mulholland (1996) also notes that the maleness of the entrepreneur in practice means that the wives of male entrepreneurs perform unpaid housework as well as direct, but invisible, labour in the businesses.

MASCULINIST DISCOURSES ON ECONOMY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women entrepreneurs in Gnosjö are invisible in the Gnosjö discourse. The question is why the label entrepreneur has masculine connotations and why it is primarily associated with men. The answer is the construction of the entrepreneur as a man, and entrepreneurship as a masculine activity, is grounded in an economic discourse, which is both scientific and more general. Particularly the scientific economic discourse is created within a neo-classical tradition.

The economic discourse is constructed as what is imagined to be the economy – production for exchange on a market – and what is not considered to be part of the economy. McDowell (2000) argues that the economy is defined as what men do, and have traditionally been doing, and that the economic actor – economic man – from the outset is constructed as masculine. McDowell also states that economic theory is built upon a scientific

ideal, which embraces rationality, objectivity and truth. Pålsson Syll (2002), in a discussion concerning feminist economics, states that economics has been one of the most male-dominated fields of study at the universities. A male bias has characterized the practitioners as well as the research interests. Neo-classical economic thought is by feminist economists described as an expression of a masculine perspective with focus on individuality, atomism and goal orientation.

According to McDowell: 'The discursive construction of "the economic", like that of labour power, as neutral, rational, instrumental, and above all able to be valued in monetary terms, permeates economists' and economic geographers' conceptualisations of economic processes' (McDowell, 2000, p. 236). This construction of the economy, which constitutes the foundation of economic research, implies a dichotomization between, among other things, public and private, market and non-market, as McDowell makes explicit (see also Nelson, 1993): 'This devaluation of the feminine and the valorisation of the masculine attributes lies behind the social construction of economics . . .' (McDowell, 2000, p. 499). These dualisms are hence not gender neutral, but express what is considered to be masculine or feminine.

The dichotomization between the masculine and feminine and the construction of these hierarchical dualisms have deeply rooted traditions. Nelson (1996) also argues that what is defined as economics is associated with masculinity, and this is due to the fact that economics is defined as 'science', which in turn is considered as masculine. The masculine side of the gendered dichotomy, associated with science, is constructed as reason or mind, while the feminine side is defined as nature and body.

The construction of this dichotomous view of science and nature, masculine and feminine, is rooted in the formation of the ideals of Western modern science which arose during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The definition of economics is thus embedded in an ideal view of modern science where reason is seen as separated from non-reason, and mind from nature and body. The dichotomization between two poles, and the domination of the masculine over the feminine, is thus the foundation of the construction of economics. In this vein Lloyd (1993) states that it is possible to argue that the construction of the economy as masculine is made in association with the construction of Western reason as masculine, and in connection with: '. . . the maleness of the man of reason' (Lloyd, 1993, p. xviii). In this perspective reason, and hence economics, is defined in opposition to what is perceived of as feminine.

In the economic discourse economic man is regarded as the prototype of economic behaviour. The economic man is thus an ideal which lies implicitly in the construction of entrepreneurs and small-business owners. The focus

of entrepreneurial research is, according to Holmquist (2002), the entrepreneur as an individual, as well as this individual's qualities. Individuality is one of the traits typical of economic man, along with autonomy. And according to Nelson (1996) economic man is imagined as acting individually and rationally so as to be profit-maximizing and competitive. She also states that individuality, activity and competition are characteristics identified with masculinity.

The entrepreneurs in the discourse on Gnosjö cannot be seen as constructed in direct relation to the ideal of economic man, but nevertheless entrepreneurs are constructed as men engaged in masculine activities. This is due to the associations between the ideal of the economic man in an economic discourse and a 'discourse on entrepreneurship'.

The association between the economic discourse and an 'entrepreneurial discourse' is emphasized by Ahl (2002, p. 34), Landström (2000), Lindgren (2000, p. 79) and in the introduction to *The Blackwell Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (Sexton and Landström, 2000). They all point to the fact that the term entrepreneur was coined by the French economist Cantillon who defined the entrepreneur as '. . . someone who engages in exchanges for profit and exercises business judgment in the face of uncertainty' (Ahl, 2002, p. 34).

Hjorth (2001) argues that during the 1990s there has been a shift in the discussions on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, because the interest in these subjects has increased significantly. The entrepreneur constructed in what Hjorth terms the enterprise discourse is associated with economic man, since interest is taken to rule over passion. Economic man thus 'crowds out' other forms of humans. Hjorth cites Du Gay: 'For many commentators, the growing dominance of the discourse of enterprise heralds the return of Adam Smith's famous homo oeconomicus or "economic man" at the centre stage of history' (Hjorth, 2001, p. 54, cites Du Gay, 1997, p. 301).

Thus there are strong, but often implicit, connections between the masculine ideal-type economic man and the construction of entrepreneurs as men. This is also one of the reasons why entrepreneurs in the discourse on Gnosjö are represented as men and why entrepreneurship is constructed as a specific form of masculinity in the discourse. A more general and popular view of the entrepreneur as man, which cannot be seen as directly mirroring the scientific discourse but focusing on men all the same, is also one explanation of the construction of a masculinist discourse on Gnosjö.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter has been to apply a feminist perspective and critically examine how gender is represented in the Gnosjö discourse. I have through this analysis made the implicit gendered perspective of the Gnosjö discourse explicit. Gender is, in the discourse on Gnosjö, represented through a separation between and categorization of one feminine and one masculine part. This gender construction also entails a hierarchization between the masculine and feminine, men and women, which at the same time means that the masculine and feminine are constructed in relations to each other. I have in the analysis of the Gnosjö discourse exposed the fact that men are put in a superior position, primarily through representing entrepreneurs as men. The categories men and women are thereby separated. Men are categorized as entrepreneurs, while women are categorized as wives of entrepreneurs or 'helpmates'. This also implies that women function as a necessary periphery or mirror for the hierarchization of men, put in a superior position.

I have discussed how discourses are related to power, and the analysis demonstrates that power works through constructing a masculinist discourse. The discourse on Gnosjö is hence from a feminist perspective masculinist since it makes women invisible. The discourse has a certain logic for what is included – and seen as interesting and important knowledge – and what is excluded. I question the fact that the discourse is commonly regarded as accurate and exhaustive knowledge about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Gnosjö, since it excludes statements on one third of the entrepreneurs – women.

Through drawing attention to the construction of entrepreneurs as men in the Gnosjö discourse I also question how Gnosjö is put forward as a role model for other Swedish regions and municipalities, since the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the region's prosperity and economic growth is to a large extent excluded. The accuracy of the explanations and experiences drawn on studies on Gnosjö are thus highly questionable.

Through the critical feminist examination of the Gnosjö discourse I have contributed to the discursive move away from the mainstream, masculinist image of Gnosjö (see also Wendeberg, 1982; Hedlund, 1997; Forsberg, 1997; Hedlund 1998; Johansson, 2000). The research findings in this chapter point to the fact that a feminist perspective is necessary in studies on entrepreneurship in order to avoid taking a male norm for granted and in order to make women entrepreneurs visible. A feminist perspective is also of importance in order to critically examine the masculine norm in detail.

This conclusion parallels what Calás and Smircich (1996) argue concerning organization studies. They write: '. . . by using feminist theories as con-

ceptual lenses, we believe a [sic] more inclusive organization studies can be created' (Calás and Smircich, 1996, p. 218).

This implies more than 'add women and stir' according to Pringle (1989) and Nelson (1993), since it demands a challenge of the existing framework of organization studies and economics. It is thus not primarily a question of adding women as a category in quantitative investigations which is sought for, but rather a qualitative shift away from a masculinist discourse in research on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

10.   Quilting a feminist map to guide the study of women entrepreneurs

Kathryn Campbell

INTRODUCTION

> The motive for metaphor, according to Wallace Stevens, is a desire to associate, and finally to identify, the human mind with what goes on outside it, because the only genuine joy you can have is in those rare moments when you feel that although we may know in part, as Paul says, we are also a part of what we know (Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, 1963, p. 11).

Metaphors alter and expand our frame of reference. Metaphors oblige us to shift from the 'language of practical skills or knowledge' (Frye, 1963, p. 16) to the 'language of imagination . . . [that has] . . . the power of constructing possible models of human experience' (Frye, 1963, p. 5). And, as alluded to in the opening quotation, the language of imagination 'leads us toward the regaining of identity' (Frye, 1963, p. 21). Metaphors, therefore, are ideally suited to the study of women entrepreneurs, a lightly charted research terrain with much to be discovered and recovered.

At best, women entrepreneurs have been treated as a minority,[50] special-interest topic. In a survey of the period 1977 to 1989, Candida Brush 'found only 45 articles published about women small-business owners/entrepreneurs', with 13 of those published in professional journals (Moore et al., 1992, pp. 102–103). More recently, a 2001 survey of seven leading entrepreneurship journals, covering the period 1980 to 2000, reported equally dismal results: 1624 articles were reviewed of which a mere 79 (4.9%) could be classified as 'gender/minority conversations' (Meeks et al., 2001). The field of economics is deeply complicit in this misdirection.[51] Through the arbitrary definition of labour as 'only those activities that produce surplus value' (Waring, 1990, p. 27), domestic and subsistence labour are discredited (Boserup, [1960] 1989; Nelson, 1996). This macroeconomic value judgment points the field of entrepreneurship towards the study of full time, growth-oriented technology-based global enterprises, a research bias that excludes many entrepreneurial women who operate in other areas of the economy (Campbell, 1994).

At worst, women's entrepreneurial voices have been drowned out by the dominant, 'male-stream' (O'Brien, 1976) narrative. For years, feminist scholars in many academic disciplines have worked to deconstruct these 'Master Narratives . . . [which] . . . seek to preserve the social order while obscuring the privileged stances/investments of writers' (Fine, 1994, p. 73). Exposing/deconstructing these 'Master Narratives' reveals their protective defences, a tightly woven constellation of self-reinforcing philosophies, ontologies and 'isms'[52] buttressed by claims to 'scientific neutrality, universal truths and researcher dispassion' (Fine, 1994, p. 71). Feminists are not alone in their struggle to break free of these 'Master Narratives'. In his revolutionary treatise, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire counsels class resistance to a 'thematic universe . . . [which is] . . . a complex of ideas, hopes, doubts, values and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites' (Freire, 1968, pp. 91–92). Indigenous peoples also struggle against 'the Western discourse about the Other . . . to ensure that research with indigenous peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful' (Smith, 1999, pp. 2 and 9). Smith advocates for the millions of indigenous peoples who are working 'to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity' (Smith, 1999, p. 23). By comparison, the Western feminist agenda of inclusion may seem a modest struggle but it shares the same core goals of identity, respect and self-representation.

As a first step towards emancipation of entrepreneurship research, Kuhnian 'normal science' is set as a proxy for these 'Master Narratives' and a critique of Kuhn's work uncloaks some of the mythology surrounding conventional scholarly activity. Then, metaphor or the 'language of imagination' is introduced to show how we might access our powers to vision what is possible. In particular, quilts and quilting are used in various direct and metaphorical constructs to think about what is needed in the study of women entrepreneurs. Quilter and successful entrepreneur Wendy Lewington Coulter views her work and her life in just such metaphorical terms:

> I see the quilt as a metaphor for the creative resourcefulness necessary to survive as a woman in a patriarchal system. In quiltmaking, as in our lives, we are piecing together fragments and remnants in an attempt to form an integrated whole. (Wendy Lewington Coulter, in Hunt, 1996, p. 18).

Here quilting is interpreted as a rebuilding, restorative process for women as we learn to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989) and to 'research back' (Smith, 1999, p. 7). Throughout the chapter various interpretative frameworks will emerge: quilts as artistic expression for silenced women; quilts as maps; quilting as social protest; and quilting as community building for women. In all these incarnations, quilts and the process of their creation are intimately linked with women's work and women's self-representation.

To extend the emancipation project, the merits of paradigm pluralism and gender-sensitive rhetorical methodologies are discussed. Freed from the normative constraints of the 'Master Narratives', we can more fully understand and appropriately document the substantial contributions of entrepreneurial women. To ground the ensuing discussion, the working definition of feminism adopted in the chapter is briefly explicated.

A BRIEF COMMENT ABOUT FEMINISM

> I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat (Rebecca West, *Clarion*, 14 November 1913 in Foss et al. (1999), p. 2).

Feminism defies easy definition as it is 'not a monolithic ideology' (Tong, 1998, p. 1) and readily embraces a multiplicity of views. In 1983 Alison Jaggar discussed four feminist philosophies: liberal, traditional Marxist, radical, and socialist. The debates have flourished and, more recently, Rosemarie Tong (1998) delineated 12 distinct categories of feminist thought: liberal, radical-libertarian, radical-cultural, Marxist, socialist, psychoanalytic, existential, postmodern, gender, multicultural, global, and eco-feminism. Such diversity and its attendant controversies are both healthy and confusing. As we craft multiple narratives about women's work experiences there might be some risk of self-destructive factionalism. In fact, a shared value system connects these many feminisms.

Gloria Anzaldua looks beyond the innumerable differences of women's experiences and sees healing at the heart of feminist initiatives. 'Though the particulars of each woman's *responding* differ, though their values, political views, and color of their skins differ, though some pull in different directions, there is a common movement: The reaching out to heal' [sic] (Foss et al., 1999, p. 111). Virginia Olesen recognizes that need for healing and stresses the importance of action to change the power structure. For her the different feminisms 'share the outlook that it is important to center and make problematic women's diverse situations and the institutions and frames that influence those situations, and then to refer the examination of that problematic to theoretical, policy, or action frameworks in the interest of realizing social justice for women' (Olesen, 1994, p. 158). Accordingly I propose that feminism is rooted in three beliefs: the right of each and every woman to full humanity (the refusal to be a doormat); a commitment to act for oneself and for all women (an obligation to the collective); and the goal of social justice (action for healing/systemic change). From those core principles, the various feminist groups work in distinct, but organically con-

nected ways, to accomplish collective benefit for all women. However, when we try to integrate those fundamental feminist beliefs into 'male-stream' research, we are confounded by a system of largely unexplained values, known now to feminists as the 'Master Narratives' and represented here by Kuhn's 'normal science'.

DECONSTRUCTING 'NORMAL SCIENCE'

Deconstruction of the culture and assumptions of 'normal science' and its companion 'isms' is therefore pivotal to the enfranchisement of feminist knowledge and to a full and comprehensive writing of women's entrepreneurial history. Although Thomas Kuhn does not bear personal or exclusive culpability for the pervasiveness of the 'male-stream' worldview, his much quoted text *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* idealizes 'normal science'. He dichotomizes the research world[53] so that 'normal science' is ascribed valued attributes and all other scholarly disciplines are devalued. Entrepreneurship research is particularly vulnerable as it strains against its ancestral roots in economics, psychology and sociology and tries to establish its own scholarly credentials. The apparent legitimacy of 'normal science' is quite seductive for this young discipline.

However, despite its self-ascribed designation, 'normal science' is far from normal. It is a narrowly circumscribed worldview, endorsed by a very small cadre of self-selecting individuals, concerned with matters entirely of their own devising, accountable only to their peers. 'Normal science' exists in the arcane realm of laboratory experiments, of dissection and measurement, of prediction and hypothesis testing. 'Normal science' depends upon quantitative research in which methods of knowledge accumulation are codified and rigidly monitored. Large sample sizes, quantitative data sets, and complex statistical analyses are assumed to be rational and bias-free. Social and cultural contexts are stripped away and ignored in search of scientific objectivity. Data irregularities are statistically smoothed to facilitate comparability across studies; emergent trends and radical outliers are eliminated in this homogenization process. In 'normal science', knowledge, once validated by the academic community, is elevated to sacred text, literally and metaphorically. Then there follows a radical inversion of artifice and reality, in which 'normal science' becomes reality and nature the threat. Divergent ideas, which challenge the sacred text, are aggressively discredited until such time as there is a 'revolutionary' change that overthrows the old paradigm. At that point all 'true' scientists move to the new paradigm; the community closes inward on the study of 'esoteric' problems emerging from the new paradigm; and the cycle begins anew as the system once again goes into defensive mode.

From a feminist research perspective, it is dangerous to aspire to paradigmatic or pre-paradigm stature for entrepreneurship research if such a stance presumes an unquestioning acceptance of all the underlying assumptions/values and techniques of 'normal science'. As well, espousing one ordained entrepreneurship paradigm is a regressive move entirely unacceptable to feminist researchers who are already deeply concerned about the lack of relevant data about women entrepreneurs. Jesse Bernard urges us to resist the alienating 'machismo element'[54] endemic in 'agentic research' and recommends instead a 'communal approach' (Bernard, [1973] 1998, p. 1 l). In fact, many aspects of 'normal science' are antithetical to the feminist research agenda and the so-called 'scientific revolutions' via 'paradigm shifts' are not sufficiently revolutionary to ensure the admission of more woman-centred, gender-sensitive research. Instead, feminist researchers recommend paradigm pluralism as a sympathetic enactment of feminist principles. This recommendation honours the heritage of women's work as portrayed in quilts and its attendant quilting culture.

SOME THOUGHTS ON QUILTS AND QUILTING

> Every great quilt, whether it be a patchwork, appliqué, or strip quilt, is a potential Rosetta stone. Quilts represent one of the most highly evolved systems of writing in the New World. Every combination of colors, every juxtaposition or intersection of line and form, every pattern, traditional or idiosyncratic, contains data that can be imparted in some form or another to anyone (Tobin and Dobard, 2000, pp. 8–9, quoting Bill Arnett).

Quilts have a long and storied history[55] in many cultures. One thread of the North American story has its origin in Africa. Early African textile works were used to encode cultural knowledge; history, religious beliefs and cultural affairs were chronicled through abstract, figurative and geometric designs that became a complex visual language (Tobin and Dobard, 2000). Textiles were a 'fabric griot'.[56] When the Black slaves were transported to the New World, they adapted the quilting medium to carry a new cultural message, overt incitement to covert resistance. Patterns and colours and stitching were messages and maps to communicate plans for escape from enslavement. These messages, stitched into everyday objects so familiar/homely that they were rendered invisible to the slave owners, were routinely 'hidden in plain view', that is, hung out on the line for all to see! The quilt thus became a 'visual metaphor for perseverance and continuity' (Tobin and Dobard, 2000, p. 159).

The creative power of the arts continues to play a crucial role in identity formation and self-expression for groups outside the mainstream. Closely

mirroring Frye's fine theorizing about the language of imagination, Black feminist bell hooks agrees that 'art occupies a radical place in the freedom struggle precisely because it provides a means for imagining new possibilities; it serves as the foundation for emerging visions' (Foss et al., 1999, p. 90). And other oppressed groups share this tradition of education, cultural cohesion and resistance through art. Alice Olsen Williams, an Aboriginal artist of some renown, comments that quilting has become for her a multi-dimensional project: 'I could use quilting as a way of teaching our language, have it as a credit course, and at the same time use it as a medium for political analysis and social awareness, where women get together and talk about what we can do about the inequities of this society' (Hunt, 1996, p. 209).

Denied access to educational and scholarly opportunities, women have historically used the arts as a venue through which to challenge their intellectual and rhetorical alienation (Foss et al., 1999; Tong, 1998).

> Women's literary voices, successfully marginalized and trivialized by the dominant male establishment, nevertheless survived. The voices of anonymous women were present as a steady undercurrent in the oral tradition, in folksong and nursery rhymes, tales of powerful witches and good fairies. In stitchery, embroidery, and quilting women's artistic creativity expressed an alternate vision. In letters, diaries, prayers, and songs the symbol-making force of women's creativity pulsed and persisted (Lerner, 1986, p. 226).

And the quilt holds a special place in this unconventional rhetorical tradition. Simple in concept but complex in application, a quilt is defined by three essential elements: a decorative surface comprised of many small pieces of fabric; an interior warmth-creating batting/wadding; and a stitching plan to hold all the parts together. These elements, individually and jointly, model the attributes of good feminist research.

The invisible portion of the quilt, the batting, determines its ultimate utility. A quilt with good batting will keep the user warm and, accordingly, will be much treasured by present and future owners. As discussed, feminism is infused with core values that guide the research agenda. These values help to ensure that feminist research, like a good quilt, serves a life-affirming, life-enhancing purpose. The decorative quilt top honours kaleidoscopic pluralism, a metaphor that parallels Rosemarie Tong's thesis of kaleidoscopic feminism[57] (Tong, 1998). Each quilt top is an amalgam of many small, colourful pieces, and no two quilts are the same. Artistic traditions may influence the design of an individual quilt but, finally, all quilts are original and are valued for that originality. The various feminist movements – colourful, distinctive and ever-changing – collectively delineate a richly patterned quilt top. Stitching holds the quilt components together

and, in that joining, creates joint and shared meaning. The overt/covert messages of the Black American slaves are a poignant example of that meaning/messaging power. Around the world women's groups quilt messages of protest against abuse and poverty, against loneliness and isolation, and against environmental degradation. Quilts are tangible forms of resistance against racism, sexism and misogyny and the quilting process is a structured site of resistance as women come together in common cause. Yet quilting is simultaneously a celebration of life, of artistry, of beauty, of caring and of possibility.

Quilting is most often a communal, non-competitive process. It is a respectful culture that fosters inclusivity and egalitarianism; the skilled craftswoman guides and assists the novice. In Canada, pioneer women met together in 'quilting bees', ostensibly to share in and expedite the substantial labour necessary to complete a quilt. That tradition continues, testament to the pleasure derived from a shared work experience and, in the context of the protest quilt, confirmation of the courage and determination that grows out of collective engagement.

Quilting embodies the art and science of synthesis. Hundreds of small pieces of cloth are joined by millions of tiny stitches, a process akin to the ecofeminist project of 'reweaving of the world' (Mies and Shiva, 1993, p. 6). As well, the synthesis of quilting is an organic process that transforms 'simple substances into complex materials' (Montagu, 1999, p. 143), a process facilitated by the mutuality and interdependence of multivariate elements. Quilting achieves synthesis on many planes: the joining of many small, fragile pieces of material; the ecological reuse of old materials; the complex harmony of the many elements; the blending of function and beauty; the tenacious strength and durability of multi-layered work; the stitching of a passionate symbolic language system; and the celebration of collective effort for communal gain. The shifting kaleidoscope pieces suggest an infinite number of possible patterns, all radiant with possibility, which brings us to the crux of the dispute between 'normal science' and feminist philosophy. What kind of truth are we seeking?

ONE TRUTH OR MULTIPLE TRUTHS: THE MERITS OF PARADIGM PLURALISM

Although devoted to scientific rationality and objectivity, Kuhn's paradigmatic 'normal science' does not actually promise a fixed, universal truth.[58] Explicitly, Kuhn theorizes sustained community consensus around one agreed truth which reigns supreme until overthrown by a new agreed truth, in other words individual sequential truths. The truth of the prevailing

paradigm is validated by hierarchical supremacy; inherent merit alone is not sufficient.

If there is no fixed, universal truth, an alternative model of paradigm pluralism, that is, the non-hierarchical co-existence of multiple truths at any one time, is as legitimate as Kuhn's thesis of sequential truths. Having suffered under patriarchal hierarchies, feminist researchers repudiate systems that require a transcendent authority (Reinharz, 1992), striving instead for an egalitarian world that respects evolutionary intellectual biodiversity. Feminism 'is rooted in choice and self-determination and does not prescribe one "official" position that feminists must hold. Feminism also is an evolving process that necessarily changes as conditions in the world change and as feminists develop new understandings' (Foss et al., 1999, p. 3). Paradigm pluralism honours this worldview.

There is much value in pluralism. Intense creativity is generated in the transcendence of differences (Mies and Shiva, 1993). Thought processes are altered. A 'pluralistic mode . . . [shifts us]. . out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes' (Foss et al., 1999, p. 1 14 quoting Anzaldua (1990) *Making Face*, p. 379).

Women and other 'minorities' who live on the margins of patriarchal society have a unique capacity to develop a pluralistic research agenda, a capacity beautifully articulated by Black feminist bell hooks (hooks, 1984). hooks inverts the stereotypical weaknesses of the marginalized, arguing that those deemed to be at the margin of society have an integral and privileged perspective on their own existence, a 'passion of experience' (Foss et al., 1999, p. 83) and radical insights about those at the centre. Discourse from the margins can instruct and illuminate. In fact, with improved knowledge about women and other 'minority' entrepreneurs, the field of entrepreneurship research, may experience multiple 'paradigm shifts', a prospect facilitated by recent research developments.

MULTIPLE FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES: PARADIGM PLURALISM IN ACTION

The convergence of two discrete research events offers timely momentum in the study of women entrepreneurs. The growing appreciation for a diversity of feminist philosophies, energized by an expanding roster of innovative research methods, promises both scholarly rigour and intricate texture,

rather like the steadying warp threads and the patterning woof threads of woven material.[59] Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) delineate a continuum of methodologies [positivism . . . post-positivism . . . critical theory . . . constructivism] that serve as warp threads upon which can be woven various feminist patterns to capture the many facets of entrepreneurial women. To illustrate some of these multiple truths, the basic elements of three feminisms–empiricist (status quo), standpoint (radical) and ecofeminist (revolutionary) – are briefly described and their relevance to particular entrepreneurial agendas discussed.

Feminist Empiricism

Much of the 1960s writing of the 'second-wave' feminist movement in North America was of the revisionist, 'add women and stir' variety (Olesen, 1994, p. 159), situated within the liberal feminist and early feminist empiricist tradition. These feminists wrote within the positivist tradition, advocating mainly for adjustments to the legal and educational systems to eliminate sex discrimination. They were 'reformists rather than revolutionaries: male was the paradigm of human nature: their concern was to demonstrate that women were as fully human as men' (Calás and Smircich, 1996, p. 222). Today, 'empiricist feminists are aligned with a postpositivist language of validity, reliability, [and] credibility' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994b, p. 101). The 'add women and stir' campaign, which has been dominated by middle-class white women, is credited with consciousness-raising and structural accommodation and it continues as a research orientation for feminist researchers who advocate the benefits of structural adjustment.

Entrepreneurship research using a feminist empiricist methodology typically will choose to replicate prevailing/sanctioned research topics and will use quantitative techniques in order to facilitate comparative analyses and policy development. Large sample sizes and standardized methodologies lend weight and credibility to policy formulations and the ensuing work has made valuable contributions to public awareness of women's entrepreneurial achievements. Generally, their work has brought much-respected scholarly rigour to the study of women entrepreneurs. Working within mainstream parameters, feminist empiricists have secured an important beachhead and, from that vantage point, they are well positioned to press for more institutional support for gender-inclusive research.

Feminist Standpoint

Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith definitively endorsed paradigm pluralism with her 1979 theorizing of the 'feminist standpoint'. Renouncing

the canons of positivism, standpoint feminism valorizes the lived experience of every woman and privileges each woman as rhetor of her own experiences. In this construct, knowledge is situated and contextualized. And as argued by bell hooks in her margin-and-centre analogy, feminist standpoint knowledge will provide 'the basis for a more comprehensive representation of reality than the standpoint of men' (Jaggar, 1983, p. 385).

The articulation of feminist standpoint knowledge works with a new definition of rhetoric and the rhetorical process. Instead of the classical rhetorical attributes of public persuasion via formal declamation, feminist rhetorical theory recognizes 'rhetoric as any kind of human symbol use that functions in any realm', enacted by anyone, for the purpose not of persuasion but of understanding (Foss et al., 1999, pp. 6–7). The everyday quality and accessibility of feminist standpoint research are in marked contrast to Kuhn's enthusiasm for the 'esoteric'.[60] Here, a quilt is not just a metaphor for protest but may itself be a rhetorical protest (Williams, 1994).

Entrepreneurship research developed upon this foundation will be radical in its rejection of grand theories in favour of particularized and idiosyncratic knowing. Standpoint feminism provides welcome space for all manner of entrepreneurial diversities. Yet those diversities exist respectfully, with a tolerance forged in their common ancestry of exclusion from the mainstream (Smith, 1979). Additionally, every entrepreneurial woman has knowledge about entrepreneurship and is accorded the stature of rhetor of her knowledge. Thus, the researcher and researched are brought together as the form and substance of the emergent knowledge are controlled by the woman entrepreneur rather than the researcher.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a comparatively new movement made powerful by its blending of multiple social action agendas. It operates at the intersection of 'spheres of feminism, indigenous knowledge, and appropriate science, development, and technology' (Wells and Wirth, 1997, p. 304). Ecofeminism is 'a vision of an alternative society, based not on the model of growth-oriented industrialism and consumerism but close to what we call the subsistence perspective' (Mies and Shiva, 1993, p. 4). It rejects the Western Enlightenment philosophy that 'Man's freedom and happiness depend *on an ongoing process of emancipation from nature*, on independence from, and dominance over natural processes by the power of reason and rationality' (Mies and Shiva, 1993, p. 6). Of all the feminisms, ecofeminism is the most deeply critical of 'normal science' and of the capitalist economic system with their shared agenda of subordinating nature to 'man's' will.

Adoption of the ecofeminist perspective, which 'locates production and consumption within the context of regeneration' (Shiva, 1993, p. 33), requires a reconceptualization of entrepreneurship and economic innovation. Ecofeminist entrepreneurship is therefore revolutionary in its import. Here, entrepreneurship is aligned with life, regeneration and coexistence with nature. The burgeoning interest in microenterprise and sustainable enterprise supports this new conceptualization of entrepreneurship. But ecofeminism's revolutionary potential implicates more than knowledge definition; the very institutional processes of knowledge accreditation and the legitimacy of conventional disciplinary boundaries are called into question. Although historically marginalized from formal knowledge structures, women have invaluable indigenous knowledge to offer to a sustainable entrepreneurial worldview (Mies and Shiva, 1993), knowledge derived from our multiple roles as primary food producers, health care providers, shelter builders, managers of subsistence activities and 'petty traders' (Boserup, [1960] 1989).

Freed from the constraints of 'normal science', the creative possibilities of these various feminist philosophies can begin to flourish. To further the development of woman-centred entrepreneurship research, critical attention now turns to the role of rhetoric in scholarly discourse.

TRANSFORMATIVE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES TO CRAFT RESEARCH SYMPATHETIC TO WOMAN ENTREPRENEURS

As noted earlier, the reformulation of rhetoric and rhetorical processes creates intellectual and emotional space within which new theory can emerge and some recommended strategies are briefly discussed.

Emotion and Spirituality

Classical rhetorical narratives are expected to be formal and dispassionate, flat and utilitarian, wedded to a 'language of practical sense' (Frye, 1963, p. 16). With information dispersion and persuasion as key rhetorical functions, the maintenance of prevailing power hierarchies takes precedence over emotional and spiritual connection. As such, artifice denies reality. Entrepreneurs are driven by a legion of emotions but conventional entrepreneurship research lacks emotional ballast. Cartesian dualism, mind over emotions, has stripped entrepreneurial research of an essential element/ingredient. Self-authored and/or verbatim documentation can help to restore entrepreneurial passion and energy to the research record

thereby better profiling the entrepreneurial spirit that has been neutered/eviscerated by the 'chaste passion' (Mies, 1993, p. 45) of 'normal science'. As well, inspiration can be drawn from the action research of Aboriginal peoples as they work to deconstruct the adverse effects of colonialism and reinscribe spirituality into their history. In the '*re*writing and *re*righting' of Aboriginal history (Smith, 1999, p. 28), the community expects the researcher to have a spiritual perspective, asking of the researcher, 'Who owns the research? Whose interests does it serve? Is her spirit clear? Does she have a good heart?' (Smith, 1999, p. 10). Spirituality is integral to the ecofeminist worldview; it 'lies in the rediscovery of the sacredness of life . . . [it is a quality] . . . in everyday life, in our work, in the things that surround us' (Mies and Shiva, 1993, pp. 17–18). The inclusion of emotionality and spirituality in entrepreneurship research begins the recovery of authenticity of voice.

Authentic Voice

When an interview is conducted as an unstructured, non-judgmental, collaborative dialogue, the interviewee is accorded the respect mandated by the feminist standpoint methodology. The purpose of such an interview is to document the woman's knowledge, in her words, with careful note of the context in which she lives. Data accumulation, rather than theory formulation/confirmation, is the primary task, with the epistemological goal of learning from the interviewee. In fact, when the interviewer strives for egalitarian connectedness rather than control, the prospects of hearing original data and of fostering unbidden theory formation are considerably enhanced. The ideal outcome is a unique, handwoven story.

The feminist oral history has a larger scope than the standard interview and invites a woman to reflect upon her life and to offer her perspective on historical events. As women have seldom had the opportunity for first-person narratives, we may employ stories, apparent digressions and non-chronological anecdotes to make sense of our experiences. While the oral traditions of Aboriginal peoples are now carefully studied, women's storytelling is more often devalued as gossip. Biographies and autobiographies are, therefore, critical to the rebuilding of the historical record as written affirmation of our place in history. The popularity of mini-biographies of women entrepreneurs may reflect women's inexperience in reflecting at length about our work or it might signal the researcher's lack of skill at asking insightful 'non-questions'. These works are nonetheless useful first steps in the recovery of women entrepreneurs into the written record because, in both formats, a woman is the rhetor of her own experience and she is made visible by documenting her voice and her ideas. These methods

adhere to the feminist standpoint principle of research *for* women rather than study *of* women and meet the spiritual/ethical standard promoted by Aboriginal action research.

Asking 'Non-Questions'

The odd but enlightening rhetorical strategy of asking 'non-questions' can assist the researcher in narrative development. 'Non-questions are those which so fundamentally challenge or question the philosophical structure of a society or civilization (in this case of patriarchy) that they cannot be understood as questions at all by those who work entirely within an established tradition of thought' (Vickers, 1989, p. 38).

In a recent conference paper titled, 'Where are all the mother/daughter business partnerships?', I posed a non-question as the line of inquiry exposed the inadequacy of conventional entrepreneurship research and proposed the accumulation of qualitative data of marginal interest to the scholarly elite (Campbell, 2001). To recover women's entrepreneurial accomplishments into economic history, research agendas must do more than simply replicate standardized topics and methods since the identification of 'exclusions, erasures, and missing information' (Reinharz, 1992, p. 162) requires the asking of previously unasked questions. A new sociological specialty, the 'sociology of the lack of knowledge',[61] (Reinharz, 1992, p. 248) can be helpful in this process. The words used to phrase these 'non-questions' also merit attention.

New Words and New Meanings

Mary Daly's work exemplifies another empowering rhetorical option, 'the power to name' (Daly, 1973, p. 8), the right we all have to create the symbols/words through which we name our experience. She makes up new words and reunites words with their ancient meanings; she bundles words together to clarify/expand their meaning; she uses irregular capitalization of words to alter thinking patterns; she changes the spelling/shape of words to reveal their old and/or new meanings; she engages in 'Grammar/Sin-Tactics' (Daly and Caputi, 1987, p. 29) to challenge the authority of rule-makers. She shows that words can be powerful tools in our hands as we rebuild our world. And just as importantly, she shows that words need not cause pain but can be a source of great delight.

> Wording is expression of shape-shifting powers, weaving meanings and rhythms, unleashing Original forces/sources. Arranging words to convey their Archaic meanings, Websters release them from cells of conventional senses. Releasing

words to race together, Websters become Muses. We do not use Words; we Muse words. Metapatterning women and words have magical powers, opening doorways of memories transforming spaces and places (Daly, 1973, p. xxxv).

Entrepreneurship research could benefit from some wordsmithing. Feminists struggle with the connotations in words such as power and success which already do not have consistent meaning for all entrepreneurs; new words and/or multiple, alternative interpretations are required. Is there an agreed meaning for the adjective sustainable when it is applied to the entrepreneurial process? Given its origin and historical usage, can the descriptor entrepreneur be truly gender inclusive? Perhaps what we really need is radical research, research which 'goes to the root or is fundamental or advocates fundamental changes in the social or economic structures' (Gage, 1967, p. 909). While we might not be as bold as Mary Daly, we can certainly become a little more daring in our crafting and choice of words.

'Language of Imagination'

Metaphors are really powerful words. Metaphors are central to the 'language of imagination' (Frye, 1963) and can creatively reshape our theorizing capacity. The quilt is a recurring metaphor in feminist writings, as exemplified in the subversive rhetorical theory of the protest quilt (Williams, 1994) and in the transmutation of disciplinary theory via 'the quilt of ecological feminism' (Warren, 1990, p. 139). Ecofeminists also use a weaving metaphor (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990), to model cross-disciplinary theory formation. Building on that tradition, this chapter invites consideration of quilting as a visioning process for innovative research about women's entrepreneurial accomplishments. Machine and military metaphors have too long dominated the language of business. What might gardening or cooking or music help us to say about entrepreneurship? Years ago Paul Hawken (Hawken, 1987) drew thoughtful analogies between entrepreneurial development and gardening. In a senior business class, in response to the standard, define-an-entrepreneur assignment, a student wrote me a recipe for baking an entrepreneur, replete with all the flourishes and craft and secret ingredients of a great chef. Traditionally taboo areas of domestic/private activity can offer radical new insights into the entrepreneurial process, thereby according to women stature as knowledgeable model builders.

Giant 'Small Steps'

Mary Daly is a courageous Muse and she has followed her own, outrageous advice throughout an illustrious scholarly career. For the more cautious,

Shulamit Reinharz offers more pragmatic advice. She suggests that we refer to scholars by their full name rather than the convention of 'vague, impersonal, masculinist surnames'; that we use metaphors from female experience and that we avoid military language and masculinist terms (Reinharz, 1992, p. 16). Luce Irigaray urges 'women to find the courage to speak in the active voice, avoiding at all costs the false security, and ultimate inauthenticity, of the passive voice' (Tong, 1998, p. 203). Any of these rhetorical strategies will help to give the story of women entrepreneurs a look and a sound that resonates with our lived experiences thereby working towards our research goals of identity, respect and self representation.

THINKING WITH METAPHORS

> Resistance to change in a person, according to Anzaldua, is in direct proportion to the number of dead metaphors that person carries . . . Shifting metaphors means changing perspectives – making new connections and seeing in new ways – through the creative use of language . . . (Foss et al., 1999, p. 115).

As proposed throughout the chapter, the work of emancipatory research becomes lighter when we jettison the baggage of 'normal science' including all its 'dead metaphors'. Courage comes through accessing 'the power to disbelieve . . . [which is] . . . the refusal to accept the definition of oneself that is put forward by the powerful' (Janeway, 1980, p. 167). In this chapter the ideology of 'normal science' and its attendant machine metaphor have been disbelieved/found to be inadequate. To imagine better theories for women entrepreneurs our symbolic repertoire has been augmented with the quilt and quilting metaphors which invite radical insights into the entrepreneurial process. What patterns do these metaphors teach us to look for? What values do they represent? What language expresses their culture?

The quilt top is beautiful and functional, public yet private, familiar but unique, harmonious and bold. Individually each attribute is reflective of some aspect of the entrepreneurial venture; jointly they dispute the rigidities of the dualistic worldview. Ignoring the limitations of either-or theories, quilts encourage us to see the merits of the both-and approach (Tong, 1998, p. 93). Entrepreneurs and the enterprises that they build are as colourful and complex as a quilt top.

The warmth-creating batting is invisible but integral to the design and functioning of the quilt. Just as feminist research is shaped and warmed by its shared values, so might we come to see that the entrepreneurial enterprise is inspired and constrained by the emotions of its participants. An entrepreneur without emotions is rather like a quilt without its batting.

Technically, the stitching joins the top of the quilt to the plain backing

but the manner in which the stitches are completed give voice to the story of the quilt. Large, rough stitches speak of urgency and an emphasis on function. Decorative and invisible stitches fulfil contrasting purposes of public discourse and private connection. Perseverance and attention to detail, measured in hundreds of tiny, precise stitches, speak a language of durability and extended life. Quilt stitching is a narrative form that is simultaneously communication and connection, an interesting way to think about entrepreneurial processes.

The act of quilting, when communal and cooperative, brings women together and honours their collective effort. Instructing a novice in the art of quilting is conducted with pride and humility. The process is as valued as the final product. Cooperation bestows a survival benefit (Montagu, [1953] 1999), behaviour well understood by successful entrepreneurs.

The metaphors of quilts and the quilting culture are much more than suggestive of insights into patterns, values and language sympathetic to the study of women entrepreneurs; they are rich with possible interpretative power. Baby quilts. Dowry quilts. Memory quilts. Teaching quilts. Protest quilts. Heritage quilts. Crazy quilts. Thinking with metaphors has much to offer.

11.   Towards genealogic storytelling in entrepreneurship

Daniel Hjorth

As a reader of this book, I think the different contributions form a specific opportunity for entrepreneurship studies. That is, I believe any student of entrepreneurship – perhaps especially when studying entrepreneurship as organizational creativity – interested in discourse and narrative can in their crossing find a way to make space for writing stories of entrepreneurship previously lacking within this field of research. I will proceed towards such an aim following this structure. First, I will initiate the discussion of the archaeological and the genealogical in Foucault's use of discourse. Secondly, I take a step back, together with Foucault, to acquaint us with his history of language becoming discourse. In the third section I discuss discursive approaches in order to arrive at genealogic storytelling. The fourth section deals with this way of writing entrepreneurship. In the fifth section, I finish with referencing entrepreneurship studies – including what we have read in this book – so as to try out this way of writing entrepreneurship.

THE ARCHEOLOGICAL AND GENEALOGICAL

Let us introduce ourselves to an overview of the archaeological and the genealogical in Foucault's work. I will give one reading of Foucault's presentation of language becoming discourse in Western Culture (see section 2). This presentation takes place in his book *The Order of Things* (Les Mots et Les Choses, 1966, transl. 1966/1970) which refers to the time in his work when he operated within an archaeological approach. This is described (in *The Order of Things*) as operating on the level of what makes situations possible. At the time of Foucault's earlier work, structuralism was highly influential in intellectual France. Structuralism – leaning on the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's theories – held the distinction between individual speech acts, that is, how language was spoken/arranged by individuals, what they called *parole*, distinct from the underlying and basic social and linguistic structure governing what can be said, what they called

langue. Without restricting himself to the langue/parole distinction, the archaeological method still shares similarities with a structuralist analysis in that it operates with text and objects without author or subject, that is, langue is the analyst's tool. Knowledge and objects are discursive in that they depend on certain conditions of articulation. I believe Kendall and Wickham's (1999, p. 26) concluding description of the archaeological approach adds important elements to our brief introduction here: '1) In seeking to provide no more than a description of regularities, differences, transformations, and so on, archaeological research is non-interpretive. 2) In eschewing the search for authors and concentrating on statements (and visibilities), archaeological research is non-anthropological.' The archaeological 'method' suggests to us the possibility of studying discourses on the level of pure description, returning to an active language beyond the passive representational version. We experience such elements in Boutaiba's text in Chapter 2 of this volume. Foucault points out that archaeology 'describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive' (1972, p. 131), the archive being 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (1972, p. 130), and so archaeological descriptions of discourses are 'deployed in the dimension of a general history' (Foucault, 1972, p. 164 in Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p. 24). 'General history', in addition, is here opposed to 'total history' and focuses not on overarching principles but on differences, breaks, disruptions, and mutations (Foucault, 1972).

There is then a crisis in Foucault's own use of this archaeological 'method': instead of prioritizing a description of rules governing discursive practices often forcing the theoretician out on the centre court, his genealogical 'method' prioritizes practices over theory 'all the way' and gives much more attention to cultural and institutional forces ordering the play of discourses. Instead of operating as if the analyst of the archives could be free from the dominant discourses of her/his day, the genealogist diagnoses practices from within.

> Genealogy also establishes its difference from archaeology in its approach to discourse. Where archaeology provides us with a snapshot, a slice through the discursive nexus, genealogy pays attention to the processual aspects of the web of discourse – its ongoing character (Foucault, 1981b, pp. 70–71).

It is in his inaugural lecture in 1970 (for a chair at the Collège de France) entitled *The Discourse on Language* (L'Ordre du Discours, published in 1971) that we can see an opening towards what would become the dominant approach in his later works – the genealogical (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). And in *Discipline and Punish*, his next major work (1975), we see Foucault abandoning the archaeological. He has now come to a point

where the systematicity of archaeology places restrictions on his more recent interest in how discourses are formed and disseminated (as strategic games):

> One can agree that structuralism formed the most systematic effort to evacuate the concept of the event . . . In that sense, I don't see who could be more of an anti-structuralist than myself. But the important thing is to avoid trying to do for the event what was previously done with the concept of structure. It's not a matter of locating everything at one level, that of the event, but of realising that there are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events . . . From this follows a refusal of analyses couched in terms of the symbolic field or the domain of signifying structures, and recourse to analyses in terms of the genealogy of relations of force, strategic developments, and tactics. Here I believe one's point of reference should not be the great model of language (*langue*) and signs, but that of war and battle (Foucault, 1980, p. 114).

The works to follow, notably the three studies included under the umbrella of *The History of Sexuality* (I: Introduction; II: The use of pleasure; and III: The care of the self), all operate with a genealogical approach. Foucault says, discussing genealogy and social criticism (1994), that genealogy (inspired by Nietzsche's use of history, opposing the search for origin or end, placing everything into historical movement) attends to 'erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today' (1980, p. 83). A genealogic approach will therefore seek to cultivate a concern for the details and accidents that accompany every beginning. Genealogists seek discontinuities, play, avoid the search for depth, and do not practise interpretation as a way of uncovering hidden meaning (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 103pp). In this sense it rejects the ordering force or essential nature of deep structures of language or social practices. As genealogist, 'Foucault is interested in how both scientific objectivity and subjective intention emerge together in space set up not by individuals but by social practices' (ibid., p. 108). As a consequence, we would not be interested in subjects or subjects' relations to other entities, but instead acknowledge that subject(ivities) emerge on specific local-temporal fields of practices and focus on how these relations are played out in complex strategy games and tactical transformations.

The genealogist is uninterested in origins, hidden meanings, minds of individuals, psychological explanations. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 109) describe:

> 'Look not to the stable possession of a truth, or of power itself,' Foucault would say, as if either were a result of psychological motivations; rather conceive of them as strategy, which leads you to see 'that its effects of domination are attributed not

to "appropriation", but to dispositions, manoeuvers [sic], tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension in activity . . .'

The genealogical approach directs us not towards substantial entities, but focuses on 'the emergence of a battle which defines and clears a space' in which subjects play their roles, 'there and only there' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 109). In Foucault's ways of practising genealogy, inspired by Nietzsche[62] and sharing a refreshing attention to history with Weber, everything is set in historical motion.

> History is the concrete body of development, with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spells; and only a metaphysician would seek its soul in the distant ideality of the origin (Foucault, 1977, p. 145).

The genealogist uses history to diagnose the present, seeks to isolate an apparatus – a relation of the non-discursive as well as discursive practices – which, apart from being a tool for the writer of a history of the present (an effective history), is also that which constitutes subjects and organizes their possible field of action (Bakhtin on heteroglossia, Chapters 1 and 2, this volume; Leitch, 1992, pp. 55–6). Central to Foucault is an effort to provide the analyst with conceptual tools that direct us to movement, the movements of a history that never stops:

> We ask about our origin and our being, not to recognise who we are and the inevitability of what we have become, but in order to render what appears as the unquestionable ground or cause of our existence as an effect of what we don't recognise. This is why Foucault traces all the discourses of the human sciences – moral discourses of reform, normalisation, self-recognition and cure – back to their inhuman causes (Colebrook, 1999, p. 198).

With this short introduction to archaeology and genealogy we have referred to discourse in a casual way. Let us now turn to a discussion of discourse so as to place also this concept in some historical movement, and equip ourselves with the possibility of discussing discursive approaches in section three.

LANGUAGE BECOMING DISCOURSE

> . . . human beings are thrown into language without having a voice or a divine word to guarantee them a possibility of escape from the infinite play of meaningful propositions (Agamben, 1999, p. 45).

Language has not always been problematized as discourse, though. Foucault identifies three stages in the history of representation (which is how he frames his discussion of language in *The Order of Things*, 1970): the Renaissance (ending somewhere between 1599 and 1650), the Classical Age (ending roughly at the beginning of the nineteenth century), and Modernity (taking off during the nineteenth century). It is important to note that these periods are identified according to the epistemic breaks that take place in the archaeology of knowledge of the human sciences according to Foucault's analysis. It is first in Modernity (and the transition from the Classical Age to Modernity is marked, not least, by the attempt from Kant to make an epistemology of knowledge into the philosophy about man) that language and representation becomes really problematic.

Discussions of the so-called linguistic turn in social sciences often result in a need to problematize representations. Instead of seeing language as a passive medium that – by the help of various methodological/statistical tricks – can copy an image of 'reality' in language, such representations are seen as impossible to achieve and emphasis is put on showing how every representation is a presentation. Again, language is active, always 'performing' – something new or a repetition, a convention – and never simply transporting sense/meaning (for example, Rorty, 1980; Calás, 1987; Hassard and Parker, 1993). Besides Foucault's, there are other versions of discourse available: a classical/scholastic use of discourse (as in Descartes' writings); Ricoeur's version focusing on the said/communicated of speech and the dialectic between this event of the said and its meaning; Habermas' version of discourse, which is like a public-conversational-rationality of a more or less universalistic kind. We focus on a Foucauldian version not only because of its enormous influence within humanities and social sciences, but predominately since authors in this volume who write in a discursive approach do so more or less in ways influenced by the richness of Foucault's continuous rewriting of his own positioning (see Pettersson and Campbell in particular, Chapters 9 and 10).

In the pre-representational period 'language functioned as a being in its own right' (Colebrook, 1999, p. 163). Truth relied neither on an ideality, nor on correspondence. It was not a thing in itself but rather the 'force of words' (ibid.). Language was non-representational, that is, not subordinated to any external authority, to any being outside itself. 'Language once had the force of its own being'. Foucault describes that this is lost in between the sixth and seventh century or, in between the Hesoid and Plato. 'It was not "subjected to transcendence" or legitimated by some external ground or presence' (Colebrook, 1999, pp. 163–4). Truth resided in what language was or what it did, not in what was said.

During the Renaissance, the details of nature receive names in a natural

language. Language, knowledge and thought are linked through the models of resemblance and similitude which are there to handle a world of signature. 'The nature of things, their coexistence, the way in which they are linked together and communicate is nothing other than their resemblance.' (Foucault, 1970, p. 29). Foucault explains further:

> It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The universe was folded in upon itself . . . Painting imitated space. And representation . . . was posited as a form of repetition (1970, p. 17).

He further suggests that the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics as a way to make a sign speak and discover its meaning, and semiology as a way to distinguish and locate signs and to know how and by what laws they are linked, in the form of similitude: 'to search for meaning is to bring to light a resemblance'. Language existed first of all, Foucault adds, 'in its raw and primitive being, in the simple material form of writing'. The transition between the Renaissance and the Classical Age is marked by the change in how the problem of language is posed:

> . . . in the sixteenth century, one asked oneself how it was possible to know that a sign did in fact designate what it signified; from the seventeenth century, one began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified. A question to which the Classical period was to reply by the analysis of representation; and to which modern thought was to reply by the analysis of meaning and signification (Foucault, 1970, pp. 42–3).

But let us not run ahead. Before we shortly describe the Modern, let us acquaint ourselves with how Foucault describes language in the Classical Age. 'According to Foucault, the Classical Age set itself the project of constructing a universal method of analysis which would yield perfect certainty by perfectly ordering representations and signs to mirror the ordering of the word . . .' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 19). Rorty (1980) discusses this 'language mirrors nature' thesis and comments that it is already the Platonic '. . . analogy between perceiving and knowing' which teaches us that the order of the world imposes the truth on a proposition of that order (ibid., p. 157). Descartes is of course the emblematic figure of this line of thinking, and his dualism (between *res cogitans, the thinking substance*, and *res extensa, the material – in space and time extended – substance*) set the limits for how certain knowledge could be developed: there is a world, created by God, existing in itself, and there is language working as a perfectly transparent medium for thought (Foucault, 1970, p. 295). Thinking is the activity of clarifying the order of the world as captured in language. Meaning is

unproblematic as this is taken care of by God. A proper analysis – a method for clarification and simplification, a dissection of nature – guarantees certainty and truth. A 'perfect language' in this sense excluded 'man' from discourse: 'Since it was taken for granted that language by its very nature made possible successful representation, the role of human beings in relating representations and things could not itself be problematized' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 20). Foucault points this out:

> In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself within it, recognizing himself therein as an image or reflection, he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the 'representation in the form of a picture of a table' – he is never to be found in that table himself (Foucault, 1970, p. 308).

In the Classical Age, language that names, patterns, combines, connects/disconnects things 'as it makes them visible in the transparency of words' is discourse: '. . . in the Classical age, discourse is that translucent necessity through which representation and being must pass – as beings are represented to the mind's eye, and as representation renders beings visible in their truth' (Foucault, 1970, p. 311). Words are not marks/signs to be deciphered, as in the Renaissance age, nor, as in positivism, perfect instruments for the analyst, but simply a network 'on the basis of which beings manifest themselves and representations are ordered'. Representation and being were linked – which is why Descartes is the emblematic figure in the Classical Age – in the strong subject who says 'I think, therefore I am'. The 'I think' and 'I am', representation and being, were related through a method delivering this link as a ground and evidence as long as 'the mode of being implied by the cogito' was not interrogated. The opening of this interrogation marks the transition to the modern age or Modernism.

'For the threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called *man*' (Foucault, 1970, p. 319, emphasis on cited text). This is when man becomes the subject *and* the object of his own understanding. 'Man now appears limited by his involvement in a language which is no longer a transparent medium but a dense web with its own inscrutable history' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 28). Kant now emerges as the initiator of this modern reflection, this analytic, that tries to show 'on what grounds representation and analysis of representations are possible and to what extent they are legitimate. Note that Kant is here trying to avoid *both* anthropologism, extending knowledge of man as an empirical being to an explanatory ground, *and* anthropomorphism, projecting reasons' own achievements onto the world itself (Colebrook, 1999). Modernity, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) note, begins

with this unworkable idea of a sovereign being, imposing the limitations of language on 'man', who is enslaved (by the limits of knowledge in language): '. . . the limits of knowledge provide a positive foundation for the possibility of knowing . . .' (Foucault, 1970, p. 317). Kant, rejecting the rationalist's as well as the empiricist's models of epistemology, sought, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, to show how reason determines the possibilities for experience and knowledge. Following Kant we find a series of thinkers devoting themselves to the problem of the empirical and the transcendental and to the task of providing a philosophical foundation for the possibility of knowledge (Comte, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Heidegger). With Heidegger we clearly sense the opening towards themes characteristic of what in more general terms has come to be called postmodernism, and more specifically poststructuralism.

Through this short history writing we learn that in modernism we can locate the crisis that became formulated by Heidegger: the failing attempt to ground the world on a higher or present being. This attempt fails to recognize the question of how grounding (of the ground) happens or how the present is presented. Structuralism, although recognizing the groundless nature of concepts, proceeds in its systematization while forgetting the question of how that 'deep structure' of language (and social practices) is possible: the question of the genesis of structure. We find poststructuralism as a label for several ways of responding to this problem. Instead of seeking to know some pre-structural and original origin, poststructuralism affirms structuration as a process '. . . which actively and affirmatively *produces* all forms of origin, centre or presence' (Colebrook, 1999, p. 103). Derrida says:

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology – in other words, throughout his entire history – has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play (Derrida, 1976, p. 292).

Derrida's and Foucault's projects, although multiple ones in both cases, share this move from the determining forces of structure to an interest in the event as a becoming, 'neither governed by being nor comprehended by structure'. (Colebrook, 1999, p. 106). Studying entrepreneurial processes in various fields of practices would not, then, be legitimated by the work of analysis as an uncovering of the truth of these processes, nor by the work of a hermeneutics that works out interpretations of these. This would only refer to some neutral or original ground, which science and scientific

knowledge has the privilege to occupy and from where the disorder of the world could be corrected. Poststructuralism instead drives us to participate in the worlds we study, to write new stories so as to open up to greater possibilities for action. Writing itself becomes affirmed and not subordinated to some structure of reason. When Foucault says that he has only written fictions, we could read this as saying that he continued to come to writing as a literary act not in opposition to science or the scientific, but as to affirm the productive force of language. Power, in Foucault's work, is often this positivity or force that produces. In this way, and in writing, we have also and continue to produce concepts and 'truths' that enslave us when taken as universal, total, and grounded in a higher authority. Foucault therefore avoids describing his work in terms of a grand theory and says instead that he is doing strategy. To do this, the genealogist makes use of knowledge tactically, demonstrating how what was assumed necessary through being handed down to us from the history of our disciplines might not be so at all. In this way, new space for writing as a creative act is opened.

DISCURSIVE APPROACH

Knowledge/Power and Stories

Through our attention to discourse we learn that knowledge and power are inseparable. In addition we learn that language as discourses is productive of subjects and objects of its concern. The unity of knowledge and power is noted already by Francis Bacon (1561–1626): 'Nam et ipsa scientia potestas est' – Knowledge is power. However, Bacon operates with a concept of power that Foucault moves beyond. Instead of power as an asset or position, related almost exclusively to domination, he stresses that power is also productive-positive: it makes things happen and circulates as a freedom of subjects to create. Power operates on freedom and because there is freedom: 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free' (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). In his inaugural speech (1971) Foucault also asks: 'But what is dangerous about people speaking? In that their discourse continuously multiplies? Where is the danger?' The 'danger' is that everyday people create to know. Without the effectiveness of dominant strategies for how to know, speaking might easily subvert, transform or destabilize the reigning order. What Lyotard called 'the little narrative' (petit récit) is in this sense an efficacious act, a tactical act, making use of a freedom to create. Science – in its enlightenment and modernist form – has always related to this as to passion/play, that is, as a legislator of proper reason speaking down to everyday narratives from a hierarchized position.

Scientific knowledge operates to tame everyday speech through assigning a proper place for it, a place rehearsed in school, which '. . . honours but disarms it' (ibid.) A discursive approach seeks to trace the possibility of such 'silencing' and turns to listen to these stories.

Richard Rorty, who has put lots of energy into showing how language as discourse makes an epistemology of knowledge, in its traditional, initially Kantian, form, into merely another 'unfulfillable' promise, or metanarrative in Lyotard's terms, says this eloquently. This helps us to imagine relations between a narrative form of knowledge and the Foucauldian interest in everyday practices as the focus for studying discourses:

> Detailed historical narratives of the sort Foucault offers us would take the place of philosophical metanarratives. Such narratives would not unmask something created by power called 'ideology' in the name of something not created by power called 'validity' or 'emancipation.' They would just explain who was currently getting and using power for what purposes, and then (unlike Foucault) suggest how some other people might get it and use it for other purposes. The resulting attitude would be neither incredulous and horrified realization that truth and power are inseparable nor Nietzschean *Schadenfreude*, but rather a recognition that it was only the false lead which Descartes gave us (and the resulting overvaluation of scientific theory which, in Kant, produces 'the philosophy of subjectivity') that made us think truth and power *were* separable. We could thus take the Baconian maxim that 'knowledge is power' with redoubled seriousness (Rorty, 1991a, p. 175).

Any discursive approach would be animated by this reflection. Discourses, say, of entrepreneurship, are not only systems of rules for what could be said, when, and by whom (see Pettersson, Chapter 9 in this volume on the Gnosjö discourse). For example, the discourse of 'opportunity recognition' is also governed by institutional forces deciding what can be published, what could be referenced, or what should be attended to when dealing with this 'topic' (see Campbell, Chapter 10 in this volume; Gartner et al., 2003, for the example of opportunity recognition; Gartner, 1989, for the example of the trait discourse in entrepreneurship studies):

> Because a discourse is a system of competing forces where rules govern what is valid, sayable and possible, a system of signs has a specific and historically determinate structure of relations. While the structuralist notion of langue was of a static unity of equally exchangeable elements, Foucault's idea of a discursive formation operates by exclusion. Ideas of 'truth' and validity are produced by rules which govern a discourse; such rules are located in institutions and practices (Colebrook, 1997, p. 42).

What is dangerous about people speaking? I believe the carnival – as a cultural practice – is perhaps the best illustration of how danger in this

respect is thought of. Foucault indicates this when discussing the ceremonies of punishment (in *Discipline and Punish*, 1979): 'there was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes' (p. 61). That is, this site of power – as with public execution – could easily become transformed into a 'site of social disturbance, or even revolt' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 146). The carnival always presented the threat to authorities that the great movements of 'the flesh' would suddenly turn against reigning order and lead to transformative action. A little speech at the wrong moment, in the wrong place could change everything. Science struggled with the playful/carnivalesque in order to prepare a place for it in the popular culture/writings (Findlen, 1998). These stories, the unofficial, the silenced, the popular, 'mere' folly, interests the genealogist who analyses the relations to the official, proper, serious discourses and shows how they have become possible as well as how things could become totally different. As entrepreneurship researchers we recognize something familiar in this approach, which describes also entrepreneurial movements – from 'what is' to 'what could become'.

Discourse and Event

We recognize, also from our above discussion of the relations to structuralism, that Foucault shares the view with structuralists that subjects are not the producers of meaning. Rather, meaning is discursively produced according to *the dynamics of discursive practices and institutions*. This represents the point where Foucault moves beyond the structuralist position, the 'systemic' view of meaning-formation, and as such it is an opening towards the possibility of the event which the closed structuralist system of language would make impossible. Foucault saw this as an important part of his method, of how he worked:

> . . . I wonder whether, understood in a certain sense, 'eventalization' may not be a useful procedure of analysis. What do I mean by this term? First of all, a breach of the self-evident. It means making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all. To show that things 'weren't as necessary as all that . . .' (2002, p. 226).

An event alters and reconfigures the force operating in a discursive formation (Colebrook, 1997). A discursive formation is, in Foucault's earlier writings, something like a system of serious statements, the latter being comparable to speech acts. In the genealogical period, discursive formations are rather described as formation of objects, concepts, tactics and strategies which give meaning to the world, a 'logic' organizing and normalizing the

social. A genealogic approach also stresses the dynamic, processual, discontinuous, immanent, strategy-tactics double conditioning, and the multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in strategies (relations of power). We sense the urge to make analysis into a practice that avoids killing what is studied, that is, that allows the *becoming* of life to stay in focus and avoid fixation/ossification. This is also why the narrative is important as a form of writing and knowledge in which life is allowed to be carried to the reader/listener with its liveliness, fervour, excess, potentiality, and passion still breathing us. As we breathe air for life, life breathes us through narratives.

Furthermore, Foucault continues, '. . . eventualization means rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary' (2002, pp. 226–7). Studying the formation of a 'dot.com' start-up (see O'Connor, Chapter 5 in this volume) as an entrepreneurial event would then require that we determine the process of 'dot-comization' through which this new start-up emerged as possible, necessary and real. We would not analyse it (the event) as an institutional fact or ideological effect, Foucault notes, but as an event in the tension between this 'dot-comization' of the economy – the processes producing the possibility of and necessity of launching a venture – and the local effects this reality has in the social field. 'An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it . . .' (Foucault, 1977, p. 154).

The challenge is to avoid the reproduction of categories operating to 'dispel the shock of daily occurrences, to dissolve the event' (Foucault, 1977, p. 220). For '. . . forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events' (ibid., pp. 154–55). To isolate the event is to think without telos (end) or arche (origin), or, to turn to the practices, to their logic, to the overall effect escaping actors: 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does' (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 187). The question of what 'what they do' does is the question of practices.

Practices and Discursive Formations

> The genealogist sees that cultural practices are more basic than discursive formations (or any theory) and that the seriousness of these discourses can only be understood as part of a society's ongoing history (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 125).

Discursive approaches direct our attention to practices: 'Discursive practices are characterised by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories' (Foucault, 1977, p. 199). This is where rules regulating discourses are located. Together with our cultural habits and our institutions, practices are where we find the rules and norms watching over, normalizing and legitimating discourses. When we have been able to describe a discursive formation, which can also be described as a specific domain of knowledge that produces its exteriority, for example, medical science constructed by and for 'doctors', producing 'what nurses know' as its exteriority, we should locate it in the broader cultural/institutional context. This would be how the archaeological and the genealogical complement each other.

How do we get at the practices enabling our analysis of the effects of 'what the do'? This is, again, when we can turn to stories. Narrating, which always is a cultural, institutional and discursive operation, brings practices to us in a form where life is still in language:

> Narratives are . . . storehouses of practices. The telling of a folk-tale can be itself a form of practice. De Certeau therefore agrees with Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of the opposition between theory and practice. Theory itself is a form of activity; it is a 'labour of separation' which produces the material it seeks to know as both 'other' and subordinate (de Certeau, 1988). At the same time, practices are themselves a form of theory (Colebrook, 1997, p. 126).

As we get busy organizing knowledge in our studies and writings, knowledge is organizing us. As we set out to design research practices for our empirical processes, research practices design our ways through these processes. The 'productivity' of discourse should alert us to acknowledge this effect of a discursive approach: we become aware that discourses already have approached us, and we find ourselves in the midst of making use of the silently provided solutions they have brought:

> Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them (Foucault, 1977, p. 200).

A focus on discursive *formations* would lead us to what we might describe as an orientation, in the field, towards archaeological descriptions – showing how people think and act in relation to certain objects; how they can legitimately talk about these (again, see O'Connor, Chapter 5; Rehn and Taalas, Chapter 7; or Pettersson, Chapter 9 in this volume); and under what circumstances and according to what norms they can make use of and elaborate on

concepts. However, turning, as does Foucault in practising a genealogic approach, to practices we are given the possibility to broaden our scope to include the non-discursive (such as the body) as well as the discursive. Narrating, we can describe as a practice we find both discursive and non-discursive. We have also a description of the tacit, of skills, styles and of social routines that would exemplify the non-discursive. Narratives, precisely for exemplifying both the discursive and the non-discursive, become highly interesting to the genealogist seeking to locate the discursive in the landscape of our cultural practices. This accompanies our interest in entrepreneurship. For a style, characteristic of a certain culture (Swedish, or of teaching, or of skateboarding) 'acts as the basis on which practices are conserved and also the basis on which new practices are developed'. (Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus, 1997, pp. 19–21). They can therefore suggest that style is the basis of practices and that '[S]pecial sensitivity to marginal, neighbouring, or occluded practices [. . .] is precisely at the core of entrepreneurship . . .' (ibid., p. 30). They also conclude that this sensitivity '. . . generates the art, not science, of invention in business . . .' (ibid.). Entrepreneurship would thus result in the creation of new styles, that is, of new bases for everyday practices.

Having elaborated on how a discursive approach would direct our study I have tried to describe the points with a genealogic approach. In so doing I have also come to suggest the interesting crossing of genealogy and the attention to and use of narratives in our studies. I now turn to developing this point in section 4.

GENEALOGIC STORYTELLING

Narratives are important as they bring with them the 'eventness', the temporality, of the event studied. It is on the level of narratives that we find it 'natural' to resist the historically mediated tendency to place the wit of everyday practices in a position where we assume the need for a little schooling, the work of scientific rationality, in order for such narratives to make sense. Focusing, as a genealogist, on the cultural practices and narratives as a central form for hosting and expressing those practices, the purpose of research can shift from building positions from where we cast critique upon society into one where we enhance our possibilities to actualize forms of participation in shaping society and to multiply the ways we can participate. Taking this as an argument to do less theory and instead narrate genealogic stories, we would move from a priority of scientific rationality over narrative/literary wit. This distinction is drawn with the familiar modernist anxiety we recognize in particular from the dark light of enlightenment. When it comes to a production of truth, there is no

point, apart from elevating our contemporary position, to accept the sharp distinction between the scientific and the literary. A genealogic approach refuses to see that there are either universal, ahistorical and normative foundations for critique, or groundless critique. Genealogists would instead study the formation of universals as well as their local forms and functions in practices of today (Dean, 1999). In the context of this book we would conclude from this that the genealogical discursive approach would not accept a (modern-)scientific difference drawn between scientific rationality and narrative wit of everyday practices. We would instead acknowledge their interdependence and how they play together in human lives. Such conclusions are drawn under the influence of Michel de Certeau's writings on narratives, fiction, and science (de Certeau, 1997). Let us read de Certeau to see how he writes on the relation between narratives and science:

> Shouldn't we recognize its *scientific* legitimacy by assuming that instead of being a reminder that cannot be, or has not yet been, eliminated from discourse, narrativity has a necessary function in it, and that a *theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production?* (de Certeau, 1984, p. 78, emphasis in cited text).

It is as if de Certeau has one of the Latin meanings of discourse in mind, that is, *the act of running about (discurrere – to run about)*. The 'necessary function' of narrativity in discourse would then be this *running* through which concepts get 'discoursed'. Narratives would – for the genealogist – be culturally soaked practices which in their everyday form represent a marginal language, that is, carrying the possibility to subvert and surprise dominant discourses, official or 'epistemologized' knowledge. Marginal or silenced stories, apart from carrying a transformative force, are also political and collective (Marks, 1998; Deleuze end Guattari, 1986).

As marginal, narratives are related to myth in the history of science. Narratives, Vattimo (1992) says, are distinct from myth through presenting 'themselves explicitly as, "having become" and never pretend to be "nature"' (p. 26). A genealogical approach directs us, precisely, towards the tension between the official/epistemologized/discourse and the unofficial/ silenced, to the point where narrative wit and scientific rationality cross, and is in this sense diagnostic, that is, working on the present as an open set of possibilities, while recognizing the delimitation of the necessary and normal by dominant forms of reason.

We owe a lot to both Michel de Certeau (1997) and Maurice Blanchot when it comes to great developments in our creative possibilities to imagine, use, and destroy relations between literature and knowledge. De Certeau continues to discuss this withering distinction (as seen in Blanchot's and Breton's writings; compare Foucault, 2000, pp. 171–4):

> To do that [recognize the scientific legitimacy of narrativity] would be to recognize the theoretical value of the novel, which has become the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science. It would also be to return 'scientific' significance to the traditional act which has always *recounted* practices (this act, *ce geste*, is also *une geste*, a tale of high deeds). In this way, the folktale provides scientific discourse with a model, and not merely with textual objects to be dealt with. It no longer has the status of a document that does not know what it says, cited (summoned and quoted) before and by the analysis that knows it. On the contrary, it is a know-how-to-say ('*savoir-dire*') exactly adjusted to its object, and, as such, no longer the Other of knowledge; rather it is a variant of the discourse that knows and an authority in what concerns theory (1984, p. 78).

When we set out to investigate this in-between of science and literature, of scientifically legitimized forms of knowledge and everyday narratives/wit, we will disclose a fire-break patrolled by 'fire fighters' belonging to science proper – those who, in the opening scene of enlightenment, cleared the break (Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke). In this fire-break not only Blanchot and Bréton, but certainly Foucault would appear as pyromaniacs, 'guilty' of trespassing, of disorderly conduct, and of bringing stories like fodder for the fire into the dry and inflammable land of science. Inflammable as all human when cleansed of *ludens* in the name of *oeconomicus* for which 'scientific rationality' all too often has served as detergent.

> In order to clarify the relationship of theory with those procedures that produce it as well as with those that are its objects of study, the most relevant way would be a *storytelling discourse*. Foucault writes that he does nothing but tell stories ('récits'). Stories slowly appear as a work of displacements, relating to a logic of metonymy. Is it not then time to recognize the theoretical legitimacy of narrative, which is then to be looked upon not as some ineradicable remnant (or a remnant still to be eradicated) but rather as a necessary form for a theory of practices? In this hypothesis, *a narrative theory would be indissociable from any theory of practices*, for it would be its precondition as well as its production (de Certeau, 1997, p. 192).

What science represses or silences is given the name of literature, folktales, 'mere stories', or 'simply rhetoric'. In doing this it:

- depoliticizes its practices and results;
- operates with a unilinear conception of time/history (which in Hegel was related to a progress towards dialectical fulfilment, Vattimo, 1992, pp. 2–5);
- represses passions and affects (as Hirschman, 1977; de Certeau, 1997; Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Hjorth, 2003 have shown); and
- kept ethics out of its discourse through speaking in the name of truth (de Certeau, 1997, pp. 214–21).

Lyotard uses the well-known example of Plato's allegory of the cave from *The Republic* to show that science emerges in and searches legitimacy through narrative forms of knowledge. He explains:

> Scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative, kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all. Without such recourse it would be in the position of presupposing its own validity and would be stooping to what it condemns: begging the question, proceeding on prejudice (Lyotard, 1984, p. 29).

It is a deeply rooted reflex on the part of the 'scientific writer', though, to use a battery of techniques – presented as methods – to cleanse the 'scientific argument' from traces of narrativity such as the playful, ambiguous, ironic, figurative and metaphorical. Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly* (from 1511) appears as a blow from a safety valve in the midst of the tightening language of science, parallelled with and serving the formation of the concept of state and a Raison d'État (in Machiavelli's *Prince*, from 1513). The polymorphous language of narratives could not be allowed in this process for which unity and singularity had to be in reason as in God. Bruno Latour (1987) suggests that the transformation of linear prose into a folded array of successive defence lines is the surest way to tell that a text has become scientific. He refers to the difference in style between articles within the same field of knowledge and shows how they have transformed from proceeding in the linear prose to that of being stratified into many layers and broken up by references, coding, schemes, statistics, curves and diagrams, columns. Of course, this text would more or less demonstrate Latour's point.

The point here is to illustrate, from discussions of the history of science as well as from postmodern destabilizations of the 'order' of the scientific text, that narratives and narrativity are indeed serving the genealogist in general and students of entrepreneurship in particular. In order for us to grasp how the narrative form of knowledge haunts the scientific it is helpful to study the practices of 'making science' (how methods work in particular) and the stylistic regulations that are used as wedges to create and keep distance from 'stories'. Latour and Foucault are the ones concentrating on this transformation process – when scientific institutions together with methods and styles of writing form into apparatuses that secure the voice of truth speaking in the name of the real. Genealogy can serve in the disclosure of how what is now an established scientific result depends on a series of exclusions, accidents and crossings through which it has come to triumph in solitude: in Foucault's words, to inquire into the contemporary limits of the necessary. Writing, for the genealogist, has the obligation of disrupting the 'self-evidence or feeling of progress which enables satisfaction with the present as an inevitable outcome of the past' as Colebrook (1997, p. 58) put this.

From the perspective of narrative knowledge, however, the point with describing scientific knowledge in these terms is not to reject it as 'wrong'. That would be to stumble over oneself. In addition, '. . . incomprehension of the problems of scientific discourse is accompanied by a certain tolerance: it approaches such discourses primarily as a variant in the family of narrative cultures' (Lyotard, 1984, p. 27). Instead, we should proceed according to a *genealogic storytelling*, where we trace a genesis of effective discursive formations, describe how they summoned their power to form strategies in relation to which one can affirm or deny the true and the false, and, after having shown how certain practices emerged into a status as principle in specific systems, continue to tell the silenced stories bearing witness to the instability of principles' self-evidence (Hjorth, 2001). Such a *tactical research* (see also Hjorth and Steyaert, 2003) searches for sudden breaks and accidents – in the genesis of dominant discursive formations, strategies – and tell their stories as a subversive move. These silent histories often come in the form of small narratives, in the form of everyday languages, unofficial reports and wit. 'Something in narration escapes the order of what it is sufficient or necessary to know, and, in its characteristics, concerns the *style* of tactics' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 79). Genealogy, seeking to disturb the order of the self-evident, is therefore oriented towards narrativity, which in the style of tactics transforms the strategic domination of theory.

> Writing, considered as *writing*, as an inscription and delimitation rather than a passive and transparent representation would be tactical. There would be less focus on meaning, content or conceptual generality – this would be the effect of strategic ordering – and an attention to the singular act of inscription which is necessarily repressed in the acceptance of strategy [. . .] A text is not an expression or reflection of its world. The very experience of a world as general, meaningful and identifiable order is the effect of a textual strategy or organisation (Colebrook, 1997, p. 123).

GENEALOGIC STORYTELLING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is a distinctly entrepreneurial element in the tactical of this discursive approach we have called genealogical storytelling. It searches the in-betweens and makes use of opportunities as these are presented in the openings that moving into these cracks generate. *Entre-* and *-prendre* of entrepreneurship is here given a translation. That is, tactical research as in a discursive approach called genealogic storytelling, directs us towards those potentialities, those virtualities that can become actualities through

differentiation, divergence and creation. This form of organizational creativity – for the new always demands organization to be created in order to work – is what we call entrepreneurship (see opening of this chapter). It 'foolishly' desires the actual (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) and is powered by connecting with other desires to increase the productive capacity (Johannisson, 1985). In a world 'full of order', dominated by 'successful strategies', entrepreneurship seems increasingly to be targeting those strategies, searching for cracks in them, for the right timing, and to strike there and then to create surprises: 'Occupying the gaps or interstices of the strategic grid, tactics produce a *difference* or unpredictable event which can corrupt or pervert the strategy's system' (Colebrook, 1997, p. 125). In a discursive approach we recognize the power of thinking as a productive power, that is, what holds the potentiality of worlds. Any structure would then, instead of being received as given, be acknowledged as an effect of the event of structurality. A discursive approach seeks to describe how the structure is effective but also how it was prepared through a series of interpretations, and, on what battlefields it summoned its resources.

The often-reported 'pragmatic quality' in entrepreneurial processes (for example, Gartner, Bird, and Starr, 1992) has given researchers reasons to interpret this as foolishness, as 'acting as if', or to elaborate on how risk, uncertainty and ambiguity is part of the entrepreneurial process. It is like entrepreneurial processes actualizing ideas/concepts/projects against better knowledge; like everything we know does not apply in the case of entrepreneurial creativity. With our discursive approach, however, we can think differently. Entrepreneurship can be approached as an example of how we can respond to the excess of creativity and difference in life. This desire to create knows – as if entrepreneurs were effective genealogists – that also dominant orders are unstable; that 'what is' only appears so as a result of a stabilizing achievement. Entrepreneurship becomes the art of transforming the desire to create, of channelling or creating passages for this flow of life into a specified future. Like the genealogist's writing of a history of the present, the successful entrepreneurial venture is careful to translate his or her concepts via the 'grammar of local history' into the context where he or she intends time to take off from a new plateau (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003; Spinosa et al., 1997): a kind of place sensitivity made use of through timing. This challenge is well illustrated by how the tacticians of the blat system maintained embedded economies (Rehn and Taalas, Chapter 7 in this volume) as well as by Foss' 'theatre entrepreneur' translating her ideas into the local language and history still keeping their transformative power (Chapter 4 in this volume).

Entrepreneurial processes are tactical processes, and our interest as genealogists in the interstices, the in-betweens, the transitions, breaks, and

crossings is shared by this entrepreneurial focus on cracks in the strategic grid. This is where the tactical act can strike, with a sensitive timing, and create difference (or, indeed, allow difference to manifest itself). The pyromaniac, referred to above, is again a useful image: the inflammable land of a scientifically rationalized economic reality presents opportunities for a playful response to life's creative excess. *Homo ludens* light fires: sudden break-outs, events, producing energy in processes making use of what was officially understood as fixed. Partly extending our previous language, we would exemplify how our discursive approach leads us to describe entrepreneurship as the force connecting the elements needed for a fire to break out: heat – passion/desire to create; oxygen – the differentiating power in life, close to us as our breathing, continuously escaping attempts to formalize (attempts to transform logos into logic); fuel/fodder – stories/narratives feed the fire and need to proceed with great timing. When these three are present, fire strikes as an event of difference, that is, entrepreneurship creates new organization, shapes the future at the present. The effect of entrepreneurship is a name given to this elusive event of fire – a metonymy for the release of social creative energy through entrepreneurial processes. Fire is the event taking place when molecules leave an 'excited state', releasing energy in the form of heat and light, and this light is seen by the human eye as that we have named 'fire' ($C + O_2 \rightarrow CO_2$ + heat + light). Entrepreneurship, rather than leaving, is the continuous movement towards new possibilities for fire, and so the natural-science image is here clearly inadequate for our descriptive purpose. Desire, difference, and narratives relate to entrepreneurship in much more complex ways than do heat, oxygen and fuel to fire. They do share the status as in-between phenomenon though: crossing resources to create new; often associated with accidents or sudden changes; releasing energy; spectacular effects. This will also remind us of the work of the discourse analyst: not only to attend to power, crossings, accidental shifts and turns, and marginal stories, everyday wit, but also to attend to the surprise of the event:

> This is the very project of genealogy; given where we are and the regularity and normativity of how we think, is it possible to disown our thought and think otherwise? This can only be examined through a new form of the question of the self and the question of who thinks. We ask about our origin or being, not to recognise who we are and the inevitability of what we have become, but in order to render what appears as the unquestionable ground or cause of our existence as an effect of what we don't recognise (Colebrook, 1999, p. 198, discussing Foucault).

If a discursive approach in the form of genealogic storytelling helps us to study the event, it seems like it will help us study entrepreneurship.

Readings

12. Reading the storybook of life: telling the right story versus telling the story rightly

Jerome Katz

NARRATIVE AND DISCURSIVE APPROACHES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES

I grew up around parents who were business and civic entrepreneurs, which is to say I grew up in a world full of stories. Whether discussing a new person being recruited, a contact made, a sale or contribution or placement, the difficult past or the glorious future, life among entrepreneurs was a storybook sort of life, insofar as a lot of it involved and evoked stories. With such a background, sitting amid experts on entrepreneurial narratives and listening to their explanations of the purposes, processes and methods of entrepreneurial stories, I was offered moments of intense enlightenment and at times intense frustration. The enlightenment came as I finally understood what made a particular narrative compelling or gave it a resonance with my own thoughts and emotions. The frustration came when I posited the words of the narrative experts against the stories I have carried, and find myself inadequate to making the leap from the discussion about stories to the stories I know. In either situation, I found myself going away from the presentations filled to my intellectual brim with ideas I wanted to ponder even more, and hopefully the chapters here will bring you to a similar impression.

The role of narratives in entrepreneurship seems to me remarkably intertwined with the historic dialectics or dualities of our field. There is for example popular entrepreneurship and research entrepreneurship. On one hand, in most societies there are mainstream narratives, often from magazines for and about entrepreneurs. From these come an incessant stream of stories and tales that form a large part of the common understanding of entrepreneurship in a given country.

The popular narratives contrast with the scholarly narratives of researchers, which, while often originally identified using popular narratives, come to exist and be shared among very select populaces, largely disconnected from the mainstream of the entrepreneurial narratives from

which they emerged. It is like laboratory (vs. naturalist – another dichotomy) zoological studies – it often seems we entrepreneurship researchers find a narrative in its natural habitat, capture it, and return it to our own research venue for study and even dissection. Like those lab-bound zoologists, we come to understand the structure of the story, and even how its parts work and fit together, but the narrative analysis process often seems to result in our losing the understanding of how the story fits into and serves its purposes in its natural environment.

Perhaps the dialectic that I found personally the most informative was embedded in the social context of the conference itself. There seemed to me to be a distinct difference in the situation of the narrative builders depending on what side of the Atlantic they called home. For the Europeans in attendance, the narrative was readily accepted, as were the users of that technique, and the source of irritation was the difficulty of getting narrative-based research published in journals oriented toward quantitative works. While a few North Americans were present, they often identified with the frustration of their European research cousins, but often went beyond that to talk about what seemed to me to be the loneliness of the narrative researcher in American academia. These narratives perhaps drew a parallel from the stories of the solo entrepreneurs being described in the sessions, and it also seemed clear that in those parallels were also a reserve of strength on which to draw. In these situations, it could often appear obvious that the researchers drew strength from one another, and even from their method, as they found inspiring examples among the entrepreneurs.

At times the gathering, which was on a relatively remote island near the edge of the Stockholm Archipelago, became something very near a resurrection of gatherings of entrepreneurship researchers early in the development of the field. Modern entrepreneurship as a discipline was really founded by a generation of 'lone wolves'. These academics, with names like Sexton, Churchill, Hills and Brockhaus in the USA and Birley, Gibb, Chell, and Klandt in Europe were often the only people on their campuses promoting entrepreneurship, usually to dismissive academic audiences. What emerged as a response to that rejection was what I've called a 'travelling gypsy band' of academic meetings on entrepreneurship. The meetings travelled from one school to another, but in Europe or North America throughout much of the 1980s there was nearly a meeting a month somewhere on entrepreneurship research. In those meetings subsets of 'the usual suspects' arrived and for a day or two shared the emerging ideas and the emotional commitment to a discipline they hoped to grow. They were successful, perhaps beyond their expectations, but for those people gathered in Sandhamn, the sense of shared ideals and shared commitment was strongly evocative of those stories told by the prior generation of lone-wolf academics.

Subsequent Inspirations

When at the conference, part of my role was to make comments on the presentations and the discussions that followed. One of the options Daniel and Chris gave me was to reprise those comments here. However, a lot of time has transpired since then, and the chapters in this volume are often very different from those papers originally given at Sandhamn, so what I want to do is to take a moment to offer brief observations on what I took away from these revised papers.

THE RESEARCHER IN THE NARRATIVE PROCESS

I kept finding myself asking repeatedly 'where is the researcher's own narrative in these efforts?' It no doubt reflects a bias of my training in the qualitative procedure that the researcher was always considered as an instrument of data collection, but one that could easily be affected by the environment, learning, emotion and even fatigue. As the researcher-as-instrument learned more about the culture and people, greater variation in behavior and meaning could be identified, but in this process the instrument is also changed. I was taught that change per se is not evil, but the researcher must put some effort into continually assessing oneself. Journals, repeated meetings with individuals who help the researcher explore their own consciousness around the research problem, research group peer reviews and a host of other procedures, even to content analyses and repeated surveying of feelings, were all suggested.

Listening to many of the participants at Sandhamn, it seems there is a different norm working with many from this group. I confess my education in qualitative method was clearly at the hands of positivists, although positivists who believed in chaos, ambiguity and even the occasional belief in the contrariness of person, technology and world. But regardless of these complications, the belief was that in personally studying others, using qualitative methods, in the field, over extended periods, the researcher needs to also have a means of monitoring and considering changes in themselves and the study as they proceed. Underlying this is the belief that through such efforts useful knowledge can come, and from that knowledge comes improved ways to perform research and analysis, or as the postmodernists claim, to get at 'the truth'.

Amid the postmodern mindset underlying many of the researches reported at Sandhamn is a contrasting belief that the uncertainty of measurement and the contextuality present in every research endeavor makes self-assessment an often futile gesture – one that offers at best a veneer of

objectivity, but in doing so undermines the realism of the narrative research setting. There is a philosophical elegance to the argument, and some very valid examples from the history of the social sciences, but the same can also still be said for the positivists and middle-range approaches.

I think in this volume the question comes to my mind most clearly when I juxtapose two chapters – Lene Foss' passionate depiction of Bente and Kathryn Campbell's discourse on quilt making as a metaphor for studying women entrepreneurs.

The first time you read Lene Foss' ' "Going against the grain" . . . Construction of entrepreneurial identity through narratives', you can't help but admire Bente, the entrepreneur whose life is the focus of the narrative. Lene does an exemplary job of establishing the historical and geopolitical context and interweaving these with Bente's life to show how entrepreneurship emerges in a social context, even when it appears as the actions of an individual entrepreneur. I find even now that I wonder if Lene's very real, and very warranted admiration for Bente and her achievements mean that the story gets less critical consideration than is warranted.

For example, the business hardships encountered seem to be comparatively trivial in their impacts on the flow of the business or the narrative, when they seem to have the potential to be far more grave than the narrative suggests. It has taken a long time to understand the Scandinavian idea of self-sufficiency, which is called 'duktig' in Swedish. If I follow this correctly, individuals strive to show themselves able to take care of themselves and their businesses on their own. Along these lines, the Scandinavian sense of moderation or modesty (in Swedish 'lagom') enters. When combined, the idea is that a good person does not make a big deal about the problems they encountered and bested. Caesar's famously brief account of a lengthy campaign – Veni, vidi, vici (I came. I saw. I conquered.) – is what I think of when I read this narrative.

Let us say for the moment that the understatement is present. It might reflect the true level of difficulty Bente faced. It might understate the reality, but does so in a way that other Norwegians (or perhaps, more broadly, other Scandinavians) might recognize as modesty in the face of grave challenges. But perhaps there was no understatement. Bente's efforts were the relatively straightforward and averagely difficult process she describes. Then of course the underlying story, with its elements of heroism and innovation in the Far North, loses much of its punch.

There is another whole context to think about, which is what Bente said, what Lene heard, and then reported. I know from prior experience that Lene is a conscientious and insightful researcher, but in this specific case, when it seems the narrative Lene wants to offer us is one with an implicit concept of heroism, is the understatement a cultural artifact, a naturally

occurring inconsistency in the narrative, or an error of the research or analysis process? As the postmodernists posit, when any research situation is looked at in its smallest details, the precision that science aspires to becomes less and less.

Could improved self-monitoring or self-narrative procedures help resolve questions like the one above? Possibly, but no doubt with costs for the researcher in terms of time, resources, and what could quickly become a painful self-awareness. The question of the worth of such efforts is one that strikes me as culturally grounded, in particular based on the cultural norms of the publication outlets or research networks in which an individual operates. This social relativism itself melds the cynicism over method inherent in postmodern thinking with the analysis so dear to positivists, and may thus be seen as a suspiciously inclusive outcome by both camps. But for researchers, it offers a rule of thumb for deciding when to include self-assessments and when they are not essential.

Kathryn's approach offers a remarkable clarity of self-awareness. What is known by those attending the workshop at Sandhamn, but might be news to readers is that Kathryn's writing and speaking voices are each unique, and quite distinct from one another. In person her narrative style is infectiously humorous. She demonstrates a remarkable ability to seize on everyday occurrences and show how our 'normal' responses reflect aspects of our cultures and ourselves that we take for granted. Her vocal personal narrative style is direct and inclusive, at once evocative and enlightening. You have a chance to read her article, and I invite you to create your own narrative describing it.

But in both writing and speaking, what is consistent is Kathryn's use of herself as the instrument of analysis. She does an outstanding job of pointing out what she sees, how these things strike her, and what she makes of them. She admits which ideas are her own, and which were inspired or developed from the thoughts of others. The result is what I used to call a hodgepodge, but now call a quilt in deference to her narrative of exposition.

Her chapter, and to a lesser extent her presentation at Sandhamn, were personal narratives, offering her own insights on the nature of entrepreneurship among women and the cultural settings that complicate and explicate that process. As a self-narration, it is no doubt easier to be self-aware, but if one were to intersperse interpretive narratives such as Kathryn's with the narratives of an entrepreneur on which the interpretations are based, I think readers would have the chance to see the entrepreneur, the researcher, and how the two relate to the same ostensible topic. In such situations I think the reader has the opportunity to truly be the third set of eyes in the research situation, and that is an exciting prospect.

So in my mind I see Lene's story as a heroic effort on the researcher's part

to conceptualize a heroic effort on the entrepreneur's part. In that process, the story becomes the driving cause, and its lessons to me revolve around storytelling and what is right – telling the story the right way (the way it happened) versus telling the right story (the story that gets at the heart of the process). Postmodernists declaim there is no one right thing, and Lene's effort points out the many 'rights' that need to be considered. This contrasts with Kathryn's unflinchingly consistent building from the researcher outward to encompass all that is read and witnessed, so that the intended perspective is clear, but perhaps elements of the underlying story get short-changed. Both approaches are instructive, and both are useful for understanding entrepreneurship and ourselves.

TOOLS FOR FUTURE USE

After my arguably interminable discourse above on researcher self-awareness, I would be wholly remiss if I did not single out the dramaturgical approach described by Torben Damgaard, Jesper Piihl, and Kim Klyver in their chapter 'The dramas of consulting and counselling the entrepreneur'. As a means of testing one another's understanding of the people and situations being researched, their approach offers some exciting prospects for uncovering unexpected insights about how we perceive others.

From working with writers of plays and fiction, I would approach their model with a bit greater fear of accuracy than the authors. Drama authors know that the reason so many characters in plays, movies and television come across as two-dimensional is that authors often find they first notice the more extreme, unusual or distinctive elements in a character. This often is followed by the role the character plays in the narrative, moving it along in particular ways, usually at particular times. With these two elements covered, the author may decide to concentrate on other elements of the story, often ones in which they have a particular interest.

Very often audiences may not notice that the character consists only of the distinctive element and their dramaturgical role, since in the immediacy of the performance, both elements 'ring true'. It is only on reflection afterwards that the limitations of the portrayal become apparent. As one entrepreneurship researcher who has been in media put it, 'How do you make sure you gave the *real* story when all you need to get by is a *good* story?' In using their approach, adding ways to check the quality and depth of the characterization, above its recognizability, would do a lot to assure the method produces the results for which one could hope.

When at Sandhamn, the story I found extremely fascinating as a story was Monica Lindh de Montoya's 'Driven entrepreneurs: a case study of

taxi owners in Caracas'. On re-reading a year later, the bustling narrative, with its overlapping perspectives of drivers and owners and the interplays among the owners themselves make for an involving read. In fact, she has done a remarkable job of juggling many stories in a short chapter and giving them in a way that makes it easy for the reader to keep straight the many strands of lives she has described. As a story, it is instructive for those entrepreneurs considering renting out their resources, and as a way to see how different human resource strategies can result in different outcomes. Some day Monica or some other reader will recognize the power of her story to explain one of the most arcane and jargon-filled of economic concepts, those of agency theory.

Stylistically, I find that I learn a lot from definitions and the process of creating them. In that light, Smith and Anderson's chapter 'The devil is in the e-tale' turned out to be a personally rewarding place for me to start my rethinking about the conference. Interestingly, this chapter seemed to me to be the one that had the most involved subplot, looking far more different on paper in final form than I recall from the conference itself. As it stands now, their chapter offers one of the few published codifications of story types in entrepreneurial situations. For researchers who must move between qualitative and quantitative universes to balance understanding and publishability, rubrics like theirs are a critical resource.

When I heard Ellen O'Connor talk about creating a business as creating a story, I beamed, since she was espousing one of my favorite lines. But this was only the beginning of my smiles. Her approach to showing how a compelling narrative gets built and improved upon through repeated interactions and retellings gave me the finest example I've ever encountered of the storytelling process optimized for the entrepreneurial situation. What is particularly useful about her approach is the way she uses the concept of intertextuality to model how stories of the future engage with the actions of the present. Simple goal-setting models often failed to work in explaining firm creation because the existing goal-setting models assume the process linking action and outcome are generally known and accepted (that is, legitimized). For new firms, especially ones in new industries, or with untried products or services or personnel, the action-outcome link is probablistic, and the probabilities are determined by social processes. Ellen's approach explains the how, the why, and the when of these exchanges and their effects on the entrepreneurial story and the eventual firm. It is a masterful effort, and perhaps a seminal one.

GOOD STORIES FOR THE RETELLING

Sandhamn is a place that must be thought of in terms of the sea and the port, with the common bonds linking the two the places where people can share drink and stories. This is so true an aspect of the place that during the conference no less than the King of Sweden came to the bar next to our conference room to partake of drink and stories while his sailboat was reprovisioned. Keeping this in mind, if you were in Sweden and someone told you that they heard something in Sandhamn that they'd like to tell you, you would give the ensuing story your greatest attention.

There are three stories from Sandhamn that I will take away, and because each is in this book, you can too. Sami Boutaiba's story of the YalaYala group, entitled 'A moment in time' captures the *zeitgeist* of the millennial period and the dot-com boom in a manner that is poignant, insightful, and immediately identified as reflective of those times. Already I find my youngest students are uncertain about what was so different about the dot-com boom, and stories like Sami's offer an immediately understood narrative.

Katarina Pettersson's 'Masculine entrepreneurship – the Gnosjö discourse in feminist perspective' has already struck a responsive chord in several of the participants in the conference, sparking perhaps the most heated exchanges of the time in Sandhamn. The observations she draws from decades of material cannot quickly be dismissed, and provides either a damning indictment of masculine domination of narratives, or a fascinating opportunity to witness the emergence of feminine, possibly feminist, voices amid a formerly all-male choir. It is a story that will always find an audience.

Finally, Alf Rehn and Saara Taalas' 'Crime and assumptions in entrepreneurship' is a piece certain to inspire academics to serious debate. Should the definition of entrepreneurship be expanded to include the creation of all kinds of organizational entities, including those outside the law? I was fascinated by the elaborate construction of the social context for theorizing that entrepreneurship research has so far only included law-abiding entities.

Perhaps it reflects differences in cultural backgrounds, but it has always seemed to me that among American researchers, entrepreneurs often conceptualized in advance of laws. The excesses of the dot-com boom bring these to life, but it not a unique situation. Prior booms brought about prior excesses, and there has always been a legal marginality inherent in the innovations developed by the most advanced entrepreneurs. Many of the consumer laws of today exist because of innovative actions of entrepreneurs, and many of the established business practices of today were initially considered illegal when introduced by entrepreneurs. Often in the USA it has

been the role of the entrepreneur to create not only new organizations, but new business practices, business models, and occasionally, business laws.

Should criminal organizations be studied? In many ways I suspect the point is moot. I believe the reasons for a lack of studies of criminal organizations are ones of safety and funding, not theoretical rectitude. A truly insightful study of a criminal organization would put the criminals at increased risk from competing criminal organizations and law enforcement agencies both. Thus most efforts to craft such a compelling narrative are likely to end in the end of the researcher. In comparison, studying ostensibly law-abiding small-scale entrepreneurs, who limit illegalities to tax evasion, price gouging, and employee harassment (or those entrepreneurs in high-growth businesses who engage in price-fixing, accounting irregularities, and stock manipulation) are relatively safe venues. Still Alf and Saara bring out the legal context and often under-appreciated contributions to our orientation to research in a powerful and useful manner. It will take years of discussion to settle their challenging question, and on such bases academic careers are made.

REFLECTIONS ON NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Part of the reason ESBRI invited me to the conference was because as an editor of so many different special issues and research compendia, I can often find where the opportunity for publication exists for works. I have tried to think about where the edge in publishing lies for narrative approaches, and even a year later, the answers like narratives themselves, are complex.

The conference papers show the diversity of what the narrative approach covers. We have instances where the narrative was the narrative of another individual or set of people (for example, Montoya, Foss, Boutaiba), the narrative of the author (Damgaard, Pihl, and Klyver, Campbell), or the narrative of other narratives (Rehn and Taalas, Pettersson). While the first two types of approach seem to me to have a commonality of purpose and method, and incidentally fit with commonsense ideas of what a narrative is, calling the last type a narrative seems to decrease the clarity and distinctiveness of the approach. Narratives of narratives are virtually indistinguishable from properly performed literature analyses (for example, Cooper, 2001), and the conceptual or methodological gain achieved by calling these narratives are not apparent, while the cost to those elements central to narrative is evident, and arguably high.

This problem is reminiscent of the definitional problems the field of

entrepreneurship faced for more than two decades. Entrepreneurship's approach was to permit and institutionalize several types of definitions, for example, wealth creation, innovation, organizational formation. Other solutions might also have worked. However the goal of clarifying what entrepreneurship meant was to help researchers and users of research to know what was being offered and its larger theoretical and intellectual context. Until narrative methodology deals with its own internal differences, it will be too difficult for 'outsiders' to follow, and thus difficult to recruit new adherents.

There is no doubt a cultural problem in getting narrative approaches (and here I talk of narratives of others and narratives of self) accepted in journals, notably those entrepreneurship journals hewing to the more quantitative approaches identified with the American approach to science. Part of this problem is physical – narrative papers take more space in journals, thus forcing out or delaying other papers.

Another part of the problem is that the distinctiveness of the findings based on narratives is not as great as one might hope. Part of this is editorial – often narratives take a great deal of space to show a simple point. There are no standards for how a researcher pares down the narrative details to demonstrate the basis for analysis. Lacking such guidance, and having an emotional investment in the data gathering, it is particularly difficult to decide how to present the minimum narrative necessary to prove a point and (in the interests of honest science according to Chris Argyris) permit the reader to disconfirm it.

Research narratives, for good or ill, also face competition from journalistic narratives, because many of the elements of using another's words are the same in both settings. Often a journalistic narrative can make its point in 2000 words, including those of the person studied. The academic typically uses four times the space or more. As the entrepreneurial public becomes a more sophisticated consumer of ideas, the gap between journalistic and research narratives lessens (to be fair, this is also happening for quantitative works in the two settings also). In some chapters, like those of O'Connor, the conceptual demands for more space are evident. But examples like hers are more the exception than the rule. Achieving a greater distinctiveness of voice and concept can only aid in differentiating research from journalistic narratives. In the end, researchers only possess a window of opportunity where they create new ideas and ways to think about entrepreneurship. Those that make sense and answer questions of interest will get picked up by the journalist community and popularized, so the value to be added by the researcher is greatest on the leading edge of theory and drops dramatically as one works with increasingly established (that is, old) ideas.

Finally, I could not help but notice how the thinking underlying the European approach to narratives takes an American ideal and makes it work far better than the Americans have to date. It is the concept of respecting the common person. Until the last third of the twentieth century, 'great man' approaches to history and entrepreneurship abounded, and were rooted in a distinctively European *realpolitik*, historically linked to culturally embedded ideas such as royalty and fixedness in social classes. Throughout most of the twentieth century the Americans espoused a 'common man' approach, in part to counter the European model. This approach underlay such things as the Progressive movement and the populist approach to educating of philosophers such as John Dewey. The conventional wisdom was that Europeans tolerated and even promoted elitism, while America promoted populism.

With that historical thought in mind, it was fascinating to see how the tables have turned. In the narratives presented in Sandhamn, the focus was not on the 'great men' (or women) of entrepreneurship, but rather on giving voice to average people who happened to do entrepreneurship. The choice of people and stories for the narratives highlighted the populism underlying the current postmodernist drive to support the narrative approach. This contrasted with much of the research in America, especially for the strains of entrepreneurship using a wealth-creation definition, where the modern equivalent of 'great men' and great ventures are the enduring focus.

Perhaps in that populism, however it is philosophically rooted, there is the connection with what remain core American values around respect for the common person. If there is, it could serve as a wedge for entry into American journals. The definition of entrepreneurship the narrative users would need to build on is that of organizational formation (Katz and Gartner, 1988) or self-employment (Reynolds and Miller, 1992), but with the right definitional foundation, populist approach, and methodological innovation, perhaps European narrativists might fashion a package that would sell their intellectual wares in the competitive American market. It is an idea worth considering.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

I talked earlier about the lone wolves of the 1980s and how the people at Sandhamn were reminiscent of those pioneering lone wolves. The larger context faced by the modern lone wolves is different from the world of the 1980s and in that difference lies the seeds of a new opportunity – one based on being an entrepreneurial academic. Today publishers are scrambling to find new journals. Advances in publishing and electronic distribution has

dramatically changed the cost structures of journals, and opened up new opportunities. We have seen this in the explosive growth of entrepreneurship journals in the past ten years, where more than 30 new journals have appeared (Katz, 2003). As I have noted before (Katz, 1991, 1994, 2003) these journals often have difficulty because they tend to be generic and as such undifferentiated one from another.

If as our participants asserted in the conference, there is a need for outlets amenable to publishing narrative-based research and theory, and in fact some of the broader research objectives of the narrative researcher community can be best met in the settings found in entrepreneurship research, then there is a possibility for researchers like those at the Sandhamn conference to successfully negotiate to start a new entrepreneurship journal, one focused on the narrative and discursive approaches to entrepreneurship, and on the underlying theory and method of narrative analysis. Such a journal would have a strong potential subscriber base in Europe and North America among entrepreneurship scholars, and the libraries of their universities, and there would exist a secondary market for narrative researchers in other disciplines who seek out the journal for its methodological articles. A journal like the one I describe might find a ready partner in one or more of the professional societies for entrepreneurship researchers, further enhancing the attractiveness of the prospect for a commercial publisher (and for the society, who might be able to provide it inexpensively to members). At its root is the problem of moving from telling a story to living one, and that leap is at the heart of all entrepreneurship, be it in business or academia, or in this case, both. A new journal would make a fitting legacy for the conference.

13. The edge defines the (w)hole: saying what entrepreneurship is (not)

William B. Gartner

This is a story I often tell at doctoral seminars about my own 'initiation' into the community of entrepreneurship scholars. I believe that this might be worth telling here as a coda to Rehn and Taalas' chapter in this book. They offer a thoughtful exposition of some of the facets of an article I wrote nearly two decades ago – 'Who is an entrepreneur? is the wrong question' (Gartner, 1988). We often see the outcomes of scholarly endeavors – the book chapter, the journal article, the monograph and book – without some sense of the conversations that develop as these 'products' are published. I've found that journal articles, particularly, don't necessarily 'speak for themselves'. The process of academic writing so often mutes the author's voice through a conversation that occurs during the process of reviews and rewriting. This process is not often transparent to the reader. What appears on the pages of a journal article is often the result of multiple dialogues among the author, editor, and reviewers. It is these conversations, well, actually my recollection of these conversations that are the basis for this story of how 'Who is an entrepreneur?' came to be written and published. In addition, I'll use this story as a commentary on where the other chapters in this book seem to be directing future entrepreneurship scholarship.

In 1984, Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland published an article in the *Academy of Management Review*, 'Differentiating entrepreneurs from small business owners: A conceptualization' that articulated a sense of entrepreneurship that was so radically different from my experiences studying entrepreneurs. To be honest, the article provoked feelings of rage. Rage? Well, a month before I had just learned that the *Academy of Management Review* was to publish an article of mine (Gartner, 1985) that offered a very different view of the nature of entrepreneurship. This article, 'A framework for describing the phenomenon of new venture creation' posited that there was significant variation among the population of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial situations. In other words, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurships probably had a lot more differences among them than similarities. In fact,

this framework suggested that one of the primary conundrums facing entrepreneurship scholars was this problem of accounting for all of the variation (in entrepreneurs, their activities, the kinds of organizations they started, and the situations in which these activities took place) and that it might actually be very difficult to find any commonalities. And, now, the *Academy of Management Review* had published an article that seemed to be so diametrically opposed to a variation perspective.

Now, it might be worth backtracking in this story, to talk about how I had arrived at the conclusion that the phenomenon of entrepreneurship was intrinsically about the nature of variation. I had finished my dissertation, 'An empirical model of the business startup, and eight entrepreneurial archetypes' (Gartner, 1982) a few years before. This effort had been a struggle to find any commonalities among 106 case studies I had generated as the empirical bases for my research on entrepreneurship. The initial purpose of the dissertation was to explore whether entrepreneurship training had a positive effect on the ability of entrepreneurs to successfully start and grow companies. In order to find out whether this was true I contacted entrepreneurship scholars at various universities to identify entrepreneurs (my assumption was that they would identify their students) that they knew who might have taken an entrepreneurship course or undergone some kind of entrepreneurship training program. I identified over 240 entrepreneurs through this method, and, in contacting these entrepreneurs, I found out that most of them had not had entrepreneurship training (and most were not the students of the entrepreneurship scholars who had given me their names), and that their startup stories were, for me, unbelievably diverse. Since this group of 240 individuals didn't really seem to have entrepreneurship training as a commonality in their experiences, I decided to just 'figure out' what was going on with this 'sample'. I suppose the dissertation became a way of making sense of what I had. So, I engaged in both qualitative and quantitative efforts to understand this group of people. There were 106 individuals who ended up completing an in-depth phone interview as well as responding to a detailed mail questionnaire. This took a year. The variety of their stories was astounding. Individuals had started businesses from all kinds of backgrounds and for all kinds of reasons. There were a variety of businesses that were started (restaurants, manufacturing firms, doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants, lawn service businesses, construction firms). I was surprised that there could be so many ways to start businesses, and that there could be so many businesses that people could start. What to do with this mass of information? It took another year to come up with methods to both recognize the differences among these 106 cases as well as find similarities. I used hierarchical clustering to evaluate the similarities and differences among these 106 cases

using all of the quantitative information I had collected. This clustering method begins with grouping the 'most similar' cases at the initial level through success steps into clusters of less and less similar cases until there remains only one cluster left. Part of the challenge of using hierarchical clustering methods is to determine at which stage the clusters that are formed have the most similarities among the members of a particular cluster, and the greatest amount of differences between each of the clusters. While the clustering algorithms attempt to generate 'tight clusters' with lots of 'space' between the clusters, there is much room for interpretation. Using the qualitative case studies I had written, I had some sense of what each story told, and where there might be similarities among these cases. I eventually decided that there were eight clusters that seemed to group these 106 case studies into similar 'patterns' of kinds of individuals, startup behaviors, firms, and situations. While the dissertation, then, offered eight 'archetypes' of entrepreneurship, it was always in the back of my mind a sense that these archetypes were at best a compromise for finding similarities among what looked to be 106 very different experiences.

The 'framework' article (Gartner, 1985) was, then, the 'theoretical' section of the dissertation that provided my logic for the way that the variation among all of these different entrepreneurships was organized. So, I was somewhat in the naive 'glow' of feeling that the *Academy of Management Review* had 'designated' my perspective on entrepreneurship as the path that entrepreneurship scholars would likely take for discussing the phenomenon: Entrepreneurship was about variation.

And then Carland et al. (1984) appeared. They offered a statement of entrepreneurship that didn't seem to reflect variation as a primary characteristic:

> An entrepreneur is an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purposes of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterized principally by innovative behavior and will employ strategic management practices in the business (p. 358).

From my research experience, this kind of entrepreneur represented a very small proportion of the individuals who had engaged in starting organizations. What about all of the other kinds of entrepreneurs? Well, Carland et al. (1984) classified them as small-business owners:

> A small business owner is an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business must be the primary source of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his or her personality, intricately bound with family needs and desires (p. 358).

Well, that description didn't seem to fit many of the entrepreneurs in my sample, either. And, so I began to rage about, what appeared to me, a very simple classification scheme for identifying entrepreneurs that seemed to have no relationship to the entrepreneurs that I had studied. Most of my entrepreneurs didn't seem to fit either of these categories, so what were they? – Neither entrepreneur nor small businessperson, it appeared. As a way to 'cool down' I decided to write a rebuttal to their article, something that I was able to write in a period of a few weeks. I entitled the article, 'Who is an entrepreneur? is the wrong question' and I sent the article to the *Academy of Management Revie*w on July 31, 1984. The gist of this initial manuscript was that the phenomenon of entrepreneurship needed to account for a myriad of things, and that defining entrepreneurship in terms of the dimensions of profit and growth limited our attention to a fairly narrow vision of what the phenomenon might entail. I came down heavily in favor of focusing on the behaviors of individuals involved in starting organizations, but, fundamentally, the article sought to draw the reader back toward the framework offered in Gartner (1985), which would eventually be published.

And, now the story about the conversation I engaged in so that 'Who is an entrepreneur?' could get published. It wasn't much longer than about three months (October 19, 1984) that I received a letter from the editor with a couple of reviews. The editor was 'reasonably optimistic' that revisions could be successfully undertaken. The reviewers had mixed feelings about the manuscript: One liked it, the other had some concerns, but they appeared to be minor. Each seemed to have their own sense of 'what entrepreneurship was' and 'who entrepreneurs were' that either fit, or didn't, my own sense of the phenomenon, but there did seem to be an openness to letting me speak my mind about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. The editor asked for a rewrite, and indicated that the article needed to address the reviewers' concerns: Two differing opinions to resolve. I responded with conciliatory remarks to the reviewers, and a somewhat changed manuscript that I submitted on January 15, 1985. A few months passed, and then I received another letter from the editor indicating that one of the reviewers was sick and unable to continue with the review process (whom I later was told was Al Shapero) and that another reviewer was now assigned to evaluate the manuscript. Within about two months I received another set of reviews (April 4, 1985). This time, one of the original reviewers was clearly in favor of the arguments in the revised manuscript while the newly added reviewer indicated in his one page review that he had substantial reservations regarding the manuscript's tone and ideas. The editor asked for more revisions to respond to this new viewpoint. I was not happy to receive this news. Another revision and a letter to the editor and reviewers was written

in six days, and sent back on April 10, 1985. The revised manuscript was now entitled, 'Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship: Content versus process approaches,' and it attempted, I thought, to be less confrontational. But, the letter to the editor suggested that there might need to be conversation between us regarding my comments to the reviewers and that it might be necessary to re-revise the manuscript and my comments to them before they saw it again. My comments to the newly added reviewer were, to say the least, scathing and angry about this reviewer's beliefs (that were counter to mine) about the nature of entrepreneurship that were offered in a one page review. I felt that his reviewer was just clearly 'wrong' and his comments in the review were not supported by the empirical evidence, and I wrote eight single-spaced pages to show this reviewer how much I thought the reviewer's one page review lacked any sense of thoughtfulness, thoroughness, or academic rigor. Looking back, I realize that my comments would not likely endear me to this reviewer, change his mind, or provide me with a champion to encourage the editor to allow this manuscript to be published. I received a letter back from the editor (April 22, 1985) that the second reviewer had recovered from his illness and that all three reviewers would be evaluating this third version of the manuscript. In early June 1985 the editor informed me that Al Shapero had died and that the review process would entail reviews from the remaining two reviewers. Not long after that I received a phone call from the editor asking me to meet with him at the Academy of Management National Meetings in San Diego that August to talk about the reviewer's responses. Apparently my scathing letter had not had any positive affect on convincing the new reviewer of the error of his views. At this face-to-face meeting I was told that this reviewer was so offended by my remarks that he had not thought a review of the revised manuscript was necessary. The manuscript should just be rejected. My reply was argumentative rather than scholarly. At that point I was asked to consider another revision, and a more conciliatory approach to addressing the reviewers, and as the editor indicated, 'through the kind of professional discussion for which we all strive.' On October 16, 1985 I sent another revised version of the manuscript to the editor along with this rather brief note to the reviewers:

> I have modified the tone of the manuscript to reflect a more professional discussion of the issues, though the manuscript continues to have a strong point of view. I have inserted what might be called a 'gentleman's disclaimer,' that is, I state that I have not signalled out the Carland et al. (1984) paper as any better or worse than other research studies pursuing trait research, and I am using the Carland et al. (1984) article as an example only. I imply that I do not wish to do battle with individuals, but simply with the question 'Who is an entrepreneur?' which I believe has led the field into a dilemma we can't get out of. There are

many fine and energetic researchers in the entrepreneurship field such as Carland et al., and I believe we would all benefit by directing our energies along more fruitful paths. Although I hope the disclaimer sets a better tone than previously, I cannot change the thesis of the manuscript. The thesis of the manuscript remains the same: Research on entrepreneurial traits and characteristics is less likely to enable us to understand entrepreneurship than research on how entrepreneurs behave. It is a little idea, but little ideas incrementally move the field to higher levels of understanding.

Two months later (January 2, 1986) a letter from the editor and another set of reviews arrived. The third reviewer continued to find areas in the revised manuscript where the logic of its arguments seemed to break down, as well as pointing out that, 'the response to Carland et al., should have been presented when the article first appeared. It has now been nearly two years since the article appeared. It's a little late for a rejoiner.' The original reviewer continued to be supportive and offered some suggestions about the need to identify outcomes that might be useful for identifying success. Another revision was requested, and I complied with another revision and a letter to the reviewers on February 15, 1986. In this revision I decided to delete all of the discussion of Carland et al. (1984) from the text and rewrite the manuscript in whatever manner I could to make the reviewers happy.

In May a letter arrived from the editor indicating that the third reviewer was still unhappy with the manuscript and the editor asked me to write a letter indicating how I would address these concerns. On July 4, 1986 I sent back a three-page letter attempting to, again, clarify my position, and put the best possible light on the manuscript to address any of the issues brought up by this reviewer. On August 7, 1986 I received a letter from the editor rejecting the manuscript.

Well, disappointed, yet undeterred, I wrote the editor a letter challenging the rejection of the manuscript, and asked for some reconsideration, given the number of revisions of the manuscript (five) as well as some compassion for the review problems that developed because of the animosity between the third reviewer and myself. In addition, I made a phone call pleading my case. The editor acquiesced and suggested that another reviewer should be brought on board to offer to make a final determination. This review was undertaken and the editor wrote me on December 12, 1986 that the manuscript was, again, rejected. Sigh.

And, the rejections were not yet over. I decided to re-title the manuscript, 'Who is an entrepreneur? is the wrong question' and added back all of the materials involving Carland et al. (1984) and began to send the manuscript out for review. In all of these letters to these editors I suggested that a rebuttal by Carland et al. might be paired with this manuscript. Over the years versions of this manuscript had been sent out to others in the field, and most

scholars knew of its existence, and some had actually begun to cite the manuscript as a working paper. Carland et al. was well aware of the manuscript, and thought an opportunity to rebut my views would be a helpful way to clarify their ideas, as well. The manuscript was sent to *California Management Review* in January 1987, and rejected in February. The manuscript was then sent to the *Journal of Management* in March and rejected in May. The manuscript was then sent to the *Journal of Business Venturing* in June and rejected in October. Finally, I sent the manuscript to the *American Journal of Small Business* in November 1987, where the reviewers rejected that manuscript, as well, but the editor, Ray Bagby decided to publish the manuscript, along with a companion piece by Carland and Frank Hoy entitled 'Who is an entrepreneur? is a question worth asking' (Carland, Hoy and Carland, 1988). And, in 1989 the Editorial Review Board of the journal, now renamed *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, decided to award the article 'Best Article of the Year' for 1988.

Whew. Well, what to make of this story? At times my intention in the telling has been to suggest, 'persistence pays off,' that eventually one's ideas get published, and, one's colleagues may even recognize that one's ideas are a 'contribution.' At other times it is a story about how it is easy (or stupid, or foolish) to lash out at a reviewer for a perceived 'poor review,' and that the consequences of making a reviewer angry is unlikely to result in the manuscript getting published. Or, it is a story about finding one editor that could see enough value in the manuscript to decide to publish it. Or, it is a story about being 'unlucky' with the selection of reviewers and the review process, itself. Or, it is a story about . . .

But, wait, there is a bit more to the story, yet to tell. During the *Academy of Management Review* review process it dawned on me that my colleagues in the entrepreneurship field, had, as I quoted through Cole (1969), 'some notion of it – what he thought was, for his purposes, a useful definition' of entrepreneurship, but that each scholar's definition hadn't really been made conscious to themselves, or public to other colleagues in the field. It was at this point that I undertook a Delphi process among all of the entrepreneurship academics. The details of the Delphi process are described in Gartner (1990). In general, the process is designed for participants to express their views on a particular topic, and then all of these various comments are distributed back to all of the participants so that in subsequent rounds participants are queried in a manner to ascertain where there might be commonalities among their viewpoints. My intentions were to 'help' my colleagues see their differences in their beliefs and views about the nature of entrepreneurship. I felt that each person had a unique view of what the phenomenon of entrepreneurship entailed; yet each person assumed that others held similar views. Maybe, through this Delphi process, my colleagues might

reach some consensus as to what entrepreneurship is, or is not. Consensus? The result of this process revealed to me how fragmented the views of entrepreneurship scholars actually were, in terms of coming up with some sense of the essential characteristics of the phenomenon. 'What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship?' (Gartner, 1990) is, then, a companion piece to the 'Who is an entrepreneur?' article. 'What are we talking about . . .' discovers that entrepreneurship scholars have differing views on eight aspects of entrepreneurship as a phenomenon: the entrepreneur, innovation, organization creation, creating value, profit or non-profit, growth, uniqueness, and ownership. That is, entrepreneurship scholars disagree on each of these eight themes about whether these attributes are important, or not. For example, some scholars believe that entrepreneurship involves only profit-making enterprises, while some scholars believe that entrepreneurship can involve non-profit or unprofitable enterprises. Some scholars believe that entrepreneurship only involves growth opportunities while other scholars disagree. Some scholars believe that entrepreneurship requires innovation and uniqueness while other scholars disagree. Essentially, then, entrepreneurship scholars disagree about all aspects of entrepreneurship such that there is no single characteristic that all scholars would indicate is a facet of the phenomenon that entrepreneurship would have. As Cole (1969, p. 17) warned 'And I don't think you're going to get farther than that.' With these stories in mind . . .

The scholars in this book extend the dialogue of current entrepreneurship scholarship in a number of ways. First, the boundaries of entrepreneurship itself are pushed out to consider different ways that entrepreneurial activity occurs, such as the endeavors of taxi owners and taxi drivers in Caracas, the ongoing conversations of identity creation that occur in an internet startup in Silicon Valley and a consultancy in Denmark, the drama of developing a theatre in Sør-Varanger, quilting in Canada, and criminal activity in Russia. There appears to be no major commonalities among the kinds of entrepreneurial phenomena that are talked about. Second, the ways in which entrepreneurship itself is studied also vary in these chapters. There is participant observation, autobiography, interviews, dramaturgy, historical analysis, and, I'm sure, other labels for the methods these authors used to make sense of the entrepreneurial phenomenon they encountered. And finally, there are a variety of connections to other genres of academic scholarship. I sensed that there were very few citations that all of these authors shared as a source of common reference. So, as the edges of entrepreneurship scholarship are pushed farther out to recognize a broader range of entrepreneurial phenomena, ways of studying this phenomena, and source ideas for connecting to this phenomena, one can celebrate that entrepreneurship scholarship seems to be expanding towards a cornucopia

of variation. I think this trend is inherently positive because entrepreneurship itself demands this requisite variety (Weick, 1979) in order for us to know and talk about what it is.

One approach towards talking about entrepreneurship that, I believe, holds great promise is the path taken in a chapter in this book by Damgaard, Piihl, and Klyver in their construction of a drama, or fiction, about an aspect of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. I have wondered why there are so few fictional accounts of entrepreneurs and their experiences. It would seem that in fiction one could more fully utilize one's imagination to grasp many of the subtle, internal, and ephemeral qualities that seem to be nearly impossible to write about in any of the scholarly forms available to us. I am sure that because my literary roots are so thin I cannot readily identify works of fiction that would appear to have some grasp of the world of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship that we, as scholars in the entrepreneurship field frequently encounter. Would we find entrepreneurship in *Great Expectations* (Dickens, 2003), *Moby Dick* (Melville, 1992), or *Good Faith* (Smiley, 2003)? It might be that the actual experiences of entrepreneurs are themselves fictions, as O'Connor points out in her chapter in this book. It might be that the fictions created by entrepreneurs are more imaginative than what might be created by any authors of fiction, so that a fiction writer's efforts would never seem to ring as true to us as the stories told by these entrepreneurs themselves.

Finally, what may be a cause of concern in the trends that this book may represent is that, as the boundaries of our field ever continue to expand to include more kinds of phenomena, more ways of studying these phenomena, and more academic genres for talking about these phenomena, we, as a community of scholars, become more remote and distant from each other. Who is talking to each other in this book? What does it mean to come together as a community of scholars when fewer and fewer of us are likely to use the same language or talk about the same thing? And, it is particularly troubling if our scholarly connections tend to be 'out there,' outside of our field, rather than within the boundaries of the field itself. Who will we talk to, if not among ourselves? Can there be a community without ongoing conversations among us? This conversation, this dialogue occurs when we reference each other's work, and work to make connections between where we are, and where others are in the field (Latour, 1987). So, as the edges of the entrepreneurship field continue to expand, is the field a whole or a hole?

The story that I offer might be one of trying to find the common connections among us, as entrepreneurship scholars, as we seek to understand a phenomenon that is inherently about 'being different' (Gartner, 2001). Not only are the people and the situations that we study 'different,' I think we,

as scholars in the entrepreneurship field seek to be 'different,' as well, in our approaches, our words, etc. The challenge, and the promise of narrative approaches, is this ability to give voice to the uniqueness that is every person's experience, as well as to connect each story to our common humanity. As the doctor and poet William Carlos Williams observed:

> We have to pay the closest attention to what we say. What patients say tells us what to think about what hurts them; and what we say tells us what is happening to us – what we are thinking, and what may be wrong with us . . . Their story, yours, mine – it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them (Coles, 1989, p. 30).

14.   Relational constructionism and entrepreneurship: some key notes

Dian-Marie Hosking in dialogue with Daniel Hjorth

> Dian, when we had the workshop in Stockholm and you were invited to say something on the theme of constructionism I remember that we, the people at the workshop, and you, experienced a fruitful conversation, covering various aspects and problems related to this approach. What we didn't quite cover, though, was your relation to entrepreneurship.

I have never met an entrepreneur. Or perhaps I have. My elderly woman friend who does Bed and Breakfast – is she one? My mother – who began her own florist's shop – was she? And what about my Asian friends who run the ever-open corner shop, are they? Are there 'entrepreneurs' in more collectivistic societies than ours, or is the concept especially meaningful and relevant in more individualistic contexts? Perhaps social scientists have created 'the entrepreneur' thus to study them?

> As with most concepts of fairly complex composition, constructionism has emerged in many forms, or, to be more precise, comes to be used in many different ways. Not least the – if nothing else – 'linguistic neighbour' constructi-*vism* tends to confuse people. I believe it would be great if you could clarify your use of constructivism and how this sits in the context of your history of interest in constructionist approaches.

Many years ago I became interested in a well known 'contingency model' of leadership. Specifically, my interest was in contingency models as a potentially useful way of joining talk about persons and contexts and exploring their interrelations. My journey led me to investigate literatures that seemed likely to have something to do with leadership including, for example, studies of managerial behaviour and of entrepreneurs. As I travelled, I came to feel that centring one *particular* person (such as a leader, manager or entrepreneur) and focusing on their personal characteristics and behaviours gave too much significance to that individual. Relatedly, I had problems with the treatment of contexts as 'out there', available to be manipulated through the selfish acts of the centred individual.[63] These

analytical moves had the effect of over-emphasizing stability (what) at the cost of processes and change (how). Separating persons and contexts also made it difficult to explore their mutually constructive relations.

To be very brief, I came to the view that the field of Organizational Behaviour and related fields were dominated by approaches that (a) treat people as things, (b) independent of other entities (people and non-human objects or contexts for human action), and (c) in 'subject–object' (S–O) relation. So, for example, when persons – let's call them entrepreneurs – are theorized as Subject then they are treated as able to know and to influence Other as Object. Other is considered only from the subject's point of view – as an instrument for the Subject in the pursuit of their (supposedly neutral, rational, and generally valuable) purposes. Of course the reader of a text brings something to their reading of a text. So I should not say that some approach 'IS' entitative . . . 'is either this or that'. This would again be fixing the identity of someone or something, treating that identity as if it were independent of my relation with it. Perhaps we should rather say that certain stories – with their particular characters (entrepreneurs and . . .), storylines (risk-taking . . .) and moral point (heroism, success despite hardship etc) – seem more entitative (Hosking and Morley, 1991) than others.

So, what sort of story 'lets go' of the overly individualistic view of persons (as independently existing, bounded entities) together with its associated overly 'culturalist' view of societies, structures, organizations (as independently existing, bounded entities)? One such story is 'constructiv*ism*'. It has been around for a very long time. In western psychology, it is reflected in the (early twentieth century) shift from talk of sensation to talk of perception. This 'cognitivist' approach assumes 'the world' provides sense data, and individual minds process this data to produce knowledge about the world. Constructivism says that people cannot know the world as it really is. Rather the mind 'combines what is in the head, with what is in the world' so to speak. The term '*social* constructivism' is used to refer to a related story that pays particular attention to social influences and the effects they have on our knowledge claims. In both cases, the interest is in rationality – on the accuracy of our knowledge – and on how closely our actions reflect that knowledge.

> If I may interrupt here and ask you to describe where you think constructivism becomes inadequate and what constructionism instead can provide, what effects this approach has, so to speak.

In constructivism the sharp (entitative) separation of individuals from other objects is blurred by cognitive activities and social relations. The language of sense 'making' (rather than sense taking) provides a way to signal this constructivist position. So, for example, some explicitly speak of

leaders as those who influence other people's constructions of reality. And now researchers in the area of entrepreneurship seem increasingly attracted to talk of sense making. Constructivism and social constructivism are part of a wider shift in the sciences from naïve to critical realism. In my view, they are now part of 'normal science' and as such, relatively uncontroversial. But to answer your question, is this shift adequate? And does this shift do enough to deal with my earlier expressed concerns about contingency theorizing? For me, the answer is no. In my view, other possibilities deserve serious attention. In particular, I am interested in:

- de-centring particular individuals (that is, entrepreneurs) and, instead, centring relational processes;
- letting go of talk about individuals, mind operations (including sense making) and knowledge, to
- instead talk of relational processes as inter-actions that
- (re)construct identities and worlds as local rationalities or cultures.
- This opens up the possibility that relations could be inclusive (participative) rather than exclusive (between independent existences), a possibility that
- includes researchers – who may re-construct their participation as part of, rather than apart from, the relational processes they are studying. This is also a way to
- locate power in relational processes and to link talk of power to talk of local realities and relations between them; at the same time –
- assuming the complexity of realities and relations by exploring multiple and changing constructions, and
- their moral (not just pragmatic/instrumental) qualities.

The above constitute some key features of what I regard as 'relational' or 'social' constructio*nism*.

> Reading other texts of yours and your co-authors, you describe a multilogical inquiry practice which is particularly precise in articulating how constructionism, especially in the form you call relational, is different from constructivist approaches, treating self- and world-making as two separate (intra- and inter-personal) processes. When I read this, this rejection of a dualist position, relational constructionism to me shares the spirit of Foucault's work and his intense rejection of the individualist/subjectivist bias in our scientific culture – the influence of a Cartesian model of epistemology and ontology as two separate issues. A relational ontology/epistemology, abandoning this separation, is described in your writings where you argue that constructions of self and other are relational, i.e. related to each other and to the discursive practices of particular local and historically related cultures (Hosking, 1999). Also this I believe is consistent with Foucault's description of how we can counteract the Cartesian

reflex. He writes: '. . . we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what positions does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse?' (1977, pp. 137–8).

Foucault's 'method', which I think we should describe as anti-method, always included a focus on discourse from the double focus on the historical conditions of the emergence of discourses and the regulations of their 'effectiveness' in social fields of practice. It seems to me that relational constructionism describes this as the focus on social processes rather than on individuals, and stresses that attention is directed towards social processes theorized as language based processes of co-ordination, co-ordinations that also construct self in relation to other. Now, and excuse this long route, do you recognize these 'touching points' between relational constructionism and a Foucauldian poststructuralist approach? In addition, I would like to recall a sense of danger I had when reading these descriptions of constructionism, a danger that this approach directs our attention towards the future and its making in the present, but perhaps not towards history. Now I know that referring to history like that is imprecise; I do this, however, to leave space for your description of relational constructionism's use of history – of whatever kind – and how this danger might be avoided.

It is perhaps relevant to note that people speak of relational (or 'social') constructionism to mean many different things. Often they seem to be relating a tale of *constructivism* – as if it were new. And often the tale seems to embrace modernist assumptions. Much more rarely a postmodern narrative is developed – as in the present case – and as in the related work of Foucault. This brings me to a related point that, in my view, relational constructionism is best viewed as a thought style, as a 'theory of theories'. It embraces assumptions that are importantly different from modernist and critical realist perspectives. One important consequence is that relational constructionism cannot just be 'picked up' and 'used' as a seemingly more fashionable alternative to other theories, as many seem to want to do. For example, theory, method and data are now seen as so interwoven that the distinctions make little sense. For this reason, the term 'data' probably will not be used (it is too suggestive of a view of facts as independent of theory and methods). Similarly, 'methods' – all methods – are viewed as ways of *constructing* realities.

> I like the concept of thought style. It brings out the aesthetic dimension of doing research that I believe is always underemphasized. In another time the concept of paradigm might have been used. This, in turn, was accompanied by another concept which, I believe, would also be a candidate for describing the resistance to an intellectual shopping mall attitude on the part of the thinker, that is, that one could just pick up, as you put it, a style when it seems convenient. The concept I think of is of course incommensurability. I also acknowledge that 'paradigm incommensurability – method' makes up a consistent package. 'Thought style – the reality-constructing effects of style – ways of constructing

realities' would then be, if not another, so at least another package. I would like you to stay a bit with this discussion of the relations between research style, knowledge and realities. Let me ask like this: Are there arguments for the second package due to specific, historical problems of the first 'package' when used in thinking and writing? That is, are the concept-relations in the 'first package' that, though inevitably being productive when used, actively locks us into a specific, perhaps even monopolizing perspective, one which pulls writers and readers into a reality-constructing process you want to avoid?

Well, I'm with you up until your last point – where I'm not sure I know what you mean. Perhaps it's relevant to say that, in my view, relational constructionism de-centres (but does not reject) the assumption of a 'real world' and instead speaks of 'relational realities' – what people make real through their interactions. One important consequence is that 'research' now has a changed meaning – not to 'tell it how it is' – but, for example, to 'tell how it might become'. More generally, research might strive to be 'world enlarging' (Harding, 1986), to open up new possible identities and (local) worlds – perhaps by 'telling' – but perhaps also by shifting emphasis from outsider knowledge to participative change work.

> There are consequences here for how researchers conduct inquiry processes in the field. Consequences that also seem common to poststructuralist and relational constructionist research. Neither approach can prioritize researcher forms of knowing over practitioner forms of knowing. Indeed, I think it is possible to suggest, in the context of this book, that this general scepticism before the traditional status of scientific knowledge is also a precondition for the emergence of the widely spread attention to narrative forms of knowledge. Instead of asking in order to fill out the blanks of a great theoretical jigsaw puzzle, researchers would emphasize the co-creation of realities in processes of knowing. This makes the centrality of ethical questions even more evident than perhaps traditionally has been the case. When we think of relational constructionism and fieldwork, for example the study of a company-in-the-making or of the processes of organization creation pushing the boundaries for 'what is' in order to launch a new project, what are the possibilities for this kind of research in terms of what comes out of it? How can we frame the relations between researcher and society at large from this horizon? As a student of social processes I believe every research project is a process of becoming a researcher. Now, from a relational-constructionist point of view, or style of thinking, the question is what you think is characteristic of such a process of becoming researcher, having the question of ethics in mind?

OK, let's backtrack a little and give a historical context to this style of thinking. Then we can look at some of the key characteristics of the process of 'becoming'. First, the themes of what I am calling 'relational constructionism' have a very long history. If we just turn to relatively recent times we may say that they can be found in many literatures including, for example in: the philosophy of inquiry, feminism and feminist critiques of science, the

sociology of knowledge, cognitive and social psychology, interactionist, cognitive, and phenomenological sociologies, radical family therapy, most systems theories, and critical social anthropology. Constructionist themes also are prominent in discussions of (post)modernism. Some well known contributors to constructionist thinking include Mead, Bateson, Berger and Luckmann, Schutz, Garfinkel, Gergen, Foucault, and many others.

A good deal of constructionist work explores 'what' constructions people produce. Sometimes researchers use the language of 'discourses' and sometimes the language of 'narrative' to refer to these.[64] Other work explores 'how' constructions – of personhood, of entrepreneurship, of cultures, relationships – are produced. I will go on to outline one view of the processes in which realities are (re)constructed, actively maintained, and changed.

Multiple inter-actions. First, I centre inter-action rather than its 'products'. Realities and relationships are made in written and spoken (conceptual) language; in such cases it is useful to speak of inter-actions of texts, that is, of text – con-text relations. In addition, realities and relationships are made in co-ordinations of non-verbal actions, things, and events;[65] in such cases we can speak, for example, of inter-acts or of 'act-supplement' relations (for example, Gergen, 1995). The most general point here is our talk about *relating*, regardless of what is being related to what; we can use the term inter-action to embrace all of these relational possibilities. Inter-actions can include a handshake or some other non-verbal gestures; can be conversations about local markets and strategy; can be the playing of a string quartet, etc. Inter-actions involve texts, actions, objects, and artefacts available to be made part of some ongoing process, to be re-constructed, made relevant or irrelevant, meaningful or meaningless, good or bad, *by being put into relation*.

> As an entrepreneurship researcher, let me reflect further on what you say. If the study of entrepreneurship is gravitating towards the theme of possibilities, opportunities, chances, and this certainly characterizes the development of entrepreneurship research during the 1990s onwards, what are some of the implications of this constructionist style of thinking? On the one hand it seems we are offered a more sober view of what used to pass as 'a flash of inspiration', 'divine genius', 'strategic decision' or 'creative mind'. For this, in a constructionist language, is possible to describe in its more minute details as relational possibilities traditionally falling outside a more roughly cut scientific language perhaps unfit for studies of entrepreneurship or any form of social creativity? Talk of the individual entrepreneur as a fixed entity (who thus vanishes in relational constructionism) obscures what is always the case: the continuous becomings of life present multiple relational possibilities that make human living – varying with place and time – into an entrepreneurial act of creating organization. Creating an organization of these multiple relational possibilities produces the result of a 'form a life'. From a relational constructionist point of view, talk of the entre-

preneur is very obviously (though implicitly) talk about power. It seems that one can form this (entrepreneurial) life only by constructing power over others. The question then is how anything – creation processes in particular as they always explore in-betweens – come to pass as individual achievements? For this is how entrepreneurship has been studied.

Well one reason lies with the multiple, simultaneous, and often tacit qualities of construction. Construction processes consist of multiple, simultaneous and interrelated inter-acts, many of which are tacit. Take, for example, some newly announced corporate mission. Relating to this text will probably involve *multiple con/texts* such as, for example, discourses of local and of corporate management, of previous change initiatives, of being 'messed about', of a strategic re-orientation . . . And not one reality but multiple social realities may be made in the course of the many different inter-actions. Some may speak of the mission statement as the latest management joke, it may be used as the basis for team briefings, referenced in development workshops, become a key narrative in stock market activities and so on.

It is not just that inter-actions are multiple, they also are *simultaneous* and many of the supplements or con/texts will be *tacit*. For example, the deceptively simple coordination of shaking hands relies upon reference to a great many local cultural practices to do with greeting, polite and impolite forms, when one form is used rather than some other – with whom – in what relations . . . It is perhaps, the tacit quality of many relations that leads some to construct an entitative narrative, for example, of entrepreneurs, markets, a business enterprise – encouraging the view that 'it' is an 'it' – observable, singular, and relatively stable. It is in these processes of simultaneously relating multiple texts/acts, many of which are tacit, that *local* realities are (re)produced and changed.

> This would be possible to see as a description of entrepreneurship, if we change to: processes of simultaneously relating multiple texts/acts, many of which are tacit, so as to create local realities. A question here, reading your description of the multiplicities and interrelatedness of relations and construction processes, is: when do we have the possibility to identify and describe a construction process? What are we looking for when we study these, and what would lead us to describe a possible relational construct as an actualized one? In effect, then, I suppose I could ask: what guides our style of inquiry in the field?

Local-social-historical constructions. In the course of inter-action, stabilized effects or patterns are (re)produced as some actions/texts are supplemented in ways that socially certify them as relevant and perhaps helpful and/or true (Hosking and Morley, 1991). These stabilized effects will include identities, social conventions, organizational, and societal structures.

So entrepreneurial processes would then thrive on the skilful use of identities, conventions, and structures in order to direct a power to produce. The result of such production, by the force of convention, the re-production of a certain style of thought, implies the presence of an entrepreneur and so all processes and relations, in retrospect, are reduced to creative minds, strategic decision making, and products and companies, the lazy celebration of an entitative world.

But not all texts will be supplemented: some will go unnoticed; others will be supplemented – but in ways that discredit them as irrelevant, inappropriate, unhelpful or untrue. Producing, reproducing, and changing stabilized effects can now be seen as located in inter-actions rather than produced by individual acts, for example, of those someone calls entrepreneurs. Inter-actions (re)construct power by certification or discrediting. For example, the proffered hand may or may not have the effect of inviting it to be grasped and shaken. Indeed, as any comedian knows, it is possible to play with that invitation, for example, by walking past the person with the outstretched hand, by grabbing their hand and wrestling them to the ground, by placing a wet fish in it and so on. We may say that a particular act *invites* a range of supplements (or con-texts) – but *not anything goes* – there are limits to what will be socially certified. Once a particular performance becomes 'stabilized' (for example, a greeting convention) then other possibilities have to be improvised and it may be harder to have some new pattern socially validated – after all, we already know what is 'real and good'. Such difficulties are especially likely to be encountered when subject-object relations – that implicate discourses or 'right' and 'wrong' – are already 'in place' as stabilized effects.

As an exercise of using the language tools of relational constructionism I could attempt descriptions of entrepreneurship that provide examples of how we could proceed in this style of thought. As an example we could now say that what we have referred to as entrepreneurship are multiple self-reality related/relating processes of invitational acts playing on the socially stabilized through either confirming or discrediting those stabilities. The power to produce 'new worlds' is an effect of combining the invitational acts of 'what could become' with the confirming/discrediting acts of 'what is'. I believe, as a reader of this book, that we find many examples of this form of organizational creativity; for example in Lindh de Montoya's stories from Caracas, in O'Connor's story of a company-in-the-making, in the life of Foss' 'rural entrepreneur', and in Rehn and Taalas' stories of social creativity. It seems, then, that this language of relational constructionism is quite generally applicable. Briefly touching upon this issue of general-specific or universal-local, what would we have had to take into account had this text been centred on a field-study?

My reference to 'local' should be understood in contrasting relation to general or universal. I wish to underline that social practices, and what is

likely to be socially validated or discredited, are local to a particular 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). To put it the other way around, I am not talking about external realities and knowledge that is generalizable to all communities and historical epochs. This said, 'local' could be as broad as 'Western', post-enlightenment constructions of science. Equally, local could be local to a company during a particular period in its history, local to a particular community of practice 'within' that company, or local to a business network in southern Sweden.

As I observed earlier, becoming a 'local', being warranted as culturally competent, is achieved by relating in ways that are locally warranted or socially certified. 'Insiders' perform their identities as co-constructors of a *particular* community (and they probably participate in many) when they act in ways that are locally warranted as 'real and good'.[66] So, in the example of the handshake, outsiders are soon identified when they try to do this in cultures that have other greeting conventions such as kissing, bowing or rubbing noses. Particular ways of 'going on' in relation may seem fixed and may be taken for granted as 'how the world really is'. However, we should not forget either the essential artfulness of these 'effects' or the processes that make and re-make them.

> Entrepreneurial processes, in the context of what you have just said, could be described also as possible because of this generic openness of history and future. 'What is' can always be destabilized through narrating how 'it' has become and how 'it' continues to become reproduced as 'present'. Entrepreneurial processes change/interrupt people's beliefs in the necessary continuation of outcomes of the past in present ways of 'going on'. Great ideas, convincing stories, timing, desire, and so on, these are all useful to accomplish such interruptions.

Part of what 'local' means is the *historical quality* of relational processes. They are after all, processes – so they are ongoing – making, re-making and changing constructions. There is always a relational context – any and all acts supplement some preceding act(s) – any and all texts may be related to many con/texts. Inter-actions, and particularly regularly repeated ones 'make history', so to speak. As an example, announcing a new mission statement might well make no sense (non-sense) unless resourced by discourses concerning, for example, collective working, management hierarchies, 'singing to the same song sheet' . . . Similarly, a nineteenth century factory worker probably would not have claimed to be 'doing research' when challenged for standing around seemingly doing nothing. And had he or she done so, it seems unlikely that such a claim would have been warranted!

Relational realities. Inter-actions *co-construct* people and worlds; self-making and world-making now are understood as co-genetic. This means that self *and* other (people, material objects, events, social structures) exist

– as social realities – only as relational dualities and not as separate entities (for example, Mead, 1934; Weigert, 1983). Identity (and other assumed entity characteristics such as personality, organizational goals and structures) is not singular and fixed and does not function as the defining characteristic of someone or something. Rather, in a relational view identity gets re-storied as a self – other – relationship construction. Identity (and other 'characteristics') become understood as (a) relational and so (b) multiple and variable (for example, a different identity in different self-other relations), and (c) as a 'done' rather than possessed.

> So, doing an entrepreneurial identity could be described as doing a mosaic of invitational acts, as manifesting great audience sensitivity, resulting in useful responses from as many as possible. This increases the organizational power to produce and connects more desires to produce. It strikes me as an important lesson to learn from relational constructionism – that we should study self- and world-making as co-genetic. It adds lots of useful reflections on the old but still important discussion on whether to focus on the individual, the act or the process (or all, but often understood as separate) in entrepreneurship research. So in sum . . . ?

In sum, relational processes are 'reality-constituting practices' (Edwards and Potter, 1992, p. 27) that construct markets, management, hierarchy, all social realities . . . what is (is not), and what is good (bad). Further, these realities are multiple and local rather than singular and transcendent. Processes only construct the way someone or something is *here and now*; other relations always are possible. Processes are constructed in multiple, simultaneous, inter-actions, and reference co-ordinations already in process. Relational processes are processes of self-making and world-making; self and other are co-genetic.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON NARRATIVE AND DISCURSIVE APPROACHES

When considered from a relational constructionist point of view, *all* inquiry, all knowing, all action can be considered as narrative. The 'inquirer' participates in relational processes – in making self as an inquirer in relation to other (for example, Howard, 1991), and in relation to narratives of science, mathematics, entrepreneurship and so on.[67] In addition, some approaches *explicitly* use the language of story telling or 'narrative' and these have become increasingly popular in studies of entrepreneurship (see, for example, present volume), in psychology (Sarbin, 1986) and in organization studies (for example, O'Connor, 1997). This said, it seems to me that relatively little 'narrative' work takes a postmodern or relational

constructionist stance (but see Boje, 1995). Instead, investigators typically treat narratives as 'mind stuff' – as the other's subjective knowledge (some sort of cognitivist orientation prevails), and position their self as an independent observer generating and analysing data in order to know what really is the case.

In contrast, relational constructionism positions con/texts (or inter-actions) as more or less local, embedded in multiple inter-textual relations. The embedded, situated, or local-relational quality of actions/texts has two important implications.[68] First, narratives are regarded as social and not 'individual' constructions and so, for example, interview transcripts are not treated as representations of a person's subjective knowledge. Second, the purpose of inquiry now may be thought of as being to 'articulate *local* and *practical* concerns' (Gergen and Thatchenkerry, 1996, emphasis added). This means articulating multiplicity, what some call 'plurivocality', and in this way 'giving voice' to practices and possibilities that usually are muted, suppressed or silenced. Inquiry is not to discover one 'truth' or to repro-duce a mono-logical construction of change (Dunford and Jones, 2000).

We should stress the following in the story so far:

- Story construction is a process of *creating* reality
- in which self/story teller is clearly *part of* the story.
- Narratives are relational realities, socially constructed, not individual subjective realities.
- Narratives are situated – they are con-textualized in relation to mul-tiple local-cultural-historical acts/texts.
- Inquiry may articulate multiple narratives and relations.
- Change-work works with multiple realities and power relations, for example, to
- facilitate ways of relating that are open to possibilities.

Studies in the style of relational constructionism seem, like most poststructural-ist studies, to be less interested in the results or products of processes as such. Herein lies a point of departure for criticism of the old systematization of knowl-edge into disciplines, which often has formed according to the belief that some empirically isolatable unit/entity – like 'the entrepreneur' or 'the business' – pro-vides an accurate basis or ground for knowledge. However, such a system for knowledge creation is clearly reductive from a relational constructionist style of thinking. Knowledge (about objects, products or social processes) is not interest-ing other than as a result of a limited interest in socially stabilized effects. In what is surely a necessary self-reflexive turn, relational constructionism, as I read you, problematizes the process of knowing. This makes me think of Derrida's view on the becoming of knowing-processes, attention to the structuring of structures, the simultaneous tension between the impossibility of relativism (using concepts already draws on their meanings in histories of socially stabilized plays of

significations), and the impossibility of closure (every concept relies on a repressed other continuously promising yet always postponing a ground or origin of meaning). With this openness, such a play of meanings, comes the need to attend to power. For closure, stabilization, truth, ideologies now become power-effects in the social field. These effects are always part of attempts to produce something depending on the efficiency and circulation of truth-effects. This is also expressed in poststructuralists' and relational constructionists' common use of power as 'power to produce/create' rather than power as positional asset or 'power over' others in hierarchical relationships. Again, this follows Foucault's distinction between negative (domination) and positive-productive power. The shift in focus helps us write histories of present states of domination; it helps us describe different domains of knowledge and their following production of exteriority or ground (how discursive formations operate); and it helps us study the productivity of strategies (effective formations of power-knowledge) in fields of practices. I would like you to develop this issue of power from the perspective of our earlier conversation.

POWER OVER AND POWER TO

Ok, I need to go back to my earlier comments about entitative discourses. I said that these necessarily assume subject-object relations and privilege the subjects' constructions. Central to the Subject-Object discourse are entitative assumptions about reality (ontology or what exists), what we can know about it (epistemology) and how we can build that knowledge (methodology). Knower and known are treated as if separate and separateness warrants the scientific way of knowing – relative to other ways of knowing. Knowing entrepreneurs and knowing scientists gather information about the other (subordinates, the environment, the research object . . .) and then use their knowledge to influence, re-form, change the other as object. Commentators have spoken of this as a relationship of 'power over', that is, as power of subject over object (for example, Gergen, 1995).

Many research methodologies reproduce mainstream conceptions of subject-object relations, knowledge, and methodology. Examples include conventional action research where knowing scientists reflect back their knowledge of the locals and their practices and, in so doing, also reproduce their (the scientists) discourses of science, reality, generalizable knowledge, how things usually are done elsewhere, notions of better-worse and so on. Yet these (implicit) discourses are unavailable for critical reflection. Similarly, many top-down change efforts try to impose one voice – one local reality – to get others to buy in to some shared metaphor, mission, or vision, or to 'be flexible'. Further, they often try to do so through constructing subject-object ways of relating where some manager (for example, entrepreneur) knows what is necessary and tries to influence (bargain, negotiate,

persuade, transform . . .) others to 'agree' with them (for example, Carnall, 1990; Dyer, 1984).

When considered on the basis of the present relational premises, subject-object relations and 'power over' are just possible and not necessary relationship constructions. Self and other need not be constructed (a) as binary opposites, that is, as mutually exclusive and opposed, (b) as 'impermeable' or (c) as having fixed boundaries. So, for example, inclusive, non-hierarchical ways of relating can be constructed in processes that treat multiple different relational realities as different but equal. Non-hierarchical ways of relating can construct 'power to' in the sense of power to sustain multiple interdependent local ways of 'going on' in 'different but equal' relation (Gergen, 1995; Hosking, 1995).

> As an entrepreneurship researcher I would reflect upon the possible future(s) of the concept of success, often used as a legitimizing tool vis-a-vis practitioners to get them interested in or to sponsor entrepreneurship studies. Success would be the accomplishment that one preferred world (view) dominates possible others, the effect being that those participating in the launching of a dominant view get the benefit of playing on home ground so to speak. Of course, entrepreneurship can be read both as a form of successful domination of the social field of possible actions of others (probably the preferred reading in communitarian approaches), and as the power to sustain multiple interdependent 'styles' or 'ways of doing it' so as to expand the possibilities of actions of others. The question is how entrepreneurship takes advantage of this latter style of organizing this freeing of desires to produce/create. Or, is this impossible to achieve from an economic point of view, and therefore, impossible to use for an understanding of entrepreneurial processes if this is tied to the concept of success in turn limited to an economic understanding? Reading your description of 'power to' as someone eager to apply this in entrepreneurship studies, I could see how this concept of power(-relations) provides a language for studying and theorizing entrepreneurship as a collective act, as social forms of creativity, as organizational creativity.

In my view, the concept of 'power to' seems likely to open up a number of (re)constructions. First, it opens up possibilities rather than closing them down, for example, through a problem-oriented approach, monological definitions of success (and failure), and other related entitative assumptions. Second, a community-based (local) view of rationality grounded in 'unforced agreement' and reflected in coordinated action (for example, Rorty, 1991)[69] replaces the assumption of universal rationality. Third, the moral (rather than instrumental) quality of relational processes is centred. Following Rorty, perhaps the 'best' that many can do to be 'reasonable' and 'moral' is to 'discuss any topic . . . in a way which eschews dogmatism, defensiveness, and righteous indignation' (Rorty, 1991b, p. 37).

The above seems to be an argument for opening up to multiple realities – rather than imposing one local-cultural-historical reality over others.

> This, in the context of the earlier conversation, sounds like it could be describing entrepreneurial processes. Perhaps only half of it, the opening part, leaves us to focus also on the creation of order that each new form of organization, and organizational creativity, demands. Multiplicity, I believe, is crucial for creativity and therefore crucial for the opening up of possibilities.

Relational constructionist writings and practices give great emphasis to inquiry and change-work that generates and works with multiplicity rather than suppressing or homogenizing it through the application of statistical procedures or through management drives to 'consensus'. In general terms, multiplicity can be constructed in non-hierarchical ways that recognize and support difference and that construct 'power to'. This may mean including everyone who has an involvement in some issue through participative change-work. However, the point of participation is no longer to increase the likelihood of acceptance of someone else's decision, or to increase the quality of a (consensus) solution. Rather it is a way of including and enabling multiple local realities in different but equal relation.

Last, since relational processes construct realities there is no requirement to narrate activities as either inquiry or intervention – a 'both-and' approach is enabled. So, for example, action research can be developed in more participatory ways along with related methodologies such as co-inquiry and collaborative inquiry. Similarly, change-work shifts from the language of intervention to the language of 'transformation' in order to capture the notion of change 'from within'. Attention shifts from the discourse of inquiry, for example, to care-full questioning and care-full listening as a way of 'doing' different but equal relations, and to entrepreneuring rather than entrepreneurs. I have never met an entrepreneur, have I?

Notes

1. I will argue in this chapter that the linguistic and performative turn are complementary and both are needed to conceive a prosaic approach to entrepreneurship.
2. Which has been no sinecure, as we can read in Deetz's plea (2003) to reclaim the legacy of the linguistic turn.
3. What is paralogy? Consensus is only 'a particular state of discussion, not its end' (Lyotard, 1984: 65). The end is paralogy 'a move (the importance of which is often not recognized until later) played in the pragmatics of knowledge' (p. 61). The ends are moves that seek to contribute to diversity, uncertainty and undecidability, it is dissensus or apprenticeship in resistance because invention is always born of dissensus (Bertens, 1995: 127). For a plea to cherish (more) paralogy in organization studies, see Czarniawska (2001).
4. While with a very different philosophical background. While Derrida 'departed' from de Saussure, Bakhtin rejected him, even as a point of departure (see Holquist, 2002).
5. This fragment originally appeared in: Problema soderzhaniia, materiala, I formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve [The problem of content, material, and form in verbal creative art]. See Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. xix.
6. There is little doubt that Bakhtin greatly admires the realist novel and its ability to embrace the sense of the presentness of the present in a way that other genres don't, most notably the Greek Romance, but also such autobiographical genres that he refers to as the analytic type and the energetic type (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 140–42).
7. For a more elaborated analysis of the becoming process of YalaYala, see Boutaiba, 2003.
8. Ventures and Consulting were the names of their two working areas.
9. A three-year education aimed at developing competencies in project management and entrepreneurship. The title of the candidates produced from this school is 'chaos pilots'.
10. Translated into Danish, they were oftentimes distancing themselves from what they called '1ønslavementalitet', which is probably a notion with a sharper connotation than the English wage earner.
11. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist (1984, pp. 79–80) also eloquently describe the tension between centrifugal forces and centripetal forces as a 'constant struggle between the centripetal forces that seek to close the world in a system and the centrifugal forces that battle completedness in order to keep the world open to becoming'.
12. A manner of thinking that can be found especially in the essay on the chronotope in the *Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981) essay on the Bildungsroman in *Speech Genres and other Late Essays* (Bakhtin, 1986).
13. Compare the first meeting with YalaYala and the poster on the wall stating: Speed is God and Time is the Devil.
14. And, as already mentioned, these included friends and family and, most importantly, themselves.
15. As one might notice, YalaYala was rather ambivalent towards working with consultancy in the first place. For one, they didn't want to work with the kind of consultancy jobs their anti-fixation point worked with (short-term jobs, when generally talked about). They wanted to do long-term strategic consultancy, but they didn't really have these kinds of jobs. Yet, generally speaking once again, it seemed quite clear that the whole community wanted to work more with ventures. This was an area that really seemed new and exciting.
16. How much time was actually spent on leads versus the amount of time spent on actual jobs was not clear for anybody. But some members typically estimated that it was too much time, in spite of the potential hidden in them.

17. Thus, before they actually started as a company, they had been talking about doing so for approximately half a year.
18. The ideal of public exteriority may be said to have built in an ideal of simultaneity. Hence, being open on all sides also means that others can enter into dialogue whenever, and with potential impact, in a particular process.
19. That is, the tendency to narrate every moment as if it was a threshold, highly laden with possibilities for transforming life.
20. Of which the rogue, the clown, and the fool are praised figures for their ability to subvert through a demasking that can be that of wise naivete, laughter, parody, etc.
21. When YalaYala was established as a company, everybody paid an amount of money, and the people who had their own firms brought these into the community. Thus, the ventures they had in YalaYala and that did have some money involved was actually created before YalaYala started.
22. The ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel has become renowned for exposing and questioning the taken-for-granted by directly attacking it. For instance, he has been asking students to go into shops and negotiate prices of goods where none thought any negotiation was possible. In other words, Garfinkel has got a reputation for producing counter-cultural moves.
23. Profluence is the literary word for the sense that the story is getting somewhere.
24. Hence, they had formally started out in December 1999, and the movement of a very intense focus upon selling slowly grew larger from around the time that the first employee was explicitly allocated time to work with the venture project.
25. In fact, it was a remark she didn't tell me, but a colleague of mine, Torben Jensen, who later did his investigation into United Spaces.
26. See Bakhtin, 1984, for a thorough discussion on Dostoevsky's 'invention of a literary personality' that never coincides with himself, because he is always in the process of becoming.
27. According to Bakhtin (1981, notably pp. 89–95), adventure time is a way of understanding experience that was perfected very early on in the Greek romantic novel. The typical plot of this story was organized around the meeting of hero and heroine and the sudden flare-up of passion and love between these two. The remainder of this romantic novel, the large bulk of the text that is, is about all the obstacles the hero and heroine must go through in order to be reunited. Yet, the important thing here is that no matter what happens, no matter how much time goes by, their passion and love remain absolutely the same. Therefore, adventure time is all about coincidence, waiting for that particular moment where the plane of the first moment can continue in a manner absolutely unaffected by everything in between, by anything in the middle, so to speak.
28. At the time I spoke to the CEO, he still missed a more overt support from the rest of the members, notably during the actual interactions where the potential for a dialogue that faced the internal differences was there.
29. A thorough overview of anthropology's contributions to studies of entrepreneurship can be found in Stewart (1991) and in the Introduction in Swedberg (2000).
30. For anthropological studies on entrepreneurs in Africa see, for example, Clark (1994), Hart (1975) and Lewis (1976); for Asia, see Davis (1973), Dewey (1962), Evers and Schrader (1994) and Ward (1960).
31. Although owners are free to set their own fees, the going rate in 2001 up to writing (March 2002) was 30 000 Bs. a day (15 000 Bs. on Sundays). National and religious holidays were free of charge. In a normal week in 2001, the taxi would thus bring in 195 000 Bs. for its owner (then $300), a sum that gradually declined in value with the ongoing devaluation of the currency.
32. Most Venezuelans belong to the Catholic Church. People active in the Evangelical Church are considered eccentric, but are seen as good employees because of the church's stand against the use of alcohol and because of the prominence that church-related values have in the lives of its members.
33. Ten million Bolívares was at the time equal to 16 000 dollars.

34. 28 000 000 Bs. was nearly 45 000 dollars at the time.
35. Big accidents involving considerable damage are covered by insurance (although there is a deductible portion) but smaller dents and scrapes cost less to fix and are not covered. According to most agreements the driver is responsible for the cost of fixing these smaller accidents.
36. Recovering income lost in this contract would be time-consuming and more expensive than it is worth, so drivers with *opción a compra* contracts as well as those who rent the cars know that they will not be prosecuted.
37. Owners, too, will readily divert other income – and savings – into the business when imperative, such as when insurance must be renewed or repairs carried out.
38. In the early spring of 2002, the Bolívar traded at about 750 to one dollar. By June it stood at 1200 to a dollar, and in April, 2003 at between 2300 and 2400 to a dollar in the free market (preferential dollars at 1600 to a dollar were also available to individuals and companies meeting very selective government requirements).
39. The gasoline available at the height of the strike was imported from Brazil and was leaded, resulting in expensive damage to the taxis, most of which run on unleaded gasoline. Drivers, in their eagerness to keep working, tended to fill up with whatever gasoline they could obtain.
40. I am thankful for comments on this chapter and earlier drafts from Turid Moldenæs, Hanne C. Gabrielsen, Knut H. Mikalsen, Hallvard Tjelmeland and Randi Rønning Balsvik.
41. The sami people have their own distinct language (Finish-Urgisch), their own folk music (juogiat) and craft tradition (duodji). Their pre-Christian religion was heavily inspired by shamanism, where the juogiat was performed together with a little drum (runebom). Natural phenomena (like torden: sun, wind and moon) also played a role in their religion (Hætta, 2002).
42. The kven minority has strong roots in Eastern Finnmark and was acknowledged as a national minority in 1999. The kvens were originally immigrants from Finland. They settled in Varangar in 1590 (Ottar, 2001). In Finnmark the kven eventually developed strong ties eastwards and often traded with Swedish merchants (Mellem, 2002). In the latter part of 1800 the immigration increased due to failure of the crops followed by famine and Russian rampage of their farms in Østerbotten.
43. Bente told later in the interview how her father got sick shortly before the parents divorced.
44. During that time, she got used to being alone with him, caring for him and sometimes she needed to call the hospital.
45. 'Forum Theatre is the performance of a set of scenes or vignettes by professional actors whom the audience can direct, thus altering the outcome each time the scene is played. For example, if a member of the audience asks the actor to change the attitude of his character from inattentive to attentive, the audience can immediately see the effect that this would have on the situation.' Source: http://www.forumtheatre.com/
46. In this text I use the words entrepreneur, self-employed and small-business owners etc. synonymously.
47. This is also the aim of my thesis Pettersson, 2002. This text is thus founded on some of the research findings in my dissertation.
48. In my thesis, Pettersson, 2002, the material analysed consists of around 300 media reports and 50 studies on Gnosjö.
49. These figures represent persons whose income, and income tax, stem from self-owned businesses.
50. '. . . notions of caste and minority group are not productive when applied to women. *Why* should this majority be a minority? And why is it that the members of this particular caste, unlike all other castes, are not of the same rank throughout society? . . . As Gerda Lerner put it . . . "All analogies – class, minority group, caste – approximate the position of women, but fail to define it adequately. Women are a category unto themselves: an adequate analysis of their position in society demands new conceptual tools"' (Harding, 1987, p. 19).

51. Jessie Bernard notes that economists are 'candid and forthright' about their bias, a trait not shared by sociologists. 'Sociologists have not specified that most of their paradigms also fit only that cash-nexus world' (Bernard [1973] 1998, p. 17).

52. A map of this 'male-stream' cosmology would include such eminent concepts as: Cartesian dualism, rationalism, capitalism, individualism, universalism, modernism, postmodernism, and humanism. But it also includes such unpalatable ideologies as: militarism, sexism, ableism, imperialism, reductionism, consumerism, paternalism, postcolonialism, racism, classism, primitivism, imperialism and naturism.

53. The world of science is dichotomized into 'disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than as inclusive), and which place higher value (status, prestige) on one disjunct rather than the other' (Tong, 1998, p. 246, quoting Karen J. Warren [1990]). These 'binary oppositions' (Tong, 1998, p. 199) or 'polarities' (Bernard [1973] 1998, p. 18) or 'positional superiority' (Smith, 1999, p. 58, quoting Edward Said [1978]) are painfully familiar to women as we have always been relegated to the low-status disjunct in innumerable binary opposites including: intuition/knowledge; body/mind; emotion/reason; subjective/objective; private/public; soft/hard; nature/culture; expressive/instrumental; functionalism/aesthetics; immanence/transcendence. In a win-lose dichotomous model, it is axiomatic that the 'Other' cannot/must not be granted any status.

54. 'Agency is identified with a masculine principle, the Protestant ethic, a Faustian pursuit of knowledge – as with all forces towards mastery, separation and ego enhancement (Carlson, 1972). The scientist using this approach creates his own controlled reality . . . The communal approach is much humbler. It disavows control, for control spoils the results. Its value rests precisely in the absence of controls.' (Bernard [1973] 1998, p. 11).

55. 'Weaving was a nearly global phenomenon, and quilting was practised by the Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Persians, from whom it was introduced into Europe by the Crusaders' (M'Closkey, 1996, p. 114, quoting Hedges and Wendt [1980]).

56. 'Stories were the primary medium of the African *griot*, whose task it was to memorize all important historical events for the village community and to recite history in a creative fashion' (Tobin and Dobard, 2000, p. 31).

57. Tong likens the ever-changing beauty of the kaleidoscope's 'hundreds of chips of colored rocks' to the vitality and infinite variety evident in feminist writing (Tong, 1998, pp. 279–80). While the process is contained, the patterns, created by reflection, cannot be externally controlled. The appeal of the kaleidoscope resides in the opportunity to participate in ever-changing pattern formation.

58. Kuhn struggles with the concept of 'truth' which he commingles with the concept of 'progress'. 'We may . . . have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth' (Kuhn [1962] 1996, p. 170).

59. The remarkable commonalities between a quilter and a qualitative researcher are nicely captured in the characterization of the qualitative researcher as '. . . a *bricoleur*. [who] produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation. "The solution (bricolage) is an [emergent] construction" (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991, p. 161) that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle . . . The researcher-as-*bricoleur*-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms.' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994a, pp. 2–3).

60. Kuhn was much enamoured of the descriptor 'esoteric', using it some dozen times throughout his essay.

61. 'A "sociology of the lack of knowledge" examines how and why knowledge is not produced, is obliterated, or is not incorporated into a canon . . . feminist researchers . . . have demonstrated how certain people are ignored, their words discounted, and their place in history overlooked. We have shown how certain things are not studied and other things are not even named . . . Making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors,

understanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects for men – all continue to be elements of feminist research' (Reinharz, 1992, p. 248).

62. 'Accepting Nietzsche's idea that no historical description can be complete (an aim for such completion locks the historian into the past), Foucault's genealogy focuses on the connection between history, use and power. It is not power, interest, will, rather than discourse, which is foregrounded in Foucault's genealogy. History is a history of the present insofar as it is written to disturb the self-evidence or feeling of progress which enables satisfaction with the present as the inevitable outcome of the past' (Colebrook, 1997, p. 58).

63. See Hosking and Morley, 1991 for a more extended critique of contingency models and related systems approaches.

64. But note, this does NOT mean that those who use the language of narrative or discourse are necessarily taking a relational constructionist perspective; see later discussion.

65. Perhaps not surprisingly, our definition is similar to definitions of 'discourse'. However, we do not fully embrace the wider theoretical stance of 'discursive psychology' or of discursive approaches that remain unreflexive about their own social construction; see Gergen [1994] for a discussion of their qualities and relations with relational thinking, also Steier [1991].

66. Although it is not *necessary* to be a local to carry off a competent performance, you can participate in becoming a local by being relationally responsive to the invitation (action) of another. See, for example, Catherine Bateson's [1993] narrative of 'Joint performance across cultures: improvisation in a Persian garden'.

67. So, for example, psychology (Maier, 1988), and 'science' (Carrithers, 1991; Howard, 1991) can be viewed as telling particular kinds of stories (for example, Hosking and Morley, 1991).

68. Beware, many approaches to narrative embrace 'modernist' discourses and many are best thought of as examples of 'first-order constructionism'.

69. But here I am not talking about knowledge (as is Rorty) but about inter-action. In this case 'agreement' means we can go on coordinating our actions without questioning or being questioned, that we do not have to share the same story (agree) about what we are doing (for example, Hosking and Morley, 1991).

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