SLU

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The spatial context of gender in entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This thesis aims to contextualise gender-in-entrepreneurship, which means focusing on when, how, and why entrepreneurship happens. Gender-in-entrepreneurship implies a focus on how women and men perform gender in entrepreneurship while questioning underlying masculine assumptions of entrepreneurship. By combining the two ideas, this thesis adds to our understanding of how the gender process intertwines with entrepreneurship and takes place in a spatial context.

I have performed ethnographic fieldwork (including interviews, observations and staying up to date on social media) with over 70 informants who were men and women entrepreneurs, municipal politicians, and officials, all in a small rural municipality in Sweden with about 6000 residents. The municipality is attempting to rebrand itself from industrial to entrepreneurial.

This compilation thesis is based on four papers. Together, these papers provide a range of insights into gender-in-entrepreneurship when considering a spatial perspective. Relating the four papers to the overall aim, I illuminate two points:

I demonstrate that the spatial context is intertwined with gender-in-entrepreneurship through showing how entrepreneurship in context reproduces gender, and how the gendering of spatial context shapes entrepreneurship.

I also demonstrate what the spatial context comprises, through developing the dimensions of the history of the spatial context, the distance to other spatial contexts, and the closeness within the spatial context. These dimensions are situation and place specific; they are dictated by the spatial context. Through contextualisation, researchers can see these dimensions and thus see that it is through their interactions that gender-in-entrepreneurship unfolds.

Keywords: Context, Entrepreneurship, Ethnography, Gender, Sweden

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Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling syftar till att kontextualisera genus-i-entreprenörskap vilket betyder att fokusera på när, hur och varför entreprenörskap händer. Genus-i-entreprenörskap innebär ett fokus på hur kvinnor och män gör genus i entreprenörskap och ifrågasätter underliggande antaganden om entreprenörskap. Genom att förena de här två idéerna bidrar denna avhandling till förståelsen för hur genusprocessen sammanflätas med entreprenörskap och sker i en rumslig kontext.

Jag har gjort etnografiskt fältarbete (med intervjuer, observationer och uppdateringar via sociala medier) med över 70 informanter som varit kvinnliga och manliga entreprenörer, kommunpolitiker och tjänstemän i en liten landsbygds-kommun i Sverige med omkring 6000 invånare. Kommunen arbetar för att ändra sin image från industriort till entreprenöriell.

Denna sammanläggningsavhandling baseras på fyra artiklar. Tillsammans ger de fyra artiklarna insikter kring vad vi kan lära oss om genus-i-entreprenörskap när vi överväger ett rumsligt perspektiv. När jag knyter ihop de fyra artiklarna belyser jag två punkter:

Jag påvisar att den rumsliga kontexten är sammanflätad med genus-i-entreprenörskap genom att visa hur entreprenörskap i kontext reproducerar genus och hur genus i rumslig kontext formar entreprenörskap.

Jag påvisar också vad den rumsliga kontexten innehåller genom att utveckla dimensionerna: den rumsliga kontextens historia, avståndet till andra rumsliga kontexter och närheten i den rumsliga kontexten. Dimensionerna är situation- och platsspecifika; de dikteras av den rumsliga kontexten. Genom kontextualisering kan forskare se dimensionerna och därmed se att det är genom deras interaktion som genus-i-entreprenörskap utvecklas.

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Preface

> We can build this thing together
> Standing strong forever
> Nothing's gonna stop us now[1]

We can build this thing together. While the text you are about to read stands with my sole name on it, it is the result of the involvement of many people. Through my PhD journey, I have been involved in a progressive, challenging and evolving research climate. Paraphrasing my dear colleague Hanna: 'we want to save the world'. It is a wonderful thing to be around this kind of support and vision.

Moreover, the text consists of 6 years of hard work and fika breaks. Standing strong forever. During this time, I produced massive amounts of empirical material, a newborn feminist (I cannot imagine something else) and four academic texts, which form the basis of my PhD. I had a number of existential crises, and not to mention, I built a house and moved numerous times.

One thing that came out of my PhD journey was this text. I hope you enjoy reading this piece because I worked so hard to get it to this form. Remember that the journey is not as neat as the final product and we do the best we can. Nothing's gonna stop us now.

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[1] Warren, D. & Hammond, A. (1987). Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now. Grunt Records.

Dedication

Till Stina,

generationen som formade mig och generationen som tar över efter mig.

Contents

List of publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

I. Roos, A.* (2017). A Multiplicity of Contexts: Gender and Locality in a Contextualized View of Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*, 13 (4), pp. 10–28.

II. Roos, A.* (2019). Embeddedness in Context: Understanding gender in a female entrepreneurship network. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 31 (3-4), pp. 279-292.

III. Roos, A.* & Gaddefors, J. (manuscript). In the wake of the ironworks – Entrepreneurship and the spatial process of emancipation from oppressive gender structures

IV. Roos, A.* & Pettersson, K. (manuscript). "We need an old man" – Forging a Masculine Ideal Entrepreneur in a Rural Post-Industrial Community.

Papers I-II are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.

* Corresponding author

The contribution of Annie Roos to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

   I. I am the sole author

  II. I am the sole author

 III. This paper is based on a co-authorship where I am the lead author. My contribution was that I led the process, collected a majority of the material and developed the idea. After I wrote the initial draft, my co-author and I shaped the manuscript together.

 IV. This paper is based on a co-authorship where I am the lead author. My contribution was that I collected the material, developed the idea, and did the analysis. After I wrote the initial draft, my co-author and I shaped the manuscript together.

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1. Introduction

In this thesis, I explore how entrepreneurship emerged in a small Swedish rural municipality, where gender was reproduced. The municipality will be called Oakville and is about 1,000 m^2 in area, has around 6,000 residents, and is located 50 km from the nearest urban centre.

In the project underlying this thesis, I first followed a group of women entrepreneurs (papers I and II); later I expanded my fieldwork to include both women and men entrepreneurs (papers III and IV). In addition, people serving a number of functions in the municipality, including politicians and officials, were included. Each of these papers have different perspectives on entrepreneurship, gender and context.

Based on these empirical studies of Oakville, I will contextualise gender-in-entrepreneurship. Departing from gender-in-entrepreneurship implies that gender is seen as socially reproduced and the research focus is on challenging gendered assumptions. Reproducing gender implies that gender can be reinforced and challenged, either intentionally or unintentionally. It is around this process that this thesis takes stock. While research highlights the need for researching structures rather than women entrepreneurs (Ahl 2002), research on structures is scarce in comparison to the vast number of studies on women entrepreneurs (Jennings & Brush 2013). As such, this thesis focus on how gender is reproduced in relation to entrepreneurship and context. I offer a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship, adding depth and detail to show how gender and entrepreneurship are intertwined processes taking place in a particular context (Bruni et al. 2004; Welter 2020). That context *is* important for gender-in-entrepreneurship is well recognised (cf. Ahl 2006; Welter 2011, 2020). By taking a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship, this thesis reveals *where* gendered changes takes place, in and through the entrepreneurship process. The thesis focuses in particular

on the spatial context — in a Swedish rural municipality — to better understand gender-in-entrepreneurship.

In the next section, entrepreneurship as a context-dependent process is introduced. Then, gender-in-entrepreneurship will be introduced, before further explaining the aim of the thesis, which is contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship.

1.1   Contextualising entrepreneurship

The concept of context becomes valuable when attempting to understand how entrepreneurship emerges in various places. It is the specifics of context that explain how an entrepreneurship process unfolds (Zahra 2007; Welter 2011). Only by including context can researchers acknowledge the richness of the entrepreneurship process.

Approaching entrepreneurship as a process means focusing on a number of involved actors (Steyaert 2007), in contrast to the lone entrepreneur often heard about in conventional research on entrepreneurs (cf. Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson 2007). A process perspective is also sensitive to the possibility for multiple values created in the process (cf. Calás et al. 2009). Hence, using a process perspective changes the focus in entrepreneurship research (cf. Steyaert 2007), allowing researchers to view the actors and the created values. Researchers also need to consider context to find explanations of what is happening.

Recently, there is what may be regarded as a contextual turn in entrepreneurship research (Welter 2011; Korsgaard et al. 2015a; b; McKeever et al. 2015). Particularly, researchers have argued that the entrepreneurship process cannot be understood as an isolated event; it is intertwined with context (Johannisson 1990; Jack & Anderson 2002; Mair & Martí 2006). A focus on context in entrepreneurship research means paying attention to social practices (Parkinson et al. 2016), discourses (Berglund et al. 2016) and the intertwining of internal and external processes (Spedale & Watson 2014).

Welter (2011) talks of four different dimensions of context: business, social, institutional, and spatial. The business dimension of entrepreneurship has been exhaustively covered in the body of research and focuses on the firm and market aspects of entrepreneurship. The social dimension (relationships), institutional dimension (rules and norms) and spatial

dimension (the geographic place) are intertwined in the spatial context (Welter 2011). Gaddefors and Anderson (2017) argued that spatial context is where entrepreneurship is embodied, since context is always enacted and experienced in a certain place.

Anderson (2008:395) voiced this connectedness of entrepreneurship and spatial context when she suggested that the gendering of entrepreneurship occurs "through everyday practice rooted in space and place." Thus, in a contextualised view, gender is closely connected to the spatial context. Sometimes researchers highlight this connectedness through seeing gender as a specific dimension of context, and sometimes as intertwined with dimensions (Welter 2020). With this connectedness in mind, I will now turn to the gender and entrepreneurship research debate, leading to the notion of gender-in-entrepreneurship.

1.2 Gender-in-entrepreneurship

In this thesis, gender is seen from a social constructionist perspective. From this perspective, gender is about the power relations that dictate what is perceived as proper for women and men to do (Connell 1995; Risman 2004; Deutsch 2007). In this respect, gender is not about men and women as variables (what women and men 'are') but rather about the perceived norms, behaviours and perceptions of femininity and masculinity (Calás et al. 2007). Gender can then be analysed as a structure or a discourse. In applying these views on gender, gender becomes the starting point for research in gender-in-entrepreneurship (Ahl 2006).

Many have noted that much of the existing research on gender and entrepreneurship sees gender simply as an explanation of the inequalities between women and men experienced in entrepreneurship (as critically highlighted by for example Mirchandani 1999; Ahl 2006; Ahl & Nelson 2010; Henry et al. 2015; Marlow & Martinez Dy 2018). In these studies, women entrepreneurs are often portrayed as having shortcomings or experiencing problems, which explains why women are not as successful in entrepreneurship as men (Ahl 2006). Women involved in entrepreneurship are labelled *women entrepreneurs*, implying that, somehow, they are something different from 'normal' (male) entrepreneurs, creating a separate group for isolated study.

For more than twenty years, researchers have called for gender and entrepreneurship research to move beyond 'women entrepreneurs' (Mirchandani 1999), and to step away from a singular focus on women's experiences and instead challenge the underlying assumptions and perceptions that shape entrepreneurship (Mirchandani 1999; Ahl 2006; Hughes et al. 2012; Hamilton 2013; Lewis 2014). Put another way, there is a perceived need to move from gender-*and*-entrepreneurship to gender-*in*-entrepreneurship.

While gender-and-entrepreneurship focuses on women entrepreneurs and gender as variables, gender-in-entrepreneurship shifts focuses to how women and men perform gender in the process of entrepreneurship, and how gender is constructed through entrepreneurial stories found in places like media and research (Ahl 2006). Where gender-and-entrepreneurship takes concepts of women, men, and entrepreneurship as given, the gender-*in*-entrepreneurship approach questions the underlying gendered assumptions of entrepreneurship (Verduijn & Essers 2013).

As research on gender-in-entrepreneurship moves beyond the limited focus on solely counting women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurship, or women's experiences, the need to study male entrepreneurs and their relationship to gender becomes apparent. Even though men have been taken for granted in research on entrepreneurship, they have largely been absent in research about gender and entrepreneurship (Giazitzoglu & Down 2017). To uncover the underlying assumptions and perceptions of gender-in-entrepreneurship, then accounts from men entrepreneurs become as valuable as those of women entrepreneurs. There is need not only to study women's gendered identity work in navigating the entrepreneurship discourse (cf. Aggestam & Wigren-Kristoferson 2017; Webster 2017), but also the gendered identity work by men entrepreneurs (cf. Smith 2010; Giazitzoglu & Down 2017). Furthermore, there is need to understand how these gendered identities are negotiated between women and men entrepreneurs (cf. Bruni & Perrotta 2014; Vershinina & Rodgers 2020) and within the supporting — or hindering — environment, both in terms of resources (cf. Malmström et al. 2017) and policy (cf. Ahl & Nelson 2014; Berglund et al. 2018). By including the experiences of both women and men, research can explore how gender is reproduced with entrepreneurship

To summarize, gender-in-entrepreneurship research is not about seeing women as a deficiency from the masculine norms in entrepreneurship

research (Marlow & Swail 2014). Instead, the gender-in-entrepreneurship approach challenges the very notion of the assumptions of what entrepreneurship is. These assumptions are for example that entrepreneurship is a male activity or process which implies masculine abilities such as a wiliness to take risks (Smith 2010), being the heroic self-made man (Ahl 2006) and being financially oriented (Jernberg et al. 2020). These assumptions are reproduced, either challenged or reinforced, by people, media and research. It is within this setting, together with the contextual debate, the aim of this thesis is formulated.

1.3   Contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship

The aim of this thesis is to develop understanding of a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship, which has been inspired by the contextual turn in entrepreneurship research, the perspective of gender-in-entrepreneurship, and the empirical example of events in Oakville.

The argument for developing a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship lies in the recognition that the connection and interaction between gender and entrepreneurship can only take place in a spatial context (Weber 2007; Heldt Cassel & Pettersson 2015; Tillmar 2016; Harrison et al. 2020). By aiming at contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship, I seek to understand not only how the gender process in context shapes entrepreneurship (cf. Anderson 2008), but also how entrepreneurship in a context shapes gender (cf. Hanson 2009; Welter 2020).

With this contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship, I am answering calls to study entrepreneurship from a spatial perspective (Trettin & Welter 2011), here realized through papers I-IV (see Table 1). Each paper brings its own unique contribution to the fulfilment of the aim of this thesis, which will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Table 1. Aims and research questions in papers I-IV.

	Aim of paper	Research question
I	To examine the multiplicity of contexts in entrepreneurship processes	How does an entrepreneurial process enhance different changes in contexts?
II	To contribute to understanding the processes of gendering entrepreneurship	How does a female entrepreneurship network reinforce and challenge gender structures?
III	To investigate the spatial aspects of how entrepreneurship is involved in empowerment and emancipation	How can entrepreneurship be linked to empowerment as a way to emancipate people?
IV	To investigate the gendered ideas and ideals embodied in an imagined ideal entrepreneur	What gendered constructions are made about an ideal Entrepreneur in a rural post-industrial community that is trying to rebrand itself through garden tourism?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The next section of this chapter will introduce the rural municipality that comprises the empirical material of this thesis. Chapter 2 discusses entrepreneurship, gender, and context, and presents the literature used in the four papers. Next, chapter 3 presents the methodological choices, with a particular focus on my use of ethnography and its implications. Chapter 4 summarises the four individual papers, and finally chapter 5 answers the aim, explains the contributions and implications of my work, and presents suggestions for future research.

1.5 Introducing Oakville

I collected my empirical material between 2014 and 2020 in Oakville, a small, rural municipality in mid-Sweden. A municipality is a Swedish administrative division of a geographical area. Oakville is a pseudonym (anonymity will be further discussed in section 3.2.3).

Oakville has around 6,000 residents and 400 businesses, and it is located about 30 minutes from the regional capital. The research project builds on earlier studies of the municipality and a garden that was established there around the year 2000 (see Gaddefors & Cronsell 2009; Berglund et al. 2016;

Gaddefors & Anderson 2017). Previous research, led by my supervisor, focused on entrepreneurship as a change process, problematizing the interplay between individuals and context, but not with a gender perspective.

In this chapter, I will introduce you to my understanding of this municipality. First, I will disclose my understanding of the municipality before I began this work. Next, I will review the historically important phases the municipality has gone through, and what the municipality is like today. Lastly, I will discuss the current businesses in the municipality.

1.5.1　My relation to Oakville

Wigren (2007) suggests that a researcher should give a brief description of their background, with the aim of making the reader aware of the researcher's perspective when they perform an ethnographic study. With that advice in mind, I disclose the following. When starting my PhD-studies I had just turned 24 and was fresh out of five years of university studies. I did both my bachelor and masters at SLU, and I liked the familiar environment a continued journey at SLU provided.

My main supervisor introduced me to Oakville, and through him, I was able to initiate municipality contacts. Before getting involved in Oakville, I knew that there was a famous garden in the municipality as a friend went there for a study visit during university. When Googling the municipality, I found a business that renovated used furniture. They painted and fixed old rustic sofas and linen closets, and sold them as "shabby chic".

My shallow pre-understanding of Oakville helped me to see the municipality with rather fresh eyes. I did however have an understanding of gender and entrepreneurship in Sweden from both my bachelor and masters theses, which focused on these subjects (see Jonsson & Roos 2012; Roos 2014). Furthermore, I grew up in Sweden, and so I have an understanding of the Swedish context. The particular context of the municipality was, however, something that I discovered only through the fieldwork. The importance of the history of the place (which we will come to in a moment) was something that I had a hard time wrapping my head around. I was born and raised in a small community in southern Sweden, and I knew little of the historical legacy of large businesses taking care of people. The informants in the municipality had to explain this history and its impacts to me, and I could at times be naïve in my questions.

1.5.2 The history of Oakville

There have been three distinct historical phases in the municipality: the time of the ironworks, the time of the forest and plastic industries, and the time after their closing. The first two phases are characterised by different large businesses taking care of their employees (and therefore, by extension, taking care of the town, where the employees lived). Many people in the municipality today look back at these larger businesses with sentimentality, because they 'fixed everything'. Therefore, there is a longing for a new larger business to come back to Oakville that can, in a way, 'fix all the problems' as the ironworks and plastic and forest industries did previously.

In the first phase, the municipality was dependent on the ironworks for jobs and community development and was an industrial community dominated by one large business. Even though the ironworks closed in 1930, the legacy of the ironworks is still present. For example, the name of the ironworks is found in numerous places in Oakville.

After the ironworks closed down, the second phase for the municipality began. The ironworks estate was taken over by a forestry industry business, which used it as one of their headquarters. In the mid-twentieth century, a plastic industry, producing snowmobiles and boats, was established and successfully developed in Oakville. The municipality leaned on these few businesses for jobs and security.

Nevertheless, later in the last century, young people began emigrating and investments drained. The third phase began. The businesses in the plastic industry either closed down or moved jobs internationally. A multinational business acquired the forest industry business, and it closed its headquarters.

The grand estate of the ironworks was left with numerous old industrial buildings, some land, and an impressive, but timeworn, manor. At the start of the 21th century, the transformation process of the ironworks into a tourist attraction, a garden, began.

1.5.3 Oakville today

Instead of being characterised by one or two large businesses, the municipality is nowadays characterised by small businesses and a garden, which is the tourist attraction at the ironworks. While there is a longing for a big business to come back to the municipality, there is also a focus on entrepreneurs and small businesses. This focus is for example visible in a newly established collaboration between the municipal politicians, officials,

and representatives of the local business groups to foster a more 'business-friendly climate' in Oakville. They discuss for example the problems of local shops closing down and how the municipality lacks younger people who could take over businesses. (Paper IV has a more thorough discussion of the perceived problems and thought of solutions within Oakville.)

The population of Oakville has been stable for a few years. While the number of deaths is at the moment equal to the number of births, there has been a demographic shift, with the municipality's average age being 46 (Statistics Sweden 2019). Young adults are leaving for university and job opportunities in other towns, while the immigration of asylum seekers, including families and lone younger men, is keeping the numbers level.

1.5.4 Businesses in Oakville

In 2017, the municipality had about 400 businesses (Statistics Sweden 2018). Almost 30% of business owners were women (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth 2019).

The county where Oakville is situated is characterised by many farming, forestry and fishing businesses, and the construction and carpentry sectors have the highest number of businesses (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth 2019). Several sectors traditionally thought of as 'male' are well-represented in this county. In the sectors education, health and social care, and personal and cultural services, women entrepreneurs outnumber male entrepreneurs.

Ten percent of working-age residents are business owners, and 97% of these are small businesses with fewer than 50 employees (Företagarna 2018), equivalent to the average of the municipality of Stockholm (Företagarna 2018), the average in Sweden (Carlgren 2019a), and higher than average in the county (Carlgren 2019b). The private business with the most employees employs around 75 people (Carlgren 2019a). Small businesses comprise 34% of the tax revenue and account for 46% of all the job opportunities in the municipality (Företagarna 2018). Still, the municipality has few new businesses compared to the average municipality in Sweden (Carlgren 2019a) and considerably fewer than the county (Carlgren 2019b).

In a business ranking of the 290 municipalities in Sweden, Oakville is in the lower 40% (The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise 2020), however it has climbed almost 50 places in the ranking since 2019. The business ranking takes into account, for example, things like the number of new businesses in

the municipality, tax-level, competition on bids with the public businesses, and the attitudes of different actors towards businesses. Oakville is ranked higher than the surrounding municipalities in the county, and Oakville holds the highest placement over the past ten years. Nonetheless, municipal politicians and officials view it as problematic that the municipality scores so low in this ranking. It is especially seen as a problem that Oakville has, overall, dropped in the ranking from being among the top municipalities ten years ago.

2. My literature

In this chapter, I discuss how entrepreneurship, gender, and context both differ and are alike in my four papers, and I review the literature cited in the papers.

2.1 Entrepreneurship, gender and context

Each paper brings its own unique perspective on entrepreneurship, gender, and context. How the concepts are presented in the papers varies as my understandings of entrepreneurship, gender, and context changed and developed throughout this thesis work. Nonetheless, the understanding presented in paper IV is not more "true" than the understanding in paper I — it is simply a different perspective on the research. I will now bring forward these nuances and discuss how these concepts are used.

2.1.1 About entrepreneurship

In this thesis, entrepreneurship is viewed as more than an individual initiating and running a successful business. Rather than seeing entrepreneurship as merely an economic endeavour that could potentially have other outcomes, the approach taken is more elaborated. Entrepreneurship is a change process that always has social implications (Calás et al. 2009; Berglund et al. 2016). These social implications are not always beneficial for society, but nonetheless they are outcomes of the process (cf. Calás et al. 2009). Rather than starting a business, entrepreneurship implies mobilising locals (Vestrum 2014), sustaining community (Weber 2007), and/or building a collective identity (Hanson & Blake 2009).

Research on entrepreneurship has for a long time focused on individual entrepreneurs, their entrepreneurial traits, and their roles in starting up new

(successful) businesses (Bygrave & Hofer 1991; Bhave 1994; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson 2007; Brush et al. 2009). In contrast, viewing entrepreneurship as a process implies a focus on the relational aspects between actors rather than on what is going on in an individual's mind (Steyaert 2007).

Undoubtedly, these focused individuals have for the most part been men, and thus a masculine essence of entrepreneurship have emerged and been manifested (Ogbor 2000). Indeed, entrepreneurship is, because of its manifested masculine essence, considered to be a masculine discursive construct (Ahl 2006). Seeing entrepreneurship as a process is to open up for the possibility to discuss these discursive constructions (Steyaert 2007).

2.1.2   About gender

In this thesis, I analyse gender through structures and discourses. Using these two different perspectives means that I understand gender in entrepreneurship both through how people relate to gender structures and how gender structures are expressed through discourses, implying two different views of the role of gender, either as an external structure that is stable over time and implies additional fixed categories, or as discourses made up of peoples' collective actions (Young 1994).

When I analyse structures, in paper I-III, I focus on how people react to and are affected by gender, how they reproduce gender. Within the power relations of gender structures, actions are seen as reproducing, as in challenging and reinforcing, social systems (Risman 2004; Deutsch 2007). Gender structures imply that gender is embedded within our institutions and actions (Martin 2003). So while it is us (people) doing gender, gender springs from social structures (West & Zimmerman 1987).

In contrast, in paper IV, gender discourses are the enactment of the structures. A discourse dictates what is considered 'good' through authorising and legitimising certain claims, beliefs and practices within a social system (Connell 1995). Gender is not only viewed as the representation of men and women (Calás et al. 2007). Instead, analytical categories, such as entrepreneurship or woman and man, are to be seen as subjective concepts that are produced through language, history, culture and politics (Calás et al. 2007).

These two ways of using gender are both found in research on gender-in-entrepreneurship. In this research, there is a focus on questioning

assumptions, performing gender, and using accounts from both women and men. The focus on questioning gendered assumptions in entrepreneurship comes from the notion that entrepreneurship is intrinsically a masculine construct, built by male researchers who researched men entrepreneurs (cf. Ahl 2006). As such, the idea of 'entrepreneur' implies (among other things) the construct of the heroic self-made man, the risk-taker and the conqueror. The focus on performing gender in entrepreneurship comes from the observation that actors like media and researchers are reproducing these constructs (cf. Pettersson 2004; Ahl 2006). Performing gender implies seeing gender as a process rather than something naturally attached to humans. Because both men and women are involved in this reproducing process, there has been a call for gender-in-entrepreneurship to include empirical accounts from both women and men (cf. Mirchandani 1999). Historically (and also at the present time), women entrepreneurs have been researched in relation to gender, while men entrepreneurs have been left out of this debate and seen as the norm (cf. Marlow & Martinez Dy 2018).

The gender process described above is thus seen as intertwined with the entrepreneurship process. I now turn to the third process in focus in this thesis – context.

2.1.3   About context

Context plays a crucial role in how the entrepreneurship process emerges (Welter 2011; Gaddefors & Anderson 2017). Focusing on context means taking into account when, where and under what structural conditions the entrepreneurship process emerges (Welter 2011). Context either enables or restrains the entrepreneurship process through, for example, specific institutional rules, or the social expectations about who can be involved in the process. The business dimension of context is the most well-researched dimension, as it focuses on industry and market aspects (Welter 2011). I turn to the other three dimensions — the social, institutional, and spatial dimension — to enhance understanding of how the entrepreneurship process emerges.

In the first paper, I focus on the institutional (gender) and spatial (locality) dimensions of context. The institutional dimension involves rules and norms surrounding entrepreneurship. An example of this is how entrepreneurship as gendered empowerment and emancipation unfolds rather alike in both Saudi Arabia and Sweden, even though at first glance, the institutions in

these countries are very different (Alkhaled & Berglund 2018). Moreover, the spatial dimension focuses on where entrepreneurship take place, and it implies a particular geographical environment. An example of this is how the place endows resources and offers entrepreneurship the link to the world outside (Müller & Korsgaard 2018).

Gender is in this alternative singled out from the other dimensions and viewed as a particular dimension. Focus is on how dimensions interplay (Welter 2020). This perspective is common when focusing on how context either constrain or enable entrepreneurship. Seeing gender as a dimension of context serves well in the first paper as it focus on showing how gender and locality are intertwined in the entrepreneurship process.

An alternative is to see gender within the dimensions and focus on how contexts are gendered (Welter 2020). In three of my papers, gender is part of the social, institutional, and spatial dimensions of context. In these papers, I look at the spatial context as it is where the social, institutional and spatial dimensions are intertwined (Welter 2011). The institutional and spatial dimensions are laid out above. The social dimension implies focus on networks, households and the family aspects of entrepreneurship. An example of this is when a family (rather than an entrepreneurial front-figure) develops entrepreneurship (Astner 2020).

Gender is through this alternative seen as intertwined with the social, institutional and spatial dimensions, created through the relationships, and sustained with a particular localness. Thus in papers II-IV, the spatial context is seen as gendered.

2.2   Literature used in papers I-IV

Complementing the discussion on entrepreneurship, gender and context, I use different literature in the four papers: I) space and place, II) embeddedness, III) empowerment and emancipation, and IV) masculine ideals and ideas. The literature in the four papers build on each other. The place aspect in paper I is further focused on in paper II, where embeddedness is seen as one mechanism to strengthen place. Empowerment and emancipation are established in paper II as a way to think about how place can be strengthened. In paper III, they are further developed through a focus on the role of entrepreneurship in empowerment and emancipation. Paper IV

turns to how an entrepreneur is produced. As such, the literature show four different ways of thinking about contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship.

2.2.1 Paper I – Space and place

In paper I, the literature concerns the relationship between space and place. In short, while space is a fairly economic view of a community, the perspective of place implies more of a social investigation.

Space can been viewed as the capacity for profit that a community has (Johnstone & Lionais 2004), and the system of material objects and relations (Cresswell 2014). Geographical coordinates demarcate an area and provide an inventory of material resources such as minerals and soils, and even map demographics and the communication capacities of the material sides of place. Strengthening the space of a community lies in, for example, supporting more businesses and residents, which in turn will contribute to the economic development of the community.

In contrast, applying the concept of place means looking beyond the production and consumption values of a community and instead emphasising social and cultural aspects (Johnstone & Lionais 2004). Place is seen as the capacity for producing meaning in, and of, the community. Or, as Tuan (1977:5) puts it, "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value." Anderson (2000) argues that place gives meaning and identity to people. So, focusing on strengthening the place of community means, for example, supporting relationships, building trust, and, if needed, changing norms.

2.2.2 Paper II – Embeddedness

Embeddedness conceptualises how place is strengthened. In essence, embeddedness is a process of anchoring within a particular context. The concept is a way to understand the mutual relationship as a process between two entities (Aldrich & Cliff 2003). It can be about how people (Jack & Anderson 2002), businesses (Vestrum 2014), and practices (Welter & Smallbone 2010) become rooted within a community.

Embeddedness highlights the mutual relationship between entrepreneurship and society as social constraint and resource enabler (Jack & Anderson 2002). In turn, this relationship implies that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs engage with community beyond merely the economic business setting (McKeever et al. 2015).

2.2.3   Paper III – Empowerment and emancipation

In paper III, I chose to explore empowerment and emancipation to further understand the gender structures laid out in paper I and II. While the concepts overlap, the ideal types of empowerment and emancipation are different in their focus on what to change. Empowerment focuses on individual change and development, while emancipation implies societal change (Inglis 1997; Al-Dajani et al. 2015; Alkhaled & Berglund 2018).

Empowerment focuses on individual action and agency developed through entrepreneurship (Gill & Ganesh 2007; Datta & Gailey 2012). It involves practices within existing structures, and the goal is to improve agency (Gandz & Bird 1996).

Emancipation means that entrepreneurship needs to be about changing the structures (Rindova et al. 2009; Jennings et al. 2016). The collective actions and the collective freedom is vital for reaching emancipation. Emancipation is the practice of liberating the collective from the structure, and of the collective gaining freedom to agency (Goss et al. 2011; Verduijn et al. 2014)

2.2.4   Paper IV – Masculine ideals and ideas

Paper IV looks at masculine norms in entrepreneurship by focusing on the construction of entrepreneurship as seen through the construction of an ideal male entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is historically linked to men (Ogbor 2000) and therefore, the idea that entrepreneurship is something masculine is often seen as "given" (Marlow 2014). The masculine entrepreneurship discourse is seen to exclude the feminine and women (Pettersson 2004; Hamilton 2013; Jernberg et al. 2020).

The male entrepreneur and its attributes holds a central place within the entrepreneurship discourse (Ahl 2004, 2006; Berglund & Johansson 2007). The ideal masculine entrepreneur carries attributes such as not being timid or shy (Meyer et al. 2017), being rational, power-seeking, competitive, and controlling (Ahl 2006; Berglund & Johansson 2007), risk-taking, having a player mentality, and applauding dominance (Smith 2010). Overall, the ideal masculine entrepreneur is considered strong rather than weak and active rather than passive (Ahl 2004).

Each paper has its perspective on contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship. Focusing on the spatial context means that the actual site for the

research is crucial. Oakville is a particular site with a particular and unique spatial context. In the next chapter, I will lay out how I studied this particular spatial context.

3. Methodological choices

I have used a social constructionist perspective by conducting ethnographic fieldwork that has been analysed through qualitative analysis techniques. Something to carry with you throughout this chapter is the method employed in the four different papers, as shown in Table 2. In the following sections, I dig deeper into the methodological practicalities and choices made, starting with the fieldwork and ending with the analyses. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss research quality.

Table 2. An overview of the papers in relation to methodological choices.

	I	II	III	IV
Approach	Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative
Fieldwork	Ethnographic	Ethnographic	Ethnographic	Ethnographic
Empirics from the fieldwork	A female entrepreneurship group	A female entrepreneurship group	Business owners, municipal politicians and officials	Business owners, municipal politicians and officials
Organized with	NVivo	NVivo	NVivo	NVivo
Analysis technique	Constant comparative analysis	Narrative analysis	Temporal bracketing analysis	Thematic content analysis

3.1 The reasoning behind the methodology

With the aim of contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship, I choose to do ethnographic fieldwork. This thesis is built upon a social constructionist perspective (Morgan & Smircich 1980), which builds on viewing entrepreneurship (Lindgren & Packendorff 2009), gender (Calás & Smircich

1996), and context (Welter 2020) as happening in social interactions. Concepts, like entrepreneurship and gender, exist between people and in relation to other concepts (Morgan & Smircich 1980). Departing from a social constructionist perspective, I use a qualitative approach with ethnographic fieldwork.

3.1.1 A qualitative approach to research

Focusing on contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship implies understanding how the concepts context, gender, and entrepreneurship are constructed. Since qualitative research focuses on meanings of a phenomenon (Morgan & Smircich 1980), these ideas fit well with the aim of the thesis.

Gender researchers do not unambiguously prioritise a specific research method over others, but have historically relied on and valued the qualitative approach (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002; Doucet & Mauthner 2008). The argument is that qualitative approaches capture the complexity of people's experiences (or women's experiences, in the arguments of Doucet & Mauthner 2008).

3.1.2 Ethnographic fieldwork

Gender is a complex phenomenon, better experienced than verbally described (Martin 2003), which fits the advantages of ethnographic fieldwork well. Ethnographic fieldwork focuses on understanding culture through the individual and the collective (Brannen 1996). It involves different ways of collecting empirical material such as interviews (Spradley 1979), observations (McDonald 2005), and actively participating in social media (Hine 2017). Ethnography holds a portion of the researcher immersed in the field and captures the everydayness of people (Van Burg et al. 2020).

The ethnographic fieldwork is further explained in the following section, through looking at a particular event I took part in, a barbeque.

3.2 Understanding ethnography

In this section, I will depart from an ethnographic event when trying to understand the essence of ethnography and ethnographic fieldwork. I will also discuss the issues of 'going native', anonymity, and who is represented in the ethnography.

3.2.1 The barbeque as a way to understand ethnography

The female entrepreneurship group I followed arranged a barbecue at the beginning of the summer of 2016 with other female entrepreneurship groups in the region. As part of my ethnographic fieldwork, I tagged along. Ethnography involves a researcher's participation in the everyday activities of a study object (Johnstone 2007). In particular, "an ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context" (Tedlock 2000:455). This specific event, the barbeque, is an example of such an attempt.

On the day of the barbeque, I met six of the entrepreneurs in the group at the train station and we all took the train for about one and a half hours to another town. We all sat together, as this train had neat groupings of seats where six people can sit opposite each other. The conversation between the six of us began when we left the station and lasted until we got off the train. At the barbeque, we mingled and ate dinner. Someone who organised the event had prepared groups where the women were to present themselves to each other and reflect on their business. In the late evening, we took the train back and I got into my car and drove home.

On my car ride home, and the day after, I tried to collect my thoughts around this experience and made the following deliberations. These deliberations say something about ethnography, not solely about the aim of the thesis. The four deliberations are as follows:

Being social is important for building trust. Through socialising, I created trust between the entrepreneurs and me as a researcher. Through understanding their behaviour, sharing their lives and simply interacting with them, trust is created (Johnstone 2007). On the train, I did not have my notepad out, not on the way there or the way back. Instead, I tried to be social and make the women comfortable. The conversations were 'high and low' and we touched on subjects such as family, work, and issues in the municipality. There was a lot of spontaneity and nuance in the conversation between us. I believe socialising helped me in future ethnographic fieldwork, such as attaining and carrying out interviews. The trust enabled me to follow the people for a longer period of time, thus conducting a longitudinal study (Johnstone 2007).

There is a researcher-informant relationship. Ethnographic fieldwork has the advantage of the researcher being present in the lives of the people studied (Van Maanen 1988). These recurring meetings meant I could trace

how my presence affected the people I studied. The same week as the barbeque, I had an interview with one of the women entrepreneurs who was on the train. In that interview, she told me, rather in passing, about how one of the businesses she was involved in had booked fifteen weddings the coming season, in comparison to zero the previous season. In the interview, I stopped her and told her how impressed I was by this. After this, we spent some time discussing how it had come about.

On the train to the barbeque, she told the others the news, not at all in passing but with pride in her voice. So, what I emphasised in our interview became important for her to share with others. Hence, my actions affected how informants behaved the next time I met them. I-the-researcher became part of this social world the informants were creating (Alvesson 2003).

Moreover, another dynamic in our relationship involves them having me tagging along. During this event 'my' entrepreneurs had to introduce me to others, multiple times. They always did this gladly and said with pride in their voices that I was doing research on them and the municipality. They told the others that I was to be considered a 'fly on the wall' following them around (I will elaborate on this peculiar thought later on when discussing observations). I then told a couple of sentences about my project before we continued our pre-set roles of them having a discussion while I observed and took notes.

Always wear the 'research glasses'. First-hand interactions with everyday lives become the basis for a researcher's understanding of the study objects beliefs, motivations, and behaviours (Tedlock 2000). For this reason, I tried to always be alert and open to what I could see and hear. Ethnography is an unstructured fieldwork involving situations, lived experiences and meanings rather than observations and reports (Johnstone 2007). Although the barbeque was an informal social event, it was important, albeit sometimes very difficult, to wear the glasses and be a researcher. I felt that my brain needed to go full speed to be able to observe what was said and what happened around me.

This was not an interview situation where I had the informant focusing on my questions or on me. Nor did we have a recorder between us. Instead, I had to be more subtle and balance this new environment with new people not used to having a researcher around, while still trying to write down observations and quotes. It was much easier when the presentations started at the barbeque. The women presented their businesses in smaller groups and

I joined one. Then we all focused on the same thing and I could have my notepad out, observing and taking notes more freely.

No information is insufficient. It is thus better to write more notes than less (McDonald 2005). During this event, I wrote eight pages in my A5 notebook. However, during the presentations, as I knew 'my' entrepreneurs before the barbeque, I just made a note about whether they said something new about themselves instead of trying to remember the full story they shared. Afterwards, I could sift through and further value information back at the office. The sifting back at the office is also a way to not merely answer questions, but to pose new questions for further investigate in the field (Johnstone 2007).

I hope this story of the barbeque provides an insight into ethnography as a vast research approach of different styles, fieldworks and assumptions (Tedlock 2000). Table 2 above shows how I used ethnographic fieldwork in all four papers.

Before going into detail of the practicalities of the ethnographic fieldwork, I will further discuss three aspects of ethnography: the question of how native to go, the question of anonymity, and the question of what the ethnography represents.

3.2.2   Nativity and naiveté in ethnographic fieldwork

For ethnographic researchers, there is always the question of how native to go. Historically, doing ethnographic fieldwork meant to 'go native' and thus immerse yourself in the culture and the place that was being researched (Tedlock 2000). However, this idea was scrutinized, as researchers are then supposed to be able to emotionally detach themselves and become pure observers, at the same time as they are to be engaged 'normal' residents within the culture. Overall, an impossible task. A middle way was posed by for example Johnstone (2007), where the researcher critically reflects on what they are experiencing. Therefore, I tried to step away from the 'insiders perspective' that ethnography is closely linked to (Czarniawska 2007).

Because I research gender and not women, I could not always be an insider because of my own sex (I identify myself as a woman) (see Doucet & Mauthner 2006 for a discussion about how simply being the same sex does not count as enough to be an insider). Still, undoubtedly, my sex helped me in connecting and gaining trust with women entrepreneurs to a greater extant than with men entrepreneurs. A concrete example of this difference is that it

took me three months to book an interview with a man entrepreneur. During that time, I had already done about ten interviews and observations with women entrepreneurs.

My sex also affected the fieldwork to the extent that the transcripts I have of interviews with men entrepreneurs rarely focused on gender issues, because the questions I posed seldom focused on the women's or the men's experience of gender. Still, from the interviews with women entrepreneurs, there are often excerpts about their experience of gender in relation to entrepreneurship. Naturally, I commented on these statements and asked follow-up questions.

In the transcripts of interviews with men entrepreneurs, the subject of gender could still be read through the lines, but it was not as explicit. For that matter, there were rarely any follow-up questions either.

Without a doubt, my role as a researcher is not neutral here. The same questions could not have been posed to women and men simply because a research situation is never like another one (Alvesson 2003). The same is true for research situations between two women. However, I would also argue that women are socialized to talk more about their situation as women, as opposed to men who have not been socialized to reflect upon their role in society in gendered terms. I did, however, know I could sift through the material once I got home and still find assumptions of gender, even if the answers did not explicitly focus on gender.

Adding to the questions raised above about going native there is also the question of anonymity. How can a researcher who has gone native get consent while trying to engage as a 'normal' resident? This is an impossible task in ethnography. In the next section, I will discuss how I worked to ensure as much anonymity as possible.

3.2.3   Anonymity and ethnography

Anonymity is a cornerstone of qualitative research, but difficult to uphold in an ethnography (van den Hoonaard 2003; Walford 2018). One argument for this view are that people within a group being studied have relations to each other and take notice as soon as any information about other people is displayed (Walford 2018). For instance, there is only one cheese factory in this municipality, so when I write about a cheese factory, the others know what is being referred to. Anonymity cannot be upheld. Another argument is that the studied people know the researcher better than the researcher knows

the studied group (van den Hoonaard 2003). News travels fast in a municipality, and on occasion, people approached me because they knew what I was doing. I was also interviewed by a municipal official and the interview was published on the municipality's website.

Nonetheless, to those that I interviewed and did individual observations with, I disclosed that I would not use their personal name nor the name of their business. However, I did not promise that individual quotes could not be traced back to them. This was a way for me to gain legitimacy with the informants and sustain (my idea of) their idea of what a researcher does. Contracts with informed consent were not written. In the words of Walford (2018), informed consent cannot be given since I would have been unable to uphold it, and thus would have had to break the trust I had built.

When sitting in on meetings, I did not ask everyone for permission. I was always introduced by someone, a gatekeeper, who told the people at the meeting what I was doing there. Through the gatekeeper's introduction (Walford 2018), I consider myself as having the permission to observe and take notes.

These thoughts around anonymity are linked to the question of what is being represented with ethnography. Without having complete anonymity, the ethnography does not represent individual people. In the following section, I will further develop these thoughts.

3.2.4   Representation and ethnography

Ethnography connects the researcher to the representation of the study. In essence, an ethnographic representation involves the researcher's construction of a concept (Hatch 1996). The concept in this thesis is the relationship between gender and entrepreneurship in the spatial context. Ethnography is used here to understand the micro-level cultural concepts (Brannen 1996) of Oakville, not my own story. I do not claim I am representing the people I am studying (Czarniawska 2007), and as an observer, I do not know more about the people than the people themselves do. However, I do argue that I could see different things than the people I studied could see. For this reason, I am not stretching the ethnographic fieldwork in this thesis to say that this is a method of auto ethnography. The style and underlying assumptions I use is nothing compared to the first-person voice so closely related to auto ethnography (Ellis & Bochner 2000).

Even though there are a variety of people in the study, personal attributes like class, sexual preference and profession are not particularly analysed here. Furthermore, there are types of people not represented in my study. This means I have been selective in whom I let define or influence the problem that I study.

For example, while I followed a few people born in other parts of Europe, I have not interviewed or directly interacted with anyone who is non-white or who has roots in countries outside of Europe. Such people does of course live in the community, but did not attend the meetings that I attended. Alternatively, or perhaps even more accurately, I should say that we did not attend the same meetings. There is an exclusionary environment present in the meeting setting. The masculine discourse around the entrepreneur highlighting white, heterosexual and middle class men (Jernberg et al. 2020) is thus also found in practice within this municipality. In paper IV, I further focus on this discourse and how it is accomplished in Oakville.

This selectiveness is an outcome of the ethnographic fieldwork. Wigren (2007:390) states "there are always meetings, incidents and discussions that the ethnographer will miss, simply because s/he cannot be everywhere at once." Perhaps I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, or perhaps I was not observant enough. If I were arguing for trying to present a complete picture of this municipality, my ethnographic fieldwork would have been exhausting. Instead, I am reflecting on those things and informants that I know that I missed, and what that means for the representation.

Representation will further be laid out when I describe how informants were chosen as one part of the ethnographic fieldwork.

3.3   The ethnographic fieldwork

For me, the ethnographic fieldwork involved three phases. While they may not be distinct on a timeline, they are distinct in my mind-set as researcher. The three phases are as follows:

The orientation phase, where I chose and got to know Oakville. Business owners were approached as the main informants, but I also talked to municipal politicians and officials, spouses, employees, and people involved in volunteer work.

The focused phase, where I focused on what was interesting in terms of developing theoretical knowledge, empirical knowledge and access. I

conducted interviews, made observations, was involved in meetings, and interacted on social media. Overall, I spent about 200 hours tagging along and engaging with people in Oakville.

The wrapping up phase, where I needed to handle informants opting out and me eventually leaving the field. I also discuss reporting to the municipal officials and other informants.

These phases reflect the guidance of Wigren (2007), who suggested what to disclose in an ethnography: 1) entering the field and developing relationships and interactions with informants, 2) sites visited and excluded, and 3) evaluation of information. The three phases and the main events are explained in more detail in the following sections.

3.3.1 The orientation phase

The orientation phase involved choosing to go to Oakville and who to talk to there. It took me six months from the beginning of my PhD before I visited Oakville. This section holds a short story of this first visit.

Studying Oakville

When starting doing research, I knew I wanted to study gender and entrepreneurship. Choosing to do this in Oakville happened for two reasons: accessibility and excitement. The municipality was small, rural, and thus limited in size and therefore convenient to study (Anderson 2000). It was possible for me to see political initiatives and the local responses to these. I have previously pointed out that my main supervisor had contacts in Oakville, thus initial access to contacts was not a problem.

As for the excitement, a noteworthy reason for choosing this municipality was the existence of the ironworks turned into a garden. Papers III and IV describe a story of how the garden came about and how the people in the municipality received it. There is previous research on the garden but not with a gender perspective (cf. Gaddefors & Cronsell 2009; Korsgaard et al. 2015a; Anderson & Gaddefors 2016). My excitement came from the garden having gone through many of the same changes as other rural production sites, transforming from a production unit (e.g. beef production, or iron in Oakville) to holding tourism events and other service-related experiences (e.g. a bed and breakfast, or a garden in Oakville). Previous research highlight how gender is performed differently throughout this change

process (Heldt Cassel & Pettersson 2015) and I was curious how it was in Oakville.

The unit of analysis in this thesis is a process. This process holds the processes of entrepreneurship, gender and context. The contextual turn in entrepreneurship research has opened up the space for investigating different units of analysis (Gaddefors & Anderson 2017). Previous research on gender and entrepreneurship focused on an individual perspective in relation to the business context (Roos & Gaddefors 2017) and even though research have shown that entrepreneurship is produced through social interaction (Chell 2000), little is known about how these social interactions are organised. Here, a change in the unit of analysis could be beneficial. This thesis focus on the process in a specific municipality, Oakville.

Visiting Oakville for the first time

The first time I went to Oakville was with my supervisors and we had a meeting with one of my main supervisor's contacts as well as the municipal enterprise developer and a local female entrepreneur. Before the meeting, I Googled the female entrepreneur, and saw that she ran a private assistance business with 350 employees. The contact had said, in her mail conversations with us, that the entrepreneur was one of the influential entrepreneurs in the municipality, and I could not repress my excitement about this. In the meeting, we discussed what I planned to do in my research, and my interest in gender, entrepreneurship, and the rural small municipality that we saw Oakville as.

One of the field notes I wrote during the meeting mentioned above is seen in Figure 1. The notes are the first page I ever wrote as a field note. The note contains excerpts from the conversation among the six of us and I have blanked some parts for anonymity. Figure 2 is an English literal translation of the field notes and explains the statements said in the meeting.

Figure 1. Field notes written at the first meeting in Oakville.

Literal translation	Explanation
* Percentage many women entrepreneurs Service and welfare	Oakville has a higher number of female entrepreneurs compared to the surrounding areas and they are active in service and welfare sectors. This is rather a saying than a fact, as the statistics shows that the municipalities in the county have the same percentage of women business owners (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth 2019). Later in the meeting, they explained the higher percentage with a historic culture of women that make things happen when it comes to businesses and voluntary work.
* Hunting – old men	The hunting in Oakville is for old men. I took this note since it was a gender marker in that sense that they said something about women and men's behaviour and the norms in this municipality.
47 % further education young women → moves 5 % men → stays Other women move in, easier to start a business then. Choosing to move here. With family you return	47% of the women choose to go to university or similar after graduation and thus move from Oakville. 95% of the men stay in the municipality. This leads to women from other communities moving in, as they marry the men in the municipality. As the informants saw it, being an outsider made it easier for the women to start a business. When the women who moved from the municipality start a family, they generally settle down in Oakville again.
Moving in is higher than moving out	Overall, they say that immigration is higher than emigration.
The garden – changes the image of Oakville Occupancy increased Culture and craft. Can change view on gender → More tourist businesses	We discussed the local tourist attraction in terms of how it had changed the perception of the municipality to something beyond masculinity. The tourist attraction has led to more people moving in, mostly people enjoying culture and craft. Here I made my own note wondering if that could change gender. The establishment of the garden had also led to more businesses focusing on tourism.

Figure 2. Literal translation and explanation of Figure 1.

Informants in Oakville

I use accounts from a variety of people in the municipality, ranging from farmers, to parents, to municipality electives; some informants are all three. I also have accounts from volunteers that were involved in the local sports clubs and the church. In essence, I met ordinary people who have specialized knowledge about their own life (Spradley 1979). This specialized knowledge builds up a common experience. I use these people's knowledge, and my interviews and observations with them, to illustrate the relationships among entrepreneurship, gender, and context.

At my first meeting in the municipality (the one explained in the previous section), the municipality's enterprise developer introduced three groups of business owners to me. Later on, the municipality started a new group, "the official group" in which I also took part. See Table 3 for an overview of these groups.

The first group of business owners was the female entrepreneurs. A month after our meeting, I took part in my first meeting with this group. I had prepared some notes on what I was going to do and some discussion points. The discussion that followed became my first transcribed conversation. I ended up following this group and their members the entire time I was doing fieldwork. I took part in their summer events to close the year's activity and did most of my interviews with the entrepreneurs in this group.

Another group of business owners were those in the municipality centre that met to discuss issues such as opening hours, activities to increase sales, and what to do with empty business spaces. Two months after the initial consultation, I was at one of their meetings as an observer. I had a short presentation about my research and made myself available for interviews and observations. Interest however was low and I did not end up booking anything.

The third business group was a private invitation-only group. These business owners had a direct dialogue with the head of the municipality. The focus here was to reverse the decline in population growth caused by the ongoing urbanisation in the region. This group also talked a lot about tourism and the financial state of the town, and the running of the garden.

Table 3. An overview of the business groups in Oakville.

	Female entrepreneurs	Businesses in the municipality centre	A private invitation group	The official group
Observed meetings	12	2	5	6
Content	Grow and establish women's businesses	Organising and developing the local shops	Invite-only group aiming at developing Oakville	Joint meetings between groups aiming at developing Oakville
Involved people	Entrepreneurs and women wanting to start a business	Entrepreneurs and municipal officials	Entrepreneurs, the head of the municipality and officials	Entrepreneurs, municipal politicians and officials
Sex composition	Women	Women and men	Women and men	Women and men
Overlap of people between groups[2]	6	8	9	10
How often did they meet?	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	4 times a year
People from the group interviewed/ observed[2]	13	1	4	5

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[2] Overlapping people are shown in both groups.

One year into the fieldwork, the municipality formed an official group based on representatives from all the three groups. The mother organisation represented the female entrepreneurship group. I took part in the initial meeting of this collaboration, and tried to follow them over the coming years. The group evolved into an institutional-formed advisory group to the municipal politicians and officials.

The informants for this thesis primarily came from these different business groups. Because I first attended the female entrepreneurship group, and got a good feeling from them, that group is where I started looking for interviews. After some meetings with the other groups, I also booked interviews and observations with them. To me, focusing also on men was interesting, to avoid further 'othering' research on women entrepreneurs (Marlow & Swail 2014). In addition, the municipal officials invited me to various events and I was able to book some interviews through those events. The collecting of empirical material through these interviews and observations will be laid out in the following section.

3.3.2 The focused phase

The focused phase involved spending time in Oakville. In this section, I first lay out an overview of the fieldwork before going into detail of how I interviewed and observed people and processes. Lastly, I lay out my involvement on social media.

Overview of fieldwork

Overall, I was in the field from February 2015 to June 2018. I have not visited the municipality since June 2018, but I have stayed up to date with it through social media and reading the local newspaper on occasion. In Table 4, I lay out the numbers of the ethnographic fieldwork.

I conducted 39 interviews, 11 observations, and attended 26 meetings as an observer. In addition, I have also interacted and observed via social media, though I have not tracked the number of occasions. I kept track of all instances such as meetings, interviews, and observations in an Excel spreadsheet marking who attended what. It was impossible for me to mark every single person I interacted with in the municipality. Those who I interacted with more than once, those who spoke freely and openly, or those who made any kind of impression on me made the list. I interacted with 72

people, according to my list. Everyone who did an interview or a private observation is on the list. Below I will go further into detail on how interviews, observations and interactions on social media evolved.

Table 4. An overview of fieldwork from February 2015 to June 2018.

What?	How many?	Explanation
Occasions in the municipality	76	Interviews and observations, hence all the bookings I made in a calendar.
Unique days in the municipality	43	Usually I had more than one booking on the same day to make the most out of my trip to the municipality.
Hours spent in the municipality	192	Interviews and observations, not social media or travel to and from the municipality.
Individuals I met and tracked	72	People from interviews and observations that I decided to put into my Excel spreadsheet.
Interactions tracked	342	Unique interactions I had with people, in essence the marks in my Excel spreadsheet.
Individuals I tracked more than ten times	14	These people are those who are most prominent in my empirics.

Interviews

An interview is used to try and grasp how people understand their life and world (Kvale 2007). It is a way to see what the informants themselves think of their experiences, dreams, and everyday life. In this thesis, I conducted 39 interviews with 21 people. Doing an ethnographic study implies doing ethnographic interviews.

According to Spradley (1979), the researcher's role in an ethnographic interview is to slowly and gradually direct the conversation into the purpose of the interview. Spradley (1979) also describes three kinds of ethnographic questions, namely descriptive questions, structural questions, and contrasting questions. Descriptive questions focus on getting the informant to explain something about their everyday life. These questions are also called grand tour questions, paying homage to a guiding where an informant has a good sense of the tour and the researcher does not. Structural questions focus on understanding how an informant thinks about their knowledge. Contrasting questions focus on clarifying how an informant sees two entities so that the researcher can get a better understanding of what the informant means.

The first time I interviewed an entrepreneur I had three descriptive ethnographic questions at hand: 1) tell me about yourself, 2) tell me about your business, and 3) what are your thoughts about what is happening in the municipality? The conversation began from one of these descriptive questions, continued with further in-depth questions and then returning to the other two descriptive questions.

Even though the initial questions were the same for all the interviews, the follow-up questions differed depending on the interview. Based on what the informant said and how they said it, I pursued the next question (Kvale 2007) using a mix of descriptive, structural and contrasting follow-up questions (see Spradley 1979). My prior knowledge about the person influenced the follow-up questions such as if someone else I had met talked about the one I interviewed, or if I had read something about them. An example of a descriptive follow-up question is "But, how does that work?" An example of a structural follow-up question is "Is that advantageous?" An example of a contrasting follow-up question is "Does one part of the business need to stand back in order for the other part to prosper?"

I met 10 people for more than one interview. When meeting an informant again, I only had one (three-part) question at hand: what has happened since the last time we met — personally, in your business, and in the municipality?

Combining ethnographic fieldwork and interviews meant that the interviews were more informal and were made in a setting familiar to the informant (Munz 2017). While more formal interviews also happened, more often than not, the interviews were loosely structured.

This is exemplified when I tagged along with one of the informants when she was driving to visit her clients. We did the interview in the car, so without the pressure of eye contact. We could pause without it being awkward, and without me rushing to the next question. It became a relaxed conversation and we often wandered from the questions I had prepared. For example, we talked about the local sights that we passed. This kind of interview looked more like a friendly conversation than an interview with a clear purpose and direction (Spradley 1979). These conversations helped me gain the trust of the informant as well as make them feel more comfortable with the situation. Furthermore, I could capture the everydayness in their entrepreneurship, not merely get historical accounts (Van Burg et al. 2020).

In addition to driving around with informants, I took walks with them. One took me to the local recreation area where we took a long refreshing

walk and ending up talking about cancer in her family. We shared some tears and gave each other a hug. Another entrepreneur wanted to show me her favourite spots in the garden. It was a magical day when spring just turned into summer and all the flowers were ready to burst. We had an ice cream and a long conversation about her involvement in the municipality.

Doing these kind of tours of the local municipality was something I highly appreciated and something that I also interpreted as important for the informants. They got to tell me about where they grew up, about what political initiative had brought something new to the municipality, and how all the people and businesses were linked. In this way, we built our ongoing relationship as researcher and informant (Munz 2017).

Emotions in the field influence the research process and when writing up ethnographic fieldwork, it is important to take notice to this (Wigren 2007). However enjoyable I make fieldwork sound, there were also other more difficult instances. In Figure 3, I describe a not so productive interview. The interview felt more like a factual interview than an interview where I could try and understand the informants life (Kvale 2007). Overall, it was a stressful environment for gathering empirical material. Wigren (2007) points to how a researcher doing ethnographic fieldwork will get along with some people better than other. Perhaps this was one of these situations; we could not get to a friendly conversation as Spradley (1979) advocates.

I met a shopkeeper at her store and it became a not so productive interview in the sense that I only had fragments with me afterwards. As potential costumers kept coming into the store, I felt I was in the way no matter where I stood or what I did. The questions that I had prepared all seemed to fall flat with short answers from the informant. The number of years she has been active (a fact) was only a small part of what I was interested in. I was not able to develop a conversation between us.

I struggled the whole hour this interview took. Still what came out was just fragments. In the transcribed document, I wrote on top that this interview felt more like an interrogation than an interview. We did not book another interview and we did not meet in any groups after this not so productive interview.

Figure 3. Example of a not-so-productive interview.

I want to highlight that when I interviewed business owners, they had to answer the phone even if I was sitting there. This can be a good thing, as I could get glimpses of their workday and thus new versions of events, and

material for my study. Yet it was also frustrating for me when an interesting line of conversation was interrupted. After an interruption, there is almost never a way back to the same line of conversation.

Observations

The different interview situations described above show how interviews are not only a conversation but also have elements of observation. In combining observations and interviews, I gained a better understanding of the informants setting, which is the main purpose of observation (Patton 2002). What separates individual observations from observations in an interview is the identity of the driver of the meeting. In an interview, I-as-researcher was the one pulling the strings, asking questions and follow-ups. As such, I experience both the informants' behaviours and hear their opinions simultaneously (McDonald 2005).

Other than observations done during interviews, I also did 11 individual observations. The observations I did were based on a shadowing technique where I did what the informant did (McDonald 2005; Czarniawska 2007). With this type of observation, I-as-researcher was in the background, trying to downplay my own role and letting the informant run the show. For instance, when I was observing a lecture with one of my informants, I came early when she prepared the lecture, I listened to her lecture, introduced myself when she asked me to, small-talked to those she small-talked to during the break, and lingered after the lecture until she left the lecture hall. This kind of situation enabled me to see an individual as embedded in their social context. (McDonald 2005). As such, I was retaining my 'outsiderness' and thus refusing to 'go native' and immerse myself in the situation under observation (Czarniawska 2007).

However, I was not a 'fly on the wall' as my informants once labelled me (see section 3.2.1). Being a 'fly on the wall' implies that I-as-researcher would have had no or very little impact on the research situation. Instead, I embraced my situation and was not quiet. I asked for clarifications and elaborations (see McDonald 2005), and the informants asked me about things and made comments (Gill 2011). In retrospect, this kind of material became valuable for the analysis.

I also observed 26 official meetings of various groups. As explained above, I was involved in structured meeting settings with four groups: the female entrepreneurs, the businesses in the municipality centre, a private invitation group, and the official group. The initial thought was that the

different groups in the municipality were only supposed to lead me to informants; I did not intend to follow the groups. However, as per usual with ethnographic fieldwork, the means of collecting material evolve (Gill & Temple 2014). The meetings became the basis for getting to know the municipality. The female entrepreneurship group became the empirical material for two of the papers. The businesses in the municipality centre was the group I followed the least. I took part in their meetings a few times, but stopped going because they did not talk about community or business development. They were much more hands-on than I was looking for in my research, discussing opening hours and the practical challenges of their individual shops. The meetings was however a good way for me to get faces on some names and become familiarised with the municipality centre.

In meetings, I sat in one of the chairs like the others, with my notepad, and tried to navigate what was important to write down. I always began by noting the time, date and place of the meetings (McDonald 2005). I then went on to do a drawing of the room, noting who was attending, and where everybody was sitting. Some people were new to me at every meeting so I made a note of who they were and their role in the municipality: did they have a business?, where did they live?, how were they employed?, why where they attending the meeting? I then listened to how the meeting evolved. To see an example of field notes from a meeting, see Figure 1.

In some meetings, I was more active than in others. Whenever someone asked me questions, I answered. The questions could be about gender and entrepreneurship, or a reflection on a specific topic within the group or Oakville in general. I also facilitated some of the meetings, such as when I held a discussion about gender and entrepreneurship with the female entrepreneurship group.

Social media

Social media is one of the multiple sites of observation and participation in this ethnography (Marcus 1995). During the fieldwork, I became friends on Facebook with some of my informants and followed them on Instagram (and some followed me). I also followed the municipality page as well as some businesses' pages and the business groups' pages. I liked posts, made comments and took a screen shot whenever something caught my eye.

Through being on social media, I could compare and develop material from social media with material from interviews and observations (Marcus 1995). However, the main goal was never to collect any extensive empirical

material through social media, not as suggested by Kozinets (2010) for a netnography. I followed (became friends with) people, not things, metaphors, or conflicts, as suggested by Marcus (1995), thus implying that I chose the conventional way of doing multi-site ethnographies on social media.

If anything, my presence on social media helped me to build trust and a relationship with the informants (Baker 2013). For ethical reasons, I did not lurk in the shadows but was open with my presence and interaction (Hine 2017). Seeing what was going on in the municipality was a good way of starting the conversation in interviews and observations, as suggested by Baker (2013). Staying up to date with each other on social media made our connection more grounded, helping us to build a collaborative relationship (see Gill & Temple 2014 for a discussion on the messy part of building a relationship in ethnographic fieldwork).

Using social media was also a way for me to give a bit of myself to those people who had given me so much of their personal lives. Social media became a shared space (Baker 2013) between me-as-researcher and them-as-informants. In this space, they saw what I was doing as well, while away from them.

3.3.3 The wrapping up phase

In this section, I discuss informants opting out during the study and then when me as an ethnographic researcher left Oakville. I also discuss the different forms of reporting I did to the informants and the municipal officials.

Opting-out but still being part of the study

While the informants involved in this study could opt out at any time, they continued to be part of the analysis because we met in meetings and I heard of their involvement in the municipality from other informants. Around half of the informants opted out of the study after we did a first interview or observation. As we never agreed to more than the first interview, I did not hold this against them. Usually opting out happened in silence through not answering my e-mails or delay and talk around my presence and questions when I approached them in a mutual meeting setting. It was easy for me to notice these signals and thus I left the person out of any further attempts of an interview or observation.

I also know that some of the informants unfriended or stopped following me on social media. Besides opting out of the study, a possible reason for their actions is that our mutual relationship stopped being important when I stopped visiting the municipality.

The researcher leaving Oakville

While ethnographic fieldwork has the advantage of being present in the lives of the people studied (Van Maanen 1988), it also means that the researcher eventually has to leave. When I finished interviewing and observing, I did not unfriend anyone on social media but let the relationship continue over the internet. Frankly, unfriending someone is harsher then not befriending them in the first place, especially because of the hierarchical relationship existing between me-as-researcher and them-as-informants. This relationship is based in that the researcher has the option of leaving the fieldwork, an option not available for the informants. As such, the hierarchal relationship between a researcher and informants is unavoidable (Doucet & Mauthner 2006).

The discursive argument of 'knowledge is power' is found in the relationship between the researcher and the research object (Bodwitch 2014). The researcher has knowledge about theory and the personal life of a research object, knowledge that the research object may not have. As such, 'giving back' to the research object is always a matter of exercising power. I tried to solve this problematic relationship by giving something of myself to the informants, as I will turn to now.

Reporting back to the informants

Reporting to informants happened both formally and informally. Informally it happened through trying to give something of myself in interviews and observations. When someone asked me questions, I always tried to be open with the informants about what was going on in my personal life. I felt it was difficult to talk about the research I was doing, because I was not yet confident enough to talk about 'the results' and 'the findings' of what our time together had produced. But I could always share something about where the research was going and give some reflections about the municipality, as well as their businesses.

More formally, the reporting involved that once each year, the female entrepreneurship group invited me to present my research. I talked about developments in my papers and the progress of collecting empirical material.

At these events, I took the opportunity to shift the focus from me and the work I was doing, to their thoughts about my involvement in the municipality and their thoughts on the subject at hand.

On one of these occasions, at their Christmas celebration, I held a workshop where the women were asked to discuss their (and their businesses) relationships in the municipality. I talked about the latest developments in my paper and showed them the fictional names I had given them. The fictional names fascinated them enormously and was something we came back to both in meetings and interviews during the following years. They were intrigued as to why I choose those names and some even built a kind of persona surrounding their name. I told them that the name was my representation of them; the text is not a representation of their lives. Instead, as Hatch (1996:359) writes: "…if ethnography represents anything at all, then it represents the ethnographer and his or her own cultural biases."

At one point, I was invited to their yearly meeting but I just had a baby and could not join. That year I wrote an extensive letter for them to read and sent a picture of me and the baby. On this occasion, I missed the opportunity to gather any new material. Reporting was more important here then gathering new material.

The people I reported to were not always the ones actually involved in the study. On several occasions, I had spontaneous conversations with municipal officials about the empirical material and with new people that joined the groups in which I was involved.

Presenting my work at the municipality

I also gave a presentation for the elected heads of the municipality, concluding my fieldwork in June 2018. The municipal official that had been involved with me since the beginning of the fieldwork invited me. At the meeting, I gave a presentation about what I had done during my years there and gave four reflections on how they could consider the businesses in the municipality.

The first point, which links to my first and second papers, was about what the Swedish government values and how those values are important to the municipality. I saw that the municipality mirrored and interpreted the policies the government decided on. The local needs, as expressed by the resident in the municipality, were not considered nor valued. This inexperience led to an uphill battle in trying to make changes other than

economic ones; it favoured economic growth over other local changes in the municipality, such as changes in gender perceptions.

The second reflection focused on whom the municipality sees as an entrepreneur. Connecting paper IV, I reviewed the individuality of entrepreneurship in the municipality and highlighted how it excluded other constellations and specific people, such as women and those who run an informal business.

The third reflection was about embeddedness and the question of what kind of businesses were wanted and called for in the municipality. I reviewed the municipality's, and even more so other municipalities, wish to attract already established national (and multinational) businesses, in other words, businesses that were not embedded. I proposed that it might be more cost effective and sustainable for the municipality to instead focus on embedded start-ups and make the already-embedded businesses more prominent in the municipality.

The last reflection focused on the social problems experienced by many of the entrepreneurs I met. Many of the business owners expressed that they were lonely in their entrepreneurship. Even though many of them took part in networking activities, it still did not seem to be enough. I highlighted the work the municipality did with groups and the yearly dialogue when they visit entrepreneurs. Through this, I urged them to focus on finding the entrepreneurs who did not have the loudest voices in the municipality, and the businesses that did not have the most employees or the highest turnover.

3.4   Analysing the ethnographic material

Ethnographic fieldwork renders massive amounts of empirical material in a variety of field notes, interview extracts, and the researcher's thoughts. In this section, I will first lay out the initial steps of analysing my material before going into detail about the different analytical techniques used in the papers.

3.4.1   Six steps of analysis

In essence, analysis happened on a practical level, the same way in all four papers — it is merely the final product after re-writing that is different. Below, Figure 4 shows a list of the organising process and analysis of the

empirical material for all four papers. After the figure, each step is laid out more in detail.

The process of organising and analysing the empirical material
1. Take field notes
2. Organise numerical information
3. Transcribe recordings
4. Code in NVivo
5. Write up as stories/events
6. Individual analytical technique and re-write

Figure 4. The process of organising and analysing the empirical material.

1) In the field, I took notes, both during the interviews and when doing observations. All the interviews were also recorded. The notes contained a messy non-structured compilation of follow-up questions, quotes, actions people took, orders of who said what, and sometimes my initial reflections on what happened. See Figure 1 for examples of notes taken in the field.

2) I recorded all the numerical information about the visits in an Excel spreadsheet. The information contained the date and the location of the visit, the duration of the visit, what type of visit it was (meeting, interview, etc.) and who I met during the visit. This file grew quickly, but by using it I was able to easily access information about the number of visits, hours spent in the field, and how many times and when I met each person. The file was essential when writing up papers and showing the vastness of my method. Table 4 shows an extract of what I can render from the spreadsheet.

3) The next step involved transcribing the recordings and digitalising the field notes. This step was important in trying to prepare the interview material for my analysis (Kvale 2007). I am grateful that I had two students do transcriptions of the recorded interviews for me. I digitalised my field notes by simply transcribing the text from my notebook into a Word file. The drawings and arrows did however not get past this step, but I kept them in the notebook for future reference.

4) To organise and code the material, I used the NVivo software package. Saldaña (2009) explains coding as the process between collection and analysis. Coding can be done either on paper, or, as I did, with a computer software. The advantage of using software is that one can easily go back and find quotes and reflections later on, as well as sift through a lot of material if

when looking for a specific event, person or subject. Figure 5 shows two screen shots of my Nvivo file. I have anonymised some of the codes.

Highest level of nodes		
Name	Files	References
	0	0
	0	0
Bruksorten	1	1
Företagande	7	16
	0	0
Företagarföreningar	1	1
Genus	6	13
Intervjupersoner	0	0
Min roll som forskare	6	7
Oakville	15	37
Personer som det pratas om	0	0
The female entrepreneurship network	8	15

Expanded level		
Name	Files	References
The female entrepreneurship network	8	15
Affärsutveckling	12	20
Den sociala biten	11	16
Ett behov av att vara professionel	7	16
Hjälpa varandra	9	13
Identitet	1	1
Marknadsföra Oakville	6	6
Mer affärer	10	14
Plats	4	5
Påverka	11	16
Synlighet	11	16
Tillhörighet	15	22
Uppdatering av vad som händer	5	7
Utbildningar	3	3
Våga starta	5	9

Figure 5. Screen shots of the nodes in NVivo.

Since the material is in Swedish, the coding is mostly in Swedish. As I finished transcribing and writing interviews and field notes, they were

imported into NVivo regularly. I coded the material based on 'who said what' and 'what was said'. Once I had coded some, or all, material, I organised the codes. This meant gathering codes together into more combined and abstract nodes. For an illustrative table of this process, I refer to paper II (Roos 2019:283).

5) Writing is an integral part of doing research (Wolcott 1990) and a large part of analysing the material, because ethnography is a written representation (Van Maanen 1988). This analytical step of working with the ethnographic material comprised three parts: 1) actual wording from interviews and meetings, 2) field notes where I made observations and reflections, and 3) my interpretation when synthesising everything. The goal here was to write a first representation of my understanding of the culture in a particular event or surrounding a specific story (Van Maanen 1988).

6) Up until this point, the four papers developed in similar ways. After an initial draft came numerous revisions. My analysis and my writing of the actual text always happened in relation to each other and always in the same document. The stories and events were organised, reorganised, filled with more quotes, slimmed down through removing quotes, and through applying different elements of the emerging theoretical parts in that particular manuscript. From this point, each papers has its own specific analytical technique. I will now move to these analytical techniques.

3.4.2   Analytical techniques used in papers I-IV

In the sixth step of the analysis, I used an analytical technique specific for each paper. In the four papers, I use constant comparative analysis, narrative analysis, temporal bracketing analysis and thematic content analysis. Using four different analytical techniques meant four different ways of tackling the research questions. My analysis in the papers varied because each paper has different purpose. I will now go through the analytical techniques as they appear in papers I-IV.

Paper I - Constant comparative analysis

In paper I, I used constant comparative analysis as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which is a part of the grounded theory approach. From the perspective of Corbin and Strauss (1990), grounded theory is something that both describes and explains a social phenomenon and how it changes. Suddaby (2006:634) continued along these lines by stating that grounded

theory is "most suited to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience", meaning that grounded theory is more appropriate to use when trying to understand how individuals interpret situations (Suddaby 2006).

In grounded theory, results emerge as patterns based on the developing understanding of empirical observations and the literature (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The approach wants to capture the process of how a researcher's growing understanding of an empirical phenomenon turns into research results. In this way, grounded theory helps map the processual combination of empirical material and existing theory.

Paper II - Narrative analysis

In paper II, I use narratives as a way to organise and analyse the empirical material. From the stories written up as part of the analytical process, I constructed narratives (Czarniawska 1998) using the stories, quotes, my own perceptions of the municipality, and other material gathered in the municipality. Even though the fragments and material varied in time and place, they were connected into narratives in the research process (Boje 2001).

A narrative conveys more than verbal dialogue; it is also written texts, body language, and atmosphere. The narratives progressed through an ongoing interplay between the empirical material and the emerging theoretical background (Glaser 1978) and happened in conversations with peers in formalised seminars, meetings, and over coffee. The analysis suggests a sometimes-tangible movement between different analytical levels, such as fieldwork, empirical material and its interpretation, and reflections on what the material meant on a more abstract level (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018).

Paper III - Temporal bracketing analysis

Paper III uses temporal bracketing to analyse the empirical material. Temporal bracketing involves linking events, sequences and happenings together from a process (Langley 1999). The temporal implies a longitudinal perspective, and the bracketing implies sequencing and comparing these phases (Bizzi & Langley 2012). Temporal bracketing analysis works well with a single case (Langley 1999), which is the focus in paper III.

The result of temporal bracketing analysis is 'blocks' that are connected through different phases of a process (Langley 1999). The next step is to

revisit the empirical material and fill in the blocks with empirical material such as quotes and examples (Gaddefors et al. 2020). Temporal bracketing allows the investigator to simultaneously focus on the mutual linkage among these blocks (Langley 1999).

Paper IV - Thematic content analysis

In paper IV, thematic content analysis is used in a similar way that it has been used previously when researching gender-in-entrepreneurship (see for example Foss 2010; Ahl & Nelson 2014; Pettersson et al. 2017). We looked for the assumptions (Ahl & Nelson 2014) surrounding a specific entrepreneur and taking place at a specific site. In the analysis, we also looked for instances of what was not said (Pettersson et al. 2017). This is exemplified when writing the opposite of certain quotes and focusing on who or what is excluded. In this way, we also identified silences around gender and entrepreneurship.

Going back and forth between analysis and coding is especially prominent in this analysis. We saw with our first coding that the entrepreneur and the garden were supposed to be a solution to something. Hence, we went back to the material and re-coded to search for the perceived problem(s) that the entrepreneur and garden was the solution for. Revisiting the first coding is a way to ensure the patterns inform the research objective (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019), which is also what Glaser and Strauss (1967) talked about as constant comparative analysis, an iterative process where comparisons of observations develop into a theory.

After the analysis, I have arrived at the results. What is left is the question of how to evaluate the quality of the research.

3.5 Research quality

There is a difference between research doing good and research performed well. Relying on feminist theory, the 'right' and 'good' is to focus on changing women's subordination (Calás & Smircich 1996). The basic idea of research for the emancipation of people (Lincoln & Guba 2000) is thus the overall guiding principal in my research. Aiming at challenging gender inequalities means that feminist research is for the most part labelled 'good' as it is an alternative to mainstream research (Doucet & Mauthner 2006).

Consequently, feminist knowledge is considered 'better' than patriarchal knowledge (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002).

Moving to the question of whether a study is performed well, there is issues of assessing trustworthiness of ethnographic studies. There are many ways to assess quality in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba 1986; Wigren 2007; Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). When assessing trustworthiness, I chose three criteria from Wigren (2007): whether the study is authentic plausible, and critical. These three criteria are used so that the researcher can convince the reader of a trustworthy research process (Wigren 2007). Consequently, this is an assessment of what good quality *means*.

3.5.1 Authenticity

Authenticity means going beyond assumptions in the fieldwork (Wigren 2007). Assumptions are central in authenticity, plausibility and criticality. They are the notions we base our reality on. As such, they are usually one-dimensional, superficial, and seen as representing a one-sided true reality. Moving beyond assumptions means for instance seeing past polished stories of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, and focusing instead on the everydayness of the entrepreneurship process (Wigren 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1986) talk of determining different value- and belief systems that are in conflict with each other. In my work, I moved beyond the assumption that entrepreneurship is available to everyone (cf. Pettersson 2004). Especially in paper IV, the assumptions surrounding a particular local entrepreneur are scrutinised.

Authenticity honours the input of participants (Lincoln & Guba 1986). To accomplish authenticity, the researcher needs to participate and collect material with the everydayness of people in mind and not just in artificial interview situations, which is the reason for incorporating my participation in meetings in the municipality. Authenticity is about being genuine about the fieldwork (Wigren 2007), where the "genuine" aspect is accomplished through showing how the researcher has been in the field and by giving focus to his or her experiences and interpretations of particular events there. This methodological chapter is the basis for genuineness, where I tell what I did in the field and how I interpreted some of the events happening there. In papers I-IV, events and interpretations are presented in detail.

3.5.2 Plausibility

Plausibility is about how well the researcher bridges empirical and theoretical material (Wigren 2007). The researcher has the role of seeing connections and assumptions, creating some kind of understanding of them, and then communicating them. To understand and acknowledge the assumptions leads the researcher to the process of theorizing. Understanding needs to be reasonable and be supported by the empirical material, but it does not need to be firm proof of anything (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). Flyvbjerg (2006) emphasized the importance of rejecting and modifying a theory, or a part of a theory, through qualitative work, and this viewpoint is the basis for all of my four papers, where problematization on different levels modifies and gives perspective to specific aspects of a theory. In this way, my work "is the telling of a very small story that [I] hope resonates with others" (Calás & Smircich 1999:666).

Theorizing from contextually bounded research is possible if the descriptions are thick enough (Flyvbjerg 2006; Wigren 2007). Ethnographic material is a good example, because it involves interview extracts, observation notes and the researcher's own experiences (cf. Spradley 1979; McDonald 2005; Hine 2017). This kind of research is valuable in itself because it provides concrete and practical empirical material (Flyvbjerg 2006).

3.5.3 Criticality

Criticality means to challenge the researcher's assumptions (Wigren 2007). Undoubtedly, the researcher is the one who decides what assumptions to focus on, and how to focus on them. Being reflexive solves this issue.

Reflexivity is about moving beyond repeating naïve and problematic established elements of research and thinking (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). The focus is to acknowledge multiple interpretations of something in the field (Alvesson 2003). These multiple interpretations can lead to seeing new and interesting possibilities, and hence novel research (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018). Without a reflexive stance on what knowledge is produced, the result may be filled with unquestioned prejudices and unreflected power relations (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002).

A practical part of being critical is to be open about successes and setbacks when doing fieldwork (Wigren 2007). For example, see Figure 4 when a less productive interview situation is provided as a contrast to more

productive situations. Another practical part is to use different starting points when looking at the empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018), which implies moving beyond taken-for-granted views on the empirical material. Viewing my material with different lenses, as shown in chapter 2, is one way of using different starting points.

4. Abstracts of papers I-IV

This chapter includes the abstracts of the individual papers that build this thesis. As explained in previous chapters, the papers differ on a number of points, and each has its own perspective on contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship.

Appendix 1 lists all publications related to my years as a PhD-student, including a number of texts not presented as a part of this thesis. Below is the abstracts of the four papers that comprise this thesis.

4.1 Paper I

Roos, A. (2017). A Multiplicity of Contexts: Gender and Locality in a Contextualized View of Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*, vol. 13 (4), pp. 10–28

A contextualised view of entrepreneurship is on the rise within the research field. More and more researchers use context to explain how, where and when entrepreneurship happens. Adding to this, I argue that there is a need to consider a multiplicity of contexts when researching entrepreneurship. This paper sets out to examine how two of these contexts, gender and locality, change with an entrepreneurial process. The case captures how an entrepreneurship association enhances change in contexts in different ways. The findings challenge a decontextualized view of entrepreneurship and add to a growing body of literature making this argument in two ways: first, the multiplicity of contexts is elaborated upon, showing how changes in the entrepreneurship process strengthen different aspects of contexts; and second, the need for a reflexive view of contexts and entrepreneurship is presented, showing how the chosen contexts change how the entrepreneurship process is studied.

4.2 Paper II

Roos, A. (2019). Embeddedness in context: understanding gender in a female entrepreneurship network. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 31 (3–4), pp. 279–292

In this paper, I argue that through a process of embeddedness in context, a female entrepreneurship network is able to challenge gender structures. I investigate how a female entrepreneurship network is constructed and how they reinforce and possibly challenge existing gender structures. From an ethnographic study, three processes in the female entrepreneurship network were identified: making proper entrepreneurs, building relationships and engaging in change. In the different processes, the women involved in the network reinforced gender structures through compliance with a masculine discourse of entrepreneurship, but also challenged gender structures through questioning this discourse. Through becoming embedded in their local community, the women entrepreneurs were able to take charge of the development of the network and challenge gender structures as a result of questioning the masculine discourse of entrepreneurship. This implies an interplay between embeddedness and gender as two separate but dependent processes. Linking together gender and embeddedness elicits a new take on the way female entrepreneurship networks are constructed and how they could advance gender equality within entrepreneurship. Consequently, this paper emphasises a need for further examination of embeddedness within gender and entrepreneurship research.

4.3 Paper III

Roos, A. & Gaddefors, J. (manuscript). In the wake of the ironworks – Entrepreneurship and the spatial process of emancipation from oppressive gender structures

In this article, we explore the links among entrepreneurship, gender, empowerment and emancipation. In particular, we investigate spatial aspects of these interlinked processes, and illustrate emancipation from oppressive gender structures through entrepreneurship as a spatial process. A spatial process helps us to see practices and changes of emancipation. Empowerment can be one of these practices. We especially highlight the collective reproduction of oppressive structures. Our findings complement the insights of recent publications on gender, empowerment and emancipation through a new understanding of how entrepreneurship can be linked to empowerment and emancipation.

4.4 Paper IV

Roos, A. & Pettersson, K. (manuscript). "We need an old man" – Forging a Masculine Ideal Entrepreneur in a Rural Post-Industrial Community

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the gendered ideas and ideals ingrained into an imagined ideal Entrepreneur, set in the spatial context of a rural post-industrial community that is attempting to rebrand itself through garden tourism. Longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in this Swedish community. We spent 43 days total in the community over four years. We analyse the gendered ideas and ideals about the community's perceived problems, garden tourism as the solution to these problems, and the community's imagined ideal Entrepreneur who is to help the garden solve the problems. We find that the imagined ideal Entrepreneur is viewed as masculine. The community forges the Entrepreneur into an imagined masculine ideal as holy, a saviour and a god. We find that the community replaces its historical masculine ironmaster by another masculine individual: the Entrepreneur.

The metaphor of forging adds an innovative theoretical dimension to the feminist constructionist approach, and suggests focusing on how 'maleness' of entrepreneurship is produced and reproduced in local contexts. We argue that policy targeting gender equality and entrepreneurial development needs to be context specific in order to question gendered assumptions. Our development of forging allows for highlighting the contextual aspects of entrepreneurship, through focusing on a particular spatial context and learning how this community constructs the ideal Entrepreneur. Our study contributes a new spatial context to previous research on gendered representations of entrepreneurs. We add a new aspect to the literature by studying an imagined, type-casted and recruited Entrepreneur, rather than entrepreneurs who emerge and are self-appointed.

5. Conclusions

In the very first paragraphs of this thesis, I introduced the idea of a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship. In the four papers that comprise this thesis, I have answered calls to study spatial aspects of entrepreneurship (Trettin & Welter 2011) and to study contexts as interlinked in research on gender (Marlow 2014; Tillmar 2016). Through ethnographic fieldwork I explored how entrepreneurship emerged in a small, Swedish, rural municipality. With the fieldwork in Oakville, I provide the perspective of a spatial context to understand gender-in-entrepreneurship.

In this section, I explore the aim of the thesis and present the contributions and implications from this thesis, and some ideas for future research.

5.1 Contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship

In the four papers, I demonstrate that the spatial context is intertwined with gender-in-entrepreneurship. Table 5 summarises the main findings from the papers that are most closely linked to my thesis aim.

Paper I sets the stage by highlighting how entrepreneurship enhances changes in gender and the spatial dimension simultaneously. For this reason, gender and contexts are seen as intertwined. Specifics of this spatial context are demonstrated in how the social relationships among the women entrepreneurs focus on professionalism; however, because of their relationship to this specific place, these women were also able to challenge gender structures (paper II). The spatial context is not only a place where entrepreneurship happened for these women (spatial dimension), but also a factor that enabled them to take charge of the development of their group (spatial context). The spatial context here is not restricted to the limits imposed by the geographical boundaries of this municipality, but it also

involves institutional and social dimensions, because the spatial context considers the relationships and the norms and rules in Oakville. The local gender structures in this spatial context were challenged by the women entrepreneurs, because this was a place of belonging and a force for both individual and structural change. Hence, this spatial context, with its relationships and spaces for autonomy, was the driving force for empowerment and emancipation (paper III). In addition, Oakville was replacing its historical masculine ironmaster figure with a masculine entrepreneur (paper IV). Both the history and current circumstances of this community were thus a part of how the masculine discourse of entrepreneurship was realised. The social expectations about who is an entrepreneur was shaped by the historical specificities of this spatial context.

Table 5. Main findings to thesis aim from papers I-IV.

	Views gender as a dimension. Focuses on different dimensions of contexts.
I	Through the case study, I show how entrepreneurship enhances changes in different dimensions of contexts (institutional and spatial) simultaneously. Dimensions of contexts are intertwined.
	Enhancing different aspects in entrepreneurship means some dimensions are being enhanced while others are potentially weakened. Using different dimensions of context is important when researching entrepreneurship.
	Views gender structures as part of the spatial context.
II	Discusses how entrepreneurship policies, realised in a spatial context, reinforce gender structures through compliance with a masculine discourse of entrepreneurship, but also how they challenge gender structures through questioning this discourse. Policy targeting gender inequality and entrepreneurship is lacking a context perspective.
	Three overlapping processes in a female entrepreneurship group are identified: making proper entrepreneurs, building relationships, and engaging in change.
	Entrepreneurship can challenge gender structures through the process of embeddedness in spatial context. The embeddedness process enabled the women to take charge of the development of the group.
	Embeddedness and gender interplay as two separate but dependent processes.

	Views gender structures as part of the spatial context.
	Shows how entrepreneurship interacts with a spatial context through providing local spaces of autonomy and leading to local changes.
III	Discusses the links among entrepreneurship, gendered empowerment, and emancipation from oppressive gender structures.
	Seeing gendered emancipation through entrepreneurship as a spatial process helps us to see bounded changes in the local. Gendered empowerment can be one of the practices involved in the quest for emancipation from oppressive gender structures.
	Views gender as a discourse in the spatial context.
	Shows how the spatial context is active in recreating gendered ideal types of entrepreneurs.
IV	Provides the metaphor of forging an ideal entrepreneur. This forging metaphor is part of a feminist constructionist approach that highlights the local and spatial contextual aspect of entrepreneurship and shows how a local community constructs an entrepreneurial ideal.
	The male ideal entrepreneur is viewed as masculine through the ideal being forged as holy, a saviour and a god. Oakville is replacing its historical ironmaster figure with a masculine entrepreneur.

Taken as a whole, these four papers show the intertwining of the spatial context and gender-in-entrepreneurship in two ways. On the one hand, I show how entrepreneurship in a spatial context shapes the reproduction of gender (cf. Hanson 2009; Welter 2020). In particular, I demonstrate that entrepreneurship in Oakville reproduces gender structures in relation to local conditions. This reproduction involves local processes that both challenge and reinforce gender. Reinforcing gender involved, for example, the subtle business professionalization of entrepreneurs, and what type of entrepreneurship not quite considered 'proper' in Oakville. This reinforcing process was countered with a subtle challenging of gender, which involved questioning and reconstructing the local masculine entrepreneurship discourse, such as when women took over the development of the garden and challenged masculine ideas around entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, I also show how the gendering of the spatial context shapes entrepreneurship (cf. Anderson 2008). Gendering of a spatial context involved, for example, suppressing some imaginable consequences of entrepreneurship in favour of strict economic outcomes; in this case, this process manifested when the garden was framed as a 'business as usual' and thus its involvement in the emancipatory process was repressed. The

gendering of a spatial context shapes entrepreneurship through specifics and surrounding discourses. The gendering of the spatial context of Oakville is not to be seen in isolation, but rather it should be seen as a result of governmental policies and national discourses on entrepreneurship, which are revealed in how the people in this place constructed the ideal male entrepreneur based on both local history and the national discourse of entrepreneurship. The ideal male entrepreneur became tailored to the local needs of this particular place.

Focusing on male entrepreneurs in this way, I additionally show how gender structures can be researched per se (as opposed to focusing on 'the woman entrepreneur'). While gender-in-entrepreneurship research highlights the need for researching structures rather than women entrepreneurs (Ahl 2002), research on structures is scarce compared to the vast number of studies on women entrepreneurs (Jennings & Brush 2013). This thesis is an example of research built on and resulting from this critique. Papers I and II take the perspective of a female entrepreneurship group, but do not focus on women entrepreneurs as 'other' than men entrepreneurs (cf. Ahl 2002). I am not contrasting them with men entrepreneurs or portraying them as weaker versions of the more 'proper' male entrepreneur. Instead, by focusing on gender structures, I am questioning the masculine construction of entrepreneurs previously found in research on gender and entrepreneurship.

Papers III and IV illustrate researching gender structures by including empirical material from both women and men entrepreneurs, and these two papers give a wider set of voices. Focusing on the spatial context rather than 'who is an entrepreneur' (see Ogbor 2000) enables me to take this leap. This wider set of voices shows how men are also active in reinforcing — but also challenging — gender structures. Their active role is for example seen in their participation in the construction of an ideal male entrepreneur for Oakville, an ideal that mostly reinforces gender ideas, although I demonstrate that this ideal does, to a lesser degree, also challenge gender

5.2   Theoretical contribution

With a contextualised view of gender-in-entrepreneurship, I offer a view of the spatial context not merely as a physical place, but also as a context that holds other dimensions that intertwine with gender-in-entrepreneurship. As

other researchers have pointed out (e.g., Welter 2011), any particular spatial context involves social and institutional, as well as spatial dimensions. It is through social relationships and institutional policies that entrepreneurship becomes gendered in a specific geographical place. Nonetheless, the social, institutional and spatial dimensions do not provide the entire story of the spatial context. A contribution of this thesis is the finding that the spatial context also holds dimensions of history, distance, and closeness.

Having an historical dimension means that the historical specifics of a place also play a part in the future of that spatial context. The influence of time has been researched in entrepreneurship (cf. Steyaert 2007), but here, I point towards the historical impact of this specific place. Taking account of an historical dimension means looking for instances in the past that shape the present spatial context. Gender is an historical production that is reproduced in the present (Calás & Smircich 1996); here, the specific history of the ironworks and the ironmaster induced people to construct a specific male ideal entrepreneur. The historical dimension enables researchers to see how the people in the spatial context challenge and reinforce gender based on a specific historic production of gender in this specific place.

The distance dimension means that the boundaries of this spatial context make it different from other spatial contexts. Oakville experienced distance to other spatial contexts, such as the regional capital. It had a specialness that was bound to its geographical location and the social relations in that location. The distance to the 'outside' context means that discourses surrounding this spatial context are interpreted and translated, not merely mirrored. For example, in Oakville, the realisation of an externally imposed entrepreneurship policy targeting gender issues took the form of a persistent focus on economic growth. The women entrepreneurs were to grow their businesses, and the group of women entrepreneurs were thus reinforcing gender structures by complying with this masculine discourse of entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, it is through interpretation and translation of this policy that gender can be challenged and not merely reinforced in this spatial context. When the women took over the policy and tailored it to their needs, they were able to both empower themselves and others, and take part in emancipation. Focusing on the distance dimension means highlighting and contrasting between local discourses and discourses at the national and global levels. Researchers are able to move between different levels of

abstractions, as well as see the practices specific to a spatial context that come into play when interpreting and translating discourses.

The closeness dimension, as a complement to the distance dimension, means that there is closeness within a spatial context, a closeness manifested in the same people meeting repeatedly in different constellations. This closeness means that gender can be challenged by the same people in many different ways through these separate constellations. For example, the women in the entrepreneurship group focused on emancipation by involving new members in the group and thus enabled change within the municipality. Some of the women in the entrepreneurship group were also involved in the emancipation process at the garden. Two different processes resulting from two different constellations — but both in the same spatial context. The closeness dimension enables researchers to see not only social relationships (as in the social dimension), but also relationships tied to physical places.

My conclusion is that, to further understand how gender is reproduced in entrepreneurship, it is sufficient to add and conceptualise different processes. I demonstrate that gender is intertwined with at least four other processes such as context (paper I), embeddedness (paper II), empowerment and emancipation (paper III) and community development (paper IV). Looking at these processes provides different ways of thinking about contextualising gender-in-entrepreneurship as interlinked processes, which adds to our understanding by providing a gender perspective on entrepreneurship and context, and by viewing gender as intrinsically intertwined with context (Welter 2020), meaning that gender is reproduced through relationships in the spatial context and is sustained with a particular localness. These processes also contribute to our understanding by highlighting the spatial perspective on gender-in-entrepreneurship, which includes considerations of when, where, how and under what structural conditions (Welter 2011) gender is reproduced in entrepreneurship. Through these examples, I contribute to our understanding of how gender is connected to entrepreneurship, and how gender happens in spatial contexts (Weber 2007; Anderson 2008; Heldt Cassel & Pettersson 2015; Tillmar 2016; Harrison et al. 2020).

Seeing gender as part of the spatial context means focusing on how the dimensions of history, distance and closeness are gendered, and understanding these dimensions will help us to see how gender is reproduced in the interactions among them in the particular spatial context. For example,

when the old ironworks was turned into a garden, the historical momentum of its role as the main employer (and its other intimate ties to the municipality) helped forge people's vision of the entrepreneur as male, not only as an ideal entrepreneur for the ironworks, but serving as a saviour for the spatial context. At the same time, the distance to other spatial contexts helped people in the municipality interpret and challenge masculine economic practices in Oakville through processes at the garden — in other words, gender was locally challenged. The closeness within the spatial context meant that the people in Oakville together developed the garden in different directions than had been envisioned, and in this process, they also reproduced gender.

These dimensions are situation and place specific; they are dictated by the spatial context. It is through context and the perspective of contextualising that researchers can see these dimensions, and thus see that it is through their interactions that gender-in-entrepreneurship unfolds. Without taking account of these three dimensions, there is a risk that researchers would merely mirror global and national discourses on gender, discourses that are not necessarily applicable to specific spatial contexts such as Oakville.

5.3   Practical implications

This thesis provides a critique of the well-established view of the ideal picture of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Therefore, this research has a secondary aim in addition to the research aim, namely to emancipate people (Lincoln & Guba 2000) and change women's subordination (Calás & Smircich 1996), as called for by feminist scholars before me.

In the preface of this thesis, I wrote that I want my research to matter. What stands out is the change for my informants in Oakville. My presence in Oakville sparked different processes. I was a sounding board for many of the informants as they developed their businesses (and lives) alongside my fieldwork. I supported them in their numerous struggles and tried to answer any questions they had. When asked, I tried to give perspectives from a researcher's point of view and lay out different alternatives. I always celebrated with them when they did something that they were proud of.

My involvement resulted in, for example, strengthening the feminist voice and actions of the women who took part in the female entrepreneurship group. Throughout the papers, I show how the women are a local driving

force for equality. Through my collaboration with the group, municipal representatives, and the regional office, a more progressive feminist stance on equality has been developed.

In Oakville, the governmental policy surrounding gender equality and entrepreneurship had a perspective on individuals promoting gender equality through women starting more businesses and/or running their existing businesses in a more successful (male) way. Men entrepreneurs were left out of policies promoting gender equality, and the focus on structural issues is exceedingly limited.

Two alternative, and complementary, ways to fix structural problems through policy can be imagined based on this thesis and the fieldwork in Oakville. 1) Focus on structural gender issues by involving men entrepreneurs and municipal politicians and officials. Solely focusing policy on women entrepreneurs implies that they are the ones who need to be fixed (Pettersson et al. 2017). 2) Make room for local variations within policy so the local needs and challenges can be met. Instead of giving national directions for micro-managing content, a way to apply and carry out the intended goals is to involve those who are affected by a policy while that policy is being made. Policies targeting gender equality within entrepreneurship that are not linked to the spatial context in which these policies will be realised can be counter-productive.

5.4 Future research

The interconnection of a rural setting and gender is a fascinating process that has great potential in further research. Applying intersectionality to this connection could be an interesting development for both intersectionality theory and gender-in-entrepreneurship literature. Intersectionality theory would gain a spatial perspective, and gender-in-entrepreneurship would be seen in a new context. The urban/rural power structures could then be further theorised as part of the identity processes implied in intersectionality, which in turn could highlight the limitations and problems with intersectionality by asking what kind of power structures the theory can apply to.

A point that I touched upon but did not dive deeply into is how gender is reproduced in the relationship between the entrepreneur(ship) and the municipal politicians and officials. This reproducing happens in the spatial context and must therefore have spatial connotations. What are these

connotations? How do these relationships emerge? There is also the notion of moving away from seeing gender as individual identity work and moving towards collective identity work. This identity work is bound to happen in a spatial context, just as the relationship discussed above is bound to happen in a spatial context. As such, what is the role of the spatial context in collective identity work? Paper IV is not framed with this lens, but could be envisioned as showing a collective identity process where there is different power emphasis between the one being constructed and the spatial context. Framing this paper as collective gendered identity work could give perspective on the role of a spatial context in identity theory.

Future research could also continue exploring novel units of analyses when it comes to gender-in-entrepreneurship. Research on men entrepreneurs is gaining momentum and this research is important for understanding the masculinity of entrepreneurship, because it is not only about how men entrepreneurs reproduce and legitimise the masculinity of entrepreneurship, but also about how they are challenging it. This research not only has implications for men entrepreneurs as *men* entrepreneurs, but also about how masculinities are produced and reproduced within entrepreneurship, and in particular spatial contexts. My thesis is one of the building blocks in this endeavour.

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Popular science summary

Gender issues engage people, whether actively portrayed through the #metoo movement or negatively portrayed, in for instance the noticeable lack of women in leading positions. In this thesis, I ask how gender comes about and change in relation to entrepreneurship.

Focusing on entrepreneurship within a gender perspective means acknowledging that the underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs is persistent despite numerous programs, initiatives and research projects claiming to increase women's participation in entrepreneurship. One reason given for the unsuccessfulness of some of these endeavours is that women are in these endeavours seen to lack the appropriate skills and have problems realising their 'true entrepreneurial self'. In these kind of endeavours, gender is seen as an explanation for the inequalities experienced in entrepreneurship.

This thesis fits within a more inclusive research stream that focuses on challenging the things we take for granted in entrepreneurship. As such, this thesis moves beyond a sole focus on women entrepreneurs, and instead focuses on how women and men do gender in entrepreneurship. Doing gender means that we as humans construct characteristics such as feminine and masculine through, for example, how we speak, think, act and write: basically through everything we as humans do. Gender is and becomes socially constructed between for example people (in conversations and interactions) in organizations (through routines and governing documents, for example) and through media images (such as representation).

As such, gender is seen as relations of power that dictate what is perceived as proper for women and men to do, and it is more about perceived norms, behaviours and perceptions of femininity and masculinity than about men and women as variables. The main focus in this line of research is on the gender process – that is, how gender come about and changes. Building on

the gender process, previous research has highlighted how entrepreneurs, both women and men entrepreneurs, do gendered identity work. Moreover, previous research has shown that entrepreneurs in media and policy are produced in gendered ways.

What is missing from previous research is a link to context. The gender process in entrepreneurship takes place in particular contexts, but we are yet to be sure of how context affects the process. Focusing on context when researching entrepreneurship means seeing entrepreneurship as connected to its surroundings. Instead of focusing on the heroic (male) entrepreneur who starts and runs a successful business alone and isolated from society, contextualising entrepreneurship means embracing the surroundings of entrepreneurship. As such, it is productive to view entrepreneurship as a process involving many different people and with many outcomes, not only economic outcomes. Contextualising entrepreneurship means seeing entrepreneurship through a societal lens involving the specifics of the market, the relationships, the norms and laws, and the place where the entrepreneurship unfolds.

It is within this place — this spatial context — that this thesis focuses upon. In a specific place, relationships, norms and laws surrounding entrepreneurship becomes tangled together. Linking the gender process with a specific contextual view of entrepreneurship allows us to focus on *where* the gender process in entrepreneurship is produced. What new things can we learn with this focus?

This thesis is built upon four papers, all bringing their own unique perspective to this problem. The four papers are based on ethnographic fieldwork, which in this case lasted 6 years, and took place at a particular site. I conducted interviews, followed people in their everyday lives, attended meetings and stayed up to date with the community on social media. Overall, I interacted with over 70 people and was part of 26 meetings. I mostly came across business owners, but also municipal politicians and officials, as well as spouses, employees, and people involved in volunteer work. The common denominator was their relationship to a specific municipality in rural Sweden, Oakville (a pseudonym).

Taken together, the four papers of this thesis contribute the following two main findings. I demonstrate that the spatial context is tangled together with the gender process in entrepreneurship. I do this by showing how entrepreneurship in context reproduces gender, and how the gender process

in this spatial context shapes entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship reproduces gender by reinforcing gender through business professionalization of entrepreneurs and by determining what is considered as 'proper' in Oakville. At the same time, entrepreneurship also challenges gender by questioning the masculine entrepreneurship discourse. A discourse is the conversation that takes place around a phenomenon through people's communication with each other, in speech and writing, for example via public speeches, policy documents, research texts and individual meetings. In contrast, I also show how the gendering of this spatial context shapes entrepreneurship through, for example, suppression of some imaginable consequences of entrepreneurship in favour of strict economic outcomes.

I also demonstrate what the spatial context holds by highlighting dimensions of history, distance, and closeness. Highlighting these dimensions nuances previously proposed views that a given spatial context includes a specific place, specific relationships, and specific norms and laws. Looking at each of the dimensions (history, distance and closeness) helps us understand the spatial context by illuminating how gender is reproduced in the interplay among history, distance, and closeness.

The historical dimension comprises the historical specifics of this place that play a part in its future. For example, when the old ironworks in Oakville was turned into a garden, the history of the physical place influenced the people's idea of the male entrepreneur best suited to run the development.

The distance dimension comprises the (physical and other types of) boundaries of this place that make it different from other places. The distance between Oakville and the 'outside' means that discourses surrounding this place (at for instance the county level) were not merely mirrored in Oakville, but rather they were interpreted and translated to suit this specific place. For example, the distance from Oakville to other places meant that gender was locally challenged by interpreting and questioning the masculine economic practices in Oakville, through changes in processes at the garden.

The closeness dimension complements the distance dimension, and it refers to the closeness of people within Oakville. The same people met repeatedly in various constellations (like different interest groups), and thus the same people were able to challenge gender from the different standpoints of these different constellations. The closeness dimension focuses on how relations are tied to physical places. For example, the closeness within

Oakville meant that the people together were able to develop the garden, and thereby reproduce gender.

These dimensions are situation- and place-specific; they are dictated by the spatial context of Oakville. By focusing on context, these dimensions are more easily seen, and it becomes more clear that it is through their interaction that the gender process in entrepreneurship develops. If the dimensions of history, distance and closeness are not used, there would be a risk that researchers would simply mirror global and national discourses on gender, which might not be applicable to specific spatial contexts such as Oakville.

This thesis shows that researching the gender process in entrepreneurship can be realised in a way that is not merely focusing on 'the woman entrepreneur' and seeing gender as an explanation for the inequalities experienced in entrepreneurship. I do not try to identify similarities and differences between women and men entrepreneurs; I do not try to explain why women are not as involved in entrepreneurship as men are. Nor do I consider women entrepreneurs as a special group worthy of studying in isolation.

Instead, I question the masculine construction of entrepreneurship by focusing on gender structures. One way to do this was to include empirics from both women and men entrepreneurs. While men entrepreneurs are the ones usually studied in entrepreneurship research, they are still rare in entrepreneurship research with a gender perspective. As such, men entrepreneurs and their relation to gender are little understood. By studying both women and men, I thus provide a more realistic set of voices about who gets to shape the gender process in entrepreneurship. Listening to all these voices reveals that men are also active in reproducing gender in entrepreneurship.

Turning briefly to policy implications, I show that the governmental policies on gender equality and entrepreneurship in Oakville came from the perspective that gender equality was best promoted through women starting more businesses and/or running existing businesses in a more successful (male) way. Men entrepreneurs were left out of policies promoting gender equality, and the focus on structural issues was exceedingly limited. I provide two alternative ways to fix structural problems through policy: 1) Focus on structural gender issues by also targeting men entrepreneurs and municipal politicians and officials with the policy. Solely focusing on women entrepreneurs implies that they are the ones who need to be fixed if gender

equality is to happen. 2) Make room for local variations within policy so local needs and challenges can be met. Policies targeting gender equality within entrepreneurship that are not contextualised can be counter-productive by simply not allowing interpretation and translation to meet local needs and challenges.

Overall, this thesis focuses on how gender comes about and changes in entrepreneurship happening in a specific context, Oakville. This thesis is also a critique of the ideal picture of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. The future I envision sees these phenomena having greater inclusiveness.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Genusfrågor engagerar människor, oavsett om det porträtteras genom #metoo-rörelsen eller av den ständiga bristen på representation av kvinnor i ledande positioner. I denna avhandling frågar jag hur genus skapas och förändras i förhållande till entreprenörskap.

Att fokusera på entreprenörskap i genusfrågan innebär att belysa att underrepresentationen av kvinnliga entreprenörer är ihållande trots många statliga program, initiativ och forskningsprojekt i syfte att öka kvinnors delaktighet i entreprenörskap. En anledning till dessa tidigare misslyckanden är att kvinnor i dessa satsningar framställs som att ha bristande färdigheter och problem med att förverkliga sitt "sanna entreprenöriella jag". I de här satsningarna så ses genus som en förklaring till de ojämlikheter som upplevs inom entreprenörskapet.

Denna avhandling är förankrad i en mer inkluderande forskningssyn där fokus är på att utmana de saker vi tar för givet med entreprenörskap. Som sådan går denna avhandling bortom att fokusera enbart på kvinnliga entreprenörer och fokuserar istället på hur kvinnor och män gör genus i entreprenörskap. Att göra genus innebär att vi människor konstruerar egenskaper såsom kvinnligt och manligt genom t ex hur vi pratar, tänker, agerar och skriver: i stort sett genom allt det vi människor gör. Genus är och blir socialt konstruerat t ex mellan människor (i konversationer och interaktioner), i organisationer (via t ex rutiner och styrdokument) och via mediabilder (genom t ex representation).

Därmed ses genus som maktförhållanden som dikterar vad som uppfattas som lämpligt för kvinnor och män att göra och det handlar snarare om upplevda normer, beteenden och uppfattningar om femininitet och maskulinitet än om män och kvinnor som variabler. Huvudfrågan i denna forskningssyn handlar om hur genus skapas och förändras och därmed finns

det ett övergripande fokus på genus som en process. Utifrån genusprocessen belyser tidigare forskning hur entreprenörer, både kvinnor och män, skapar och gör identitet kopplat till genus. Dessutom visar tidigare forskning hur entreprenörer i media och statlig policy framställs normativt.

Vad som saknas i denna forskning är en länk till kontext. Genusprocessen inom entreprenörskap sker i en särskilt kontext, men vi är ännu inte säkra på hur detta sker. Att fokusera på kontext när man forskar på entreprenörskap innebär att se entreprenörskapet som kopplat till omgivningen. I stället för att fokusera på den heroiska (manliga) entreprenören som startar och driver ett framgångsrikt företag ensam, isolerat från vad som händer i samhället, innebär en kontextualisering av entreprenörskap att omfamna omgivningen. Därmed är det fördelaktigt att se entreprenörskap som en process som involverar många olika människor och med många resultat, inte enbart ekonomiska. Att kontextualisera entreprenörskap innebär att se entreprenörskap genom en samhällelig lins som involverar marknadens särdrag, relationer, normer och lagar och den plats där entreprenörskapet utvecklas.

Det är platsen – den rumsliga kontexten – som denna avhandling fokuserar på. På en viss plats blir relationerna, normerna och lagarna kring entreprenörskap sammanflätade. Att koppla samman genusprocessen och en kontextuell syn på entreprenörskap leder därför till ett fokus på *var* genus i entreprenörskap görs. Vad kan vi lära oss när vi fokuserar på en specifik plats för entreprenörskapets genusprocess?

Denna avhandling bygger på fyra artiklar, som alla ger sitt eget unika perspektiv på detta problem. De fyra artiklarna bygger alla på etnografiskt fältarbete som innebär att forskaren är involverad i en viss plats under lång tid, 6 år i detta fall. Jag gjorde intervjuer, följde människor i deras vardag, var involverad i möten och höll mig uppdaterad på sociala medier. Sammantaget interagerade jag med över 70 personer och satt med på 26 möten. Människorna som jag träffade var mestadels företagare men också kommunpolitiker och tjänstemän, liksom makar, anställda och volontärer. Gemensam nämnare är deras förhållande till en viss kommun på svenska landsbygden, Ekbyn (ett pseudonym).

Genom de fyra artiklarna bidrar denna avhandling med följande två resultat. Jag belyser att den rumsliga kontexten flätas samman med genusprocessen i entreprenörskap. Jag gör detta genom att visa hur entreprenörskap i kontext formar genus och hur genusprocessen i den rumsliga kontexten formar entreprenörskap. Entreprenörskap formar genus

genom att dels förstärka genus genom en affärsmässig professionalisering av entreprenörer som inte anses vara tillräckligt entreprenöriella för Ekbyn. Samtidigt utmanar entreprenörskap genus genom att ifrågasätta den maskulina entreprenörskapsdiskursen. En diskurs är det samtal som förs kring ett fenomen via människors kommunikation med varandra, i tal och skrift, t ex via offentliga tal, policydokument, forskningstexter och enskilda möten. Som kontrast visar jag också hur genus i rumslig kontext formar entreprenörskap genom att till exempel nedvärdera möjliga resultat av entreprenörskap till fördel för ekonomiska resultat.

Jag belyser också vad den rumsliga kontexten innehåller genom att kasta ljus på dimensionerna historia, avstånd och närhet. Därmed utvecklas tidigare tankar om att rumslig kontext har en specifik plats, relationer, normer och lagar. Dimensionerna (historia, avstånd och närhet) bidrar till vår förståelse om den rumsliga kontexten genom att rikta vår uppmärksamhet mot hur genus formas när dimensionerna samspelar.

Den historiska dimensionen innebär att den här platsens historiska detaljer också spelar en roll i dess framtid. Till exempel, när det gamla järnverket i Ekbyn förvandlades till en trädgård, påverkades den fysiska platsens historia den tänkta manliga entreprenör som folk i Ekbyn ansåg var bäst lämpad för att driva utvecklingen.

Avståndsdimensionen innebär att (fysiska och andra typer av) gränser för denna plats skiljer den från andra platser. Avståndet till kontexter utanför betyder att diskurser inte speglas på platsen utan snarare tolkas och översätts för att passa den specifika platsen. Avståndet till andra platser innebar till exempel att genus utmanades lokalt genom den manliga ekonomiska praxis som tolkades och utmanades i Ekbyn genom processer i trädgården.

Närhetsdimensionen innebär att det, som komplement till avståndsdimensionen, också finns närhet inom Ekbyn. Samma människor träffades upprepade gånger i olika konstellationer (såsom i ideella grupper), vilket antyder att genus kan utmanas genom samma människor i många konstellationer samtidigt. Närhetsdimensionen fokuserar på hur relationer är knutna till fysiska platser. Närheten inom Ekbyn innebar till exempel att människorna tillsammans utvecklade trädgården och genom detta också formade genus.

Dimensionerna är situation- och platsspecifika; de dikteras av den rumsliga kontexten i Ekbyn. När man fokuserar på kontext kan forskare se dessa dimensioner och se att det är genom deras interaktion som

genusprocessen inom entreprenörskap utvecklas. Utan att använda dimensionerna historia, avstånd och närhet, finns det en risk att forskare bara speglar globala och nationella diskurser om genus, som inte är tillämpliga på specifika rumsliga kontexten, såsom Ekbyn.

Denna avhandling visar hur man kan förverkliga en forskningsansats med fokus på genusprocessen i entreprenörskap, i motsats till att fokusera på "den kvinnliga entreprenören" och se genus som en förklaring till de ojämlikheter som upplevs i entreprenörskap. Som sådan identifierar jag inte likheter och skillnader mellan kvinnor och män. Jag försöker inte förklara varför kvinnor inte är lika engagerade i företagande som män. Inte heller ser jag kvinnliga företagare som en speciell grupp som är värd att studera isolerat.

Istället ifrågasätter jag den maskulina uppbyggnaden av entreprenörskap genom att fokusera på genusstrukturer. Ett sätt att göra detta var att inkludera empiri från både kvinnliga och manliga entreprenörer. Medan män som entreprenör är de som vanligtvis studeras inom entreprenörsforskning är de fortfarande ganska frånvarande i entreprenörskapsforskning med ett genusperspektiv. Alltså har manliga entreprenörer och deras relation till genus bara varit begränsat förstått. När jag använder empiri från både kvinnor och män ger jag således en bredare uppsättning röster, en mer realistisk bild, av vilka som formar genusprocessen i entreprenörskap. Genom att använda denna bredare uppsättning röster visas hur män också är aktiva i att forma genus inom entreprenörskap.

När det gäller politiska konsekvenser av min forskning så visar jag hur regeringens politik kring jämställdhet och entreprenörskap i Ekbyn hade ett perspektiv som fokuserade på individer som främjar jämställdhet genom att kvinnor startar fler företag och/eller driver sina befintliga företag på ett mer framgångsrikt (manligt) sätt. Manliga företagare uteslöts från politiska initiativ som ska främja jämställdhet och fokus på strukturella frågor är ytterst begränsat. Jag belyser två alternativa sätt att lösa strukturella problem, såsom genus, genom politiska initiativ: 1) Fokusera på strukturella genusfrågor genom att också rikta policyn mot manliga företagare och likväl kommunala politiker och tjänstemän. Att enbart fokusera på kvinnliga företagare innebär att det är de som behöver fixas för att jämställdhet ska ske. 2) Gör utrymme för lokala variationer inom policyn så att lokala behov och utmaningar kan tillgodoses. Politik som riktar sig mot jämställdhet inom entreprenörskap som inte är kontextualiserad kan vara kontraproduktiv

genom att det helt enkelt inte finns utrymme för tolkning och översättning till lokala behov och utmaningar.

Sammantaget fokuserar denna avhandling på hur genus skapas och förändras i entreprenörskap som händer i en specifik kontext, Ekbyn. Avhandlingen är också en kritik av den ideala samhällsbilden av entreprenörer och entreprenörskap. Förhoppningen är att de här fenomenen har en större inkludering i framtiden.

Acknowledgements

I climbed a mountain and I turned around.[3] I have climbed the mountain of PhDing and it is time to turn around and thank those who helped me get to this point.

Not everyone can be acknowledged by name as that would lead to a thesis in itself but I am thankful for all those who were part of my journey. I have encountered so many people who have left a mark in my soul. Below is just a fraction of these people. They are in no particular order. I have rewarded you all with a fragment of the music I listened to while doing this PhD. I know… I am a nerd, a proud one!

My supervisors Johan Gaddefors, Richard Ferguson and Katarina Pettersson. We have had challenging and developing conversations and co-authorships. We have not always agreed and I am so proud of what we accomplished together. You have been so patient with me, honestly, that is an understatement. *Taking the long way around.*[4] I hope our journey together in academia will continue and that I will continue to learn from you in the years to come.

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academia. Special thanks go out to Hanna who really helped me shape my thoughts into understandable text when I finalized this Kappa. You get your own music fragment: *So bright, you guide me through. I believe in you.*[6] I am so grateful for your commitment and I hope that I can be there with you when you are finalizing your Kappa.

Oakville. *We wrote our own story. Full of blood, sweat and heartbeats.*[7] It goes without saying that this thesis would not look the same without you opening your arms, homes, hearts and businesses to me. For that, I hope my mark on the municipality and the residents is a positive one and that I have told my story of you in an approved way. Your lived lives are the basis for this thesis. Our ways will for sure cross in the future – I am not ready to leave you just yet.

Mikaela and Linn for helping me transcribe all of my material. *My, oh my. Look how the time flies.*[8] I could not have done this thesis without you.

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Nina and Emma. *I look around me, and see a sweet life. I'm stuck in the dark but you're my flashlight.*[10] Thank you for giving me perspective on academia, watching Pitch Perfect with me and having babies at the same time. You helped me stay sane in an insane world. We are a great team of glitter, self-doubt and support.

Kyla Krogseng for doing the proofreading and editing of most of my work. *If your wings are broken borrow mine so yours can open too.*[11] We went through piles of administrative hassle together and I am glad we did. Our cooperation was always good and the result, the written text, was so much better.

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[6] Michael Bublé – I Believe in You

[7] Kelsea Ballerini – Legends

[8] The Wreckers – My, Oh My

[9] Gillian Welch – Look At Miss Ohio

[10] Hailee Steinfeld – Flashlight

[11] Rachel Platten – Stand By You

Jennifer Ast who helped me with the language editing of this document and the two final papers. I am so grateful that you tried to make sense of my writing and for your flexibility in the last days of writing. *This one says we're [her] best last chance.*[12]

The administration at the department, which supported me and tried to keep me within the structure. *Follow your arrow wherever it points.*[13] Sorry for giving you such a hard time. I really enjoy all your friendly escapades in trying to keep the department together.

Dr. Nermin Elkafrawi and Dr. Deema Refai. *I had the time of my life. Fighting dragons with you.*[14] Thank you for letting me do something more with my empirical material. Together we have learned so much about co-authoring and having your support throughout my PhD, and mum life, has been so rewarding.

Joakim. Thank you for giving me Stina and perspective on life. You saved me back then. *Här, ta min hand. Vi ska åt samma håll.*[15] I hope we will continue on the same road ahead. Moreover, I will you give you a copy of this document with the title you proposed when I was going crazy about my work: The world according to Annie.

Mum and Dad. I am forever grateful that you help my family and me so much. We could not wish for better mormor and morfar. If anyone, you have helped me to find the time and energy to finish this thesis. *En del av mitt hjärta kommer alltid slå för dig.*[16]

Lina. It is rather odd that we have gone through the same phases together for the last couple of years. Phases that I would not want to go through with anyone else. *It's your love that brings me home. [Sister] let me be your shelter.*[17] During difficult times, you have been my shelter and for that, I am forever grateful. Among other things, you started your business at the same time as I started this PhD, and now you are moving on at the same time as I am finishing up. As such, you gave me perspective on what it is like to run a

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[12] Sugarland – Tennessee

[13] Kacey Musgraves – Follow Your Arrow

[14] Taylor Swift – Long Live

[15] Lars Winnerbäck – Åt samma håll

[16] Thomas Ledin – En del av mitt hjärta

[17] NEEDTOBREATHE – Brother (featuring Gavin DeGraw)

business. Moreover, do not despair; you do not carry the burden of women entrepreneurs on your shoulders.

Fredrik. *As deep as these roots run we'll never be too far gone from the dirt we were raised on*.[18] Thank you for always being the stable person in our family. Thank you for letting me ask all the dumb questions about farming when I started my bachelor studies. Your house is always open and that is something that I am grateful for. The memories created in that house will always be with me. You represent the kind of entrepreneur that just does stuff; evolving, changing, and always putting family first.

Lastly, Annie Roos. Tack, du gör så gott du kan. *It's too late to make it right. I probably wouldn't if I could.*[19] Remember to celebrate every submission.

Annie Roos

Hulan, January 2021

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[18] Jason Aldean – Dirt We Were Raised On

[19] The Chicks – Not Ready to Make Nice

Appendix 1 – Publications

The four individual papers and this thesis document are not all the scientific publications I have produced. Three out of the four papers (the exception being paper II) were presented at conferences during their formative stages. I also wrote in other outlets in parallel with the four papers. What follows is a list comprising publications from my time as a PhD student, sorted by type and in chronological order.

Journal publications

Roos, A. (2017). A Multiplicity of Contexts: Gender and Locality in a Contextualized View of Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*, vol. 13 (4), pp. 10–28

Roos, A. (2019). Embeddedness in context: understanding gender in a female entrepreneurship network. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 31 (3–4), pp. 279–292

Jernberg, F., Lindbäck, A. & Roos, A. (2020). A new male entrepreneur? Media representation of male entrepreneurs before and after #metoo. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, vol. 35 (2), pp. 211–224

Book chapters

Roos, A. & Gaddefors, J. (2017). Innocent sampling in research on gender and entrepreneurship. In: Ratten, V., Dana, L.-P., & Ramadani, V. (eds.) *Women Entrepreneurship in Family Business*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge

Roos, A. (forthcoming). Cultivating business value beyond economic measures – narratives from Sweden. In: Yousafzai, S., Henry, C., Boddington, M., Sheikh, S., & Fayolle, A (eds). *Research handbook of women's entrepreneurship and value creation.* Edward Elgar Publishing. - *Accepted book chapter.*

Conference papers

Ferguson, R., Astner, H., Kokko, S., Roos, A. & Tunberg, M. (2015). The importance of place: Conceptualizing the rural context. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Glasgow, UK.

Roos, A. (2015). Interwoven processes: gendered rural entrepreneurship. *International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development.* Sheffield, UK.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors (2016). Living in rural gender structures – entrepreneurship and context at work. *Gender, Work and Organization*. Keele, UK.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors (2016). Being restricted by, using and provoking gendered structures in entrepreneurship. *European University Network on Entrepreneurship*. Emlyon, France.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors (2016). Entrepreneurship and context – The story of Ava. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Paris, France.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors (2017). Women and agency in rural entrepreneurship: Working Paper. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Belfast, UK.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors (2017). Gendering the Entrepreneurship Process: Working Paper. *Research in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Conference.* Lund, Sweden.

Elkafrawi, N. & Roos, A. (2018). Women entrepreneurs: a strong structuration perspective. *Gensig Confreat.* Aarhus, Denmark.

Elkafrawi, N., Roos, A., McElwee, G. & Refai, D. (2018). Strong Structuration Theory: A way to further contextualise entrepreneurship research. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Birmingham, UK.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors, J. (2019). Gender structures in rural entrepreneuring – provoking, restricting and using. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Newcastle, UK.

Roos, A. & Pettersson, K. (2019). Forging the Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship as Masculine in a Rural Industrial Community. *The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.* Newcastle, UK.

Roos, A. & Gaddefors, J. (2020). In the wake of the ironworks – The struggle for gendered emancipation through entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Sustainability Conference.* Uppsala, Sweden.

I

A Multiplicity of Contexts: Gender and Locality in a contextualized view of entrepreneurship

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Abstract

A contextualized view of entrepreneurship is on the rise within the research field. More and more researchers use context to explain how, where, and when entrepreneurship happens. Adding to this, I argue that there is a need to take into account a multiplicity of contexts when researching entrepreneurship. This paper sets out to examine how two of these contexts, gender and locality, change with an entrepreneurial process. The case captures how an entrepreneurship association enhances change in contexts in different ways. The findings challenge a decontextualized view of entrepreneurship and add to a growing body of literature making this argument in two ways: first, the multiplicity of contexts are elaborated, showing how changes in the entrepreneurship process strengthens different aspects of contexts; and second, the need for a reflexive view of contexts and entrepreneurship is presented, showing how the chosen contexts change how the entrepreneurship process is studied.

1.   Introduction

Entrepreneurship research has for a long time involved studies of individuals, their entrepreneurial traits and their roles in starting up new businesses (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991; Bhave, 1994; Brush *et al.*, 2009). In contrast to this individualistic view of entrepreneurship, a view that entrepreneurship is a process changing structures (Berglund, Gaddefors & Lindgren, 2016) is gaining momentum within entrepreneurship research. A context perspective is crucial when viewing entrepreneurship as a process changing structures since it is in the context that the structures which could be changed become evident. Seeing entrepreneurship through a context perspective emphasizes that entrepreneurship is more than this isolated event which is usually the case in the individualistic view of entrepreneurship (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard & Anderson, 2011).

Context is what constitutes the circumstances and conditions surrounding the entrepreneurship process, it enable and restrain the process (Welter, 2011). Hence, it is the context that differentiates one entrepreneurship process from another (Welter *et al.*, 2016). Context is not one variable affecting the entrepreneur, it consists of different dimensions (Welter, 2011). We could talk of a multiplicity of contexts which are interconnected but shape and are shaped by the entrepreneurship process in different ways (Gaddefors & Cronsell, 2009; Welter, 2011; Ferguson *et al.*, 2015; Berglund *et al.*, 2016). An interplay between contexts and entrepreneurship is present (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Mair & Martí, 2006; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015a). The argument implies a connection that runs both ways, making it difficult to separate contexts shaping people versus people shaping contexts, and thus, people and contexts can better be understood when considered together (Welter, 2011; Anderson & Gaddefors, 2016).

While research on context and entrepreneurship is growing, there is still a need to further grasp the complexity and heterogeneous aspects of contexts and entrepreneurship (Zahra & Wright, 2011; Welter *et al.*, 2016). I will in this paper argue that a part of that picture is to view entrepreneurship as having a multiplicity of contexts. Hence, looking beyond context as a variable (Welter, 2011) and emphasizing the complexity and multifaceted nature of different contexts. The research question in this paper is how an entrepreneurial process enhances different changes in contexts. The research questions are to help fulfill the aim of the study, that is, to examine the multiplicity of contexts in entrepreneurship processes.

To investigate the multiplicity of contexts, an ethnographic case study has been conducted with a women's entrepreneurship association, named Q, in a small community in Sweden. Aspects of locality and gender were in this paper chosen as contexts to analyze. In the case it was evident how locality and gender are interconnected, and they were thus a good illustration of the arguments. Drawing on the ethnographic material, this paper shows (1) how gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship were reproduced and challenged while aspects of locality were respectively strengthened in the entrepreneurial process, (2) how a multiplicity of contexts are interconnected within the entrepreneurship process, and (3), how there is a need for reflexivity when choosing what contexts to study since it affects how the entrepreneurship process is viewed. The article is structured as follows: First, the two contexts, locality and gender, are presented in relation to entrepreneurship. Second, the method used are presented. Third, the empirical findings are discussed in relation to the contexts gender and locality. Finally, the conclusions of the paper and recommendations for future research are presented.

2.   Theoretical framework

Locality as a context of entrepreneurship—the concepts of place and space

Cresswell (2014) has argued for locality as a process in which people engage in activities to make meaning of a space. Agnew (1987) proposed three important aspects of a meaningful location: the physical aspect, the material aspect, and the relationship between the physical and material aspects and the people. Cresswell (2014) put forward the notion that these different dimensions of location cannot alone be what constructs a place. Instead, place can be seen as something that brings these aspects together and in some sense also has a role in creating the dimensions. Place is seen as the glue between economic and social practices. Along the same lines, Korsgaard *et al.* (2015b) argued that social practices are influenced by physical location as well as physical location being influenced by social practices. Thus, an intertwining of physical and social processes occurs, leaving place to be interpreted as based on both physical and social aspects.

Using the same argument, Johnstone and Lionais (2004) discussed the view of a location as a holder for space and place. When it comes to entrepreneurship, we have the more traditional entrepreneurship being linked to aspects of space, while for example social (Korsgaard & Anderson, 2011), societal (Berglund *et al.*, 2012), and community entrepreneurship (Anderson & Gaddefors, 2016) are more linked to aspects of place. Space is viewed as the capacity for profit that a location has, while place is seen as the capacity for constructing meaning in, and of, the location (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004). Strengthening the space aspect of a locality lies thus in, for example, more businesses and citizens, which contribute to the economic development of the location. Applying the concept of place means looking beyond the production and consumption values of a location and instead emphasizing the social and cultural aspects (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004). Or, as Tuan (1977, p. 5) puts it: "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as

we get to know it better and endow it with value." So, while space is a fairly economic and capitalistic view of a location, the perspective of place implies more of a social investigation. Focusing on strengthening the place aspect of locality means to, for example, work on relationships, building trust and changing norms.

Gender as a context of entrepreneurship—reproducing and challenging structure

Gender is in this paper understood as structured behavior embedded in everyday life (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This is a poststructuralist perspective on gender that critiques the stability of masculinity and femininity (Calás *et al.*, 2007). With a poststructuralist perspective, gender is not constructed in one universal way; instead, it is flexible and varying. It is constantly reproduced and challenged through, for example, interactions with institutions, communication between people, and interpretations of historical aspects. Gender, then, is something that is enacted and "done" in actions, in social processes (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Bruni *et al.* (2004) showed that the process of doing gender and the process of doing entrepreneurship interplay. The gender aspects affect how entrepreneurship is enacted, and the entrepreneurship process affects how gender is reproduced and challenged. As entrepreneurship (e.g., Ahl, 2006) is perceived as masculine, constructed within a masculine framework with male connotations, the process to a high extent reproduces gender. The entrepreneurship discourse has sustained traditional binaries with two components: male and female (Ogbor, 2000). In the binary system the male-oriented view and definition of reality is upheld as the only legitimate view of society. The system cheers for masculine entrepreneurship concepts (Ahl, 2006) such as control, rivalry, rationality, and domination (Ogbor, 2000). To comply with the masculine view of entrepreneurship thus strengthens the reproduction of the gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2011). On the other hand, to challenge the masculine

view of entrepreneurship is to, for example, do business in another way, no matter whether you are a woman, a man, women, or men doing the entrepreneurship (Lewis, 2006).

3.   Method

The data for this study were crafted with a qualitative ethnographic approach (Johnstone, 2007). The chosen community for the study has historically been characterized by a traditionally male-dominated, large-scale industry based in ironworks and more lately in production of boats, snowmobiles, and plastic components. Today the community has moved away from large-scale industry and instead try to be characterized as a place for small-scale business. The community has a higher percentage of businesses per resident than the surrounding area (Statistics Sweden, 2014a, 2014b). As a study object within this community a local business association for female (i.e., women) entrepreneurs, Q, was chosen. Within this association around 30 women were organized, of whom 16 took an active and recurring part in the group and are thus a part of the study; see Table 1. Nine of these entrepreneurs have lent their voices for this paper; their names are underlined in Table 1. During the nine months between the first encounter until this paper was written, the group had six meetings in which I took part as an observer and sometimes as an active participant (Johnstone, 2007).

Additionally, I interviewed 11 of the women, some of them more than once. Together with the ethnographic approach, interviewing the women more than once helped me as a researcher to act reflexively when analyzing statements and observations (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). The interviews and informal meetings were set up as conversations (McKeever *et al.*, 2015) around the women's involvement in Q and their relation to the local community. Seven of the women I also observed in their daily lives (Johnstone, 2007), at work (such as when Gabby had a lecture),

and at other meetings (such as when Sydney was at a meeting with another local business association).

Table 1. The entrepreneurs involved in the study

Name	Sector	Meetings in Q	Interviews	Observations
Alice	Tourism	2	0	0
Bella	Education	4	3	1
Bethany	Education	3	0	0
Clara	Agriculture	5	1	0
Gemma	Retail	3	1	0
Isabel	Artist	6	1	1
Lesley	Logistics	4	0	0
Gabby	Health	0	1	0
Madeline	Retail	6	1	1
Mary	Logistics	6	1	0
Melissa	Real estate	3	1	1
Penelope	Private health care	6	3	1
Scarlett	Retail	2	0	0
Shirley	IT	6	0	0
Sydney	Health	6	1	1
Vivian	Health	5	1	2

The processes of interviewing and observing are somewhat loosely differentiated in this paper (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009), in line with the ethnographic approach (Johnstone, 2007). In the practical fieldwork the two methods highly overlapped. The borders became less well defined when an observation occurred while doing an interview; the interviews were thus more than just the recorded sessions, and the observations also involved my asking questions.

Because of my pronounced interest in talking to the women about their businesses, it was fairly easy to create the scope for talking about the space aspects of their entrepreneurship. At the same time, this led to discussions about place aspects being overlooked in the conversations. One example of this is an interview with Sydney: even when asked direct questions such as, "What kind of place is the local community to live in?" Sydney started her answer with "I think it is easy to run a business in this community." The remainder of the answer involved Sydney explaining advantages of the closeness in a small community and how the process is flexible and fast when it comes to solving practicalities of all kinds. It seems as though Sydney tried to give appropriate answers according to what she thought was expected of her (Alvesson, 2003). In this setting, with the way I was presenting myself and my research, Sydney and the others had preconceptions about what this research was going to be about. The preconceptions went both ways, with my analysis beginning before the first encounter with the group. Already at my desk I had ideas about the people I was going to meet and the findings I was expected to make. At the same time, the findings changed and evolved throughout the fieldwork and the deskwork. A reflexive stance was thus evident in analyzing the data (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). The analysis is still my production of the simplification of the reality that the people in this study experienced (Barinaga, 2016).

At the same time as I described and simplified the reality of the people in this study, I was also as a researcher taking part in producing their reality (Barinaga, 2016). What happened and was said in one meeting thus affected how the next meeting played out. A somewhat constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for analyzing the material was then used. The interviews were transcribed, and the observations written up as field notes. Along the lines of Müller (2013) and Tunberg (2014), the material was organized and coded using the Nvivo software. Patterns of resemblance and variance (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were explored, taking into account how gender was reproduced and challenged when it comes to the masculine view of entrepreneurship and how strengthening space and place was seen. The findings were analyzed and discussed against the background of the theoretical framework provided in section 2.

4.   Findings and discussion

In the local community there are three business associations, one of which has a subgroup exclusively for women, named Q. The entrepreneurship process happening in Q might enhance different changes in contexts, depending on what contexts are in focus. Combining locality and gender yields four intersecting ways (see Table 2) that the entrepreneurship process can enhance change in different contexts at the same time. Adding the findings from the study to these four intersections, it becomes clear that the contexts are enhanced in different ways by different aspects of the entrepreneurship process happening in Q. As explained in the method section of this paper, the four intersections were constructed when analyzing the ethnographic case in search of resemblance and variance to the theoretical framework. Below are the findings and discussions of the four intersections and how they relate to the theoretical framework.

Table 2. Intersections showing how gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship were reproduced and challenged in Q, while strengthening locality through the perspectives of space and place

Gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship are… Strengthens local…	…reproduced	…challenged
…space, capacity for profit	(1) Professionalization	(2) Women starting businesses in areas dominated by men
…place, capacity for creating meaning	(3) Business relations	(4) Women working together

What is termed professionalization of women entrepreneurs (1) occurs in Q when the women are trained in business-related practices such as first impressions, social media, and accounting. One of the goals of the government program that Q is financed by is to induce growth in businesses already established by women, and one way of achieving this is to develop the women's business-related skills (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2015). As Gemma told me: "We had a computer course where we were taught how to behave on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and such. We had some useful lectures." Gemma enjoyed the lectures because they opened her eyes, and she felt, "but of course, that's how it's supposed to be done." At the same time, she stated: "You may not remember it when you are in the midst of everything. But it's good to get a little push sometimes." Business training is also provided through a number of

different courses linked to the government program supporting women entrepreneurs. A majority of the women in the group had taken at least one of these courses. These courses were held in other cities nearby, together with other associations in the region, but not in the local community. Gabby had great use of the courses, since she felt that she lacked training in business administration, and this was a welcome addition to her previous education. She stated that when she joined the association she felt that "We were all such beginners. How do you run a business?" The focus in the association is on growth for women's businesses, and with the training there is a need to fit women entrepreneurs into the general view of (masculine) entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000; Ahl, 2006). Some of the women themselves see growth as important, as illustrated by one of Bella's reasons for joining Q, which had to do with a need for growth in her business:

I read about the association in the local paper. It said female entrepreneurship and then something about growth. I felt during this time that my business was too small, that I had to grow to survive, but I did not know how.

This clear focus, both by the government and by the women themselves, on complying with the masculine view of entrepreneurship is a reproduction of the gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2011), just by simply not questioning the way things are done within entrepreneurship (Lewis, 2006). In turn, businesses owned by women that are more successful when it comes to growth are believed to lead to place being strengthened. However, this is not the case, as working towards a further professionalization is linked to strengthening space through the focus on economic and capitalistic values in society (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004). A place perspective is not present within this intersection; since the goals are to professionalize the individual person and create growth in the separate businesses, there is not a focus on the development of the local community.

Shirley's business (2) is an example of an outcome from Q that challenges gender structures and strengthens space aspects. For Shirley the introduction to Q meant the start of her business. She took an active part in Q for almost a year before she quit her employment. She said: "I took the step, and it was something that I had longed for, for a long time." The business is run from her home, where she takes photographs and designs websites. Shirley does all kinds of programing and coding for different IT systems. This was one of the things she did in previous jobs. She said:

I come from a very male-dominated world. So it has been a journey, which has admittedly been very nice, but at my previous job I had to work and prove myself 10 times more, even though I could do the job as well as anyone else. So it's been a good learning experience.

Because of being a member of Q, Shirley gained the confidence to start her business, even though Q obviously was not the only factor influencing her decision. Still, Shirley was a part of Q for one year before deciding to quit her employment. She took part in the training and socialized with the other entrepreneurs, making it more probable for her to see that she, just like they, could start her own business. With her business Shirley strengthens space, since her business for the most part only contributes to the local community by providing herself with employment; there is not a focus on being a glue within the community. Strengthening space is not a bad thing per se, as it might come across sometimes. The problem in focusing only on strengthening space aspects within entrepreneurship lies in prioritizing that over all the other kinds of contributions that entrepreneurship could make. When prioritizing and focusing on space aspects—entrepreneurship as it has always been seen—it is hard to not think that this kind of entrepreneurship merely further reproduces the gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship, as it does not challenge this traditional view (Ogbor, 2000; Ahl, 2006; Lewis,

2006; Achtenhagen & Welter, 2011). However, Shirley is at the same time challenging the male norm of the IT sector, since she is running her home-based business in a different way (Lewis, 2006) than business is usually done in the IT sector. So, with her business, Shirley is challenging this reproduction of the gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship that comes with running a business with a focus on space aspects.

Another goal of Q is to build relationships and networks between the members. Mary stated that "Q exists as an association so we can find each other." Madeleine put it this way:

I think that everybody here thinks it is really nice to meet and that we improve [as individuals] and build relationships. Maybe we can benefit from and find amusement with each other in a number of different ways.

The women want to see more business relations in the local community through the network provided by Q. Alice, during one of the sessions, asked if the other entrepreneurs knew anybody that she could turn to as she developed mushroom picking within her business. Bella quickly hinted that her husband knew a lot about mushrooms, and then Sydney said that Bethany's dogs could help with the tracking. At an earlier meeting of Q Mary had informed the group that she had just made sure that a bunch of switchgear workers had somewhere to live in the surrounding area. They were going to be working on the local switchgear for about six or seven weeks. Mary had told them where they could go to get physical exercise and where to eat, and then had told them that they could get a massage at Sydney's salon. At one of the women's meetings Mary also told the group how she had forgotten that Vivian worked with leadership training and that she had to remember that for future reference.

It is unclear whether anything actually came of these conversations, but it shows that there is a need to connect businesses in the local community. The women want to seek out opportunities to help each other and to develop each other's businesses, so the community can continue to exist. The business relations (3) that the women develop among themselves, or at least wish to develop, lead to a further reproduction of the gender structures, since they continue to emphasize entrepreneurship as a masculine, economic, and growth-oriented phenomenon (Ogbor, 2000; Ahl, 2006). Still, the business relations are closely linked to a strengthening of the local place, since the relations have a focus on the local community. The desire is thus to connect businesses (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004) in the community, in order to develop the local place through more relationships.

Penelope had another take on building business relationships. She had started to connect people in the community to each other, people who did not know each other or did not think that they had anything in common. The reason for doing so was not financial; rather, Penelope saw the potential of the people in Q and how connecting them could be a way to develop the local community. When the women in Q come together in the association (4) they are both strengthening local place and challenging gender structures. The group is collectively and actively working together to shape the meaning of the local community (Tuan, 1977) and thus also challenging existing gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship. When, for example, Penelope connects entrepreneurs from Q with other people, based on what would happen to the community, she is driven not by economic values but by a desire to do good for the people in the community.

Thus, we can see how the entrepreneurial process in Q enhances different contexts in different ways. The case illustrates how space and place, respectively, are strengthened by the work in Q.

At the same time we can see how professionalization and business relations reproduce gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship, while women starting businesses in fields dominated by men, and women working together, challenge gender structures.

5.   Conclusion

Context is evidently important to how entrepreneurship is understood. This paper shows how different aspects in two contexts, gender and locality, where strengthened with the entrepreneurship process. The contexts locality and gender have in this paper been presented to illustrate how contexts interplay with an entrepreneurship process. Departing from the distinction between space and place, I have shown how a women's entrepreneurship association reproduces and challenges gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship. The case illustrates how an urge for professionalization of the women in the group strengthened the economic aspect of the locality, thus space (Johnstone & Lionais, 2004). However, the case also illustrates how this professionalization reproduced the traditional masculine view of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006), thus the gender structures. What strengthened space and challenged the masculine view of entrepreneurship was women starting up businesses in areas of enterprise traditionally dominated by men (Lewis, 2006). Turning to place aspects, the case showed not only how the development of business relations strengthened notions of place but also how it reproduced gender structures when it comes to entrepreneurship. Lastly, when the women worked together their cooperative endeavors still strengthened place aspects as they also challenged the traditional gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship.

Strengthening an aspect of one of the contexts will also affect other contexts of the entrepreneurial process. Just enhancing space aspects without being reflexive about what will happen to the gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship could potentially lead to a further reproduction of gender structures, even though this is not the intention. As we can see in the case,
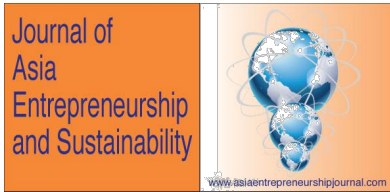
enhancing space aspects could also potentially lead to a challenge of the masculine view of entrepreneurship. In this paper I argue for the importance of choosing different dimensions of context when studying entrepreneurship since if we were to study context as a variable to entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011) we would probably not see how different contexts are interconnected or how different aspects of contexts are enhanced through interconnection. The entrepreneurial process will evidently look different depending on what contexts are chosen to study.

Hence, a multiplicity of contexts in a contextualized view of entrepreneurship is crucial for understanding entrepreneurship processes better. As shown in this paper, the more contexts to take into account, the more complex an entrepreneurship process is perceived to be. Thus, there is a need for a more reflexive view of the contexts that shape and are shaped by the entrepreneurship process. With a more reflexive view of contextualized entrepreneurship, different dimensions of contexts can be brought to light, thereby changing how the entrepreneurship process is viewed. This may in turn allow researchers to gain a better scope of the entrepreneurship process.

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II

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Embeddedness in context: understanding gender in a female entrepreneurship network

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that through a process of embeddedness in context, a female entrepreneurship network is able to challenge gender structures. I investigate how a female entrepreneurship network is constructed and how they reinforce and possibly challenge existing gender structures. From an ethnographic study, three processes in the female entrepreneurship network were identified: *making proper entrepreneurs, building relationships* and *engaging in change*. In the different processes the women involved in the network reinforced gender structures through compliance with a masculine discourse of entrepreneurship, but also challenged gender structures through questioning this discourse. Through becoming embedded in their local community, the women entrepreneurs were able to take charge of the development of the network and challenge gender structures as a result of questioning the masculine discourse of entrepreneurship. This implies an interplay between embeddedness and gender as two separate but dependent processes. Linking together gender and embeddedness elicits a new take on the way female entrepreneurship networks are constructed and how they could advance gender equality within entrepreneurship. Consequently, this paper emphasises a need for further examination of embeddedness within gender and entrepreneurship research.

Introduction

Programmes to support women's entrepreneurship have been both recognized and questioned as important in encouraging more women to become entrepreneurs and changing the gendered entrepreneurship discourse. The programmes are important for women to be able to meet personal and economic goals (Marlow and Patton 2005). Hanson (2009) argues that a further focus on empowering women entrepreneurs within the programme will enable the women to challenge gender structures. At the same time, these programmes further complies with the masculine norm of economy, as economic measures are determined by masculine precursors and there are limited discussions on structural issues surrounding gender and entrepreneurship (Marlow and Patton 2005). Stating that women need to network more to become more successful entrepreneurs merely establishes the notion that it is women, and not the structures, that need to change (Mirchandani 1999; Hughes et al. 2012). Women are seen as unable to achieve their entrepreneurial potential without the assistance of education, support and encouragement (Marlow and McAdam 2013). Women entrepreneurs thus operate under a 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' scenario (Ahl and Marlow 2012). The women are 'damned' if they act as

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proper (male) entrepreneurs, since complying with the masculine norm further upholds subordination of other forms of entrepreneurship. The women are 'damned if they don't' strive to act as proper entrepreneurs, since they then lack legitimacy and are not considered proper entrepreneurs.

With the aim of contributing to understanding the processes of gendering entrepreneurship, I address the research question: How does a female entrepreneurship network reinforce and challenge gender structures? The analysis is made through applying a theoretical framework, which links gender to embeddedness in context. Applying a poststructuralist perspective, gender is presented as a structure that people, phenomena and institutions relate to (Calás and Smircich 1996). The structures are produced through a process of social situations (West and Zimmerman 1987; Martin 2003) where differences between women and men are accomplished through creating advantage and disadvantage between femininity and masculinity (Acker 1990). Similar to gender, embeddedness is a process. Becoming embedded is to acknowledge the social context, the surrounding environment in the entrepreneurship process (Jack and Anderson 2002; Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015).

Through this study I intend to advance research on gender and entrepreneurship in several ways. First, I examine how female entrepreneurship networks are constructed, how they reinforce and challenge gender structures. Second, I show how moving towards being embedded in context enabled a female entrepreneurship network to challenge gender structures. Third, I bring forth how the processes of embeddedness and gender interplay in a female entrepreneurship network.

Initially, the paper defines some key concepts through a theoretical framework. Next, the methodological approach is developed, presenting the case studied. The case and my analysis are then offered in relation to the theoretical framework. Lastly, the findings are discussed and a conclusion is made.

Theoretical framework

By acknowledging the interplay of the gender process with different social processes (Deutsch 2007), networks targeting women are affected by and affect gender structures in various ways. As this paper focuses on how these gender structures come about and are changed through reinforcement and challenging actions, the production of gender will be the basis for analyzing the relationship between a female entrepreneurship network and the gender process. The production of gender is in itself a way of creating differences (West and Zimmerman 1987) attributing characteristics of advantage and disadvantage between women and men, and femininity and masculinity (Acker 1990). Here gender springs from social situations and is continuously produced through symbols, interactions and behaviours (West and Zimmerman 1987; Martin 2003). Structures are evident that separate men and women and value them differently (Hirdman 1988). When it comes to the entrepreneurship discourse, the hierarchy in gender structures (Hirdman 1988) is seen in how a feminine perspective becomes positioned as subordinated (Ogbor 2000). Society's view of femininity simply does not fit into the mainstream view of entrepreneurship (Ahl 2006). As an example, Lewis (2006) and Korsgaard and Anderson (2011) show how within the entrepreneurship discourse, a serious business is a business that strives for economic growth; the social enabler, social context and social outcome of entrepreneurship, is thus overlooked. Then, since a stable and small business is cast as the opposite, and men are seen as owning businesses focused on growth, women are not seen as having a place within this discourse. The dividing aspect of gender structures (Hirdman 1988) is seen in how comparisons are often made between women and men, separating *women entrepreneurs* from *entrepreneurs*, by portraying women as having shortcomings and not being as entrepreneurial as men (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004; Ahl 2006; Henry, Foss, and Ahl 2015). The actions people perform in relation to these structures could be seen as *reinforcing* or *challenging* (West and Zimmerman 1987). Following and conforming to gender structures is a reinforcement of the structures. While a challenging action is,

for example when a woman runs a business (Berg 1997) or when spaces for new expressions of the successful business woman are provided (Anderson 2008).

As I show in this paper, balancing the embeddedness process within an entrepreneurship process is a way of challenging gender structures. Since there are different types of embeddedness, such as political, cultural, cognitive and social (Welter and Smallbone 2010), using a mixed embeddedness perspective (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, and Rath 1999) means these different types are used when analyzing an entrepreneurship process. Much like gender, embeddedness is a social process. Unlike the gender process, which is a dichotomy of either reinforcing or challenging structures, embeddedness is a process of moving between two extremes. One extreme is the rational market behaviour where almost no mention is made of how social relationships effect decisions. Here social embeddedness is almost non-existent and the relationship between buyer and seller is based on price equilibrium (Uzzi 1996). Even though social relationships where gender is reproduced and challenged are not taken into account, this extreme is still linked to a reinforcement of gender structures as the economic system is framed within masculine values (Ogbor 2000). On the other extreme, we have the behaviour of over-socialization within a market, implying that the actors do not make rational economic decisions, but instead all decisions are made according to structures (Granovetter 1985), such as gender. As in rational market behaviour, a reinforcement of gender structures is apparent, as all decisions are based in the social relations that gender undermines. In between the two extremes, an entrepreneurship process embedded in the social context enables people to realise the importance of the context, become part of it, and access resources bound to the context (Jack and Anderson 2002; Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015). Context involves acknowledging the different actors included in the entrepreneurship process, and also when, where and under what institutional conditions the entrepreneurship process emerges (Welter 2011). Changing contexts can be accomplished through the social processes of interactions such as embeddedness (Vestrum 2014). Welter (2011) points to examples of when entrepreneurship has been triggered by an embeddedness in context, leading to social change within that context. At the same time, Welter together with Smallbone (2010) also shows how women embedded in an array of former Soviet institutions affect their context by, for example offering other women jobs and being positive role models. Also, Kloosterman and Rath (2001) illustrate how an embedded business owner in a neighbourhood can be part of the process of embedding customers by selling goods, and thus changing the dynamics of the neighbourhood in which they are embedded. However, *who* and *what* are not seen as separate entities in the embeddedness processes (Aldrich and Cliff 2003). Embeddedness therefore captures how different contexts interplay (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, and Rath 1999). Context is not the background to entrepreneurship, but a foreground actor in the entrepreneurial process, indicating that people and context can only be analysed when considered together (Spedale and Watson 2014). Looking at the embeddedness process unravels the dynamics by which the institutions of *who* and *what* are connected (Aldrich and Cliff 2003). For an organization, embeddedness is associated with positive effects to a degree. However, at a certain point, a threshold is reached and embeddedness tends to be associated with the negative outcomes of over-socialization (Uzzi 1997; Waldinger 1995). To get the most out of being embedded, entrepreneurs need to balance embeddedness through negotiation with the context, being cautious not to cross this threshold (Gaddefors and Cronsell 2009; Kalantaridis and Bika 2006).

In this theoretical framework three points are highlighted. First, how gender structures can be reinforced and challenged. Second, how the extremes in embeddedness—over-socialization and rational market behaviour—reinforce gender structures. An over-socialized view of embeddedness is linked to making decisions based solely on structures such as gender, and rational market behaviour is tied to following a masculine economic discourse. Third, how balancing the embeddedness in context could potentially challenge gender structures. In this paper, these three highlighted points are the basis for investigating how a female entrepreneurship network reinforces and challenges gender structures. The next section presents how I investigated this empirically.

Methodological approach

The process studied in this paper is a female entrepreneurship network, named Q, and it acts as a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg 2006). To capture the complexity of the entrepreneurship process I view the network through a social constructionist perspective (Lindgren and Packendorff 2009) and with a qualitative ethnographic approach (Morgan and Smircich 1980). The environment created in an ethnographic study makes it possible for me, as a researcher, to act reflexively and continuously compare and evaluate the findings (Alvesson and Deetz 2000). As gender is easier to experience and observe than verbally describe (Martin 2003), a mix of techniques were used ranging from interviews, participation in formal and informal meetings and observations (Silverman 1993; Alvesson 2003; Czarniawska 2007; Johnstone 2007). Since social processes, such as gender, are likely to be transparent and easier to observe in a rural community, due to the well-defined rural context (Anderson 2000; Jack and Anderson 2002), the ethnographic approach explains what the women *say* they do and what the women *actually* do.

The empirical data in this paper are from an ongoing ethnographic study about gender and entrepreneurship within a rural community where I am involved in different business networks, meetings facilitated by the municipality's administrators, as well as do interviews with and observe entrepreneurs, municipality representatives and individuals performing voluntary work. The empirics for this paper are from the first 14 months, between 2015 and 2017, of the larger ethnographic study. The female entrepreneurship network formed in 2013 as part of a Swedish government programme to encourage and support entrepreneurship by women (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth 2015). The programme ran from 2007 to 2014 and by increasing the number of women developing and running businesses, the programme aimed to create growth, competitiveness and renewal in the business sector. A number of education platforms were launched that focused on enabling women to further develop a business or business idea, and women entrepreneurship networks were initiated and eligible for financial assistance. Q was started and ran for 2 years within this programme. In the middle of 2015, the funding became linked to a regional development project funded directly by the EU.

The network had approximately 30 members, of which 18 were regular members (see Table 1). The women ran different businesses varying in sector and size, and differed in years as operational, yet were similar in the fact that they (1) defined themselves as female by participating in the network, (2) all ran some sort of business and (3) they or their business were linked to the community. During the 14 months of empirical research the female entrepreneurship network had 11 meetings. At the first meeting I attended, I held a discussion about my research project and in the following meetings I participated either as a sounding board or as an observer. Between meetings I conducted individual interviews and observations with 12 of the entrepreneurs that were interested in further taking part in the study. The interviews usually took place in their working environment; either in an office, shop or at home. In the interviews we discussed their business, their lives and their relation to Q. Observations were done, for example while listening to a lecture held by one of the women entrepreneurs. As the empirical data in this paper are from a larger study, I also met the women in other business networks and meetings in the local community. This gave me the opportunity to observe the women outside of the network, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of their relationship to Q and the local community. This resulted in meeting one member 24 times during the 2 years, and others only once when they were invited to a meeting. I had no influence over who decided to participate in either Q or any other meeting; the women attended based on their personal interest. However, I did meet all of the 18 regular members at least twice. The sampling evolved through the field work (Glaser and Strauss 1967) which is typical for an ethnographic study, where the researcher has limited control over the situation and there is the potential to be more influenced by some people than others (Johnstone 2007).

Table 1. Entrepreneurs involved in the study.

	Business information				Involvement in the study		
Respondent	Activity	Employees	Years established	Joined Q	In Q	Interviews	Observations
Addison	Horses	0	11	Start	9	4	1
Alexandra	Osteopath	0	6	Start	2	2	1
Amanda	Accounting	2	5	Middle	3	0	0
Angela	Yarn shop	1	6	Middle	3	1	0
Elisabeth	Construction and manufacturing sector	4	28	Start	7	3	1
Isabella	Administrates personal assistance	400	18	Start	10	6	8
Jennifer	Wellness centre	3	17	Middle	10	1	4
Joanna	Artist	0	30	Middle	9	1	1
Juliet	Dog training	0	5	Recent	5	0	0
Katherine	Cabin rentals	0	8	Recent	2	0	0
Maria	Logistics	10–14	16	Start	10	3	1
Michelle	Furniture, with Rebecca	4	10	Recent	2	0	0
Nina	Logistics	11	20	Start	4	0	0
Rebecca	Furniture, with Michelle	4	10	Recent	3	0	0
Rose	Honey production	0	12	Middle	8	2	0
Valerie	Leadership consulting	0	25	Start	7	3	7
Vera	Property owner	0	37	Middle	4	1	1
Zoe	IT-consultant	0	2	Start	10	2	0
Janet	Flower shop	0	15	Quit	1	1	0
Lily	Project manager	–	–	–	1	1	1

When exploring the data, I used the theoretical framework with the analytical tools of gender as reinforced or challenged, and the extremes in embeddedness and their links to gender structures. Thus my evolving theoretical framework interacted with my curiosity and the evolving fieldwork, which implies a sometimes tangible movement between different analytical levels (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000). The transcribed interviews and field notes were organized and coded in Nvivo, where I deconstructed the data, labelling statements and observations to create an uncluttered display. The first round of coding was based on the question 'What is going on here?'. The labels were then combined and connected in multiple stages (see Table 2 for an example of how a quote went through the analysis process). Coding and combining the labels happened in conversations with peers in seminars, meetings and over coffee. In the analysis process I constructed narratives through a multitude of conversations (Czarniawska 1998). These conversations varied in time and place but are still connected through narratives (Boje 2001). A narrative carries more than verbal dialogue; it is also written texts, body language and atmosphere. When arriving at the six narratives, the material was once again evaluated and I actively searched for missing material linked to the six remaining narratives. These updated six narratives were then categorized based on whether they were reinforcing or challenging gender structures.

Table 2. An example of how a quote evolved through the analysis process.

Quote to be analysed	First round of coding (97 labels in total)	Second round of coding (56 labels in total)	Third round of coding: narratives (6 labels in total)	Does the narrative challenge or reinforce gender structure?	Process
I would rather have seen more about me and my business and less about women entrepreneurs in general. You know, we all have so different needs. Maybe the economic part of running the business is the same but the other parts were hard to implement in my own business. —Addison	* Business training * The women are not the same * Implementation problem * Business administration is the same in all businesses	* Critical towards the provided business training * Women entrepreneurs are (wrongly) grouped together by institutions	Othering the woman entrepreneur	Reinforce gender structures in entrepreneurship	Making proper entrepreneurs

Three processes emerged from this categorization: making proper entrepreneurs, building relationships and engaging in change process. What follows now is a presentation of the empirical material analysed as narratives and processes. After the presentation the processes are discussed in relation to each other.

Empirical analysis

Six narratives emerged in the analysis of the female entrepreneurship network (see Table 3). The narratives were classified as either 'reinforcing' or 'challenging' gender structures with three processes coming out of this analysis; 'making proper entrepreneurs', 'building relationships' and 'engaging in change'.

Making proper entrepreneurs process

In the process 'making proper entrepreneurs' the focus is generally on women entrepreneurs and the process consists of the making of the women entrepreneurs as secondary to male entrepreneurs through othering, and a focus on the government's factors of success for women's entrepreneurship. Gender structures are then reinforced by the measure of success being closely linked to a masculine evaluation (Lewis 2006) of what a business is and the expressed need to form the women into this masculine view.

Othering the woman entrepreneur

The female entrepreneurship network have the subheading 'female entrepreneurship network for business development' and they are a subgroup to an entrepreneurship network, which is simply named The Entrepreneurs. Many women are a part of both groups and three women even sit on the board of The Entrepreneurs. The activities of Q are separated from the activities that The Entrepreneurs hold, and they have different funding. As Q was initially financed and organized by a national government programme, and is now funded by an EU programme, there are expectations about how the network should use their funding appropriately. For the most part, the activities are teaching moments such as lectures and courses. In the teaching moments the women are trained in business-related practices such as making a good first impression, handling social media and basic accounting. There seems to be a view that the women need these skills to be able to perform as entrepreneurs, as previuosly suggested by Marlow and McAdam (2013). Addison, reflecting upon the teaching moments, stated:

> I would rather have seen more about me and my business and less about women entrepreneurs in general. You know, we all have such different needs. Maybe the economic part of running the business is the same, but the other parts were hard to implement in my own business.

Table 3. Six narratives from the network arranged in three processes and categorized as either reinforcing or challenging gender structures when it comes to entrepreneurship.

	Process		
	Making proper entrepreneurs	*Building relationships*	*Engaging in change*
Reinforcing gender structures in entrepreneurship	Othering the woman entrepreneur Economic growth focus	The need to feel professional	
Challenging gender structures in entrepreneurship		Develop business together	Somewhere to belong Change on two fronts

For Joanna the teaching moments were too basic 'We did not get the inspiration we need when we have been in the game for a couple of years'. This statement, and the other above, reflect the difficulty in trying to educate women entrepreneurs: they are often very different but are seen as a general group. The women entrepreneurs are all viewed as being in need of basic training, no matter their previous experience. The governing bodies do not take into account the individual goals and needs of the women entrepreneurs.

Economic growth focus

As seen in the formalized goals of the network, the women entrepreneurs are expected to grow their business through their involvement in the network. This is evident in why the women joined the network in the first place. Addison joined the network based on a persistent feeling of needing to grow her business: 'I needed to grow, I just did not know how'. Similarly, Joanna saw Q as a marketing opportunity for her business when she moved to the area. Therefore, the meetings focus on increased sales, primarily between members and secondly with actors outside of the network. It is not taken into account that the women are in vastly different sectors (see Table 1 again) and that it could be difficult to engage in transactions with each other. At one of the meetings Q's vision was discussed:

> Katherine: What is Q's vision?
>
> Elisabeth: More competence development, more women entrepreneurs and more equality.
>
> Katherine: What kind of skills are missing?
>
> Elisabeth: General skills.
>
> The women discuss this and end up questioning if the objective is to be more women entrepreneurs or better women entrepreneurs.
>
> Isabella answers: We should make more business transactions through the network and think about what we can do together.

There are different views from the members of the network as to whether networking has actually led to increased business transactions and business growth. Isabella thinks the network has led to some cooperation between the women, but believes generally that it stopped at conversations. Maria is the one that have experienced a business transaction; she met a designer at one of the regional network meetings and then hired her to make some commercial materials for her company.

Referring to Table 3, the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process is further reinforcing gender structures when it comes to entrepreneurship as an element of separating women from normative entrepreneurs is evident. The women entrepreneurs are seen as weaker versions of the normative entrepreneur and in need of training and support, thus normalizing the masculine entrepreneurship discourse (Marlow and McAdam 2013). The governing bodies are trying to challenge the gender structures through empowering and involving more women in entrepreneurship, but they end up reinforcing differences between women and men (Marlow and Patton 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987). The network is, in this narrative, poorly embedded in context. This since instead of drawing on or appreciating the knowledge from the local community (Jack and Anderson 2002; Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015) the women entrepreneurs are seen as a homogenous group facing the same challenges as other women entrepreneurs across Sweden.

Building relationships process

In the 'building relationships' process there is a social aspect of the women coming together as well as a resistance towards focusing on this social aspect. Due to the resistance and continued

focus on masculine perceptions of what entrepreneurship is, this process further reinforces gender structures. At the same time, business development by interactions are emphasized, which favours challenging the structures. In the 'building relationships' process there are narratives that say there is a need for the women to feel like professional entrepreneurs and that the women develop their businesses through interaction.

The need to feel professional

To be professional is not a problem in itself. The question is what professional means. Within the entrepreneurship discourse it seems that prioritizing growth and economic values are seen as professional (Lewis 2006), while focusing on other aspects of entrepreneurship, such as social features, is not (Korsgaard and Anderson 2011). Maria joined Q because of a need to talk business. She was fed up with all the men at her company and the lack of professional business conversations. After the first meeting at the network she felt:

> I wanted to meet business owners, but I also wanted to meet women. So the first time I was here [at a meeting with the network] I was quite excited and thought that 'Lord how fun to meet girls, who, on top of everything else, also think that the business stuff is exciting'.

Maria and the other women express their need to talk business as it seems they do not experience professional business exchanges in other forums. Almost all the women express at some point during the study that the network, first and foremost, is a network where they can discuss how to grow their businesses. Additionally, they express a need to push aside the network's social aspect. Elizabeth describes what they do at meetings: '...it is not to meet and small talk, it has to be developing'. There seems to be resistance towards the network having more social aspects and a discontent feeling when the small talk dominates. For Janet, the social overload was a determining factor in deciding to leave the network. She took part in one of Q's meetings but decided not to continue feeling the network was too unprofessional, and did not contain enough business discourse. In conclusion, there are different views as to whether the network is fulfilling the need from the women to feel professional.

Develop business together

Growing their businesses in economic terms through ongoing conversations between the women can be seen as challenging gender structures. Throughout the course of the network, the women have employed different techniques in choosing what to accomplish at their meetings. Influenced by what the government formalized, Elizabeth initially decided what the members would learn about. Later she started to listen to what the members wanted and made the programme according to their needs. When Elizabeth stepped down as group leader, the members started to collectively arrange meetings and collectively decide the content. This development is far from the statements made in the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process, where there is little or no individual focus. Even though the women are still funded by an institution, which formalizes what they can do, they try to incorporate an individual focus on the development of their own businesses. In contrast to the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process, the focus is not on specific learning objectives, but a more individual focus, tailored to developing their businesses through collective and ongoing conversations about growth. Elisabeth illustrates these conversations by talking about how younger and older entrepreneurs inspire each other:

> We hope that we can inspire you and then maybe you can also inspire us. Many of us have worked a long time with our businesses and it could become a bit..., maybe I should see things from another perspective? That is one of the perks with the network; we can help each other in a way that we did not see for ourselves.

Referring back to Table 3, a 'building relationships' process appears when interactions between the women in the network become evident. They find themselves using each other to a mutual benefit as they develop their views on business and what it means to be an entrepreneur. In the 'building

relationships' process we move towards embeddedness into context (Jack and Anderson 2002), as the social aspect of the network draws on the local resources of the women. The narratives here are both challenging and reinforcing gender structures. On one hand, the women reinforce the structures due to a clear desire to act and develop their businesses according to a masculine entrepreneurship discourse (West and Zimmerman 1987; Lewis 2006). On the other hand, the women challenge gender structures in how they work within the network; through ongoing conversations and a more personalized focus on developing their individual businesses.

Engaging in change process

In the 'engaging in change' process a structural perspective is added to the 'making proper entrepreneurs' and 'building relationships' processes. Here the women in the network challenge the gender structures from within the structure. The 'engaging in change' process consists of the narratives that Q is seen as somewhere to belong and that the women actively empower each other and change gender structures.

Somewhere to belong

The reasons for joining and belonging to Q are not only expressed as a desire and need for business development, as expressed in the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process. In the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process the official aim of the network was discussed in terms of economic measures. Isabella has another perception of why the network is important: 'the goal is that we will have just as much say [as men entrepreneurs] and to interact together and get space'. For Michelle it was logical to join Q as she feels 'we are strong together'. In the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process Addison acknowledged that she joined Q because she felt she needed to grow her business. However, she believes the biggest value of the group is the social aspect:

> I think it's fun to get together and I think it's nice since it feels like I know someone in the community now. That's probably the biggest value; to be able to say hi to each other. I don't remember everyone's names, but it feels good that yes 'I recognize you, good to see you again just like last month'. I think it's very enjoyable. [...] Whenever we see each other in the village it's great. We say hello and such. Before I would have been in the village shopping and not said hi to anyone. So it is nice and something I have been missing.

Q is a place of belonging, somewhere where Addison does not feel that she is at the disadvantage she often feels in other situations where her business has not been seen as a 'proper business'. She feels that, 'despite my business revolving around horses', the women in Q treat her as an equal.

Change on two fronts

There is a strong focus on change within the network; change in the way the women see themselves and in the way others see them. Thus Q seems to be a force for both individual and structural change. The network can be seen as changing on two fronts: firstly, through the women empowering one another and findings strategies to operate within the structures, and secondly, by actively trying to change the structures. The women express what can be interpreted as a feminist political view of belonging to Q, as a way to discuss issues and to empower one another. Valerie talks about empowerment between the women in their roles as entrepreneurs and sees Q as 'women power'. The women express ideas such as 'we can't have a change unless we, ourselves, are driving the change' (Lily) and '...we create an added value the more people we are. If just a few of us were to sit here and talk things over again and again nothing would change' (Elisabeth). The women in Q are what Welter and Smallbone (2010) exemplify as embedded role models for other women in their local context.

Q is also platform to breed change. Isabella hopes that Q could be a driver for change within their local business community:

> I envision that in the future we can show The Entrepreneurs that Q can contribute to all entrepreneurs and not just to a small group like us. But it must be in the next turn where we, for example, might be able to expand what we do and let Q inspire all business owners who are not in Q [...]. If you do it responsibly, so that we can make sure that Q is fully accepted, it can be a small engine of some kind. Or perhaps the catalyst that can be an involved actor and fuel the other business owners. And then [our separation] is not a problem.

Isabella illustrates the slow changes in gender structures when gender is challenged through small practices (Anderson 2008). Joanna has a similar idea: 'I am interested in entrepreneurial issues. I'm interested in issues related to female entrepreneurship. I'm interested in everything that could mean development for rural areas'. As explained previously, she joined Q as a marketing strategy but has stayed within the network because she feels a need to change structures. For Joanna, Q has become a platform for enabling change within the community:

> Firstly, [Q] is a fellowship among the likeminded. Secondly, Q is a platform that gives me things I have not thought of before, and I am active in developing myself and my business. It gives new, different insights as I said. That's what it gives me; and new interactions. New people coming in [to the network] and if there is a problem I know that I can ask them if anyone knows where I should turn. And then [Q] is a reference point, I'm not just any anonymous person. I have a platform within the community's voluntary programs where I can make a difference.

The women in the network use their local context to invite new women entrepreneurs and in turn affect them through enrolling them in the programme. They are actively embedding people into their local context much like the example from Kloosterman and Rath (2001) where a shop owner sells goods to customers and embeds them in the local context. Similar to the shop owner, the network is affecting the local context by acknowledging and engaging with people in the context. In addition, Joanna expresses how 'We are not marionettes for the government' implying that the female entrepreneurship network does not comply with the reinforcing of the gender structures that are expected of them by the government. In this process, the 'engaging in change' process, we move even further towards embeddedness into context (Uzzi 1996), not reaching the threshold of over-socialization (Uzzi 1997; Waldinger 1995) where gender processes are thought to be reinforced. This move is possible since the discussions in the network are rooted in the women's perceptions of the local community. Referring back to Table 3, it is evident within the 'engaging in change' process that the network challenges the gender structures by providing a platform where the women can develop their businesses, community and feministic views. Here the focus is larger than only following a masculine entrepreneurship discourse (Ogbor 2000) as in the process 'making proper entrepreneurs'. When the women come together in challenging the gender structures they draw from their local social context. They involve more women from the community and try changing their local business community. A sense of belonging occurs with the women becoming part of their community, their local context. Here the network is not only active in challenging gender structures but also in becoming more embedded in the local context.

Discussion of findings

The programme that finances the female entrepreneurship network is reinforcing gender structures by deciding how entrepreneurship is supposed to be measured and by how the women who join the group enact this measure. However, for the women in Q the network goes beyond the government telling them they need to be better entrepreneurs. As the network is not only reinforcing gender structures, it is also a platform for the women to challenge gender structures through embedding the network in their local context. There is a flow between reinforcing and challenging gender structures when looking at the processes in the female entrepreneurship network (see Table 4). Three processes in the female entrepreneurship network were identified through the analysis (1) 'making proper entrepreneurs' where the focus is on women entrepreneurs in general, (2) 'building relationships' where there is a focus on social interactions to develop the businesses and lastly (3) 'engaging in change' where the women are simultaneously developing

Table 4. How the gender process interplay with the process of embeddedness in context, through the three processes identified in the female entrepreneurship network.

Processes	*Making proper entrepreneurs*	*Building relationships*	*Engaging in change*
Gender	Reinforcing		Challenging
	←————————————————————————→		
Embeddedness in context	Less		More
	←————————————————————————→		

their businesses, their community and their feministic views. In the processes, a reinforcement of gender structures occurs through the 'making proper entrepreneurs' process, and to some extent, through the 'building relationships' process. Both processes further comply with the masculine norm of entrepreneurship (Ogbor 2000; Ahl 2006) through normalizing the masculine entrepreneurship discourse (Ahl and Marlow 2012). However, within the 'building relationships' process there are some narratives that challenge gender structures through the women engaging in conversation about entrepreneurship. The opposition is even more evident within the 'engaging in change' process where the women are drawing on their local resources, creating a platform to challenge gender structures through empowering each other within the structures. As there is variability in gender (in)equality (Deutsch 2007), the flow between reproducing and challenging gender structures exemplifies how this variability could look.

Just as there is a flow between reinforcing and challenging gender structures within the processes, there is also movement between the processes of being more or less embedded in context (see Table 4). The embeddedness process and the gender process seem to interplay as more embeddedness in context is associated with challenging gender structures. When the women start working in the network on a more local level, with themselves and the community at the core of the conversation, they discuss structural issues of women entrepreneurs. These are the types of issues that Marlow and Patton (2005) would like to see discussed when addressing gender and entrepreneurship. Yet, it also seems to be the other way around: challenging gender structures is associated with becoming more embedded in context. As the women become more embedded in their local context they build a platform for themselves to discuss more structural issues. There seems to be a relationship within the entrepreneurship process that is mutually constitutive: the embeddedness process shapes the gender process and the gender process shapes the embeddedness process.

Conclusions

This paper illuminates the interplay between the gender process and the embeddedness process within entrepreneurship. This has theoretical implications since embeddedness then not only changes the context in which it is embedded, in this case it also changes other social processes such as gender. Consequently, this paper adds to the literature on embeddedness by showing how embeddedness interplays with other social processes and how embeddedness in context can be a way towards gender equality.

It is in this paper shown how more embeddedness in context is associated with challenging gender structures and in turn how challenging gender structures is associated with becoming more embedded in context. Three gender structure processes are identified in the female entrepreneurship network: (1) 'making proper entrepreneurs process', (2) 'building relationships process' and (3) 'engaging in change process'. Through these processes, the network is both reinforcing gender structures, through a strong focus on masculine values, and challenging gender structures, by questioning these values within their local context. The local social aspect, enables the network to add an additional dimension beyond the masculine business discourse (Ogbor 2000; Ahl 2006), which initially brought them together.

This type of study does not aim at generalizing, because generalization is not wanted (Flyvbjerg 2006). Instead, this study '…is the telling of a very small story that [I] hope resonates with others' (Calás and Smircich 1999, 666). The focus and limitations of this study are, for theoretical purposes, on the spatial context of a rural community. This raises the question of how the process of embeddedness in context leads to challenging gender structures in other contexts. Future research could further contextualize embeddedness in different spatial contexts and other contexts such as institutions. If the concept of embeddedness is further contextualized we could advance research on gender and entrepreneurship as we find new possible actors and ways of doing entrepreneurship.

How could policy support women entrepreneurship through programmes that more effectively challenge gender structures? With networks like the one in this case, there needs to be a reinforcement of gender structures to be able to challenge them. Without the reinforcing aspects that formed the group, the challenging of gender structures could not occur since there would be no group in the first place. Drawing from this case, policy could compromise, focusing programmes more on the networking between women entrepreneurs. In line with the government's objectives, the women still develop their own and others' businesses, while the social aspects enable the women to potentially challenge gender structures surrounding entrepreneurship. If the women entrepreneurs involved in these types of networks want to take matters in their own hands they can do as the network that are described in this case: focus more and more on the social aspects and engaging in their context.

However, the aspect missing in the network studied is the over-socialization of embeddedness in context. What happens when the network become to embedded in context? Theoretically, there is a threshold where gender structures, yet again, are reinforced within the female entrepreneurship network. A future research focuses on this threshold in the embeddedness process and its implications for advancing gender equality are therefore essential.

Disclosure statement

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Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Sueciae

Doctoral Thesis No. 2021:08

This thesis focus on entrepreneurship, gender and context. It adds to our understanding of how the gender process intertwines with entrepreneurship and takes place in a spatial context. Through ethnographic fieldwork, four papers are the building blocks in the thesis. I illuminate two points: that the spatial context is intertwined with gender-in-entrepreneurship and that the spatial context comprises of the dimensions of the history of the spatial context, the distance to other spatial contexts, and the closeness within the spatial context.

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SLU generates knowledge for the sustainable use of biological natural resources. Research, education, extension, as well as environmental monitoring and assessment are used to achieve this goal.