Entrepreneuring as discursive processes of emancipation and legitimation

by

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse how power is discursively produced in local entrepreneurial processes through legitimation and emancipation, thereby contributing to a developed conceptualisation of the production of power in entrepreneurial processes. By viewing entrepreneurial processes as instances of construction of power structures in terms of legitimation and emancipation, both the innovating and re-producing aspects of entrepreneurship can be analysed in a better way. In our empirical study of an organization that can be seen as a bundle of entrepreneurial processes – a rock club in a small rural town that underwent a transition from being rebels into acting as saviours of the region - we found that actors draw upon discourses of Assimilation, Outcasting, Grandiosification and Responsibilisation in their continuous interaction around notions of legitimation and emancipation. Different discourses are drawn upon by different actors at different times,

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implying that the spaces of action are continuously created and re-created in social interaction. These processes imply tensions and ambiguities between different discursive positions, which we have analysed in terms of autonomy, professionalization, creativity, maturity, altruism and visionary thinking.

Keywords

Power, entrepreneuring, entrepreneurial processes, discourse analysis, social constructionism

1. The discursive production of context in entrepreneuring

In this paper we explore how relations to context are discursively constructed by actors in entrepreneurial processes. We suggest that the construction of context and boundaries is a central aspect of entrepreneuring with consequences for power relations between actors, collective identities and notions of past, present and future action. In their daily interactions, actors draw upon discursive resources in society and local context, often invoking certain understandings of entrepreneurship while discarding and suppressing others (Ogbor, 2000; Berglund and Johansson, 2007a; Mason, 2012). Relations to context involve discursive aspects of legitimation and dependence, but also boundary-setting, controversy and emancipation. Depending on what discursive resources that are invoked and when, entrepreneurial processes may unfold in several different directions and involve different sets of actors.

Taking an 'entrepreneuring' perspective – i.e., that entrepreneurial activities should be studied as constantly emerging in social interaction and as integrated with context (Steyaert, 2007; Rindova et al, 2009; Berglund and Tillmar, 2015), we depart from the notion that

entrepreneurial processes involve the production of power relations – emerging as actors discursively construct and reconstruct notions of their venture, their progress, their mission, their stakeholders and so forth. A focus on entrepreneurial processes should, however, not prevent us from establishing links with the broader discursive context. Indeed, as Nicolini (2012) underlines, if zooming in is needed to understand the intricacies of action, especially organized action, zooming out should also be part of such inquiries. In line with Foucault's claim that "power is exercised by virtue of things being known and people being seen (1980: 154) we thus take an interest in what discursive resources are drawn upon in entrepreneuring, how they appear and is consumed, and what aspects that are played down and neglected (Phillips and Oswick, 2012).

When invoked in entrepreneurial processes, dominating hegemonic discursive notions tend not only to sustain the separation of entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs and relevant knowledge from irrelevant (Ogbor, 2000), but also to justify certain actions and lines of thought while making others more or less impossible. Culturally embedded as they are, entrepreneurial processes may, e.g., imply the comfortable reproduction of traditional entrepreneurial notions of individualist masculinity (Ogbor, 2000, Ahl, 2006, Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007, Calás et al, 2009, Berglund et al, 2016), attend to desired political and economic outcomes such as technological innovation and unemployment reduction, and confirm general discourses on entrepreneurship as a cherished but threatened societal phenomenon (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005; Perren and Jennings, 2005). At the same time, the history-making aspect of entrepreneuring (Spinosa et al, 1997; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006) and the widespread notion of emancipation and articulating dreams and alternative values through enterprising (Rindova et al, 2009; Verduijn et al, 2014) also imply a possibility of producing new and different power relations and of entrepreneurial processes unfolding in stark contrast to external expectations and senses of normality (Rehn, 2011).

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This study is located in an emerging stream of critical studies on the discursive construction of entrepreneurship and the consequences thereof (cf Ogbor, 2000; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Nicholson and Anderson, 2005; Perren and Jennings, 2005; Ahl, 2006; Fletcher, 2006; Berglund and Johansson 2007a; Sørensen, 2008; Calás et al, 2009; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009; Mason, 2012; da Costa and Saravia, 2012; Berglund and Tillmar, 2015, Berglund et al 2015). These studies center around the consequences of invoking dominant discourses on entrepreneurship in terms of power relations, departing from a concern that these discourses – despite their inherent confusion and contradiction – tend to delimit, circumscribe and normalize entrepreneurial activity in society. It is thus a general research agenda intended to…

"…unveil, disclose or realize what is often buried beneath or contained within the more "taken for granted" assumptions underpinning entrepreneurship studies and in doing so can be a positive and liberating force that revitalizes, repositions and reconceptualizes what might otherwise seem paradoxical. It is the messiness and unpredictability of entrepreneuring that attracts critical scholars; and it is in addressing the ambivalence and contradictory tensions inherent in entrepreneurship that critical scholars can make a contribution." (Verduijn et al, 2014: 99)

In this paper, we focus on the continuous organizing of the relation between the entrepreneurial process and its context (cf. Lindgren & Packendorff 2006) – that we conceive as a process continually evolving, with the aims of attending to how the grand discourse on entrepreneurship is used, mobilized, invoked by entrepreneurial actors, building on narratives of entrepreneurial activity linked to one organization, RockVille. We reveal, through an investigation of discursive practices that entrepreneurial actors mobilize different forms of the entrepreneurship discourse in their construction of context, elements that taken together might appear as contradictory and in tension. Therefore, we show that this discourse is not a unified one, but

that it harbours contradictions that actors will evoke at different times, or in different circumstances. We thus show that the entrepreneurship discourse is in fact composed of contradictory elements, which may be both experienced as constraining and productive by entrepreneurial actors.

Understanding legitimation and emancipation as two dimensions of the discursive construction of entrepreneuring, we will in this paper explore how they are drawn upon in entrepreneurial processes and what power relations and tensions that are produced. The study is based in an in-depth case study where the narratives of actors involved in the continuous development of a music club and its internationally renowned rock music festival are analysed. The analysis will thus focus on how the actors discursively produce patterns and notions of power in daily interaction, drawing upon notions of legitimation and emancipation. By this analysis, we intend to contribute to a developed conceptualisation of the production of power in entrepreneurial processes. Below, we will first introduce the theoretical notions of entrepreneuring, and legitimation and emancipation as core notions of entrepreneurial processes. Thereafter, we will analyse data from an in-depth case study of an entrepreneurial organization in terms of four discursive resources that appear when combining legitimation and emancipation – Assimilating, Outcasting, Grandiosification and Responsibilisation. Then analysis is then directed towards the discursive tensions that evolve when different actors in the entrepreneurial process studied draw upon different discursive resources – Autonomy, Professionalisation, Creativity, Altruism, Maturity and Visionary thinking – tensions that appear as power relations throughout the entrepreneurial process. The paper ends by some suggestions on how to further this conceptual understanding in future research.

2. Entrepreneuring and context: Linking process and discourse

2.1 Discursive tensions in entrepreneuring

Our notion of entrepreneuring as a process-oriented conceptualization of entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 1997; 2007) is based in a constructionist ontology, emphasizing entrepreneurship as culturally embedded processes of social interaction (Fletcher, 2006; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009). In social interactions, actors draw upon discursive repertoires in their continuous production and reproduction of interpretations of reality. Individuals and collectives define themselves - and are defined by others - in relation to general discursive expectations on how to behave and think in specific local/cultural settings. When doing and thinking differently, people usually combine such general expectations with new ideas and perspectives, constructing both sensibleness and strangeness (Spinosa et al, 1997) where the sensible links back to the taken-for-granted past and the strange to a future of possibilities.

From our perspective, the entrepreneurial process is thus a constant series of events in which people in interaction handle various boundary situations; future and past, 'we' and 'them', 'actual' and 'possible', and so forth, by drawing on discursive notions of what is legitimate and desirable but also innovative and path-breaking. We therefore claim that the entrepreneurial process can be characterized as identifying, challenging and sometimes breaking institutionalized patterns, to temporarily both belong and deviate from what is taken-for-granted in the actors' social and cultural setting (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006). This does not mean that all entrepreneurial acts will be 'exceptional' on a macro-level – Spinosa et al (1997) repeatedly maintain that entrepreneurship is about history-making in a local/cultural context. Still, this must be approached with general entrepreneurship discourses in mind, as many acts intended to deviate and change institutionalized action patterns in society are usually not framed as 'entrepreneurship' inquiry. Examples of this is criminal and oppressive activities (cf Rehn

and Taalas, 2004; Smith, 2013) but also many other aspects of societal development that take place outside the realms of capitalist business ventures (Drakopoulou Dodd, 2014). At the same time, many empirical phenomena where almost no identification, challenging and deviation from institutionalized action patterns in society take place are often included, due to the tendency to associate all sorts of admirable and desirable phenomena with 'entrepreneurship'. While the notion of 'entrepreneurship' can thus be seen as an empty signifier (Kenny and Scriver, 2012), to be used for any purpose, it still carries on hegemonic connotations of individualism, innovation, wealth accumulation and self-reliance – all desirable characteristics in neoliberal societies (da Costa and Saravia, 2012).

The dominant hegemonic entrepreneurship discourse is also clearly embraced in governmental and societal rhetorics, which tend to present entrepreneurship as an admirable, indispensable but often threatened phenomenon in society (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005; Perren and Jennings, 2005; Sørensen, 2008; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009a, 2009b; Mason, 2012). Entrepreneurship is framed as deeply needed, necessary for our survival, which implies a political agenda in which as many obstacles for entrepreneurs as possible must be removed and that entrepreneurship is to be taught in schools and become a virtue of the responsible citizen (da Costa and Saravia, 2012; Berglund et al, 2017). In their study of academic texts on entrepreneurship, Berglund and Johansson (2007b) find that these notions are also firmly rooted in entrepreneurship research; the words usually employed to describe entrepreneurship generally emphasises dominant notions of active, opportunity-driven, creative processes while obscuring other aspects. As noted by Jones & Spicer (2005), entrepreneurship discourse has become most influential through its elusive combination of success, heorism, creativity and societal necessity into an object of desire to which we all must subjugate.

While thus criticizing the entrepreneurship discourse and its consequences in terms of power structures, these scholars also point at inherent divergences and inconsistencies. Many of the suppressed discursive aspects are still cherished and actively invoked in parts of entrepreneurial practice (for example in the sub-field Social Entrepreneurship), and in the discussion on how entrepreneurship can be both a legitimate yet revolutionary facet of the modern economy lurks far-reaching disagreements on what is commendable and desirable. Entrepreneurial actors are supposed to subjugate to societal norms and standards while also upsetting and questioning these standards, they are supposed to create economic wealth but also to spend it in acceptable ways, they are supposed to act as responsible leaders but offensive, rude and bullying behaviors may also be acceptable or even admired. Different discursive resources may be invoked in different arenas at different times (Wigren, 2003), or by different co-actors simultaneously (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006), thereby changing and/or sustaining what is legitimate and illegitimate from various perspectives.

2.2 Entrepreneuring and power relations: Legitimation and emancipation

We take the general stance that power relations are produced and reproduced through dominant discourses in society, incessantly produced in social interaction by individuals, thereby a productive rather than restraining force (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). Such reproduction implies legitimation and reinforcement of the self, but also change, resistance and development (Fairclough, 2001). The production and reproduction of power relations are therefore central to our notion of entrepreneuring. In their continuously evolving understanding of the boundaries surrounding them, actors are embedded in and draw upon discursive notions of what is possible and not, what is acceptable and not, what is admirable and not, what is entrepreneurial and not, and so forth. It is a view of power as a productive force, appearing in social practices and

involved in the production of the subject – "defining and fixing individuals' sense of how they should be" (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009: 1119).

By acknowledging the discursive reproduction of taken-for-granted local/cultural norms in entrepreneurial processes, one might thus develop an understanding of the often limited space of action available to actors embedded in local/cultural milieux. Entrepreneurial processes often tend to reproduce dominating discursive notions of, e.g., inequality (Berglund and Johansson, 2007a), masculinity (Bruni et al, 2004; Calás et al, 2009; McAdam and Marlow, 2013), managerialism (Du Gay, 1994), morality (Ogbor, 2000), or individualism (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007). Naturally, it also implies an acknowledgement of power as something that people can construct together anew (Dareblom, 2005), i.e. that active resistance against power structures is in itself an instance of constructing new power structures.

Given that entrepreneurial processes involve the continuous handling of boundaries and that several different discursive sources are drawn upon simultaneously, they will at most times both reproduce extant dominant norms and make them subject to articulation and change. Entrepreneurial processes imply the production of both sensibleness and strangeness (Spinosa et al, 1997), both belonging and deviating (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006, Berglund et al, 2015) – continuously producing and reproducing actors' interpretations of what they can do, what they should do, what they are expected to do – but also what the limits of action and imagination are (cf Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Goss et al, 2011). Entrepreneuring should thus also imply discursive tensions, as different actors draw upon differing discursive resources (Berglund and Johansson, 2007a). Discourses are also possible for actors to reflect over and change over time – based on that actors are usually exposed to and drawing upon multiple discourses in everyday situations and that they experience continuous conflict and negotiation between these discourses (cf Fairclough, 2001).

One central issue to the production of power relations in entrepreneurial processes is the notion of *legitimation*, i.e., the social processes whereby entrepreneurs acquire resources by meeting expectations about both conformity and innovation. Building on a review of earlier analyses of legitimacy as a key resource in understanding entrepreneurial action, De Clercq and Voronov (2009a, 2009b) suggest that entrepreneurial processes involve the production of cultural capital (accessing and mobilizing societal institutions and norms) and symbolic capital (imposing definitions of phenomena on other field actors). Entrepreneurs face expectations to 'fit in', implying an experienced need to comply with local/cultural 'rules of the game', being 'good citizens' and performing the role of the professional and creative businessman (cf Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Berglund et al, 2017). They also, simultaneously, face expectations to 'stand out': by being innovative, unpredictable and charismatic – but still in a harmonic and productive sense (cf Anderson and Smith, 2007; Dey and Steyaert, 2010). De Clercq and Voronov (2009b) conclude that entrepreneurial processes thus involve both the production of institutional legitimacy – conforming with the current power arrangements in a specific field – and innovative legitimacy – achieved through challenging these very arrangements.

Beyond issues of opportunity pursuit, resource acquisition and legitimation there is also a need to include notions of dreams, emotions, self-fulfillment, professionalism and rebellionship in understandings of entrepreneurial processes (Downing, 2005; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Cardon et al, 2009; Jennings et al, 2016). Rindova et al (2009) thus suggest the concept of *emancipation* as central to entrepreneuring: that is, viewing entrepreneurial processes as creation of change through removing and/or escaping experienced constraints, invoking discursive notions of radical innovation, provocation, norm-breaking and risk-taking. They discuss emancipation in terms of 'breaking free' (from experience constraints) and 'breaking up' (from constraining local/cultural milieux), suggesting that it emerges through actively seeking autonomy, authoring of new understandings of reality and open public declarations of

independence (cf., also Montesano Montessori, 2016). Given our conceptualization of entrepreneurial processes as drawing upon several discursive sources and continuously evolving notions of boundaries and expectations, we do realise that while 'breaking free and breaking up' may indeed be part of these processes, confirmation and acceptance of constraints are just as likely to occur (McAdam and Marlow, 2013).

3. Case study: The RockForest festival and music association

Forestville is a small industrial town in a sparsely populated region of Sweden. The social life of the town being concentrated around the factories and sports clubs, it had not much to offer the young men growing up as punk rebels during the 1970's. During the 1980's, some of them formed their own music club, RockVille, in order to arrange concerts and other happenings by means of voluntary work and a determination that nothing was impossible. In the middle of the 1990's, the founding group realized that the success of the festival could be used for the good of the whole town. At the same time, the club was constantly close to bankruptcy due to constant expenses (maintenance of the concert hall and salaries to the full-time employees of the festival organization) and irregular revenues (mainly the entrance fees from the festivals). They invested some small amounts in other business ideas related to the music industry, and they managed to attract public funding to establish an industrial development center for the music industry.

When the fieldwork was carried out, RockVille had become the famous arranger of the internationally acclaimed outdoor RockForest Festival that had then been held annually since the end of the 1980's. RockVille also arranges several other recurring festivals with separate themes and has built an indoor concert hall with restaurant. The hall has then been enlarged

with an office building, now housing a number of small entrepreneurial companies, a national music industry center, a business incubator, and also upper secondary school educations and college programs in music management. RockVille has also become the common name for the whole group of companies owned or co-owned by the music club, with about 50 employees and total revenues of about 10 MEUR. Most of the co-founders remain in the organization in managerial positions. A few years ago, RockVille CEO Mr Sorensen was elected Creative Entrepreneur of the Year in Sweden, but he immediately claimed that he was just the front member of a group of people that had worked together for decades.

Our analysis is built upon an in-depth empirical study of the development of a major rock festival and how the actors within the festival have initiated a number of related entrepreneurial processes over the years within their organization RockVille. The study of RockVille was made as a part of a research project on entrepreneurial processes, and it turned out to be the major case study of the project. RockVille senior management were most interested in participating in the study, and repeated interviews were carried out at the RockVille headquarters by two of the authors of this article over a period of three years. They were made in a semi-structured manner in order to cover different aspects of the history and daily work of the organization while maintaining openness to emerging themes and spontaneous reflections. All interviews lasted for about two hours and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The full set of interviewees are summarized in Table 1.

The transcripts were then subject to a manual content analysis where the material was divided across the set of interviewees into micro-stories and critical incidents as exhibits of interactions in which the production of power relations could be discerned (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Each such story/incident was then further analyzed in order to identify the underlying mode and subject of interaction. From this analysis, a number of discursive themes were formulated,

relating to aspects such as self-exclusion from society, the importance of resistance, the connections to the general entrepreneurship discourse in society, and the problems of deviating and belonging to the context at the same time. The themes were then further condensed into four discursive dimensions on an underlying level drawn upon by the actors in their daily production of power in relations; Assimilation, Outcasting, Responsibilisation and Grandiosification.

	People interviewed
Mr Sorensen (man, 41 yrs)	Co-founder of the RockVille music club. CEO of the RockVille group. Board member in several subsidiaries. Festival manager.
Mr Brown (man, 43 yrs)	Co-founder of the RockVille music club and chairman of the board. Co-owner of a festival equipment firm.
Mr Linney (man, 48 yrs)	Co-founder of the RockVille music club. Booking manager for festival artists. Co-owner of a festival equipment firm
Mr Rush (man, 36 yrs)	Development and business incubator manager.
Mr Johnson (man, 44 yrs)	Co-founder of the RockVille music club. Marketing manager of the festival and owner/manager of an advertising agency.
Ms Butler (woman, 33 yrs)	CEO of the largest subsidiary, responsible for festival catering and lodging.
Ms Douglas (woman, 29 yrs)	Coach and advisor in the RockVille business incubator.
Ms Roberts (woman, 24 yrs)	Leader of a feminist rock club within RockVille.
Ms Anderson (woman, 45 yrs)	Responsible for upper secondary school educations within RockVille.
Ms Hansen (woman, 54 yrs)	Responsible for college educations within RockVille.
Mr Carlson (man, 31 yrs)	Researcher, college teacher, co-owner of a music ICT firm.

Table 1. List of interviewed actors in RockVille. All individuals, organizations and geographical locations have been renamed to preserve anonymity.

4. The RockForest narratives analyzed

In the narratives of the interviewed actors, aspects of power appeared in several ways. Here, we have condensed these aspects into four main discursive resources that are drawn upon by actors in justifying past and future actions (see Table 2).

	Outcasting	Assimilation	Grandiosification	Responsibilisation
Main themes	Precariousness, giving up, sacrificing. Poverty, self-reliance, integrity. Struggling artists identity: mis-understood, mis-treated. Organization as under threat, internal discipline needed, sustaining external conflict. Avoiding unwanted aspects of entrepreneurial expectations.	Necessary to be part of local/cultural context, citizenship, loyalty. Self-disciplination, honour local values and traditions, conforming to traditions. Lip service and impression management, playing by the rules just to get benefits. Linking to local/cultural notions of entrepreneuring and organizing.	Breaking away, rebellionship, deviance as raison d'être. Creativity, unorthodox organizing, alternative leadership ideals. Manifestations through bold symbolic acts. Seeking other cultural contexts, redefining, re-categorisations. Relating to the controversial and crazy in entrepreneuring.	History-making, striving for relevance of newness. Linking past, present and future, moving ahead but dragging along. Linking to other local/cultural contexts and fields. Redefining extant context. Enlighting and emancipating others. Relating to benevolent and responsible notions of entrepreneuring.
Narratives in which appear	Appears in nostalgic narratives of the early years, but also as a still existing potential.	Appears in narratives on how to navigate practically and successfully in the local/cultural context.	Appears in narratives on past performances and successes, in accounts on small-minded locals and in grand visions on leaving the local/cultural context behind.	Appears in narratives emphasizing the responsibilities ad virtues of being a guiding beacon for the local/cultural context and thereby sustaining their own private life world and community.

Table 2: Discursive resources drawn upon by actors in narratives

4.1 Outcasting: Self-exclusion from society through collective action

One important aspect of the outcasting discourse is drawing a sharp line between RockVille and the rest of the world. This is not least apparent through the ubiquitous references to the early years of the RockForest festival and the co-founders' notions of themselves as different people doing different things, seeking autonomy for its own sake. Through their self-image as somewhat immature rock rebels they create an identity dichotomy between themselves and the inhabitants of the town – implying relations where they are forced to create a new space of

action for pursuing their dreams and ambitions, a space of action untarnished by the conservative cultural heritage of Forestville.

> *"Most of us played in bands and we also brought together the bands to concert evenings where I acted as host. We were not allowed to continue within the school's premises for very long, it became a bit rough sometimes. Especially those evenings when we didn't have any bands, it was really heavy drinking. […] The dean had a big meeting with us on how to stop violence and drinking among the pupils, and we then formed the music club RockVille." (Sorensen)*

They recall these early years in terms of close interaction and camaraderie, spending almost all their time working together as a collective. By time, they have realised that the almost absolute equality in the team cam imply problems when difficult decisions are to be made. The close circle of friends has developed into a more professional work group where everybody lead lives of their own outside RockVille and where they try to develop ways of putting the interest of the organization before group harmony when needed.

> *Today it is not really the same thing; people have families and want to get away from work sometimes. This has meant difficulties in handling budget overruns or layoffs; we have not been professional in such occasions since we are all old friends. This is a sensitive thing, we must be professional but it shall also be fun to work here. (Brown)*

In parallel to the discursive notions of separating the organization from its context, its key actors from other actors and its work forms from the remaining world of organizations, there is also a strong connective aspect throughout the discursive themes – i.e. an emphasis on processes of relating and crossing boundaries as an underlying aspect of the organization. This is apparent in the often rich stories on the importance of friendship, brotherhood and shared burdens as

building blocks of the organization. The strong internal culture of equality, voluntary work and non-commercialism implies a view where power is something that is constructed and exercised in a collective manner, and as long as they stick to these core values they will survive.

The notion of being outcasts is cherished internally as a success factor. Conflicts and power struggles with a surrounding society populated by conservative and small-minded headmasters, parents, politicians and small business owners are seen as drivers of their own entrepreneurship in the sense that external resistance results in internal concord and harmony. Insofar they think that they now hold the power over their own operations and destiny, it rests upon the necessity of maintaining a sense of being under threat and rejected:

> *Sometimes I think that it was good for us that everybody worked against us; crazy young rebels were not really popular in the beginning of the 80's. Well, perhaps they didn't work against us, but nobody ever listened to us. The local politicians lived in the old days; they were not bad people, but they did not understand that the local youth wanted concerts and festivals. [...] It has become our strength that we have had to fix everything by ourselves. (Brown)*

A significant issue in the notion of resistance is economic precariousness – if you choose to be an outsider you will have to pay a price. In the narratives, the actors still maintain that power over your own destiny was more important than economic security, and that the negative reactions to their success have spurred them into working harder and doing even better business:

> *Like everybody else here, I have had to work elsewhere and I've also been registered as unemployed. I worked at the paper mill, for example. Throughout the 80's, everyone worked on a voluntary basis, and around 1990 we were able to employ a few people. The entrepreneurs we try to support here today think in the same way; they want their main*

interest as their work, they want to have control over their life. The envy that we have

seen is rather a part of the mentality of an old industrial town, where no one was allowed

to raise above others. (Sorensen)

Among the local/cultural values challenged during the growth of RockVille was the very notion of entrepreneurship and small business – looked upon with suspicion in a egalitarian town dominated by a few large industries. Identification with entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs was thus partly controversial and contributing to the outcasting discourse.

"'A company' was actually just a word for what I tried to achieve, I had a friend

whose father ran a company, so it became a company. My own parents had a very

skeptical view on entrepreneurs – in their minds, entrepreneurs were dodgy plumbers

who fiddled with their taxes and used company cars when going on vacation. My

grandfather was an entrepreneur, though, so they say I got it from him. (Rush)

The narratives on the history-making qualities of RockVille enterprising often relates back to the almost taken-for-granted identification as outcasts. Even the youngest project manager, which was in kindergarten when the first RockForest festival was held, recalls the stories from the early years and claims their continued relevance:

"The relations with the town are really bad [...]. Look here, here's a new brochure from

the municipality intended to promote Forestville. Look at the pictures. Forests, forests, a

fighter aircraft, a lake. And on the back side, a tiny, tiny picture from the festival. The air

force base closed years ago, for crying out loud!" (Roberts)

4.2 Assimilation: Being part, taking part

In parallel to the discursive processes of outcasting, there is also a slightly suppressed discourse of assimilation, of subjugating to traditions and sacrificing autonomy in order to succeed with their intentions. RockVille had always been different in terms of life style, music and organizational principles, and the general opinion in the local community was that they were a rebellious non-profit cultural collective. This was not easy to maintain in the relation to other actors in the local-cultural context, who demanded responsible and accountable individuals in exchange for monetary and ideological support. When they built their first concert hall, they were forced by the bank to own the building personally, since the bank did not trust RockVille to be a responsible debtor.

"Well, the bank required a limited company to lend us the money. We did not know what that was, but we wanted our building. So we brought in an accountant and a lawyer to do some writing. Then the bank wanted us to be individual owners, they did not trust the music club. So about ten of us went in as co-owners. […] Soon, people in the town started to discuss if we were now to earn money on this nice voluntary association that we had built up. As soon as we could, we sold our shares back to the music club." (Sorensen)

The assimilation discourse thus involves aspects of lip service and impression management, based in a conviction that many external actors are ignorant or expecting too much. When starting their business incubator they actively had to play down their reputation as a visionary entrepreneurial powerhouse as many incoming entrepreneurs expected that RockVille would somehow guarantee their success. There are also several examples of how they respond to worries among partner organizations by creating rules and regulations that are not used in practice as they would compromise the grand visions:

"Yes, we have introduced evaluation procedures and such stuff. But we actually make all our decisions out of gut feeling, and that is something our incubator partners do not like at all. I use to tell them that they have all their spreadsheets and diagrams with arrows and boxes just to confirm their gut feeling, but they don't want to listen to that. I speak to them quite often and get their input, but it is not an easy process. Then I make the final decision – the beauty of it all is that we don't have any owners that kill us if something goes wrong. That is just great!" (Rush)

Another issue of assimilation appeared as many different external actors did not want just a management team, but a single entrepreneurial leader. The strong discursive notions of single, heroic leaders and entrepreneurs in Western societies were present also in Forestville, in the form of requirements for trustworthiness and accountability. Consequently, the co-founders quickly decided to deliver that individual entrepreneur to the world:

"And we decided that if we were to be successful, we needed a front face. That front face was me. So we decided that I was to become the symbol of RockVille." (Sorensen)

That decision caused some internal turmoil as many had negative experiences from the early years, when a co-founder was finally thrown out as a result of his personal desire to personify the RockForest festival. Behind the scenes, they thus still assimilate to their own traditions, maintaining traditional collectivism by trying to assign different front faces to different arenas:

"Nowadays, my strategy is not to be seen locally. I might be on the cover page of business magazines and looked upon as the great businessman and all that, but at home I'm not seen at all. Instead, it is always the one that has been responsible or actually did the job that is to be seen. It's important that you always try to put the others in the light, and I've tried to do that for five or six years now. (Sorensen)

4.3. Grandiosification: Taking it to another level

When relating to present and future developments, the outcasting discourse appears in a more bold but yet nuanced version, where the actors identify themselves as creative visionaries that are breaking away from their local/cultural context in order to achieve magnificent things. Being separated from the local context enable them to consider connections at other arenas such as regional innovation systems, national TIME sector initiatives and international music industry collaborations.

While the assimilation discourse emphasizes the need to fit in in order to obtain monetary and political resources from outside, the discursive sustainment of RockVille as an emancipated and autonomous place happens through emphasizing key actors in possession of extraordinary personal qualities and the organization as a haven of positive creativity and collective action. The co-founders are not much worried about their personal roles as influential gatekeepers and action drivers despite the rhetoric on egalitarianism, but they are most keen to show the rest of the world that their egalitarian work culture is unique, rebellious and superior. This might even take place through humiliation of deviant members of the organization:

> *"If you don't like being a part of a creative collective, you cannot stand being here. One guy finally went down on his knees here in the hallway and yelled for a work description and some instructions on how to do his job. Sorensen gave him a blank sheet of paper and told him to write his own instructions. 'You can do whatever you want as long as you are committed and is having fun.' The guy quit the same day." (Rush)*

Grandiosification of RockVille happens discursively through introducing notions of emancipation in several dimensions. The initial emancipatory clashes between young rebels

and ignorant parents and the ensuing conflicts between creative entrepreneurs and stubborn local politicians are still drawn upon, but new issues of emancipation tend to appear as the co-founders assume an identity of visionary businessmen. For example, several RockVille managers claim that the organization is also part of the clash between the traditions of a small industrial town with few links outside the region, and the global economies of the fast-moving entertainment industry. RockVille was founded on the basis of emancipation from local society, but also buys into other parts of the global society. Examples of resulting discursive dichotomizations in the narratives are the music industry versus manufacturing industry, entrepreneurship culture versus corporate town culture, risk versus security, and boundary crossing versus societal compartmentalization.

> *Let's say that we have 60% of our venture capital left in the incubator in three or four years, then we will be really satisfied. Then we will have accomplished a major change in this hole. Everybody around saw us as idiots: banks, venture capitalists, authorities. We had to break all these prejudice saying that you can't work with music outside Stockholm. (Rush)*

Despite the collective ideals and the notion of egalitarianism as a precondition for innovation and creativity, some actors outside the team of co-founders can discern visible internal hierarchies. Ideas and projects must be 'sold' to someone in the founding team if it is to gain priority in the internal agenda:

> *Sorensen decided to do what several other major festivals have not been able to do, to create spin-off's from the festival. [...] Then, a gigantic conflict broke out. If it had not been Sorensen, he had been thrown out at once. They wrote angry letters to each other and called me to meetings where they told me that I destroyed the festival brand and so on. My first year here mostly meant working internally to get permission to do new things,*

and I use to remind people about that now. It was just to take it cool, explain and deliver. (Rush)

In the tradition of innovation and creativity, notions of administrative order are seen as less important and thus referred to less influential people to handle. A professionalized masculinity where visionary thinking, creative ideas and swift action are the main virtues seem to have developed over the years:

"I became an administrator, I created a network database, I kept the boys in order, tried to organize things. It was four of them; Sorensen, Goldberg, Nielsen, Rush. I created order out of chaos, a lot of things were moving then. I'm so glad I was allowed into that group, I have really learnt a lot from them." (Butler)

4.4 Responsibilisation: Securing survival and sustaining community

"To many people, this house is a way to stay in Forestville. Many of us have been here since the start and the spirit still lives on. Things are not going well for Forestville, the upper secondary school moved to the neighbor town and now people also drive there to shop. The city center here is stagnating; there is a lack of commitment and energy. This house is rapidly expanding in all directions, but the city center is losing ground. The good thing is still that all houses are inhabited. (Johnson)

While sustaining the notion of RockVille as a visionary and deviant phenomenon, there is also a growing awareness that the organization is an important ingredient in the future of the local/cultural community. Many of the employees want to spend their lives and raise their children in the stagnating town, and they have started to express the relation between their own

work and the society they inhabit in terms of taking responsibility – thereby crossing the boundaries they once set up between themselves and the local community. They assume responsibility not only for their own organization, but also for local and regional development without expecting any direct returns:

> *It was not a natural thing to expand during the 90's, but we saw that we have had many people working for us in the festival that then ended up in Stockholm. We wanted to give them possibilities to live and work here in Forestville. It was about keeping both competence and friends here; it is not so fun to see the removal vans driving away. We do have a responsibility to society; it is about keeping up shops, schools, childcare and so on. (Brown)*

There are many stories of how collaborative projects are initiated to further mutual learning, and on how extensive networking and constantly building positive external relations are seen as a core managerial task for the co-founders. As this reasoning has now also been extended to a serious moral obligation to help the Forestville municipality survive in the globalized economy, connecting discourses also can be said to contain ethical and aesthetical aspects. They explicitly connect to the general discourse of entrepreneurship in terms of processes where the important thing is to create something new that they can all benefit from, but also by adopting parts of the contemporary entrepreneurial toolbox (cluster initiatives, business incubators, venture capital firms, open source innovation, charismatic individual entrepreneurs and so forth):

> *"There is a contradiction between culture and money; you must find a balance that enables you to make a living and stick to your basic values at the same time. Some students come to me and ask for seed money, and I tell them to start by developing their business ideas instead. If we want to proceed with an idea we can then try to raise venture capital.*

On the other hand you don't need that much money; it is very cheap to live here in Forestville. We try to connect to different actors depending upon what project that we are pursuing – the municipality the government, international organizations and so forth. You have networks, see opportunities and you always help each other. But it will always be about music, that's what it is all about. (Douglas)

5. Discussion

In the empirical themes outlined in the previous section, we find four discursive patterns of power relations in the continuous organizing of RockVille. Outcasting, assimilation, grandiosification and responsibilisation take place simultaneously but not always at the same organizational place or in the same actor constellation. Consequently, the interplay between these discourses results in both tensions and ambiguities, implying several differences in how different actors in the entrepreneurial processes interpret the possibilities and limitations of action (see Figure 1).
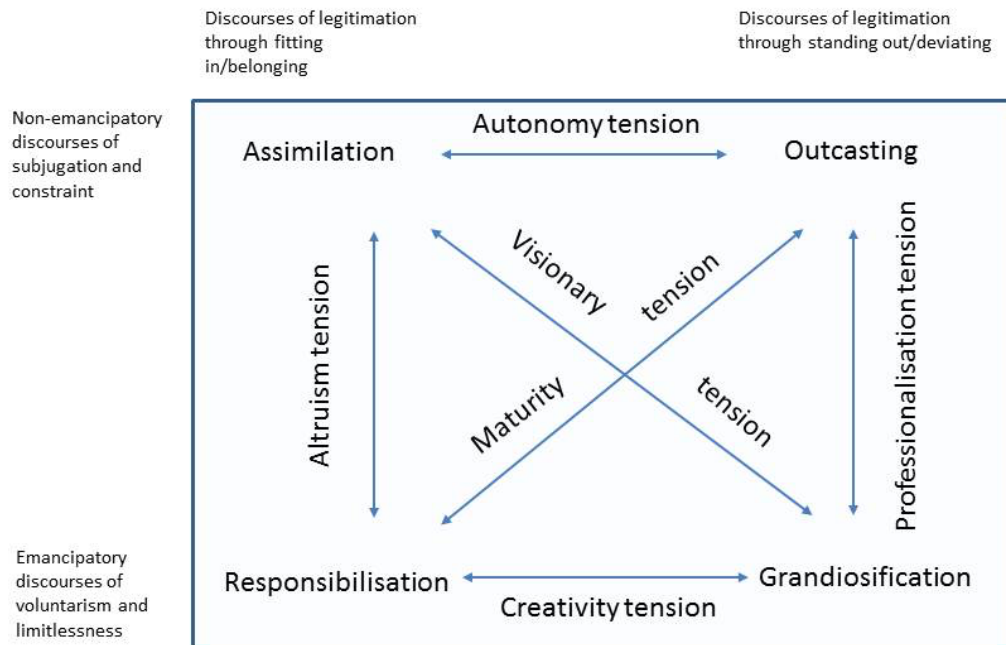
Figure 1. Discursive tensions in the production of power in entrepreneurial processes

The tensions and ambiguities found in the analysis are all concerned with entrepreneurial boundary work, i.e., the continuous organizing of the relation between the entrepreneurial process and its context (cf., Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006, 2011). From the notion of entrepreneurial processes as both deviating and relating, production of power relations take place in several and complex ways – such as in the discursive separation of RockVille from its context that involve revolt, ignorance, freedom and blame, but also friendship, professionalism, discipline and understanding. At the same time, separation appears neither possible nor desirable to the RockVille actors, as they are part of a society that expects both formal hierarchy and responsible actions.

Between the discourses of Assimilation and Outcasting we find an Autonomy tension, sustained as actors draw both upon the notion of being outsiders and the need to adapt to the rules of the game. It is a tension built on the interpretation that power structures are inescapable unless a high price is paid, that the alternative to play by the rules is a state of powerlessness and precariousness. This tension is most apparent in the accounts of the early days of RockVille, when conforming to the archetype of 'starving artist' was always more desirable than adapting to expectations from parents and teachers.

Consequently, there is also a discursive tension between the discourses of Outcasting and Grandiosification, a tension evolving around the notion of professionalism. This tension is primarily concerned with the idea that true emancipation (and hence autonomy) can only be achieved if the entrepreneurial process stand out by establishing own and novel ways of working and managing. This tension is present in much of the current projects in RockVille, such as the incubator, the feminist rock club or the ambition to start a local upper secondary school – appearing as a clash between the impatience of many younger members and the conviction among senior managers of professional organizing as one of the core competences of the organization. This is a production of emancipation as dependent on knowledge and seniority, rather than on strong emotions and free will.

The notion of visionary thinking is the foundation of a tension between the Assimilation and Grandiosification discourses, where the former is concerned with just adapting to what is taken-for-granted in the local/cultural context and the latter is concerned with the endless possibilities of both breaking away from and also changing what is taken for granted. This tension is related to history-making in the sense of reconfiguring expectations – which is a possibility that is not seen as available by everyone everytime in RockVille.

The gradual evolvement of a discourse of Responsibilisation implies tensions with all the three other discourses. One such tension is the notion of altruism – i.e., that what we do is based in a sense of contributing to the common good rather than merely navigating and manipulating the rules of the game. The altruism tension appears in RockVille as a growing conviction among some senior members that you must always give before you receive, that relating is always better than distancing, that subjugation is an overly negative conceptualization of collaboration. This is closely related also to the tension of maturity, where being responsible is to care for oneself and others – apparent in senior management admitting that they do not allow their young employees to take the same risks today as they once did themselves, but that such limitations are necessary in order to be legitimate in the context. A third tension evolving from the notion of responsibility is creativity – closely linked to issues of liability of newness (De Clerqc and Voronov, 2009b) and the balancing between being strange and sensible in writing local/cultural history (Spinosa et al, 1997; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006).

Changes, conflicts and critical incidents in RockVille seen as an entrepreneurial process – or, indeed, a bundle of entrepreneurial processes – tend to involve the identified discursive tensions in different ways. The initial start of RockVille mainly involved the notion of autonomy, but subsequent incidents such as commercialization of the festival, ousting co-founders, establishing business incubators and so forth also involved tensions related to visions, professionalization and creativity. As some of the founders gradually assumed a sense of responsibility for the local/cultural context, legitimation through emancipating both themselves and the whole town implied some difficulties in upholding the outcast identity. It is not so that some actors continuously draw on the same discursive resources or tensions – rather, different discourses are drawn upon by different actors in different situations, implying that the space of action (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996) is different for different actors and also continuously redefined.

At the same time, all discursive resources and tensions are not equally available for everyone. Despite the explicit ambitions of the RockVille founders to create an egalitarian organization where everyone can make their dreams come true – manifested as an emancipation from taken-for-granted organizing practices in the local/cultural context – it is still the founders that define what is legitimate and what is emancipated, by articulating the conditions and contents of autonomy, professional conduct, visionary thinking, maturity, creativity and altruism. RockVille it in itself an evolving local/cultural context, from which people may deviate and emancipate themselves, as well as assimilate to and take responsibility for. Likewise, not all actors can draw on the general entrepreneurial discourses in society in their pursuit of legitimation and emancipation – as the role of performing the single creative entrepreneur has been assigned to one organizational member only.

6. Conclusion: Power, entrepreneurship and research

The aim of this paper was to analyze how power is discursively produced in entrepreneurial processes through legitimation and emancipation, thereby contributing to a developed conceptualization of the production of power in entrepreneurial processes. By viewing entrepreneurial processes as instances of construction of power structures in terms of legitimation and emancipation, both the innovating and re-producing aspects of entrepreneurship can be analysed in a better way. We have departed from a Foucauldian notion of power – i.e., as discursive structures in society in which we are all embedded – that are produced in social interaction (Fairclough, 2001). Entrepreneurship can be regarded as an important discursive structure in society, especially as it is generally constructed as a positive and indispensable phenomenon in the modern capitalist economy – thereby heavily influencing everything from political ideologies to individual's lives. Still, the notion of entrepreneurship

and power has not attracted much attention neither within nor outside entrepreneurship research. In this paper, we have had an ambition to contribute to such future lines of inquiry with an analysis of how discourses are part of the production of power relations in entrepreneurial processes, how discursive tensions are part of the development of such processes, and how this can be seen as continuous development of action space for actors.

In our empirical study of an organization that can be seen as a bundle of entrepreneurial processes, we found that actors draw upon discourses of Assimilation, Outcasting, Grandiosification and Responsibilisation in their continuous interaction around notions of legitimation and emancipation. Different discourses are drawn upon by different actors at different times, implying that the spaces of action are continuously created and re-created in social interaction. These processes imply tensions and ambiguities between different discursive positions, which we have analyzed in terms of autonomy, professionalization, creativity, maturity, altruism and visionary thinking. The combination of legitimation and emancipation as core issues in entrepreneurial processes, the four discursive resources, and the six discursive tensions/ambiguities, constitute the contribution of this research.

In addition, we also would like to suggest that future research on the production of power in entrepreneurial process would incorporate the notions of identity work and resistance (Verduijn et al, 2014). By identity work, we intend the continuous processes whereby identities are constructed and re-constructed and thus also the interpreted space of action (cf., Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). In the empirical setting here, all actors are embedded in a local/regional culture that they increasingly relate to as their organization develop. The 'outcast' identity of punk rockers is thereby gradually substituted with identification as businessmen and later social entrepreneurs, which is beneficial in terms of external legitimacy but not always internally as many young people are attracted to the organization on promises of rebellionship. The

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understanding of identity work has, and will, be most important to the analysis of entrepreneurial processes if thus related to processes of power (cf., also Downing, 2005, Fletcher, 2006, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009).

The ever-present notion of resistance also tends to be re-constructed over time. Resistance can be understood in terms of articulation of alternative meanings in relation to dominant and/or prescribed discourses, based in the ever-present possibility to counter-act and counter-select (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2009). From having resisted the rest of society as young punk rockers, they now resist some aspects of the local political and business establishment while relating to the local community at large. This turn is supported by a set of rhetoric, effectively saying that RockCity is a part of community but far ahead of local governance structures in terms of ideas for the future and national/international aspirations. This re-formulation of how to and who against resistance is to materialize has, again, implied internal debates where the leading actors have been accused of disloyalty to the core values of the organization. The possibilities for resistance are never challenged, however, as voluntarism is always taken for granted.

These contradictory elements might explain the flexibility and plasticity of the entrepreneurship discourse, a discourse that is more and more present in all dimensions of society, as in education and in artistic projects. Indeed, although our case around RockVille was not chosen initially to illustrate this element, the fact that it is a cultural organization shows that the entrepreneurship discourse expresses itself in all contexts of activity, not only in what is the « traditional » context of entrepreneurship.

Finally, we again want to emphasize that every venture and entrepreneur is part of entrepreneurial discourse in society (cf., Berglund and Johansson, 2007b). In that sense, as we have showed here, RockVille is part of local and institutional society – also in how they talk about power and exercise power. When they talk and act they do so within the bounds of

discourse, their actions and choices are always embedded in the context from which their entrepreneurial ambition lead them to deviate. We are all part of discourses and entrepreneurial discourses evolve around breaking patterns, being hard-working, being somewhat odd, and dis-identify ourselves in relation to others. Entrepreneurial action is then about the construction of power relations through resistance (against some norms) and production (of new norms). The performative aspects of the societal entrepreneurship discourse (cf., Perren and Jennings, 2005; Berglund and Johansson, 2007b) should thus be of central importance in future research on entrepreneurship and power.

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