

The interaction between contexts and entrepreneurs in a rural setting

- Investigating men and women entrepreneurs in the coordinated network Fjärdhundraland

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Uppsala, June 2016



Three handwritten signatures in blue ink, arranged horizontally. The first signature on the left is 'Jimmy Eriksson', the middle one is 'Mats Thorburn', and the one on the right is 'Rebecca Jansson'.

Summary

Research has shown an increased interest regarding the meaning of contextual factors and their effect on entrepreneurial activities. It is shown that the entrepreneur's surroundings possess a greater meaning to the entrepreneurial activities than what earlier research has revealed. Hence, it is an element that ought to be more thoroughly researched beyond the fact that it *does* affect entrepreneurship, and instead aim for research regarding *how* it affects entrepreneurship. Additionally, entrepreneurs are often associated with certain attributes, such as having strong driving forces, seeking independence and being risk takers. However, these are traits moreover often associated with men and masculinity, which may be founded in norms and stereotypes created in society. At the same time, there is an increase in women entrepreneurs, leading to speculations regarding differences in how the genders perform entrepreneurial activities. If differences are frequently present – what are they and are they affected by stereotypes created in social and institutional contexts, or other?

This thesis illustrates how rural, social entrepreneurs may interact with spatial, social and institutional context. The aim of the study is to with a “lens of gender” investigate how three different levels of contexts interact with rural entrepreneurs in a coordinated network and thus affect the entrepreneurial process. The investigated coordinated network Fjärdhundraland is an association aiming at increasing entrepreneurial activity in the area around Enköping, Örsundsbro and Uppsala, as well as maintaining a prosperous countryside. Networks exist in different forms (for example in the form of friends or business relations) and are vital success factors in the entrepreneurial process. They have the ability to provide credibility, serve as intermediary to key persons or events, help create an insight of the industry and more.

The study is a single case study with embedded units and is moreover performed through interviewing 11 entrepreneurs in 8 firms (members in Fjärdhundraland). It is shown that the interviewees have gained positive effects, such as more customers, social interaction and collaboration benefits with other members. Moreover, through the network exists a united way to communicate the message of a vibrant rural area. Also, the entrepreneurs are not competitors, but co-workers. They are deeply spatially embedded in the area and the place is shown to be as important as the business itself. Furthermore, ever since the network was initiated the area has been reshaped and developed to become a tourist destination offering a holistic experience of the nature, history and places to visit. The entrepreneurs are perceived to be not directly, but rather indirectly affected by societal norms, stereotypes and values. However, since they are part of society, they also influence societal norms. There are more women than men who are members in the association as well as there are more women than men who run businesses stereotypically associated with women, such as cafés and Bed and Breakfasts. Also, women seem to be more drawn to networks and to the feeling of group belonging.

Suggestions for future research are to examine contextual aspects in combination with personal characteristics to gain a broader understanding of individuals' entrepreneurial intentions, and to perform a longitudinal study of same type since entrepreneurship and context are phenomena that characterize by complexity and processing over time.

Sammanfattning

Forskning har visat ett ökat intresse gällande kontextuella faktorerers betydelse och effekt på entreprenöriella aktiviteter. Det har visats att entreprenörens omgivning har en större betydelse för de entreprenöriella aktiviteterna än vad tidigare forskning visat. Därför är det ett fenomen som borde bli mer grundligt utforskat utöver det faktum *att* det påverkar entreprenörskap, och istället sikta på att forska kring *hur* det påverkar entreprenörskap. Dessutom är entreprenörer ofta associerade med särskilda attribut så som starka drivkrafter, självständighet och risktagande. Dock är dessa attribut ofta associerade med män och maskulinitet, vilket kan vara grundat i normer och stereotyper skapade i samhället. Samtidigt sker en ökning av kvinnliga entreprenörer vilket leder till funderingar kring skillnader i hur de olika könsrollerna förväntas utföra entreprenöriella aktiviteter. Om skillnader frekvent förekommer – vilka är de och är de påverkade av stereotyper skapade i sociala och institutionella kontexter, eller annat?

Denna uppsats illustrerar hur landsbygds- och sociala entreprenörer kan interagera med rumslig, social och institutionell kontext. Studiens syfte är att med ett könsrollsperspektiv undersöka hur de tre olika kontexterna interagerar med landsbygdsentreprenörer i ett koordinerat nätverk och därmed hur de påverkar den entreprenöriella processen. Det undersökta nätverket Fjärdhundraland är en förening som syftar till att öka den entreprenöriella aktiviteten i området kring Enköping, Örsundsbro och Uppsala, i kombination med att upprätthålla en levande landsbygd. Nätverk finns i olika former (till exempel i form av vänner eller affärsrelationer) och är viktiga framgångsfaktorer i den entreprenöriella processen. De har förmågan att förse entreprenören med trovärdighet, fungera som mellanhand till nyckelpersoner- och händelser, bidra till kunskap om industrin med mer.

Studien är en fallstudie med inbäddade enheter och är utförd genom att intervjua 11 entreprenörer i 8 företag (medlemmar i Fjärdhundraland). Det visades att intervjupersonerna har påverkats positivt av föreningen, till exempel har de fått en större kundbas, social interaktion och samarbetsfördelar med andra medlemmar. Dessutom finns tack vare nätverket ett enhetligt sätt att kommunicera budskapet om en levande landsbygd. Entreprenörerna är inte heller konkurrenter utan partners. De är djupt inbäddade i området, och platsen har visat sig vara lika viktig som företaget självt. Vidare, ända sedan nätverket har initierats har området blivit omformat och utvecklat för att bli en turistdestination som erbjuder en holistisk naturupplevelse med mycket historia samt många platser och företag att besöka. Entreprenörerna uppfattas inte som att de direkt, men snarare indirekt, påverkas av samhällliga normer, stereotyper och värderingar. Dock, eftersom de är en del av samhället influerar dem också samhällliga normer. Det är fler kvinnliga medlemmar i nätverket än manliga. Dessutom är det fler kvinnor än män som driver företag som är stereotypiskt associerade med kvinnor, såsom kaféer och Bed & Breakfasts. Dessutom verkar kvinnor vara mer dragna till nätverk och känslan av att tillhöra en grupp.

Förslag till framtida forskning är att undersöka kontextuella aspekter i kombination med personlighetsdrag för att få en bredare förståelse av individers entreprenöriella intentioner, samt att utföra en längre studie av samma typ, med anledningen av att entreprenörskap och kontexter är fenomen som karaktäriseras av komplexitet och processande över tid.

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“But in 10 years, we want to move abroad somewhere in the south of Europe and eat cheese”
Marih Jonsson, Skogsbackens ost

1 Introduction

This initial chapter describes the background to the thesis's problem and defines why there is a need of performing research on the issue to fill the theoretical as well as the empirical gap. The aim and research questions are followed by empirical, theoretical and methodological delimitations as well as an outline regarding the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Introducing entrepreneurship and context in a rural setting

My driving force is to transform the world's oldest industry and to think outside of the box.
(Pers. com., Anna Hane, entrepreneur, 160301)

Entrepreneurship is often considered an essential contribution to a country's economic development and prosperity (Acs & Audretsch, 2003). It has been shown that entrepreneurship through the creation and retention of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) plays an important role in the creation of for example work opportunities. Thus, the economic growth in different regions is generally connected to the presence of local entrepreneurs (Jordbruksverket, 2006). It is moreover shown that an area with many entrepreneurs often has a tendency to attract more entrepreneurs to start businesses (Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015). The Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket, 2006, p. 1, own translation) emphasizes:

For the rural areas, this matter is of utmost importance since it is about creating a positive spiral and at highest possible extent reach a critical mass of entrepreneurs and enterprises.

In the nineteenth century about 90% of the Swedish population lived and worked in rural areas¹, compared to today where about 85% live in cities (SCB, 2015)². This has in turn been followed by a change in the demographical and economic trends in the Swedish countryside. More specifically, rural areas many times have a fairly weak economic development (Jordbruksverket, 2012). Therefore, perhaps especially in the countryside, the entrepreneurs have a central role to fill (Jordbruksverket, 2012). The entrepreneurs are important for society since they have the possibility to create value for the region they work in, for example by creating job opportunities, making the region "a name" and draw tourists (Landström & Löwegren, 2009, Trettin & Welter, 2011). In present thesis, rural businesses are defined as businesses located in rural areas, operating within the agricultural, forestry and fishery area, with further orientation in tourism, contracting, housing rentals, small-scale food production, sales and refinement of farm products (Tillväxtverket, 2010).

Before presenting the problem background further there is a need to introduce a discussion regarding the complex concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a well-known and widely discussed phenomenon, but it however does not have a clear definition. In present thesis, entrepreneurship will be defined as a process (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015; McKeever *et al.*, 2015; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). McMullen and Dimov (2012) moreover refers to entrepreneurship as a journey that occurs over time. Thus, it is not one specific incident that leads to the making of an entrepreneur, but it is rather a series of events that occur continuously throughout time. Also, the entrepreneurial process is constantly

¹ In this thesis, rural areas are defined as the areas outside of the regional centres of the municipalities (Glesbygdsverket, 2008)

² Yet, this increased degree of urbanization is not automatically caused by depopulation in rural areas. It merely describes how the population's size in cities relates to the population in the countryside, and thus does not have to incline a displacement of people from rural to urban areas (SCB, 2015).

affected by contextual alterations and the individual's entrepreneurial learning (Ettl & Welter, 2010).

In traditional entrepreneurship literature, entrepreneurship has been studied as a phenomenon focusing on entrepreneurs as individuals possessing the right personal characters and values to initialize and run businesses (Estay *et al.*, 2013). Nonetheless, current research claims that personal character, goals and ideas merely are some of the factors that affect and shape the individual when initializing entrepreneurship. Instead, the decision to engage in entrepreneurial activity is based on the interaction with both internal and external factors and Welter (2011), Spilling (1996) and Landström and Löwegren (2009) highlight the significance of taking context into account when aiming at understanding the entrepreneurial process.

Context is a complex phenomenon not only including one's physical milieu (Welter, 2011). It also constitutes of societal norms and values as well as individuals' closer environment, consisting of family, networks, *etcetera*. Thus, up to a certain point, context forms people's behaviours. Most people adapt to fit into social norms and expectations, which is also highly applicable when it comes to gender stereotypes (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Also the associations regarding which occupations are masculine as well as feminine are strongly affecting how men and women take part in the labour market and organizations (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Moreover, as in many research areas, research on entrepreneurs and business owners is performed primarily with respect to the traits and behaviours of men (Ahl, 2006; LRF, 2009; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008). Likewise, generally in society the concepts entrepreneur and business management are associated with men (e.g. Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bruni *et al.*, 2004; LRF, 2009; Santos *et al.*, 2016). This is also applicable to the rural business sector (with emphasis on the agricultural alignment), a sector historically strongly shaped by culture and traditions (Jordbruksverket, 2006; LRF, 2009). For example, property has often been transferred through inheritance from father to son (LRF, 2009; Tillväxtverket, 2010). Further, Ahl (2006), Alvesson and Billing (2009), Bruni *et al.*, (2004), LRF (2009), Malach-Pines and Schwartz (2008) and Santos *et al.* (2016) all argue that their research and investigations do not merely show the disproportion in norms and society's structure, but also heavily criticize it and argue for a change in the perception of gender structure and the values associated with it. Hence, to even research results, it is important to possess an awareness of these issues and to create a counterbalance to the traditional ways of performing research on entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bruni *et al.*, 2004; LRF, 2009; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Santos *et al.*, 2016).

As follows, entrepreneurship is affected by multiple factors that require to be further emphasized. The following section describes the problem this thesis will address, which is moreover encapsulated in the aim and research questions.

1.2 Problem – the entrepreneurial process in a rural setting

To be able to understand the complexity of entrepreneurship, it is essential to understand when, how and why entrepreneurship occurs as well as who is taking part in it (Landström & Löwegren, 2009; Welter, 2011). As stated, the entrepreneur's surroundings possess a greater meaning to the entrepreneurial activities than what earlier research has revealed (Estay *et al.*, 2013; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Welter, 2011). Then again, the entrepreneurship literature has not in great extent taken contextual matters into account, but instead primarily focused on

the personal attributes of the entrepreneur (Welter, 2011). Nonetheless, due to the emphasized importance of context, it is an element that ought to be more thoroughly researched beyond the fact that it *does* affect entrepreneurship, and instead aim for research regarding *how* it affects entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006; Welter, 2011).

Welter (2011) discusses three main levels of contexts (see figure 1), which in present thesis are used as starting-points for more detailed descriptions of context, combined with additional supplements from other researchers. These three levels are spatial (geographical and physical location), social (family, friends, networks, *etcetera*) and institutional (both formal, such as laws, and informal, such as societal norms). Furthermore, present study intends to investigate the contexts' meaning to entrepreneurship with special regards to a specific network for rural entrepreneurs, as well as with what Gupta *et al.* (2009) call the “*lens of gender*”.

Before continuing with the problem description, it is essential to provide a clear definition of gender. The concepts of *sex* and *gender* are similar and are occasionally used as equivalents, or associated with different meanings. Here, *sex* and *gender* are defined as separate constructions. Sex refers to biology (how we are born), while gender refers to identity created within cultural and societal norms (how we choose to behave) (Ahl, 2006; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Ahl (2006, p. 612) argues that gender should not be used as an explanation of a certain behaviour, but rather as a starting point:

A shift in thought is necessary, from gender as something that is to gender as something that is done and from gender as something firmly tied to bodies to gender as tied to anything - concepts, jobs, industries, language, disciplines - or to businesses.

Following, this thesis uses the word gender to describe how one may act to fit in certain cultural and societal norms founded in male/female behavioural presumptions. Therefore, the concept of gender is considered being part of both social and institutional context. Gender could be regarded as being part of spatial context as well, but in this thesis, spatial context constitutes merely of geographical and physical location. Thus, it is not embraced with values and norms itself, rather it is the people in the place who bring the values and norms.

Although lately there has been a definite increase in studies on gender within entrepreneurship (e.g. Acs & Audretsch, 2003; Ahl, 2006; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Verheul *et al.*, 2006), the rural business areas are still neglected (LRF, 2009:a). As follows, research in this area is needed to balance the research results, especially since new trends are beginning to restructure the rural business sector, such as tourism and diversification on farms. Management in rural businesses are habitually shaped by strong traditions in gender balance, where men usually are owners or managers of the companies (LRF, 2009). Hence, this study intends to supplement existing research through the contribution of investigating how the different levels of context influence both women and men entrepreneurs in a specific rural setting with emphasis on the gender perspective.

To provide a broader understanding of different entrepreneurs who partly share the same contexts in a specific rural setting, present thesis will furthermore concentrate the attention to a coordinated network for rural entrepreneurs within a rural area. A coordinated network can be of even higher importance in rural areas than in urban areas since the rural entrepreneurs often are a bit physically isolated, and thus may be in need of networks to create for example a solid customer base (Jordbruksverket, 2006). Piperopoulos (2012, p. 142) means that clusters – “*a sectoral and geographical concentration of interrelated and interconnected enterprises which produce and sell a range of related or complementary products*” – can

enhance the innovation rate and productivity of the members. Besides, regional clusters are proven to be more useful for entrepreneurial activities than what earlier was expected. Piperopoulos (2012, p. 145) describes:

In contrast though, networking, developing strong regional clusters, capitalizing on spatial proximity and tacit knowledge and achieving synergies through competition alongside co-operation in geographical proximity, has never been more crucial for the economic development and competitiveness of regions and SMEs.

McKeever *et al.* (2015) stress there is need to supplement existing research regarding networks and their surrounding context by examining different communities (and thus contexts) in different parts of the world. Specifically, they ask for further inquiries in thriving communities and not only in “depleted” ones, since this would provide a more fulfilled understanding of the interaction between entrepreneurs, community and location. Current thesis means to accomplish this, combined with the above discussed lens of gender. Hence, it means to contribute to the completion of closing the theoretical gap, which has been identified as a need to provide further understanding and broadening of the knowledge of how rural entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial process interacts with the three levels of contexts in a coordinated network (see figure 1). The gap of increasing knowledge of how context affect entrepreneurship has been emphasized by for example Ahl (2006), Jack and Anderson (2002), McKeever *et al.* (2015), Welter (2011), Welter *et al.* (2014) as well as LRF (2009) and Jordbruksverket (2006). There is also a demand among researchers on having a gender perspective to provide an increased understanding of the complexity of the contextual factors (Ahl, 2006; Welter, 2011; LRF, 2009).

To summarize, figure 1 provides a composition of the above discussed essential concepts for this thesis and how they are correlated and connected.

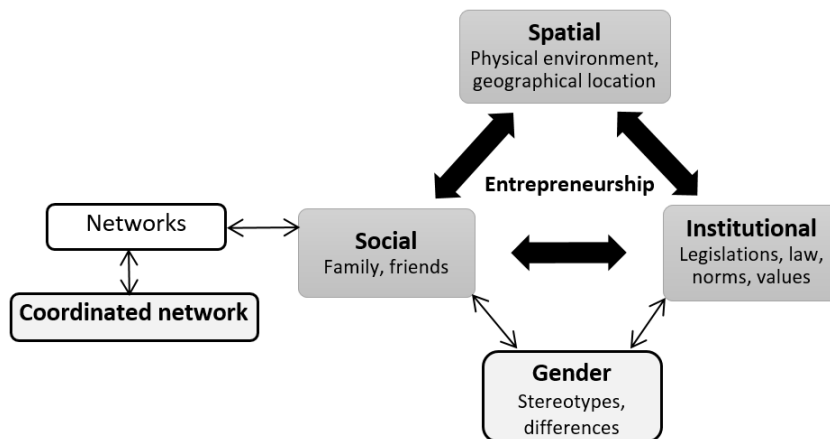


Figure 1. The study’s main concepts and how they are connected.

The coordinated network Fjärdhundraland

This study is performed with special consideration to the cooperative economic association of Fjärdhundraland (**FHL**). FHL is a network created for and by owners of rural SMEs primarily located around the communities of Fjärdhundra, Enköping and Örsundsbro in the county of Uppland. The association focuses principally on food crafts, nature experiences and local history. It has approximately 70 active members as well as 14 supporting members. FHL is developed to bring small businesses together, to develop tourism and to create new partnerships in the area. According to the website ([www, Fjärdhundraland, 2016](http://www.fjardhundraland.se), own translation), the aim of the association is:

/.../ to promote the economic interests of the members by working with rural development, for example by pursuing projects, have joint marketing and increase the interaction between members. The focus is on tourism and small-scale rural enterprises as well as related businesses.

FHL is a shared context that connects its members through contextual and sectorial proximity. It forms the basis of this thesis's empirical problem. McKeever *et al.* (2015, p. 62) mean:

So although social theorising may tell us much about macro changes, it is only by analysing the actions of the entrepreneurs, their realities and social context, that further understanding of the breadth of the entrepreneurial process can be developed.

With this in mind, FHL was chosen as a starting point to grasp the reality of the entrepreneurs, as well as to investigate how the three contexts *affect them* and moreover how *they affect* the contexts, with emphasis on having a gender perspective. FHL represents a significant part in influencing the entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial process. Thus, it may provide a broadened understanding of how the network can make a difference for the entrepreneurs and also how it interacts with and affects the gendered entrepreneurial process. This is considered to be the empirical gap that the thesis contributes to close.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to investigate how the three different levels of contexts interact with rural entrepreneurs in a coordinated network and thus affect the gendered entrepreneurial process.

To reach the aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

- How are the rural Fjärdhundraland entrepreneurs affected by spatial, institutional and social context?
- Likewise, how are the contexts affected by the rural entrepreneurial process in Fjärdhundraland?

1.4 Delimitations

This study investigates only fulltime working entrepreneurs to get a better understanding and knowledge of reasons for starting and running a rural business. However, in some cases they are dependent on the income of their spouse to afford to run the business, and in one case where the business is co-owned between spouses, one of them occasionally works extra on the side.

Furthermore, the study will be conducted in the area of which FHL is active. This choice was made to ensure that the entrepreneurs are active in roughly the same rural area, since the environment where the business is conducted is of great matter especially when it comes to rural enterprises. Furthermore, it was of great meaning to only choose members in FHL to be able to receive a uniting context and a common network for the entrepreneurs. Moreover, it is not suggested to compare this study with similar studies in other countries. Variations in cultural, historical and societal aspects are factors that need to be greatly considered before performing any type of comparison (Alvesson & Billing, 2009).

The study is based on eight focused interviews with eleven people of which five are men and six are women. This will consequently contribute to a deeper understanding of these eight companies and hence the study cannot be considered statistically generalizable to other firms within FHL, nor in other settings. However, the study may contribute to theoretical generalizability (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009) (see a further discussion in section 2.4.2).

Theoretical delimitations are referable to the selection of the main concepts of entrepreneurship and the three levels of contexts, as well as how these concepts impact each other. The study is moreover focused to examine the concepts with a gender perspective. Also, theoretical delimitations are considered referable to the choice of reviewed literature, which may have influenced the understanding and perception of the concepts and questions asked.

1.5 Outline

Chapter one has introduced the problem, aim and research questions which will further permeate through the remaining of the thesis. As shown in figure 2, following is chapter two, *Method*, which describes and argues for the choice of research design as well as the methodological approach of focused interviews. Chapter three, *Theoretical perspective and literature review*, provides a more thorough description of previous research and theoretical framework. This is followed by the fourth chapter, *The empirical study*, where the interviewed entrepreneurs' businesses are described, as well as it includes summaries of all interviews, including an interview with the chairman of FHL. The gathered empirics is then discussed with regards to the theoretical framework in chapter 5, *Discussion*, which will culminate in the *Conclusions* of the study, chapter 6. Bibliography as well as the appendix including the interview guide, are found last in the thesis.



Figure 2. Outline of the study.

2 Method

The following chapter describes why the qualitative (flexible) research design is used, as well as it argues for the choice of performing a single case study with embedded units. It is followed by a description of how the literature search has been conducted. Also, it covers a method discussion concerning how the methodological choices may affect the study, followed by ethical considerations.

2.1 Qualitative research design

This thesis's ambition is to investigate and describe how different levels of contexts interact with entrepreneurs in a closed setting as well as collect information of the situation in present time. Thus, this study is of descriptive type (Blaxter *et al.*, 2006). The closed setting is the co-operative business association Fjärdhundraland, since all interviewees are members of the association. Furthermore, a flexible, or more commonly referred to as a qualitative research design, is used (Robson, 2011). The contrast to flexible design - the fixed, quantitative design - does not focus on the details and complexity of individual processes and human behaviour, whilst it is a strong design when for example identifying general patterns in a bigger social group or structure (Robson, 2011). However, this is not the purpose of present study. Thus, the flexible design is more suitable due to its intention to provide a deeper understanding of human behaviour in a particular, process oriented context (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). This choice is also supported by McKeever *et al.* (2015) who mean that the usage of a qualitative lens and inductive approach reveal the interesting aspects of the processes that are taking place in complex contexts.

Case study

Moreover, the case study method is used. According to Yin (2009), the choice of case study can be supported by the formulation of the research questions, when the context is perceived to be of high relevance to the phenomenon of the study, as well as when there is no clear line between context and phenomenon. This thesis means to explain a social phenomenon in a contextual, in-depth way, with focus on "how" and "why" this phenomenon occurs and exists, and thus the choice of the case study method is accounted for. More specifically, this study is perceived as balancing on the border between a multiple case study and a single case study with embedded units (see figure 3).

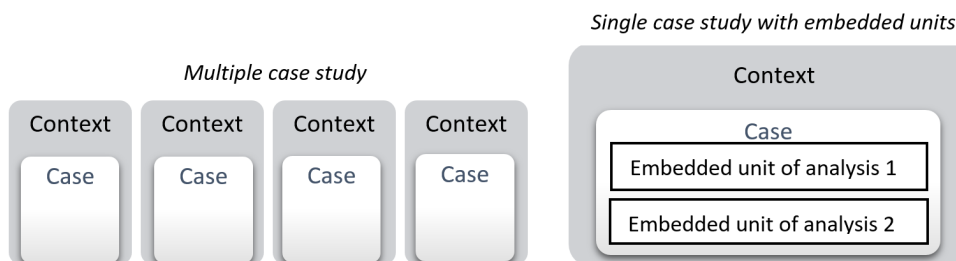


Figure 3. Multiple case study versus a single case study with embedded units (Yin, 2009, p. 46, own processing).

The principal difference between the two types of case studies is how the context differentiates (Yin, 2009). When performing a multiple case study, the researcher is able to study the cases within each separate setting as well as across settings, this to identify resemblances and alterations between the cases. A single case with embedded units however

allows the researcher to analyse one single, unique setting, followed by a possibility of analysing data within the subunits individually, between the different subunits, or across all the subunits. This creates an opportunity of comparison despite the fact that there is still only one main unit of analysis. Present study is performed on eight different companies with regards to the same context; the association of Fjärdhundraland. Even though different kinds of contexts (spatial, social, institutional) will be taken into account in the analysis, as well as merely a small number of membership companies in Fjärdhundraland is investigated, Fjärdhundraland is regarded as the main case and the eight investigated companies as subunits in the greater context. Consequently, the case study design viewed as the most appropriate for this thesis is the single case study with embedded units.

2.2 Course of action

The research is performed with primarily an inductive approach. When performing research with an inductive approach, empirical data are first collected in a substantial amount and then interpreted and divided into patterns in order to find relevant and suitable theory (Bell & Bryman, 2013). However, to be able to formulate a well-reasoned interview guide ahead of the interviews, possible theories were considered beforehand. Thus, the study is also performed with elements of a deductive approach, where the empiric originates in theory. This way of performing the study created a conceptual framework ahead of performing the empirics. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework means to identify the people who will and will not participate in the study, clarify the relationships that may occur referring to logic, theory and/or experience, as well as to assist the researcher to divide different concepts into separate categories to simplify the analysis. The conceptual framework provides support both before the empiric is accomplished, as well as after when gathered data are to be analysed. The conceptual framework in present thesis is considered to provide necessary knowledge along with assisting the identification of relevant concepts that were perceived as vital for reaching the aim of the study (for example entrepreneurship, gender differences in entrepreneurship, different types of contexts).

Additionally, Robson (2011) discusses the concepts of looseness and selectivity when performing research. If the design is too loose, it may be challenging to get a clear structure of the research, since all aspects may be as important. Meanwhile, a too selective design can lead to predetermined views, where the researcher may not be as receptive towards aspects that were not thought of in the beginning (Robson, 2011). Thus, this thesis has been performed with a combination of looseness and selectivity and was pre-structured through a vast literature review. The pre-structuring was performed to get an initial understanding of the three main ideas this study has intended to investigate; entrepreneurship, gender and context. However, the gathered empirical data did somewhat provide the study with new aspects and approaches. As a consequence, chapter one and three (Introduction and Theoretical perspectives and literature review) has to some extent been re-written after the empirical study was executed.

To reach the aim of this qualitative study, it is essential to interpret the reality and get a thorough understanding of the subject (Bell & Bryman, 2013). This was accomplished through conducting interviews with a limited sample of individuals and thus companies, within the co-operative economic association Fjärdhundraland.

2.2.1 Focused interviews

Interviewing is a distinguished technique of gathering information when performing case studies (Bell & Bryman, 2013; Yin, 2009). The interviews should be focused on two things; to be in line with the actual research and to be performed without adding bias (Yin, 2009). This thesis's empirical data were collected through *focused interviews*. Thus, the interviews were performed in a limited amount of time, approximately one hour per interview, yet still held in a conversational manner with predominantly open-ended questions (Yin, 2009). The interviews were furthermore constructed in a semi-structured way, whereas a checklist of topics and questions was used to provide flexibility in the dialogue and to receive a rich information base (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Robson, 2011). Moreover, when performing semi-structured interviews, the questions must not necessarily have to be asked in the order they are written, as long as all topics are covered during the interview, which was also the case in this study. To ensure that all coveted concepts were going to be accounted for, the questions in the interview guide (see appendix 1), have been divided under appropriate headings. These headings are *general information about the company*, *general information about the entrepreneur*, *entrepreneurship*, *gender*, *context* (with subheadings social context, spatial context and institutional context) and *other*. This interview structure was preferred due to the researchers' relatively clear image of how the follow up data analysis was going to be done. It was also chosen with intention to increase the possibility of comparison between the investigated entrepreneurs. Additionally, a focused interview was conducted with the chairman of FHL, Mats Thorburn (see appendix 2). This was done to gain an increased understanding and knowledge regarding the vision of the association as well as how the association functions.

The respondents are from here on continuously referred to as "informants" due to their important contribution of key data to this study (Yin, 2009). The interviews were held face-to-face with the informants, at the location of their business, which on every occasion meant their homes. This choice of interview location was made to interpret the informants' reality and to get a thorough understanding of the informant, since context and its influence on the people involved is of high interest in this study. Moreover, performing the interviews in the informants' home environment was also a way of making it more comfortable for them and thus increase their willingness to participate in the study.

2.2.2 Why the choice of Fjärdhundraland and the businesses?

The informants are a mixture of men and women entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs have been chosen based on their gender, their choice of being fulltime engaged in their business, their choice of owning a company within the rural business sector, their physical location as well as their membership in the association FHL. The choice of investigating eight businesses, neither more or less, was made to gain a broadened empirical data base, but also since the study is performed with a qualitative approach where the focus lies on gaining a deeper understanding of a certain process oriented context. The purpose of the interviews was to get a deeper understanding regarding the informants' behaviours concerning their entrepreneurial activities as well as characteristics (Bell & Bryman, 2013; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). This is further analysed with regard to the different levels of contexts including gender in chapter 5, Discussion. The association FHL was chosen due to its focus on providing a network between SMEs located in the area around the communities of Fjärdhundra, Enköping and Örsundsbro. The choice of focusing on a regional cluster, and specifically a coordinated network, is based upon the ambition of performing the study on entrepreneurs sharing the same spatial and to some extent social context, factors that according to research can influence innovation, productivity and decision-making for the individual entrepreneur (Piperopoulos, 2012;

Welter, 2011). The area of which in FHL operates is in turn located within a comfortable travelling time from Uppsala, from where the researchers performed the study.

2.2.3 Data collection and analysis

The interviews have all been recorded after getting allowance from the informants. Even though the transcribing of the recordings is highly time-consuming, recording was considered the most appropriate way of retelling the interviews correctly and thus minimize inaccuracies. The interviews were transcribed by two of the researchers in this study. Particularly when more than one person participates in the transcription procedure, it is highly important that the same transcription technique is used, this to be able to make cross-comparisons of the interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). The transcription technique used was to listen to the recorded interview and type it down in Swedish (the language used during the interviews), with focus on typing the exact phrases used by the informants and researchers, while ignoring unnecessary words, for example “ehmm”, and sentences unnecessary for the interview itself, such as explanations regarding the construction of the study. The choice of typing down the exact phrases was made to minimize the risk of removing what possibly could have been relevant information for the analysis (Bell & Bryman, 2013). The transcriptions were then clustered and thematically coded into the main themes of the study; entrepreneurship, gender and context. Table 1 provides a survey of the required time for each interview, number of transcription pages as well as number of pages when clustered and thematically coded into main themes. Coding is an important part of data-analysis since it simplifies and rationalize the analysis. It helps structuring large amounts of data as well as visualizing possibilities of comparison between cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The thematic codes were suggested already prior to interviewing since doing so was considered to provide a more effective data-labelling after the interviews were conducted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The choice of doing so is related to the authors’ choice of performing an inductive study with deductive features. The thematic division is based on the conceptual framework, which was formed ahead of the empirics to ensure that the concepts central to the study were covered in a theoretically correct and relevant way. After organizing the transcripts, the text was translated to English.

Table 1. Summary of time requirement for the interviews and number of transcription pages.

	Time for interview Minutes	Transcription Nr. of A4 pages	Clustered and thematically coded into main themes Nr. of A4 pages
Chairman of FHL	40	6	4
Domta-grisen	60	4	3,5
Forsby kvarn kafé	69	11	7
Kråkvilan	55	7	5,5
Mälby trädgård	55	6	3,5
Resta gård	49	5,5	6
Skogsbackens ost	54	9	7
Sussis gårdsbageri	43	5,5	3,5
Vallgarns gårdsmejeri	86	9,5	7,5

Moreover, after transcribing the recordings, the informants were sent the elaborated material to create a possibility for them to accept and possibly revise the transcriptions. This is especially important since all informants agreed to have their own and their companies’ names in the thesis (Yin, 2009).

2.3 Finding literature

Among others, Robson (2011) and Yin (2009) argue for the importance of performing research with multiple sources of evidence and thus use the principle of triangulation. Using multiple sources is a way of raising the chances of producing high quality research as well as strengthening the credibility of the results and thus also the validity. It allows a wider variety in the investigation of historical and behavioural concerns (Yin, 2009). This thesis is based on empirical investigations (interviews) as well as articles, Internet pages and books. According to Robson (2011), a literature review is performed to identify the gap in research that is to be filled, to help defining essential concepts for the study, to learn what has been said in the actual topic and to give inspiration to what types of methods that are most appropriate to use. Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) however argue that empirical investigations' equalization with data evidence should be used with restriction. The empirics is filled with interpretations and dependent on the vocabulary used, and instead of using it as evidence that directly reflects reality, it should be used as "*a critical dialogue partner*" (p. 1266) which inspires to theoretical understanding. With this in mind, the authors of this study are careful not to directly equalize the empirical investigations with pure evidence, but rather use it as the mentioned dialogue partner, inspiring to expand existing theoretical frameworks.

The literature was found both in the library of SLU, after performing searches in Primo and with help from the librarians, as well as it was lent by a postgraduate at the institution who previously performed studies on gender stereotypes in agricultural settings. The electronic databases used were in order; Google Scholar, Primo and Web of Science. Table 2 shows the main search words, *Entrepreneurship*, *Gender* and *Context*, in the first row, where entrepreneurship and gender is followed by words added in the search, and context is followed by synonyms. Besides literature search for the three main concepts, search has also been done to find relevant method support as well as some statistics.

Table 2. The search words used to find suitable literature.

Main search words		
Entrepreneurship +	Gender +	Context
Context (and the synonyms)	Differences	Environment
Driving forces	Sex	Location
Family		Social
Female		
Gender differences		
Male		
Network		
Rural		
Women		

2.4 Method discussion

The following sections contain a further discussion regarding the choice of methodological approach and its impact on the trustworthiness of the study.

2.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are a source of information also connected to weaknesses, which have been noted by the authors before the interviews were taking place. Yin (2009) discusses the risk of

formulating the questions in a way based on prejudice, incorrect interpretation due to reduced recollection, along with the informants responding to the questions in ways they believe the researcher wants to hear. The interviews in this study were performed with a cognizance regarding that no researcher is fully objective, followed by an understanding that bias in some way may interfere with the questions asked (Robson, 2011). To minimize the risk of misleading the informants, the researchers in this study were at highest length trying to avoid leading questions, along with using open-ended formulations. This was to get the most versatile answers from the informants which otherwise may only have stayed in the periphery of the interviews.

Out of the eight studied companies, five of them were co-owned with a spouse. During three of the occasions, both the woman and man were present for the interview. Even though the researchers perceive there were no attempts of influencing one another when answering, this is nonetheless considered a weakness in the study. To ensure a higher degree of accurate answering and minimize the risk of steering each other's answers, they should have been interviewed separately. Consequently, this was taken under consideration when analysing the interviews.

2.4.2 Validity

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of research, there are some central concepts which are important to take into consideration when performing the study. *Validity* concerns a discussion if one is investigating what is intended to be investigated, which more specifically is referred to as *construct validity* (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). This is where triangulation enters as a quality ensuring tool; the usage of multiple sources of evidence. The present thesis's focus has been on *data triangulation* and *theory triangulation*. A vast literature review has been performed, with focus on books and articles. This in turn has provided a solid base for the gathering of empirical evidence since it assisted the identification regarding what research already exists, and thus also the theoretical gap that is in need of filling. Robson (2011) and Yin (2009) stress that a main threat to validity in qualitative studies is not considering alternative explanations to the investigated subject by only searching for theory that supports your beforehand assumed explanations. Theory triangulation means searching for several theories or perspectives to explain a phenomenon (Robson, 2011). Consequently, seeking theory that is not in line with the researchers' assumptions is a way to ensure validity. This can also bring thoughts to perform a negative case analysis, where researchers seek theories that will disaffirm the generated theories (Robson, 2011). Thus, more elaborated theories should be developed from this technique.

Furthermore, Yin (2009) stresses that to maintain high construct validity throughout the study, it is an idea to let the key informants evaluate the case study report before publishing. Thus, to ensure the informants being comfortable with the material published and to minimize the risk of inaccuracies, the informants were sent the transcriptions for review and approval. Moreover, before performing the actual interviews, the interview guide was tested on another independent entrepreneur. This was done simply to test if the questions were understandable and relevant to the study, and thus increase the possibility of attaining relevant information.

External validity or *generalizability* is generally not considered possible when performing a study with merely eight interviews, with a total of eleven participating people, in addition to the specific and limited area of where the study is executed. Nor can this particular study be referred to as representative to the remaining members of Fjärdhundraland. As case studies intend to clarify and understand a certain process, setting or other, they do not provide the

statistical generalizability that is generally associated with for example a survey design. Nevertheless, they can contribute to the understanding of other cases, which can be referred to as *analytical or theoretical generalization* (Bell & Bryman, 2013; Ragin, 1987; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). For example, this thesis may suggest possible explanations and understandings to another case study in a similar setting and by that contribute to the theoretical thinking within present subject. Thus, how the network Fjärdhundraland affects the participating entrepreneurs can suggest how a similar network may affect its participating entrepreneurs. Flyvbjerg (2006) takes the discussion one step further and means that there lies more significance in the force of case studies than what they get credit for. He argues that a single case study may contribute to the increase of scientific knowledge, for example he mentions Popper (1959) who discussed that one can disrupt a general perception with the use of just one case that shows differently. For example, the statement “all swans are white” is disrupted when a black swan is found which encourages further inquiry and theory building. However, generalizability is not the primarily goal of this thesis. The actual purpose is to get an increased insight of the association Fjärdhundraland, and in particular a deeper understanding of the eight investigated companies.

The concept of internal validity concerns forming causal relationships, which does not concern studies of descriptive type (Yin, 2009). This matter is thus not covered within this thesis and will therefore not be further discussed.

2.4.3 Reliability

Critical factors of providing a flexible study with high reliability are to reduce the risk of bias and inaccuracies. A way to do that is to follow the objective that if another researcher would perform the same case (note; not replicating the study on another case), the outcome would be the same (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). Therefore, it is imperative to be thorough when explaining the method of which was used when performing the study, as well as performing the study with open mind and awareness of the unavoidable subjectivity that every researcher brings. Consequently, a great focus in this thesis is to provide a clear method description and to minimize bias, with the purpose of increasing the study’s reliability.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations should be taken into account especially in research that involves people, and should be reflected upon already in the initiation phase (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Consequently, this is also the case when conducting interviews. Research participants may feel stress and anxiety in the involvement of research and may protect themselves by not answering the questions completely honestly. Thus, ethical issues should be considered in order to avoid the negative consequences the participants may otherwise experience. Before performing the interviews, the following considerations were carefully thought through (Bryman & Bell, 2013); the informants were thoroughly informed regarding what the thesis aims to investigate as well as how their responses were going to be used, they were given the choice of anonymity, as well as give their allowance of recording. After the recordings were transcribed, they were sent back to the informants to ensure they were interpreted correctly.

3 Theoretical perspective and literature review

This chapter provides a more thorough description of the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The main theoretical perspective in the thesis is the concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is moreover investigated in a perspective central to the study; context. The concept of context will further be theorized into different levels; spatial, institutional and social. Both entrepreneurship and the contexts will additionally be discoursed with a gender perspective.

3.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship does not have a unanimously used definition, despite that it is one of the most frequently occurring research areas in business management since the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g. Estay *et al.*, 2013; Landström & Löwegren, 2009; Henrekson & Sanandaji, 2014). On the contrary, it is a wide and complex concept with many definitions and meanings (*ibid.*). Entrepreneurship can be seen as a process with various perspectives and dimensions, and the definition used is often dependent on the pursued inquiry since entrepreneurship in its own complexity can be adapted to the current situation. Schumpeter (1934), a predecessor in entrepreneurship literature, referred to entrepreneurship as firms driven by growth and innovation. Brockhaus (1982) theorizes entrepreneurs as individuals with certain entrepreneurial attributes which separate them from others, such as the need for performance, clear goal-orientation and risk taking tendencies, while Landström and Löwegren (2009) argue that an entrepreneur simply is someone who goes through the process of starting a company. Naffziger *et al.* (1994) mean that entrepreneurial behaviour originates from a combination of personal characteristics, goals, ideas and the environment of where the entrepreneur is active. Moreover, there has lately been an increased focus on the significance of external forces and different levels of context (society, politics, family, and physical environment) and how these dynamics influence the individual to pursue an entrepreneurial career (Welter, 2011; Estay *et al.*, 2013). Shane and Venkataraman (2000) debate that entrepreneurship is the ability of locating and exploiting new business opportunities, while Kent (1990, p. 1) ponders that:

Entrepreneurs have been equated with heffalumps /.../ no one has been able to precisely describe them or state for certainty what they are.

However, despite the different definitions and conceptions there is one general perception that is almost always applicable: entrepreneurship is a concept associated with positivity and prosperity. Present thesis refers to entrepreneurship according to the functional view of entrepreneurship, and thus equals entrepreneurship as an activity or a process (e.g. Jack & Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015; Mair & Martí, 2006; McKeever *et al.*, 2015). This view argues that entrepreneurship is not merely connected to an individual or specific business, but rather to a movement where many actors and events converge and affect the entrepreneurial process (Jack & Anderson, 2002). In the following sections, the concepts of social entrepreneurship, embeddedness and rural entrepreneurship are introduced to provide a further and more thorough description of entrepreneurship in FHL.

3.1.1 Social entrepreneurship

Approximately in the last decade there has been an increased interest in the practice *social entrepreneurship* (Smith & Stevens, 2010). However, the definition of social entrepreneurship is still emerging (*ibid.*). According to Mair and Martí (2006), social entrepreneurship should be referred to as a process as well, but differentiates from the traditional view by having its focus transferred from financial welfare to primarily social welfare. Social entrepreneurship can be viewed as creation of innovative solutions on social problems which integrate capacity, resources, social arrangements and ideas (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Doherty & Thompson, 2006). It aims at driving social change and explore and address social needs, which in turn will provide benefits (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010). Thus, a main focus for social entrepreneurship is the creation of social value (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Smith & Stevens, 2010). However, social entrepreneurship is not equalized with non-existing monetary incentives – without financial possibilities there is a definite decreased possibility of providing social sustainability. Social entrepreneurship occurs in different shapes, depending on surrounding conditions. Thereby, Mair and Martí (2006) emphasize “*the concept of embeddedness*” when studying different forms of the concept.

3.1.2 Embeddedness

Embeddedness and its meaning to entrepreneurship has received an increased interest within research (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). Embeddedness regards how different levels of context, such as community, environment and social relationships, influence entrepreneurial activity in different situations, and thus individuals’ ties to different contexts (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Granovetter, 1985; McKeever *et al.*, 2015). Even embeddedness can be referred to as a process which creates social relations leading the individual to join the local structure (social context) at a deeper level (Jack & Anderson, 2002). The social relations are key ingredients in embeddedness since they shape networks in which information is spread and decisions are made (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Smith & Stevens, 2010). An individual can be embedded in different degrees depending on involvement in the contexts (Smith & Stevens, 2010). Embeddedness can contribute both to the creation as well as the suppression of entrepreneurship and thus strengthen the view that entrepreneurship is a combination of contextual impacts; social, economic and local (Jack & Anderson, 2002; McKeever *et al.*, 2015; Welter, 2011). An increased degree of embeddedness can make it easier for the entrepreneur to identify opportunities and understand contexts, which affects the individual’s capability to extract social and economic resources which otherwise maybe would not be accessible. Thus it may also have the capability to develop contextual advantages (Jack & Anderson, 2002).

In present thesis, FHL is regarded a focal point for social entrepreneurs who have a common interest in retaining and developing the local community around FHL through creating a prosperous countryside. McKeever *et al.* (2015) moreover emphasize the role of the local entrepreneurs and their significance when establishing a “*more sustainable, culturally aware and socially sensitive form of growth and development*” (p. 63). Moreover, FHL’s local entrepreneurs can also be ascribed of pursuing rural entrepreneurship, a concept further developed in the following section. In this thesis, rural entrepreneurship is regarded as a kind of social entrepreneurship.

3.1.3 Rural entrepreneurship

Especially when researching rural entrepreneurship, the spatial context and thus geographic location, is essential due to its role of providing resources that create value, both for the

entrepreneurs but also for the local community (Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015). Silk (1999, p. 6) means that the term community represents:

/.../ common needs and goals, a sense of the common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action.

Korsgaard *et al.*, (2015) separate entrepreneurship in rural areas between *entrepreneurship in the rural* and *rural entrepreneurship*. *Entrepreneurship in the rural* refers to the choice of running a business located in a rural area based on primarily financial advantages for the business, such as lower rents. The business is not bound by or dependent on the place for the production of goods or services and is thus not hard to relocate to continue the business elsewhere. Hence, entrepreneurship in the rural has a low embeddedness. *Rural entrepreneurship* is on the other hand deeply embedded in its spatial location. Hence, it engages with the place both physically, for example a farmer dependent on the soil, and mentally, since it often is a place that contributes with a sense of purpose as well as social life (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). Rural entrepreneurship involves place-dependent resources and cannot relocate, since it would thus lose its core. It does not merely work to make profit, but to contribute to the surroundings and local community.

Moreover, Bosworth (2011), means rural businesses separate from other businesses through the achievement of at least two of three particular parameters. They should be “*located in a rural area*”, “*servicing a rural customer base*” and “*selling a rural product*” (p. 503). Businesses serving a rural customer base are for example the local pub or post office, which is not the primarily goal for this study’s entrepreneurs. However, they all fulfil the remaining two parameters. They sell rural products or services, such as running a B&B and/or café. Also, they are all located in a rural area. Bosworth (2011) means rural businesses contribute with certain intangible assets and added values to the local area that go beyond financial measures, which thus goes in line with the view of Korsgaard *et al.* (2015). For example, they manage the environmental surroundings, make the countryside accessible, and/or maintain certain rural expertise (Bosworth, 2011). With this in mind, present study is as stated devoted to rural entrepreneurs.

Rural entrepreneurship is not directly connected to the traditional view of fast growth and profit making. It has the tradition of slow-growing businesses, which most commonly do not have the ambition of becoming notably large (Bosworth, 2011; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015; Steinerowski *et al.*, 2008). Rather, rural entrepreneurship values and supports the local community before prioritizing growth and innovation. One can summarize: without the place, no business.

Moreover, entrepreneurship in rural areas usually is more socially angled than commercially angled and is encouraged as a solution for regions who have problems with isolation and decreasing population (Steinerowski *et al.*, 2008). The entrepreneurs may provide employment but also have the effect of bringing people together (*ibid.*). Compared to urban areas, there seems to be a higher support from the community and family in rural areas (*ibid.*). The social entrepreneurs in these areas do therefore have a suitable base of social capital for creation and development of ventures (a definition of social capital is provided in section 3.2.3.1). Furthermore, Steinerowski *et al.* (2008) argue that the social networks in a rural setting are denser than in urban areas. These networks do generally have many active members and a high degree of trust. On the other hand, Welter *et al.*, (2014) highlight that the physical business site may create implications and difficulties for venture survival and

development, for example when gaining legitimacy with creditors and clients, since there is a risk that they are merely seen as hobbies with limited growth potential.

3.1.4 Why all businesses in present study are referred to as entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is generally associated with innovation of different kinds, for example, the creation of a new patented product, a new way of running a business, or the generation of new ideas to develop an existing business. According to Boulton *et al.* (1984) and Henrekson and Sanandaji (2014), small businesses and new ventures does not equalize entrepreneurship. They refer their arguments to the Schumpeterian view of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934), where entrepreneurial businesses per definition are driven by innovation and growth. They further emphasize that, on the contrary to entrepreneurial businesses, many new small businesses have no intention of growing as well as they do not exist primarily to make profit. Thus, they do not characterize as entrepreneurial businesses. With this in mind, this thesis will not automatically equalize SMEs with entrepreneurial businesses and Small Business Owners (SBOs) as entrepreneurs. However, the investigated businesses were chosen because of their entrepreneurial features. They all started with entrepreneurial intentions in the sense that they yearned to add something new to the local market as well as they possessed an urge for contributing with something to bring value not only to themselves, but to the fellow people and local community. The authors of this thesis argue that there is more to entrepreneurship than merely striving for innovation and growth - a belief that may lead to researchers principally emphasizing some inquiries while minimizing the meaning of others (Ahl, 2006). Moreover, as Mair and Martí (2006, p. 38) put it:

While the profit motive might be ‘‘a central engine’’ of entrepreneurship, it does not preclude other motivations.

Entrepreneurship is also about the ability and desire of creating a functioning business by identifying the surrounding resources and opportunities, and through that identification create meaning and value for the individual entrepreneur, as well as in the long run also for the surroundings. Hence, all investigated companies are referred to as entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the investigated entrepreneurs are ascribed of being both social and rural entrepreneurs, founded in their dependence on their spatial context, as well as they actively contribute to the social benefits of the community. Also, they all fulfil two of the three parameters discussed by Bosworth (2011). To conclude, figure 4 shows how the discussed concepts of entrepreneurship culminates into what is considered to be the kind of entrepreneurship occurring in FHL.



Figure 4. How different concepts coincide into the entrepreneurship in FHL.

3.1.5 Becoming an entrepreneur - a decision affected by several factors

A business start-up can be a challenging process with many decisions to consider. Langowitz and Minniti (2007) strongly emphasize the meaning of perceptual factors when deciding to pursue an entrepreneurial career, factors that are shown to affect women and men differently. Opportunity perception (the ability to locate opportunities that can lead to business creation), risk tolerance and self-confidence are typical perceptual factors that strongly influence the entrepreneur’s decision-making, particularly when initializing a new business, as well as they at the same time are referable to typical characteristics of an entrepreneur. Perceptual factors concern how people *perceive* their own ability of becoming entrepreneurs. Generally, it is

shown that men have a stronger perception regarding their successfulness of becoming entrepreneurs than women (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Hence, men usually identify themselves in a more optimistic way, which is followed by their higher motivation for starting a business. Langowitz and Minniti (2007) regard the perceptual factors affecting women's decisions to start a business as contextually resident based in institutional settings.

The section below describes and explains through the use of theory of planned behavior how personal, relational and societal perceptions of an individual's entrepreneurial abilities can affect the individual's entrepreneurial activities.

The TPB and social perceptions - what affect entrepreneurial intentions?

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) suggests three factors that play a big role in influencing entrepreneurial intentions; entrepreneurial personal attitude (PA), entrepreneurial perceived behavioural control (PBC) and perceived social norms (SN) (see figure 5). PA regards the attraction and desire of becoming an entrepreneur, PBC concerns the perceived capability one has to become an entrepreneur, and SN regards the perceived attitude of people close to the forthcoming entrepreneur as well as the perceived attitude of entrepreneurship in society at large.

The TPB is a widely accepted theory regarding foreseeing behavioural objectives and thus motivation and driving forces of becoming an entrepreneur (Borgia *et al.*, 2005; Kolvereid, 1996). Santos *et al.* (2016) introduce the TPB into the discussion of gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions, since women repeatedly are said to potentially have some weaknesses compared to men in this matter. For example, these weaknesses can take form as inferior financial, network and human resources (Santos *et al.*, 2016). However, studies show that as long as fundamental factors when initializing entrepreneurial activity (such as starting capital and other resources) are at the same level for both women and men, there are more similarities than differences between genders. As follows, taking context into account when investigating entrepreneurship is of interest. Santos *et al.* (2016) emphasize the role of social environment when entrepreneurs make important choices, not at least whether or not they will engage in entrepreneurial activity. The authors develop the TPB and divide social environment into microsocial environment or *closer valuation* (CV) and macrosocial environment or *social valuation* (SV) (see figure 5).

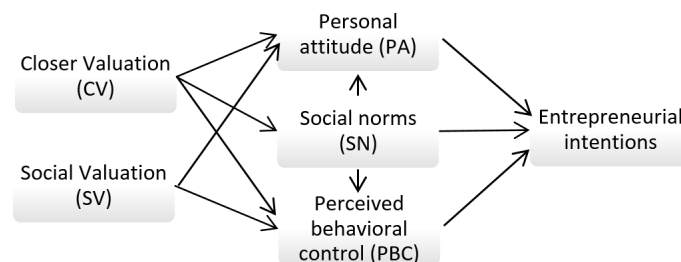


Figure 5. The TPB with additional social perceptions: CV and SV (Santos *et al.*, 2016, p. 53, own processing).

CV regards how entrepreneurial activity is assumed to be valued in the individuals' closest environment consisting of friends and family, in other words if and how entrepreneurship is supported or not. How the closest environment perceive entrepreneurship is shown to be of big importance when initializing entrepreneurial activity – it provides self-confidence to do so (entrepreneurial PBC) as well as it may affect the attitude towards entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial PA). SV refers to how culture and norms in society affect the entrepreneurial intentions and how the future entrepreneurs perceive how society, as a result of macrosocial

culture, values entrepreneurship and their possibility of becoming entrepreneurs. As stated earlier in this thesis, entrepreneurship is often related to men and masculine attributes which can consciously and/or unconsciously affect how men and women view their possibilities of pursuing an entrepreneurial career (Ahl, 2006; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Welter *et al.*, 2014).

It is shown that the motivation of becoming an entrepreneur is founded greatly in the personal perception regarding entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial PA and PBC), with indifference to gender. Santos *et al.* (2016) however discover that men show some higher entrepreneurial intentions than women, but stress that this is “*the logical consequence of their more favorable PA and PBC.*” (p. 59). Regarding the closer environment, CV, there seems to be no difference between men and women. Thus, family and other close connections are equally important for men and women. Also, perceived SV is similar between genders. Nonetheless, there is a difference in how SV influences PA and PBC. With a more positively perceived SV, men regard entrepreneurial activities as more desirable, while women are not affected by a more positively perceived SV.

Women are not born with lesser entrepreneurial intentions, but they may however *perceive* the barriers of being successful entrepreneurs as higher than men (Santos *et al.*, 2016). Also, they generally perceive the entrepreneurial career as less suitable to them, which may be referable to the view of entrepreneurship as being something with a masculine ring to it. As follows, that view may have something to do with why a more positive SV does not have a positive influence on women’s PA and PBC. In other words, even though women may feel that society values entrepreneurship highly, they still do not feel that it is relevant for them to pursue such a career. Hence, culture and social norms play an essential role for both women and men when deciding whether or not to become an entrepreneur. This is also discussed by Langowitz and Minniti (2007), who concluded the influence of perceptual factors when deciding to pursue an entrepreneurial career, Welter *et al.*, (2014), who emphasize the meaning of contextual factors and Ahl (2006), who stresses that the norms created by society are of greater importance than to focus on actual differences between genders.

The TPB with the additional social perceptions is suitable to use in this study since it provides an understanding of the behavioural intentions of entrepreneurship. The TPB is used in the discussion to support and explain motivations of the investigated men and women.

3.2 Context and entrepreneurship

To be able to understand the complexity of entrepreneurship, it is essential to understand when, how and why entrepreneurship occurs as well as who is taking part in it (Landström & Löwegren, 2009; Welter, 2011). Internal factors, such as character and personal values, are significant and affect the individual’s choice to become an entrepreneur. However, external factors, such as society’s norms, values and expectations, have been shown to play an equally important role to one’s entrepreneurial intentions (De Carolis *et al.*, 2009; Estay *et al.*, 2013; McKeever *et al.*, 2015; Welter, 2011). Taking them into account can provide a greater understanding of the entrepreneurial process. These external factors have an impact on the individual’s internal factors and can thereby greatly influence a person’s values, motives, opportunity recognition *etcetera* (de Bruin *et al.*, 2009). Also, Ahl (2006) emphasizes that too much focus lies on the individual entrepreneur while there should be more understanding and

awareness regarding the circumstances, such as network, education and managerial experience. Hence, shortcomings in entrepreneurial activities should also be attributed to surrounding circumstances and not merely to the individual. The surroundings influence the business for both men and women and, perhaps, differently between the two (Ahl, 2006). This is also discussed by for example Alvensson and Billing (1997 & 2009), Welter (2011) and Ettl and Welter (2010). Following is the choice of adding context to this study, to shed light upon the effects of external aspects and how they affect the interviewed entrepreneurs.

Welter (2011) further means that the individual is embedded in levels of contexts. Context is a complex phenomenon which influence the entrepreneurs both directly and indirectly. As follows, different contexts have the ability to provide opportunities for individuals but also the capacity to limit an individual's freedom of action (further described in the following subheadings). Thus, context can serve as an asset but also a burden for the development of entrepreneurship. Welter (2011) discusses three main levels of contexts; *spatial*, which regards physical environment and geographical location, *institutional*, which is divided into two elements; informal (norms, values, stereotypes) and formal (laws, legislations) and lastly *social*, which regards social relations and connections, such as networks (see figure 6). In present thesis they are used as starting-points for more detailed descriptions of context, combined with additional supplements from other researchers. This study moreover investigates the entrepreneurial process with a gender perspective and as stated views gender as a construction founded in societal norms and values. Based on this definition, gender is seen as part of the informal institutional as well as the social context and will thus be further discussed in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. To get a more easily digested understanding of these concepts and how they are connected, see figure 6.

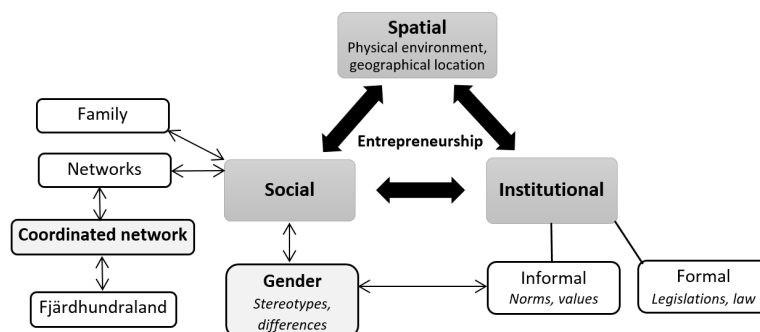


Figure 6. An overview of how the different levels of contexts are connected.

3.2.1 Spatial context

Entrepreneurs are heavily influenced by the physical environment and geographical location of their business, and thus the spatial context (Ahl, 2006; Welter, 2011; Welter *et al.*, 2014). The location has the ability to influence the individual's opportunity recognition and thus possible ideas for business creation (Ettl & Welter, 2010). The place, especially for rural entrepreneurs, is a resource and a necessity, as well as works as a self-defining and social construction (often closely related to the entrepreneurs' origin and background) which often influences the rural entrepreneurs' decisions more than economic regards (Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015; McKeever *et al.*, 2015). The place creates a feeling of coherence and belonging, which in turn may influence local knowledge and networks to contribute to local social and economic welfare. It leads to effects directed in two directions - entrepreneurship can be shaped by the place, and the place can be shaped by entrepreneurship. Korsgaard *et al.* (2015) furthermore emphasize that rural entrepreneurs' feeling of belonging to the rural area can influence and catalyse the start of more new rural businesses in the area. Smith and Stevens (2010) explain that the geographical location affects social networks and embeddedness,

which in turn affect the entrepreneurs. The likelihood for interaction between actors is higher if they live and act within the same geographic area, and therefore the geographical proximity between actors can influence the creation of networks (Smith & Stevens, 2010).

The spatial context also influences how (Welter, 2011, p. 171; referring to Berg, 1997):

.../ gender, place and entrepreneurship are intertwined, indicating how a feminist perspective can assist in understanding the centrality of place for entrepreneurship.

Spatial context is of importance both in the public sphere as well as in the private sphere. Women tend to adapt their businesses to their family situation more than men (Ettl & Welter, 2010). For example, it is common that women let their family life decide their choice of business and not the opposite. Welter (2011) further means that businesses who are run from home are not as highly valued and not perceived being as trustworthy as other businesses and may also fall under the impression of being just a hobby. Mirchandani (1999) means that home-based ventures not as often are trusted with receiving bank loans since their growth potential is seen as improbable and limited. Nonetheless, home-based ventures can increase confidence in one's own abilities since it creates a sense of control over personal as well community resources.

One may suppose that modern time's facilitated communications would decrease the meaning of the above stated. However, Piperopoulos (2012) means that it has never been more important for communities and SMEs than now to be part of networks, develop regional clusters and support each other's businesses through developing synergies of both competition and cooperation. Hence, geographical proximity promotes stronger relationships between businesses, creates greater incentives of maintaining the community's values, and initiates innovation that might not had taken place if not being in that specific location. Moreover, experiencing trust, cooperation and dependence between businesses creates a milieu where the entrepreneurs are both competitors and collaborators (Piperopoulos, 2012).

3.2.2 Institutional context

Entrepreneurs affect the institutional context through the creation of businesses which shapes the social climate of society, where job creation is one example (Welter, 2011). The societal context also influences the entrepreneurs. For example, male and female norms can affect what kind of businesses the individuals start; a man opening a beauty parlour may have to struggle to maintain his heterosexual manly appearance, or a woman may have a hard time getting respected as a constructor (Ahl, 2006). Institutional context includes both formal and informal institutions (Welter, 2011). *Formal institutions* are factors that possess direct and indirect influence on individuals. Examples of direct influences are start-up barriers like high costs to get permits or rules to oblige when ending a business. Indirect influences can be taxes, social security issues or access to education. *Informal institutions* on the other hand are embedded within society, such as norms and attitudes (Welter *et al.*, 2014). It is about what the values are among "the great mass", what is seen as preferred or desirable and how people are expected to behave. Such norms, values and attitudes shape society, and thus also how entrepreneurship is perceived and formed.

A relatively common agreement among researchers is that women have a reduced access to certain resources compared to men, which influence their entrepreneurial activities (Ettl & Welter, 2010; Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Santos *et al.*, 2016; Welter *et al.*, 2014). According to Welter *et al.* (2014), social structures in society have limited women's ability to gain experience in certain sectors due to occupational segregation. The structural factors in the

economy create an uneven participation of women in traditional male-dominated occupations and prevent women from gaining access to resources, experience as well as access to certain markets, most often in the technology sector. Welter *et al.* (2014) argue that women therefore to some extent may have created other perspectives, goals and choices. Instead of being denied opportunities to start a venture in certain sectors, women rather choose to work within sectors more “custom” to their social values, for example within retail and service professions. Still, businesses in traditional female sectors provide limited start-up resources, which in turn may affect limited future growth (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). If women however started on the same level of resource access as men, there are more similarities than differences between genders in entrepreneurial activities (Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Santos *et al.*, 2016).

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes may be of critical matter when it comes to the preservation of perceived gender differences in society, dividing behaviour and attributes into feminine and masculine features (Ahl, 2006). Women are generally perceived to be more communicative than men and typical features associated with femininity are gentleness, supportiveness, expressiveness and timidity (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Men on the other hand are considered more risk-taking, brave, aggressive, assertive and independent (*ibid.*). These perceptions are followed by prejudice regarding not only how men and women *are*, but also how they *should be*, which in turn can influence how men and women behave both consciously and unconsciously. Alvesson and Billing (2009) further mean that people many times adapt themselves and their behaviour to fit into “the system”. For example, the most common professions among women in Sweden year 2014 were within childcare, nursing, sales, and supportive roles such as secretaries or assistants (SCB, 2016) – professions that are in line with the perception that women possess more communicative and caring attributes. However, there is no guarantee that just because you are a woman/man, you possess the typical gender-features. This in turn can lead to both men and women feeling burdened with the general perception of entrepreneurship. It is also something to consider regarding the growth argument were not growing or not wanting to grow sometimes is associated with businesses owned by women (Ahl, 2006). Not wanting to grow is in fact rather common among SBOs in general (McKeever *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, research has shown that mass media is contributing to the dispersion of gender stereotypes, which in turn can affect individual choices and perceptions of gender (Nosek *et al.*, 2002). Stereotypes - socially shared beliefs about features and behaviours connected to members of a group - are often a source of bias, which consequently may lead to preconceived decisions and assessments of people and their behaviour (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). As stated, entrepreneurship is both among men and women a field of work associated with men (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Also, the individuals with the highest male gender identification are shown to show highest entrepreneurial intention (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Hence, entrepreneurship is an area of study affected by gender stereotypes since it is indicated that it is affected by socially constructed gender biases and gender identification (Ahl, 2006; Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Santos *et al.*, 2016).

3.2.3 Social context

Social context regards our social connections and relationships, existing through family, the household and different types of networks (for example friends, acquaintances and business relations) (Welter, 2011). Networks have the ability to influence the entrepreneur by providing information, knowledge, financial capital, customers, *etcetera*. They can be used as resources to overcome obstacles and to realize ideas. Moreover, networks are shown to be

especially significant to minorities, like women engaged in entrepreneurship (Ettl & Welter, 2010). Hence, how the networks function is related to societal values and norms, which is referable to informal institutional context. Also, family and friends have received an increased interest for their apparently immediate effect on entrepreneurial intentions and activities. This is typically shown in the agricultural industry perhaps more than in others, since agricultural businesses in high degree are family businesses and moreover often home-based (McKeever *et al.*, 2015; Welter, 2011). In general, family and close friends may provide encouragement, inspiration and support to the entrepreneur, but also the opposite, which may suppress the entrepreneur's intentions (Ettl & Welter, 2010). With this in mind, social context has a significant impact on entrepreneurship.

3.2.3.1 The network – an essential web of connections

A network can be defined as follows (Kadushin, 2012, p. 14):

/.../: a network is a set of relationships. More formally, a network contains a set of objects (in mathematical terms, nodes) and a mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes.

Networks provide opportunities, credibility, support, information, resources, competitiveness and innovation, which arrange for synergies and knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs (De Carolis *et al.*, 2009; Piperopoulos, 2012). They are furthermore strongly connected to firm growth, preventing failure and providing legitimacy (*ibid.*). By having strong networks, entrepreneurs perceive themselves to be in more control of the situation and experiences lower risk associated with the business creation. Likewise, Ettl and Welter (2010) explain that opportunity recognition is usually taking place in social contexts, such as networks.

To be part of a network is a form of social capital. Langowitz and Minniti (2007) mean that an individual with a prosperous social capital has a higher probability to start and succeed with his/her business. Mair and Martí (2006), describe social capital as embedded resources existing between people, networks and communities. De Carolis *et al.*, (2009) mean social capital can influence individuals' cognition (how individuals' think, reason and make decisions based on experience and knowledge) and that social capital can help and encourage venture creation. Hence, social capital does not only exist among individuals, but also among businesses. Piperopoulos (2012) emphasizes that collaborations between SMEs empowers their ability to tackle problems which could have been problematic to address alone. A collaboration, such as building a team of individuals and organisations, may enable them to operate in markets in which they would not have been able to be active in otherwise. Piperopoulos (2012, p. 103) explains how the networking between SMEs can work, by presenting Perrows (1992, p. 455– 456) definition:

The firms are usually very small – say 10 people. They interact with one another, sharing information, equipment, personnel, and orders, even as they compete with one another */.../*.

Social Network Theory

The social network theory is used when studying how people, organizations or groups are connected as well as how they interact with each other (Kadushin, 2012). In society there are many different types of social relations among people, creating a huge map with different connections and ties. It is these diverse ties that hold members of the community together in different types of networks (Granovetter, 1983).

It is desirable to possess a combination of so called *weak and strong ties* to gain the most from a network (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1983; Jack, 2010). Strong ties exist between people

who have close relationships, for example family and friends, while weak ties are referable to acquaintances or work-related connections. The strength of the tie is dependent on emotional closeness, regularity of contact, mutual benefit and trustworthiness (Stobl & Peters, 2013). Membership in organizations and business networks along with having relations to other business owners are good examples on weak ties that are important to gain relevant information and other resources (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Granovetter, 1983; Strobl & Peters, 2013). Strong ties are shown to be more important in the start-up process of entrepreneurship, while weak ties are more important as the process moves further along.

The society consists of clusters of strong ties, where weak ties are crucial bridges between these clusters. Also, weak ties are likely to be bridged to outside networks whereas strong ties are not and are thus important for peoples' integration into modern society (Granovetter, 1983). By possessing more weak ties the individual gains a bigger network of social capital and thus accesses more and new information, resources and ideas beyond what is available in their own social circle. By possessing solely strong ties, a person's access to information is limited to the views of the close contacts. Networks with more weak ties have a shorter path to coordinate and make changes (Granovetter, 1983). Smith and Stevens (2010) refer to two similar types of ties; *arm's length ties* and *embedded ties*. *Arm's length ties* are often temporary and social relations are not of primary interest. Hence, they are based on rules to form and structure the connections and exchange between the parties. *Embedded ties* on the other hand have been formed over a longer period of time and consist of stronger social relations between the parties. Thus, embedded ties are more dependent on trust and companionship to maintain good relationships and exchanges rather than the reliance on rules.

As stated, networks can be used to remove obstacles when initiating and pursuing an entrepreneurial career. Korsgaard *et al.*, (2015) mention some barriers addressed to rural entrepreneurship, which may serve as explanation as to why entrepreneurship in rural areas is less prevalent than in urban areas. The barriers are for example an underdeveloped infrastructure, a physical isolation, limitations in government support and fairly small markets with low profits. The investigated network in this thesis can serve as an example of when a coordinated network attempts to prevail through the barriers.

3.2.3.2 The social context's effect on gender differences and entrepreneurial motives

During recent years, women entrepreneurs have increased in numbers although there are still more men than women who entitle themselves as entrepreneurs (Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). The increase in women entrepreneurs has caught the eye of research, and there is a constant expansion in articles and books exploring entrepreneurship from the female perspective. Malach-Pines and Schwartz (2008) argue that the similarities between women and men SBOs are more prominent than the differences. Furthermore, they mean that the driving forces for starting one's own business also are similar between genders, with self-actualization as the strongest and fear of being fired the weakest. The differences that were most prominent, if yet small, were that women more often had a mother or a spouse that was co-owner in their companies, as well as women frequently had more business partners than men. Malach-Pines and Schwartz (2008) and Santos *et al.* (2016) argue that the stronger the will and intention of becoming an entrepreneur, the more insignificant are the gender differences. This implies that it occurs a selection where only the individuals with the required values, traits and skills are the ones making it towards starting their own businesses. Consequently, the more of an entrepreneurial personality, the lesser the gender of the individual matter (Gupta *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, when it comes to entrepreneurship networking, women typically are more approachable to informal support than men. If

women's surroundings appreciate and encourage entrepreneurs in general and an informal support therefore exist, the amount of women entrepreneurs is higher (Welter *et al.*, 2014).

Rey-Martí *et al.* (2015) have identified five main motives that affect women's ambition to create businesses, through processing existing literature. These are: *propensity for risk*, *finding a work-life balance*, *desire to develop entrepreneurial skills*, *need to seek self-employment*, and *desire to earn more than in paid employment*. Two motives are shown to be particularly connected to women's business survival. Firstly, women generally have a lower *propensity for risk* compared to men. This motive has a positive connection to women's business survival, due to the fact that women make sure they have the skills and long-term strategies required to run the business before expanding quickly. However, the underlying reasons for women's risk aversion tends to be lack of faith in their initial abilities as well as making sure that family- and work life are balanced, the latter being the second separate motive from men linked to a negative business survival (Rey-Martí *et al.*, 2015).

Ahl (2006) argues that the existing research on differences between men and women entrepreneurs put the women in a subordinate position to men and therefore it is fruitless to search for differences between the genders. Research regarding entrepreneurship generally uses men as guiding principle while women are "the others" and seen as complementary (Ahl, 2006; Alvesson & Billing, 2009). For example, research on entrepreneurship is based on attributes typically associated with men, such as leadership abilities, self-reliance, assertiveness and making decisions easily (Ahl, 2006; Heilman *et al.*, 1989; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, Ahl (2006) means that research on women entrepreneurs is performed with biases about gender, the role of family, how businesses are run, *etcetera* - aspects that all affect the methods used and the questions asked. This is also supported by Alvesson and Billing (2009), Bruni *et al.* (2004) and Santos *et al.* (2016). Ahl (2006) furthermore means there is a risk of having the perception that men and women are fundamentally different. When scientists presuppose that there are differences between men and women, they often choose to enlighten the differences in the results, no matter how small they may be. What follows is that results may be interpreted based on the bias that there *are* differences between sexes, something that also influences hypotheses, research questions *etcetera*. Also, Ahl (2006) enlightens the hazard with the general perception that finding differences is more valued than finding none, and thus one may have a higher chance of being published. This is something that can trigger researchers to enhance the meaning of small differences and interpret an all too high significance. With this in mind, present thesis does not actively search for differences between genders, but instead studies how the entrepreneurial process is affected by different levels of contexts with a gender perspective.

3.2.3.3 The family's influence

Verheul *et al.* (2006) mean that family for both men and women has a positive effect on entrepreneurship, partly since family often provides support for the entrepreneur, but also that self-employment can be adapted to family requirements. Moreover, family-to-work enrichment is experienced when positive effects, such as happiness, are transferred from the sphere of the family to the sphere of work (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). These positive feelings are shown to improve the women entrepreneurs' overall well-being as well as they enhance the satisfaction of their jobs, families and lives (Frederickson, 2001; Frederickson & Joiner, 2002). Women entrepreneurs may experience these benefits, compared to men who may not, because women repeatedly hold a shortage of access to resources in social, human and financial capital (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). Also, the female gender role stresses a value in pursuing synergies with work- and family life (Sjöberg, 2004). Therefore, the

resources women acquire in their family sphere may be more meaningful to their business success and also lead to greater results (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Meanwhile, men can be discouraged by family-work synergies (Aldrich, 1989; Morris *et al.*, 2006). Nonetheless, Rey-Martí *et al.* (2015), identified *finding a work-life balance* as a motive for women's entrepreneurship with negative effect on business survival. Women generally feel a strong connection and responsibility to family, which make them adapt their firm more to their personal life compared to having a clear focus on separating business and personal life, which in turn probably would have positive effects on their business.

3.3 Theoretical synthesis

In this thesis, entrepreneurship is defined as a process. The entrepreneurial process is affected by many different actors and events that coexist, coincide and constantly interact with the entrepreneurs (e.g. Jack & Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015; Mair & Martí, 2006; McKeever *et al.*, 2015). Entrepreneurship is in this study divided into two subcategories; social entrepreneurship and rural entrepreneurship. These subcategories are applicable to this thesis since they emphasize an increased focus on the creation of social value and social sustainability as well as they support and value the local surroundings before prioritizing growth and innovation (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010). Moreover, social entrepreneurship takes place in various shapes depending on the environment it exists in. Therefore, the degree of embeddedness is significant since it enables an understanding of how different levels of contexts influence the entrepreneurial activity in different situations (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Granovetter, 1985; McKeever *et al.*, 2015). For example, if entrepreneurs are highly embedded in a community, they have an increased possibility of identifying opportunities and apprehend contexts (*ibid.*). However, entrepreneurship can also to be restrained of a high degree of embeddedness since being too embedded may for example lead to a limited access to contacts outside one's personal social circle (*ibid.*).

Moreover, entrepreneurship interacts with both internal and external factors, which is shown by the Theory of Planned Behaviour with additional social perceptions (Santos *et al.*, 2016). It is a suitable theory to use when attempting to identify motivations and driving forces towards becoming an entrepreneur as well as how these driving forces are affected by the entrepreneur's attitude and personality, as well as society's valuation of entrepreneurship.

As stated, present study will furthermore investigate entrepreneurship in the light of the three different levels of contexts highlighted by Welter (2011) and how they interact with entrepreneurs. Spatial context regards the entrepreneurs' physical environment and geographical location. Institutional context is divided into two elements; informal institutional context, which regards norms, values and stereotypes in society, and formal institutional context, which regards primarily laws and legislations. Lastly is social context, which refers to social connections and relationships existing in different types of networks, such as family, friends and business acquaintances. In this study, gender is considered to be included in both social and informal institutional context, since both these contexts are permeated with stereotypes and norms embedded within people and society.

4 The empirical study

This chapter provides a presentation of the empirical material and is divided into two parts. The first part presents and describes the association Fjärdhundraland and also provides a brief description of each company. The second part is devoted to the interviews which are illustrated in three separate tables, covering the entrepreneurs and their driving forces, their view of gender-related issues and context, and their perception of Fjärdhundraland.

4.1 Fjärdhundraland – interview with chairman

The chairman of Fjärdhundraland, Mats Thorburn, describes that FHL is an economic association developed to bring small businesses together, to develop tourism and create new partnerships in the area surrounding primarily the communities of Enköping, Fjärdhundra and Örsundsbro. The following sections regard the start of the association, how it functions today and what the plans are for the future.

4.1.1 The start

Mats describes that the idea for FHL arose from a small project in year 2009, where both individuals and companies were involved with ambition to develop the community. They inventoried the values and the possibilities of the area, based on the questions; what could be good for tourism? And are there companies worth visiting? Although there were not that many established and “tourist-friendly” places, they found a keen interest in the community to develop the tourism. When the project came to an end in 2011, the cooperative economic association of Fjärdhundraland was created. The association furthermore did not only want to be open for local businesses, but for everyone who wanted to be a part of it.

4.1.2 Today

FHL now has about 90 members (active members and supportive members), which in one way or another work with tourism or rural development. A major part of the members are family-owned companies. Mats explains that one mission for the association is to find places that appeal to visitors. The nature, the silence and the history of the landscape are as important as the farm shops and cafés. The landscape possesses a long history, which FHL wants to communicate.

Mats emphasizes that the association has been able to influence people to start new businesses. During the start-up of the association, the focus was mainly to inspire and develop the members through providing for example courses and workshops. As a result, there are today more companies in the area than before. The association differentiates from others by not having merely a member-focus, but also through valuing the nature and the history of the landscape highly. Thus, the association aims to contribute with a holistic experience. Mats describes that the association means to become an established area of rural tourism:

We want to be able to compare ourselves to places like Gotland, Österlen, Tuscany and Provence. These places are known for their beautiful landscape and this is our goal as an association. We want to become a place that is well-known, a place where people can experience the nature and get close to the natural production. (Pers. com., Mats Thorburn, 160330)

In order to promote and make more people aware of the area, FHL has developed four different events; “the animal day”, “the rebus round”, “food and people” and “happy autumn”. These events have been good for marketing and also a reason to engage the members. The association is defined by the members and their choice to contribute and support the association. The members’ engagement varies from time to time, which is one of the difficulties with the association since FHL is dependent on having active members to gain more visitors. The association also contributes to cooperation between the businesses:

People are very diverse; you cannot force 10 horse companies to cooperate with each other. Nonetheless, people tend to be willing to cooperate. We have several members who sell one another’s products. The association does not want any business to work alone if they don’t want to. It is about creating a meeting place for the members and to inspire each other. The businesses should be each other’s role models. The association organizes regular visits for members to visit other members to provide a broader understanding for each other and create opportunities for cooperation. (Pers.com., Mats Thorburn, 160330)

4.1.3 The future

In order to reach the goal of becoming a well-known area for tourists to visit, it is important to provide information of the area. To be able to do this in a simple way, the plan is to use an application (app). The app will let the visitors know the history of a place; it can be either a story about a business or a historical moment, for example about the Vikings who lived in the area a long time ago. Mats believes that the app, which will be introduced on the next member meeting, is a perfect tool for FHL to develop. The association also aims to gain more visitors from abroad and will make the website multilingual. They will also make it interesting for each audience. For example, the Swedish website may not be suitable for the German market.

4.2 The interviewed entrepreneurs

The empirical research entails interviews with eight members of Fjärdhundraland. Five of the entrepreneurs run their business by their own. Three of them are women and two of them are men. The remaining interviewed businesses are operated and owned by couples, consisting of a man and a woman. As seen in table 3, the informants in the study are rather good representatives of the entrepreneur groups in FHL divided into women, men and couple entrepreneurs.

Table 3. An overview of the number of men and women entrepreneurs in FHL as well as in present study.

	Tot. number of firms and associations	Women entrepreneurs	Men entrepreneurs	Couple entrepreneurs	Other associations
FHL	70	19	12	27	12
Present study	8	3	2	3	0

4.2.1 Domta-grisen

Stefan Sellin is the owner of Domta-Grisen, located north of Enköping. Domta-grisen is a pig production company, focusing on free range Berkshire pigs. A significant focus of the company is the wellbeing of the animals, which according to Stefan contributes to the flavour of the meat. The pigs are butchered nearby and are then shipped to a wholesaler in Stockholm, where they are cut up and sold to restaurants and stores. Moreover, the company offers catering service. For example, one can order a whole pig with included barbecue to roast at home.

4.2.2 Forsby Kvarn Kafé

Forsby Kvarn Kafé is located in the old farm mill on the property and provides both a restaurant and a café. The business is included in Ibba's and Staffan's common company, which also covers their professional roles as musicians. Due to their interest in music they also arrange music events in the mill during the summer. For three years they got help from "Svensk byggnadsvårdsförening" (Swedish architectural compound) as well as the county administrative board in Uppsala county to restore the old farm mill.

4.2.3 Kråkvilan

Kråkvilan is owned by Marianne Sjödin. The business involves a bakery, café, bed and breakfast, and a small-scale animal keeping (sheep, chicken and bees). Furthermore, the company sells handicrafts, made by Marianne, as well as honey from the own bee hives. The company also provides the possibility to pre-order bakeries for special occasions.

4.2.4 Mälby trädgård

Per Johansson is the owner of the business, situated outside of Enköping. He cultivates organic vegetables and root vegetables. Besides vegetables and root vegetables, another focus on the farm is beekeeping. Per has thirty bee hives in operation. The products from the farm are mainly sold at the farmer's market in Östermalm, Stockholm and also to other local businesses.

4.2.5 Resta gård

The KRAV-classified farm currently consists of eight hundred hectares. The farm is diversified with animal production (sheep, pig and cattle), grain- and vegetable production and two farm shops; one located on the farm and one in central Stockholm. The shops sell coffee and cake but also products from the farm, such as beef, pork, sausage, milk, homemade marmalade, honey, lambskin *etcetera*. Moreover, the farm is run as a tourist attraction, where visitors can experience the authentic farm life on site. Anna and Fredrik's goal with the farm is to operate a profitable farming with focus on animal welfare, self-sufficiency and as little environmental impact as possible.

4.2.6 Skogsbackens ost

Marih and Ramon Jonsson are both owners of the dairy business, located outside of Örsundsbro. Today they produce a dozen different kinds of cheese and have recently started producing butter as well. All their products are self-produced by Marih and Ramon in their dairy, located just a few meters from their home. The milk used in the production is organic and produced on a nearby farm. They also have a small farm shop on the property.

4.2.7 Sussis gårdsbageri

The bakery is owned by Susanne Lindqvist, and is located in an old warehouse on the family farm located outside of Örsundsbro. In the bakery, Susanne at greatest possible extent uses locally produced ingredients in everything she bakes, from sourdough bread baked in her stone oven, to buns and cakes. She also has a shop and café by the bakery where visitors are welcome.

4.2.8 Vallgarns gårdsmejeri

Michael Sjöman and Christina Fredriksson produce goat cheese in their dairy located on their farm. They own a herd of 60 goats and use their milk to produce cheese, specifically five

kinds of cheese. In 2013 Christina also started Vallgarns Ostkaka, which concentrates on producing cheesecake on both goat and cow milk.

4.3 Portrayal of the entrepreneurs

4.3.1 The entrepreneurs and the businesses

Before start-up in the rural area, Ibba and Staffan (Forsby), Marianne (Kråkvilan) and Anna (Resta gård) were living in Stockholm or Uppsala. They had well established occupations as musicians (**I** and **S**), business leader (**A**) and teacher (**M**). The remaining entrepreneurs are originally from the area (see table 5). Primarily, all entrepreneurs had the desire to live on the countryside, to enjoy the rural life and to run a business within the rural business sector. Also, they wanted to be self-employed, to avoid commuting and to have a lifestyle where the work could coexist with their home. They emphasize that they are not primarily financially driven. Rather, they aim to produce high quality products. The customers shall know they get products from local firms who focus on both natural and social sustainability.

Everybody consider themselves being entrepreneurs. Ibba and Staffan was however a bit hesitant to see themselves as entrepreneurs. They do not feel supportive of the associations of the word, for example being driven by money and only focus on profit and growth. However, if an entrepreneur is someone seen as being creative and following the heart, they agree they are entrepreneurs. The informants use similar characteristics to describe both themselves and entrepreneurs in general are; being innovative, creative, courageous, goal oriented, stubborn, hardworking, problem solving, not driven by money. Moreover, a general pattern within the couples is that in all cases there are one part who is more driven than the other. Out of the three couples, the woman was more driven one in two of the cases: Skogsbackens ost and Forsby Kvarn Kafé (see table 5).

4.3.2 Fjärdhundraland - spatial context

All entrepreneurs were affected by their strong will of creating a business in the rural, and more specifically to have the business located at their home (see table 6). Marih and Ramon separate a bit from the others since they were not primarily affected by starting a business from their home, but mainly by becoming self-employed again, and to start a dairy. However, the decision to fulfil their dream was highly influenced by the possibility of having the dairy a few meters from home and to receive milk from a farm close by.

4.3.3 Fjärdhundraland - formal institutional context

Approximately two thirds of the entrepreneurs experienced difficulties with authorities of some kind, most often the municipalities. Especially at the start up many experienced high permit costs, such as Christina and Michael, who if they knew today how bureaucratic the legislations would be, they would not even have initiated their business, or Susanne, who argues that there are too high obstacles when new SBOs are about to start businesses, leading to lesser or at least more complicated business start-ups. Also, a common perception is that the food inspectors often are inconsequent in their judgement, as well as they sometimes do not have enough knowledge for making the right calls, a problem emphasized by for example Michael and Christina, and Marih and Ramon, who experience that they are the ones having to explain for the inspectors how a dairy should be taken care of. Moreover, Anna experiences that legislations hinder development on the farm, for example she wants to develop a small-scale water power plant to make the farm self-sufficient on electricity, but is constantly shut

down by the municipality, both since the process is slow as well as since the suggestion is rejected from time to time.

4.3.4 Fjärdhundraland - social and informal institutional context - gender and family

The general perception among the entrepreneurs is that the questions regarding gender are difficult to answer. However, after some discussion, a predominant perception is that men generally are or at least are perceived to be more confident and thus have higher trust in their own abilities (see table 6). Women on the other hand tend to take longer time to decide if they should invest in starting a business or not, and are also perceived to be more careful and thoughtful. Christina further means that women sometimes may adapt their business a bit too much to the family. Susanne experienced a lot of resistance regarding her capabilities of managing a company, mostly from men, during the start-up. Anna believes women are their own biggest threat and has experienced other women as being negative to her way of being a mother and performing traditionally important female responsibilities, like caring for the home. Back then, it was her husband who took care of the home and children. Anna thinks women are very quick to judge each other and probably are each other's greatest threat who criticize those who stand out.

Michael experiences that women sometimes exclude men from certain activities, which goes in line with Anna's perception that women yearn to belong in a closed group. Since Anna handled things in a different way, she was in some aspects precluded from the "female belonging": *"I don't care about all the talk of feminism, I just do what I want without letting anyone say otherwise"*. Per, who started in 1980, means that the possibilities for women to succeed in business have increased during his career. Marianne emphasizes that we still live in a patriarchy by tradition, for example she is dependent on her husband to be able to run her business.

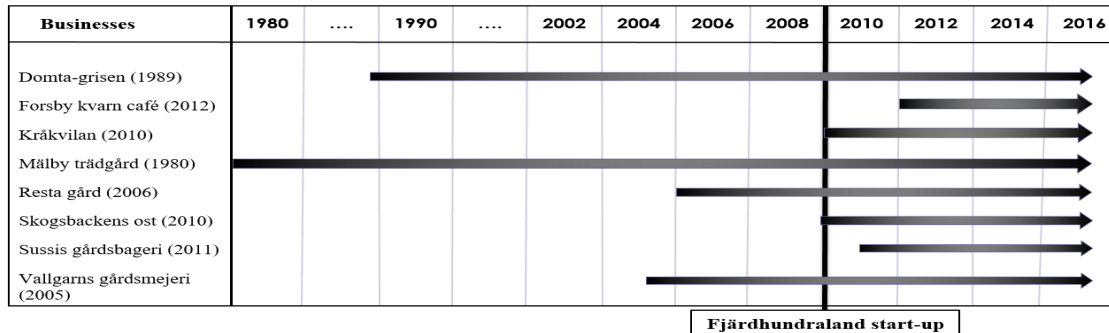
All the entrepreneurs also stress that the rural businesses and especially agriculture is a line of work founded in strong historical traditions, which affect the choice of starting/not starting a business within that specific alignment. Some note that farming can be quite physically demanding, and therefore may be more suitable for men when performing certain tasks. Running a café is by many informants viewed as a female line of business. For example, Susanne runs the café while her husband runs the farm - quite the stereotypical division (see table 6).

All entrepreneurs have supportive families, who also sometimes help in the business. On occasion, the families feel the entrepreneurs work too much, which is the case for Marianne and Michael and Christina. Marianne's family sometimes thinks it is tiring having the visitors just around the corner of their own home. Anna's family knows that she will always be an entrepreneur, and then running a farm from home is the best possible combination since she is at home and at work at the same time. At least five of the eight business owners have entrepreneurship in the family. Stefan and Per are brought up on the family farms which they took over from their parents, two examples where family had great impact on the choice of career.

All the informants feel that networks are extremely important to succeed with their businesses. Many of the entrepreneurs are members of other formal networks in addition to FHL, many times to get to participate on fairs, get new customers and spread their business name and products (see table 6). What separates Stefan and Per from the rest is that they started their businesses in the 80s, compared to the others who started their businesses

between the years 2005 – 2012 (see table 4). According to Per, During the 80s there were not as many formal network as there are today. Both Per and Stefan heavily relied on their own networking skills with friends and acquaintances. Therefore, they already had a solid customer base when FHL started.

Table 4. Illustration of year of start-up for the entrepreneurs.



A common opinion among the entrepreneurs is that networks were of even higher importance when starting the businesses than they are today. In the beginning it is crucial to get a lot of marketing and to get people to try the products *etcetera*. Marih and Ramon explain that they on every occasion said yes to every suggestion and every customer. However, now when they are more established on the market, they can afford to sort out what they want to do. Some of the women entrepreneurs are or have been members of female networks. However, no man has been member of a male network - on the other hand it does not seem to exist one.

4.3.5 Fjärdhundraland – social context

The common opinion among the entrepreneurs is that FHL provide exceptional marketing tools through social media. Moreover, they get to meet other rural entrepreneurs and discuss the businesses, the industry, *etcetera*, and provide and receive advice and inspiration to the fellow members. Also, the initiatives concerning creating the events, such as the Rebus Round, have been much appreciated and have led to an increased customer base (see table 7). Stefan and Per, who do not receive “common visitors” on the farm, still want to be members in FHL partly because of marketing, but also through supporting other entrepreneurs and thus maintaining and creating a vibrant countryside - something that benefits everyone.

Moreover, none of the entrepreneurs see other members as competitors. They emphasize that they are like co-workers who support each other. There is cooperation between the businesses, for example Ibba and Staffan use Per’s vegetables in their cooking. Marih and Ramon also sell some of the other members’ products in their farm shop. Marih says: “*sometimes I think it is more fun to promote and sell the others’ products before mine!*”. Ibba and Staffan further support other cafés to open in the area, even though they are within the same line of business and could be viewed as their biggest competitors (see table 7). They mean that if they were the only ones running a business in the area, it would not be worth it for visitors to go all the way from Stockholm to visit “just” them. Moreover, many of the entrepreneurs have a folder with information of the other members in FHL, for visitors to look at when deciding where to go next. Recommending and supporting each other is the fundamental core in FHL.

Table 5. The entrepreneurs and their businesses.

	Background and experience prior to start-up	Reason for entrepreneurship in the rural area Driving forces for starting	Driving forces today	Obstacles during the entrepreneurial process	How they perceive their own personal character	What characterizes an entrepreneur	Do they perceive themselves as entrepreneurs
Domta-grisen Stefan Sellin Started 1989	Raised on the farm. Started farming 1973.	Wanted a life in the countryside and to start pig production. Introduced and imported Berkshire pigs to Sweden 2011.	Working with pigs, continue to develop his company and actualize ideas, e.g. a grill box for rental, where a whole pig is roasted.	Decided to close the farm shop and slaughterhouse since it was too time consuming, an uneven demand and not financially viable to employ.	Innovative, individualist, engaged and aims for quality in everything he does.	Motivated, devoted, persistent, goal oriented, should not be driven by financial aspects, but with great interest in the cause.	Yes. <i>"I love the animals, and my work is my passion and lifestyle"</i>
Forsby Kvarn Kafé Ibba Andersson, Staffan Larson Started 2012	They are both educated musicians.	Wanted a house in the countryside, but it was the place with the mill that made I want to develop a café. I has always wanted a place where people can meet and socialize.	I : <i>"I want to create an oasis for the stressed out people of today. We all need somewhere to sit down, talk and socialize, a place where you can allow time to stand still for a while"</i> .	Difficult to communicate with the bank, to get loans etc. Time consuming to develop the café. S : <i>"It's challenging to do things you've never done before – being a chef, caretaker and accountant"</i>	I is a romantic and a dreamer. S thinks I is the driver. Both are problem solvers and aware of the details. S is more disciplined and I is the creative force within the mill business.	Stubbornness, courage, following the heart, finding your own inner voice. I : <i>"But also, you should know when to not listen to that voice. Sometimes, it can be a coward!"</i>	No/Yes. They do not like what the word is associated with; someone who is driven by profit. Yet, if defined in another way, they can see themselves as fitting into the concept.
Kräkvilan Marianne Sjödin Started 2010	M was a high school teacher in Swedish and English.	Moved from Stockholm to the farm in 2001, has since then loved the area. Wanted a business in the countryside, to be able to work from home & share the special place with others.	Similar as from the start. Wants to create a peaceful place where visitors can experience the beauty in the landscape.	Contact with the municipality; the inspectors interpret the law differently, e.g. the kitchen regulations.	Creative, innovative, has many ideas. Sometimes it is hard to choose which ones she wants to proceed with.	Creative, positive, brave, enthusiastic. You have to believe in what you do. Also to be thorough and structured, e.g. with laws.	Yes. She has had a special entrepreneurial driving force within her in all her life.
Mälby trädgård Per Johansson Started 1980	Studied business and accounting, worked as a salesman for one year. Returned to his family's farm, which is close to his current farm, previously owned by grandparents.	<i>"I was not meant to sit in an office, I wanted to live in the countryside and work independently"</i> . Wanted to prove people (i.a. family) wrong who did not believe in his idea.	Wanted to develop the company, create profitability so he could work fulltime with it. Always wanted to grow organically, and have customer relationships.	Did not have machines etc. at the start, but had the farm. The location is a bit problematic, not optimal to grow vegetables on the specific soil, and not perfect climate.	Creative, has an urge to live and work in the rural. He has a talent for his profession; is a good salesman and loves customers.	Enthusiasm. Be prepared to work hard, take risk and invest in the business, both time and money.	Yes. His personality makes him an entrepreneur; driven and knows what he wants.
Resta gård Anna Hane (Fredrik Hane) Started 2006	A and F worked in a telecom business in Uppsala; IP-Only, which they started. They had no experience of farming when they bought Resta.	F dreamed of living in the countryside. A wanted to do something new to her that engaged others. <i>"To transform the world's oldest industry and think outside of the box"</i>	<i>"The goal is to run a profitable farm with modern methods without doing harm to environment, animal welfare and people's health"</i> . Focus on a circular production.	Many problems; not allowed to put up road signs, wants to build a small scale water power plant but got rejections from authorities, financial crisis at the start. <i>"I don't understand how anyone can voluntarily enter into this business with high risk and low product prices"</i> .	A has a lot of energy, she never gives up. Courage. The last one to surrender. Do not care what other people thinks. Not driven by money. <i>"F is the one drawing the big brushstrokes with ideas, while I'm realistic and make it happen. We complement each other"</i> .	<i>"I think I have all the traits that characterizes the typical entrepreneur"</i>	Yes.
Skogsbackens ost	R has been doing a lot of	R : the feeling of being self-	Producing high quality	M : <i>"We have encountered</i>	M : <i>"I step on the gas pedal</i>	Driven, say yes to	Yes. <i>"We are always ready</i>

<p>Marih & Ramon Jonsson Started 2010</p>	<p>things, partly been working in a repair shop. M is a micro biologist, has been a researcher on SLU, and a biomedical scientist. R & M previously owned a horse farm.</p>	<p>employed. Sold old farm since they wanted “<i>a normal life</i>”. But they missed the freedom and created the firm after M was on a business trip and got the idea. To work fulltime in the firm.</p>	<p>cheese and have strong customer relationships. They produce many different kinds of cheese to attract wider spectra of customers.</p>	<p><i>some problems but we focus on solving them and not dwell over it</i>”. But, the food safety agency inspectors have different experiences and knowledge which can lead to diverse judgements of the dairy’s condition. M and R often have to explain how it should be.</p>	<p>and Ramon on the break. <i>We are a perfect combo</i>”. M brings ideas and is more outgoing. R takes care of maintenance and parts of the cheese making. M does the bigger part of cheese making, the book keeping, and maintain network contacts.</p>	<p>everything in the beginning to get contacts, a sense for business, open minded, not afraid to work hard to get what you want.</p>	<p><i>to bring products to our customers. You have to be there instantly to maintain good customer relationships</i>”.</p>
<p>Sussis gårdsbageri Susanne Lindqvist Started 2011</p>	<p>Has a 5-year chef training. Worked as a chef at the school in Biskops-Arnö and as a baker in a bakery at Thoresta Manor. Courses in baking.</p>	<p>Always dreamt about starting a bakery. When she was 48 she felt it was now or never. It was important to start the business in the country side, everyone moves in to the city and she wanted to do something for the community. Wanted to create a use for the old buildings on the farm.</p>	<p>Similar as from the start, but also to maintain good customer relationships. Produce high quality bread and cakes by using natural ingredients and locally produced goods, using her own recipes. “<i>I was tired of industrial bread that contained chemicals and additives and didn’t get mouldy in months</i>”</p>	<p>The food legislation is exaggerated, it takes time to maintain and cost a lot of money. Legislations are important, but should not be so tough that it creates too big obstacles for SBOs.</p>	<p>She loves the business, is goal-oriented, creative, loves networking – “<i>It’s both fun and inspiring</i>”.</p>	<p>Business oriented, you have to love what you are doing, bring and actualize ideas, be stubborn, flexible, problem solver, persistent.</p>	<p>Yes. “<i>I love running a business, but is however not driven by financial aspects</i>”</p>
<p>Vallgarns gårdsmjERI Michael Sjöman, Christina Fredriksson Started 2005</p>	<p>Michael is a zoological conservator, worked at Museum of Natural History. Had a business and was then an animal keeper at a high school. Christina is an agricultural technologist, has a pedagogic education, was a teacher at the same high school.</p>	<p>To work from home and use their own buildings and animals. It is important to have the goats, protect the breed. Wanted to create something from the goat milk. C also started Vallgarns Ostkaka since she also wanted to work from home more. Both like working independently and practically.</p>	<p>To be able to control their own business and time. They prioritize having happy customers. Cannot imagine a life without goats. “<i>It gives so much freedom to get up every day and go out to the goats. We’re not driven by money. This is our dream and lifestyle</i>”.</p>	<p>It was time consuming to learn the curdling. Limited space on the farm, they cannot fit more animals and thus not produce more cheese and cheesecake, which they would want to. They work much and want to hire, but it is hard finding someone. Also, they think the food authorities are problematic. If they had known how bureaucratic it was they would not have started. The food inspectors do not know much about the production. It is no consistency among the inspectors, and they do not make consistent judgements.</p>	<p>Both M and C agree that M is the most driven of the two and brings most ideas. C steps on the break and helps realizing ideas, which has both pros and cons. M: “<i>Sometimes you have to act fast to not let the opening pass, but mostly, it’s a good quality. We complement each other</i>”. Both are stubborn, work hard and prioritize the business.</p>	<p>Have motivation and strong driving forces, idea creating, stubborn, curious, courageous, think outside of the box.</p>	<p>Yes. They think M is the foremost entrepreneur. C started her business primarily so she could work from home. M sees a lot of potential in things and loves to realize his ideas. C is according to her “a hard worker”: “<i>This should be done, just do it!</i>”</p>

Table 6. The entrepreneurs' views on spatial, institutional and social context, with emphasis on gender.

Context			Gender				
	How does family and friends affect the business (social context)	How does other types of networks affect the business (coordinated and not coordinated, besides FHL)	Was the choice of business type affected by the location, or was the location chosen based on the choice of business (spatial)	Why there are more men than women entrepreneurs	Do gender affect how the business is run	Are there positive/negative aspects of being a woman/man when being an entrepreneur	Do you feel that your line of business is gender stereotyped? (institutional context)
Domta-grisen Stefan Sellin	Took over the farm from his father. Now, he lives by himself. Has 2 sons but no one is interested in taking over for now. Being a farmer is a demanding lifestyle which they might not be prepared for.	Is a member in "Bondens Mat i Uppland" for marketing. But he is an individualist who "worked his own way to success". The hard work has led to valuable connections mainly in Stockholm where he has most clients.	Location. It is a family farm that he developed with innovative ideas.	Thinks it is hard to say and suggests that the women have the answer to that.	Maybe sometimes, when the work is physically hard, it may be more suitable for men. But, farming is based on old traditions and that might be a reason.	No, it depends more on what you think is fun and thereby it becomes advantageous to do a certain job.	Yes, farming is a traditional line of work and traditionally it is common that the son takes over the farm. Also, it is tradition that men do the hard physical work.
Forsby kvarn kafé Ibba Andersson, Staffan Larson	At the start-up they were not influenced or affected by their family or friends. But they have been supportive. Their two children help out in the restaurant and café when needed.	I has been active in two social networks where she learned how to mingle and socialize with entrepreneurs of different professions. The Swedish architectural compound has been a valuable resource during the renovation of the mill.	Location. When I saw the mill she knew she could create her dream: a place where people can meet and socialize.	S means that women are more driven by creativity while men are more driven by money. I interprets men as more self-confident than women and this can be a reason for more men entrepreneurs.	They do not think businesses is run differently due to gender. But according to I, a café is typically something women do.	No, it depends more on the personality of the individual. As a woman, I has got major support from other women, partly from a female network and also from other women in the village. In contrast, Staffan has not encountered any similar support.	I: "A café is a typical dream of women".
Kråkvilan Marianne Sjödin	No entrepreneurs in the family from before. Gets support from mostly husband with maintenance, and daughters with café.	Member in an association in Örsundsbro. Get much support from other entrepreneurs also that are not in FHL, especially women.	Location. M wanted to start a business she could run from the farm. "It's my dream and lifestyle".	Society is a patriarchy by tradition. M is also dependant on her husband. Men have the courage to do and take things they believe are their rights.	Yes. Most of the women are sentimental and idealistic, not driven by money in the same way as men. Other things are valued higher.	No, nothing special that she has noticed.	Yes, café is typical for women. There are many women in her age that produce own food products in rural areas.
Mälby trädgård Per Johansson	At first, his family and especially his father did not think it was a good idea to start that type of business. Yet, his family, friends and WWOOF:ers ³ has helped with the firm.	A big informal network with friends and co-workers that grow vegetables and have beekeeping. At the start, he learned from others.	Location. There are better places for growing vegetables, but he wanted to continue in the family farm.	In FHL, there is a balance between the genders. In society today, women have a greater chance to become entrepreneurs. But, in some areas women still struggle due to stereotypes.	No, at least he does not see any differences. Maybe, women in some ways are better with customers, but it probably has to do with personality	No, nothing special. It has to do with personality.	It was before. From not being a single woman, there is now a balance between genders.
Resta gård Anna Hane (Fredrik Hane)	Brother and sister are entrepreneurs. Oldest daughters help when home.	Together with others in LRF, A started a network "Besöksgårdar". Otherwise,	Location. At first, F wanted to live in the rural and have some	One time, A asked her 6-year old daughter who said: "Girls are afraid and have to	It is about personality, but women affect each other and are put into	Maybe there are marketing pros of being a woman since you stand out. A does	Farming is an industry with historical stereotypes, but A does not care about

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	<p>F is not active in the practical work, but brings ideas and care about finance. The family likes the farm.</p>	<p>she does not have time to be a part of other networks and is not interested in a female network, just an entrepreneurial one in that case.</p>	<p>horses, but then they listened to their intuition and bought the big farm, and went for it.</p>	<p><i>be like everyone else and don't dare to go their own way</i>". A thinks women are afraid to stand out and want to belong to a group.</p>	<p>categories that control how they are going to behave and live.</p>	<p>not find negative aspects but, women often victimize themselves, which creates difficulties.</p>	<p>that and goes her own way.</p>
<p>Skogsbackens ost Marih & Ramon Jonsson</p>	<p>The children are not interested in the business. However, M and R get support. They have no entrepreneurs in the family, but they have friends who are.</p>	<p>They are members in 6 other networks. Every network brings an advantage to the business, e.g. lower transport prices. Also, thanks to Eldrimner they have taken many courses in food production. M was a member in a female network. There are no male networks. Both think that this is the biggest difference.</p>	<p>Both. They wanted a dairy and realized they had the possibility to have it at home. They built the dairy there to be close to the production since it is important to always be in place when producing cheese.</p>	<p>R is confused, he feels that there are more women than men. M thinks that there may be more women entrepreneurs in the dairy sector, but it probably depends on the sector.</p>	<p>They are not sure, but at least it was important for them to start the business together since they are good at different things. They would not have made it without each other.</p>	<p>R: Men and women think in different ways and thereby there is quite some difference between genders. M: Does not believe in gender differences, but on personality traits. R thinks that men are bad at networking, M the opposite: men do not need organized networks to succeed.</p>	<p>They meet more women in the dairy sector, but also many couples. But, on the other hand, they believe that maybe women think it is more fun to go to different fairs etc., and therefore are the ones who show up the most.</p>
<p>Sussis gårdsbageri Susanne Lindqvist</p>	<p>Started the business to be closer to home and to not have to commute. S works by herself, but since it is a part of the farm business, it is influenced by decisions taken along with her husband. S's mother and daughters often help out in the café.</p>	<p>A member of Mälardalen. It works nearly as FHL. Also, "Bondens Mat i Uppland", to participate in a food fair and to get her business in a "food map". S experience that women are more supportive towards her business. Female associations, e.g. sewing circles, often visit the café.</p>	<p>Both, but most location. She always wanted to start a bakery, but it was a fundamental requirement that it could be run on the farm. S wanted to contribute to the creation of a vibrant countryside.</p>	<p>S does not experience that there are more men than women, at least not in FHL.</p>	<p>S believes there are some differences, women are more aware of soft values, e.g. how the bakery is decorated and presented. Men are more focused on economy and similar, "harder" values.</p>	<p>S met resistance in the beginning mostly from men that claimed she would not succeed. She started to doubt herself and wanted to quit sometimes, but persisted. She feels strong and believes in her idea.</p>	<p>Running a café is more common among women, however, there are many bakers who are men. Agriculture and forestry are more male-dominated sectors. E.g. S's husband runs the farm while she runs the bakery.</p>
<p>Vallgarns gårdsmjereri Michael Sjöman, Christina Fredriksson</p>	<p>C has entrepreneurship in the family from early age. Family is supportive, but also thinks they should end the business – "You never have free time and the business will tear you down". Since they work so much, they do not have a lot of time to see their friends. Other firms think they are away too much from meetings/events.</p>	<p>C likes the female networks. M means that women can be distanced and exclude the men: "One time I followed C to a meeting for women where the men also were invited, but it was not good since we [the men] were only supposed to talk when we were asked something. This discrimination of women that is so popular to talk about, it occurs for men as well"</p>	<p>Location. They wanted to develop the farm and to create sellable products from the goats, which M already had had for 34 years.</p>	<p>Men are more confident and direct than women and therefore they more often dare to start their own business. Women are more accurate and thoughtful, which may be negative for them since they hesitate too much when choosing to start a business or not. Women may care more about the family than how the business is run, and are more careful not creating a business that is risky. Instead they choose to be employed to get a safe income.</p>	<p>C: "I think boys and girls are different biologically. It's like the goats, the bucks would never take care of the kids, they prioritize differently. But it can also be about how kids are brought up, e.g. girls are supposed to play with dolls and boys with cars".</p>	<p>C: "In our business there has been no difference, but e.g. it's harder for women to get bank loans. But again, women have to be more confident and believe in their own idea, which men do". Both M and C think men are more persuasive, although women do have what it takes.</p>	<p>Within agriculture there are a lot of machines and technology, which generally is more popular among men. This does not mean that women are bad at it, but they are not as interested. More women work with animals when in agriculture. Thus, the business path can be chosen based upon gender.</p>

Table 7. The entrepreneurs' views on Fjärdhundraland and future plans.

<i>Fjärdhundraland</i>	What do you gain from the association?	How do you support other entrepreneurs/how do you get support from other entrepreneurs? How do you affect the association?	Future plans
Domta-grisen Stefan Sellin	S likes to work for himself and do not use the network very much. He has had the firm for long time and thinks it is more useful for start-ups. But it is good for marketing, e.g. in social media.	He has no specific contact with other entrepreneurs and networks and is not very engaged in the association, but still thinks it is good to support the association and thereby the community. Although he is not a “stop for tourists”, he wants to support the ones who are.	He is 66 years old and could retire, but still wants to focus on the firm. He is developing some new products, e.g. a BBQ box. He wants to continue the development of qualitative Berkshire pigs and to deliver good products to his wholesaler in Stockholm.
Forsby kvarn kafé Ibba Andersson, Staffan Larson	Get a lot of support from the association. Are not as active as before, but are still members. It is valuable primarily from a marketing perspective, they gain more visitors from cities. FHL contributes to a bigger awareness of the community and the activities in the area.	They promote other businesses to visitors, and vice versa. Use locally produced products in their cooking and baking, most of the time from other members. Members do not perceive other members as competitors, but as partners. More cafés contribute to more visitors. S: “ <i>It would be catastrophic if we would be the only café in the area</i> ”. As members in the association they promote each other by showing the folder with members.	Their plan is to continue to run the business, it's their life and their way to live. S: “ <i>We are great at taking care of our business and that is as well our plan for the future</i> ”. For now, they have invested everything necessary for running the business the way they want.
Kråkvilan Marianne Sjödin	M would have started the business no matter what, but FHL provided a huge support. She got a lot of help from FHL, e.g. education and help to construct the website.	Promotes each other's businesses, i.a. by showing the FHL folder with other firms. In the café she uses e.g. Skogsbackens ost, which she explains to visitors who then gets more value in what they buy.	Has many ideas but it is hard to choose. Since she works by herself and the space is limited, it can be hard to expand, but she does not want to move the business elsewhere. Wants to develop the garden by e.g. build a greenhouse.
Mälby trädgård Per Johansson	It is primarily for social reasons. He gets a lot of inspiration from other firms.	Businesses in FHL supports each other, e.g. Forsby uses his vegetables in their café. Also, he collaborates with other beekeepers and work on the Farmer's market in Stockholm. FHL suggests that he starts e.g. a farm shop that people can visit, but he thinks it takes too much time.	He's getting older, but still has plans to develop the sales on the Farmer's market in Stockholm by selling new products, such as healthy smoothies with ingredients from his farm.
Resta gård Anna Hane	FHL contacted Resta to become members. A has been to many meetings with FHL and thinks it is valuable to get in contact with other rural entrepreneurs.	A and other entrepreneurs help each other with business opportunities, which is important since she never had a network with other rural businesses. It is fun to hear how the business is going for others, how the season has been etc. The activities arranged by FHL have been really good. Resta took initiative of starting “Mat och människor” in FHL. A thinks that FHL is a very active and functioning association.	Continue developing the many orientations they already have, e.g. have 70 cows instead of 4 with a milk robot, start a lodging business, an outside training facility, running water power plant etc. But, A does not want the firm get too big, and risk losing the charm of small-scale farming. A larger firm requires more employees, thus “ <i>more people running around on the farm</i> ”.
Skogsbackens ost Marin and Ramon Jonsson	Good marketing since everyone recommend each other. FHL arrange events that M and R join.	They support each other by promoting each other, important to have good relationships with other entrepreneurs. The other members are partners and not competition. M: “ <i>Sometimes it's more fun to sell the others' products than our own!</i> ”	Now they got an employee which is good since they are about to start a café and Deli in nearby Salnecke Castle, with locally produced products. This is partly to provide chances to other entrepreneurs to grow. M: “ <i>But in 10 years, we want to move abroad somewhere in the south of Europe and eat cheese</i> ”
Sussis gårdsbageri Susanne Lindqvist	S is a member since 2 years back. She is more and more involved and has met new people. More customers thanks to the marketing, the events, the other entrepreneurs who recommend her business. Several members also go on field trips together.	S works alone and thanks to the network she can just call someone to get guidance, and the opposite. E.g. S and Skogsbackens ost collaborates when delivering products to Uppsala.	Plans to develop the café to be able to receive more visitors. Also, she has courses in flatbread making, which she wants to develop through more and bigger groups.
Vallgarns gårdsmejeri Michael Sjöman, Christina Fredriksson	Became members from the start in 2010. It is good to get contacts with other entrepreneurs, and marketing through e.g. all the events and website. “ <i>We help each other out in the community. There are many people from other parts of the country that are fascinated that we don't see each other as competitors</i> ”.	Now they are not very active in FHL due to lack of time. However, the SBOs in FHL support each other by recommending products and businesses, and cooperate with others (e.g. Skogsbackens ost) when delivering cheese to Uppsala.	They wanted to expand, but they had to cancel those plans due to building legislations. It is time and energy consuming to get permits. They think that the municipality could focus more on supporting SBOs, they do not get enough support. They want to expand the dairy so they can get more money and afford to hire. This would then give them more free time.

5 Discussion

This chapter offers a discussion regarding the findings from the empirical study in relation to the theoretical implications introduced in the theoretical perspective and literature review. The discussion is divided in the same sub categories as in previous chapters. Further, the discussion constitutes the basis for the conclusions of the study.

5.1 Becoming rural, social entrepreneurs

The informants consider themselves as being in possession of the characteristics associated with entrepreneurs regardless of their gender. Moreover, they describe entrepreneurs as being innovative, creative, courageous, goal oriented, stubborn, hardworking and problem solving. This is consistent with the conveyed theory, where attributes such as being high-achieving, innovative, goal oriented, risk taking as well as having the ability to identify business opportunities were argued for (Brockhaus, 1982; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). However, the initiation of their businesses was not only based in the informants' possession of typical entrepreneurial characteristics. Rather, the main reason for the start-ups was according to them their desire for a rural lifestyle as well as their affection for the community and area. They were not primarily financially focused and growth driven, which is more referable to the classical entrepreneur described in literature (e.g. Schumpeter, 1934, Henrekson & Sanandaji, 2014). The informants, as stated in section 3.1.3, are therefore regarded as social as well as rural entrepreneurs who address social needs, provide benefits for the community and are deeply embedded in the spatial context (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Doherty & Thompson, 2006, McKeever *et al.*, 2015). They possess intangible assets and add value to the local area, for example by managing the environmental surroundings, creating an accessible countryside and/or maintaining certain rural expertise, as discussed by Bosworth (2011).

Discussing the Theory of Planned Behaviour

The purpose of the TPB is to create an understanding regarding what makes certain people engage in entrepreneurial activity and more specifically how they perceive their own abilities as well as how their surroundings perceive and value those abilities (Ajzen, 1991; Borgia *et al.*, 2005; Kolvereid, 1996; Santos *et al.* 2016). The interviewed entrepreneurs all have a common perception that they are capable of being self-employed business owners. They have confidence in their own ability, even when others opposed themselves to them initiating a business. An example is Susanne who got a lot of resistance, mainly from men, when she was about to start her business. At the same time, others were supportive of her business idea, which in turn was well received also by FHL. Anna, who may be seen as quite an unconventional woman entrepreneur according to theory's conception of typical female characteristics, experienced most resistance from other women. However, her personal attitude (PA), perceived behavioural control (PBC) as well as closer valuation (CV) contributed to her strong belief in her own capabilities.

Aspects that were frequently brought up to discussion during the interviews were the perception of men being more confident as well as them having high trust in their own abilities, while women were considered more careful, thoughtful and being in need of more time to decide whether or not to initiate business start-up, even though women were as able of pursuing business initiation as men. This goes in line with Santos *et al.* (2016) who argue that women are not born with lesser entrepreneurial intentions, but they may however *perceive* the

barriers of being successful entrepreneurs as higher than men. Anna means women are their own biggest threat and are quick to judge each other due to their own perceptions of their responsibilities of caring for the home. This goes in line with Sjöberg's (2004) statement that the female gender role values family-work-life synergies more than men. Especially in the rural business sector, old traditions are present which also today influence men's and women's choice of business alignment. For example, among the informants, Stefan and Per were the only ones among the informants who inherited their farm which in turn provided a solid base for them to initiate their businesses.

The informants did not show any particular differences in motivations and intentions when initiating entrepreneurship. However, Santos *et al.* (2016) mean that men show more entrepreneurial intentions than women, but stress that this is "*the logical consequence of their more favorable PA and PBC.*" (p. 59). According to Santos *et al.* (2016), women also have a tendency to perceive their entrepreneurial abilities with lesser positivity. Nevertheless, in present study, women and men shared similar perceptions of their own abilities. This goes in line with Gupta *et al.*'s (2013) perception that people are drawn to entrepreneurship because of similar intentions and characteristics which create an attraction to entrepreneurship, and not with characteristics based in gender. As stated above, the informants for example share the desire of living in the rural, contributing to the local community as well as being self-employed. This implies that due to the entrepreneurs' common characteristics and also due to their similar self-perceptions, they were drawn to entrepreneurship based on the same causes.

The following sections provide separated discussions regarding the three levels of contexts and their interaction with the informants. It however needs to be emphasized that all three levels constantly coincide and overlap each other, but to easier grasp the interplay between contexts and informants, they will be discoursed separately.

5.2 Spatial Context

According to Ahl (2006), Korsgaard *et al.* (2015), Welter (2011) and Welter *et al.*, (2014), entrepreneurs are heavily influenced by their physical environment and geographical location of their business. Nonetheless, rural entrepreneurs are even more affected by their spatial location, since they often both physically and mentally engage with the place in a particularly high degree (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). All entrepreneurs found the geographical location appealing and chose their business direction primarily based on the physical conditions provided in the place they either moved to or already lived in. Hence, the informants were influenced by their strong will to create a business in the specific rural setting located in their home environment. Stefan and Per were already deeply embedded in the area when initiating their business start-ups through the long-time presence of their relatives in the area. The remaining informants were also embedded in the area when deciding to initiate their businesses since they already had lived in the community for quite some time, however with two exceptions. Anna, and Ibba and Staffan saw the potential in their to-be-homes the first time they laid eyes on them. Indeed, it was the place that made them initiate their businesses, but it was heavily combined with their urge for entrepreneurship (Anna) as well as their vision of creating a place for people to meet (Ibba and Staffan), prior to their move to the place. The entrepreneurs are also engaged mentally with the place due to the fact that the place contributes with a sense of purpose, social life and desired lifestyle. These are the driving forces for living, working and continuously developing the community. Moreover, FHL is contributing to the development of the community, and as chairman Mats stated, aims at

becoming a well-known and visited destination for tourists. Thus, the entrepreneurs both shape and are shaped by the place, as stated by Korsgaard *et al.* (2015).

According to Piperopoulos (2012), geographical proximity among businesses foster stronger relationships, which is applicable to the entrepreneurs in FHL. All the interviewed entrepreneurs highlight the importance of the association and the relations it creates with other rural entrepreneurs in the local area. Being part of FHL indeed has made it easier for some members to both live and work at the same place, something which otherwise might have created difficulties. For example, Ibba and Staffan highlighted that if they would have been the only ones running a business in the area, people may not feel it is worth visiting. As follows, the entrepreneurs need each other to create an attractive area containing of many different places to visit. Thus, solid relationships between the entrepreneurs are of prominent importance in FHL. Furthermore, Piperopoulos (2012) and Korsgaard *et al.* (2015) discuss how rural entrepreneurs' strong connection and sense of belonging to the place can serve as catalyst for innovation and new business creation, which is also relatable to the interviewed entrepreneurs. For example, Stefan wanted to develop the orientation of the farm and started breeding Berkshire pigs as well as created new products, with primary objective of adapting the business to be able to run it from the farm. Likewise, Anna aims to both develop new business orientations as well as developing the existing ones.

Rural businesses are usually home-based ventures (McKeever *et al.*, 2015), which is also the case for the informants. Home-based ventures may however be associated with the risks of not being valued as high, not being considered as trustworthy as other businesses, and are frequently viewed as hobby leisure (Welter, 2011; Mirchandani, 1999). This argument corresponds with some of the informants who state difficulties with receiving a bank loan. Mirchandani (1999) argues that the reason lay within the generally low growth potential of these businesses. Nevertheless, by running a home-based business, the individuals' self-confidence may even though increase since it establishes a sense of control over both the community's resources as well as the personal resources and abilities (Mirchandani, 1999). This can be related to the informants who indeed are in their comfort zone - they know the area, the people and together with FHL they receive even further support. By this mean, they are able to control and assemble resources and create value for both themselves and the area. Also, as Jack and Anderson (2002) emphasized, the higher the degree of embeddedness, the higher the probability for the entrepreneurs to identify opportunities and understand contexts, which can lead to them taking advantage of contextual benefits. As such, the entrepreneurs in FHL have created practical benefits by taking advantages of contextual factors as using the advantages of the community's coherence to carry out activities that both benefit the individual and bring value to the community as a whole. Examples on these activities are the event days which engage many members and create a holistic experience for visitors since they visit both the individual businesses as well as the area which provides its nature and history.

To summarize, the informants are in high degree embedded in the location. Consequently, the individual's motives, decision making and behaviour is constantly influenced by the location (Jack & Anderson, 2002). They cannot simply relocate to another location since the location is an essential part of the company. Without the place, the entrepreneurs would not have initiated their businesses.

5.3 Institutional Context

The institutional context consists of both formal and informal institutions (Welter, 2011), which is why the following sections are divided into the two elements.

5.3.1 Formal institutional context

Common obstacles presented by the entrepreneurs during the interviews were certain laws and legislations (and thus formal institutional context) that possessed challenges especially during the start-up processes. For example, two thirds of the entrepreneurs mentioned having difficulties with authorities since the legislations were perceived bureaucratic. Susanne meant the legislations are too tough and can make it even harder and challenging for new SBOs to initiate business start-ups than it already is. Likewise, some informants felt certain permit costs were too high (and thus directly influenced the business), as well as that the municipalities' food inspectors interpret the law differently and do not always know how to make a correct assessment (which possess indirect influences on the businesses). For example, if Michael and Christina, who run a dairy, would have known how difficult it would be with the bureaucratic legislations and food laws, they would never have started the business in the first place. Thus, to foster and create better conditions to increase the number of entrepreneurs in rural areas, the authors of this thesis argue that the formal institution should be simplified, since it is very hard to affect laws and legislations by a single or a few individuals. These bureaucratic laws may lead to fewer business start-ups, which is negative for the development of entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurial activity in turn plays a vital role for creating a vivid countryside (Jordbruksverket, 2006) and to maintain the prosperity of nations (Acs & Audretsch, 2003). Additionally, as mentioned in section 5.2, some of the entrepreneurs mentioned it could be hard receiving a bank loan (direct influences), mostly since the lender did not perceive the business ideas as tenable or being able to make profit in the future. This goes in hand with what Welter (2011) and Mirchandani (1999) highlight regarding that home-based businesses often are seen as hobbies, as being less trustworthy and having limited growth potential. Rural businesses are most frequently home-based; hence they may have a slightly lesser probability to receive bank loans. This is also emphasized by Korsgaard *et al.* (2015) who mean rural businesses face challenges since they gain limited government support.

5.3.2 Informal institutional context

In contrary to formal institutions, informal institutions are deeply embedded within society and describe norms, values and attitudes among people, and moreover what is seen as desirable and preferred regarding how people should behave (Welter, 2011). Moreover, according to Ettl and Welter (2010), Gupta *et al.* (2009), Powell and Eddleston (2013), Santos *et al.* (2016) and Welter *et al.* (2014), norms and attitudes towards women's work occupations may be affected by women's reduced access to social, human and financial resources. For example, the reduced access can lead to limited abilities to gain experience in some sectors, primarily in traditionally male-dominated occupations. Women therefore tend to work within traditional female sectors, such as retail and service professions, which may be more "custom" to stereotypes and their social values (Welter *et al.*, 2014). Somewhat half of the interviewed entrepreneurs believed this could be the cause for fewer women rural entrepreneurs since rural businesses, especially with an agricultural alignment, are associated with men as well as are male dominant particularly due to old traditions. On the other hand, the majority of informants replied that this is not the case in FHL, where there are even more members who are women (see table 3). But then again, there are many service-oriented businesses who are members in FHL, such as cafés, bakeries and B&Bs, and these are

primarily owned by women. However, the most common perception among the informants is that it is mainly the personality that affects how people behave and what choices one makes. But it was also mentioned that society is a patriarchy by tradition and that women and men struggle with gender stereotypes. There was a rather general perception that women are not as forward as men, they may be afraid to stand out and want to belong to a group, as well as women affect each other and are thus put into categories that control how they should behave and live. Thus, women, and of course also men, with high probability become affected by societal norms and values which are caused by old traditions, stereotypes and societal norms.

Moreover, highlighted by Christina, women can prolong the decision-process regarding whether or not to start a business due to them being too hesitant and careful, as well as not being willing to take risks. This goes in line with Rey-Martí *et al.*'s (2015) results where women generally show a lower propensity for risk than men. However, according to Rey-Martí *et al.* this was positively associated with women's business survival, while Christina meant that women are too hesitant to sometimes even get out of the starting blocks. This was also indicated by Anna who meant women sometimes are afraid to go their own way, Marianne who emphasized that society is a patriarchy since old and Ibba and Staffan, who felt that men are more self-confident and aggressive in their way of leading a business. What is moreover noticeable though, is that Rey-Martí *et al.* (2015) meant the underlying reasons for women's risk propensity are lack of faith in themselves and their skills, in combination with urges to combine work- and family life in a way that premieres family before business. Hence, this research supports the perception of many informants, where women are perceived as being less self-confident (while they at the same time are equally as able as men). Moreover, both Christina and Michael, as well as Ibba and Staffan, indicated that due to women's lesser confidence, it may lead to them being perceived as less trustworthy, which in turn may decrease their chance in receiving a bank loan. This matter was also inclined in theory, by for example Ettl and Welter (2010), Gupta *et al.* (2009), Powell and Eddlestin (2013), Santos *et al.* (2016) and Welter *et al.* (2014). However, when access to resources were on equal terms, there were no particular differences shown among the genders (Santos *et al.*, 2016).

According to the authors of present thesis, the informants were not *directly* affected by other's opinions and values regarding how they as entrepreneurs should behave. This goes in line with the characteristics typically associated with entrepreneurs, such as believing in their ideas, taking risks, being courageous and goal-oriented (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). For example, Susanne was at first discouraged of initiating her own business, primarily due to others fear that she would not make it, but she prevailed and ended up with a business in line with her vision. With that said, the authors of this thesis still suggest that the entrepreneurs *indirectly* are affected by norms and values in society, based on performed literature review and theoretical implications, such as Ahl (2006), Alvensson and Billing (1997 & 2009), Ettl and Welter (2010), Gupta *et al.* (2009), Langowitz and Minniti (2007), Santos *et al.* (2016) and Welter (2011), but also LRF (2009) and Jordbruksverket (2006). Present thesis's authors argue that we are constantly affected by societal norms and stereotypes, to the point that we are embedded in them at such depth that we do not feel or notice how they affect us and how we affect them, until we start putting things into perspective and in relation to each other. Society's norms and stereotypes are all we ever have experienced and known, and are thus normalized. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding how the entrepreneurs affect society.

5.4 Social Context

The social context consists of many different types of networks, from friends and family, to business acquaintances (Welter, 2011). It is shown that the social context is highly important for entrepreneurs when their entrepreneurial intentions are about to become entrepreneurial activities. For example, family and friends often play a decisive role for entrepreneurs (Welter, 2011). Five out of eight businesses have or had entrepreneurs in the family, while everyone has entrepreneurs in their friend zone. All informants experience support from their families, which Ettl and Welter (2010) mean is good for the business since it provides encouragement and inspiration. Many times family members also help the entrepreneurs in their businesses, for example their children help in the cafés and participate in markets. However, Christina's daughters, although being supportive, felt that Christina and Michael worked too much and lacked the time to attend social events. Ettl and Welter (2010) also stressed that family and friends could suppress entrepreneurial activity, but due to the fact Christina and Michael live their dream and preferred lifestyle and perhaps since the daughters are grown-up, they do not feel suppressed by this. Stefan and Per have both been supported through the inheritance of their farms, events that in high degree are founded in the fact that they and their families are rooted in the agricultural sector. Moreover, they are also representatives of the historical traditions in agriculture where sons inherit properties from their fathers. What is to be noticed though, is that both Stefan and Per took over the farms in the 1970s/early 1980s, and perhaps the passing of time has started to bend the traditions.

5.4.1 Discussing gender differences and similarities

According to Malach-Pines and Schwartz (2008) there are more similarities between female and male SBOs than differences. Their research moreover showed that women generally had more business partners than men and that women more often had a mother or spouse who were co-owner in their firms. Particularly the latter assertion was shown to coincide with present study, since Susanne and Anna co-owned their business with their spouse. However, no general conclusions can be made out of this since Stefan and Per are both single and thus one would not know how their situation would have been if being in partnership. Likewise, Welter *et al.* (2014) argue that women are more perceptive to informal support from others compared to men. In general, if women feel encouragement and informal support, the amount of women entrepreneurs tend to increase (Welter *et al.*, 2014). Most of present study's interviewed women are or had during the start-ups been members of female networks and many times felt comfort in the knowing that they were supported and part of the group. This goes along with the idea of Ettl and Welter (2010), where minorities, as women entrepreneurs, tend to find participation in a network as especially important. Anna was the clearest exception of this and has never felt the need to be a part of a female group, but is rather more interested in the idea of general entrepreneurial groups, without particular focus on women. She states "*I don't care about all the talk of feminism; I just do what I want without letting anyone say otherwise*". This mindset of believing in her own abilities can be relatable to what theory means are primarily masculine characters (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, research show that the higher the male-gender identification an individual has, the higher are the entrepreneurial intentions (Gupta *et al.*, 2009), and as stated among the entrepreneurs, men tend to be perceived as more confident and possess a more "I do what I want" - attitude. Anna can here be seen as having a higher male-gendered identity (thus saying she possesses many of the personality traits usually associated with men, not that she feels less like a woman *per se*), which partly can be suggested as explanation for her being a bit excluded from the "female belonging". In line with the female urge of group belonging, Michael has experienced that women can distance themselves and exclude men when women are clustered within a

closed group. What is moreover interesting - there seems to be no existing male networks, at least none known by the informants. Additionally, there were nothing in particular found regarding why this may be the case in the reviewed literature for this thesis, merely the fact that women in general have more business partners and appreciate informal support more than men. However, the authors of this thesis suggest that (with support from theory's arguments regarding female and male characteristics) due to men's perceived higher belief in their abilities, their greater access to resources and their generally not as prominent need of belonging to a group, there may not be as many reasons for them being members in a supportive network designed especially for men.

Unlike the theoretical implications that women experience family-to-work enrichment more than men and also that women tend to adjust their business to their family in a higher degree than men (Aldrich, 1989; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Morris *et al.*, 2006; Powell & Eddlestin, 2013; Welter, 2011), this was not inclined in present study. The women and men seemed to regard the family's support as important but did not however experience that the family affected the business in any other particular way (with exception from the direct help they gained from time to time in their businesses). However, the authors of this study emphasize that the fact that family did not affect the way the businesses were run, could be due to the age of the entrepreneurs. Most of them are now middle-aged or getting closer to retirement, which mean they already have "completed" the typical family life. The exception is Anna, whose youngest child is approximately one year old. As stated, her family feels that running this type of business, where home- and work life are closely related, is beneficial since Anna is at home while she at the same time is at work.

Finally, after completing the above stated discussion, the authors of present thesis feel it is beneficial to address the risks associated with the search for differences between genders, as emphasized by Ahl (2006). Ahl means that finding differences generally are valued higher than finding none and thus finding differences increase researchers' chances of being published. Therefore, even small differences can be exaggeratedly emphasized. As follows, the authors of this thesis do not attempt to draw too big conclusions and generalize the perceptions of the interviewed entrepreneurs since they are few in numbers and merely argue for their personal opinions. However, their perceptions are part of the empirical base in this study and therefore possess an important role in the study's results.

5.4.2 Networks in general, Fjärdhundraland in particular

According to De Carolis *et al.* (2009) and Piperopoulos (2012), networks provide credibility, opportunity, information, competitiveness, resources and innovation, which may in turn create synergies and knowledge shared between entrepreneurs. These statements are consistent with the informants, who all highlighted the importance of networks and describe networks as essential keys in order to succeed with their businesses, especially during the start-ups. Many of the informants are members of different associations, particularly because of the marketing. As Piperopoulos (2012) highlights, networks have the ability to enable new markets, which entrepreneurs maybe would not have been able to reach without the support from the networks. The informants mean that the different networks have provided marketing and opportunity to spread their business name and products, which in turn have provided more customers. Likewise, Piperopoulos (2012) means that collaborations, like networks, make it easier to tackle problems, like reaching more customers, which may have been a difficult issue to address alone.

A common perception is that especially FHL is a really well functioning network, with great positive exchange. As previously stated, the members in FHL have gained both measurable advantages, such as more customers and transportation collaborations, as well as unmeasurable advantages, such as inspiration, support and social relations from the network. The members are moreover owners of very small, rurally located businesses, who without the network could have had a hard time in gaining customers, due to their physical isolation, potentially limited access to markets and resources, *etcetera* (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). They greatly benefit from each other through the fact that they together possess a great number of potential attractions for visitors. For many of the SBOs, it is the quantity of businesses/attractions that contribute to their individual gain. Thus, their numbers do not make them competitors, but are rather essential for the prosperity of both the individual businesses as well as the area. As Christina puts it: “*We help each other out in the community. There are many people from other parts of the country that are fascinated that we don’t see each other as competitors*”. Also, FHL aims to contribute with a holistic experience for the visitors - the nature and landscape are as important as the farm shops and cafés. For example, the events like “the rebus round” have been successes. Additionally, FHL is located in an area with a history going a long way back, a fact that is to be utilized by the network even more than today. For example, as Mats explained, there were some foreign visitors once who stopped by a rune and asked “*where is the original?*”, and were impressed by the fact that they were looking at it. It is events like this that moreover inspired FHL to come up with the idea of an informational application that visitors could download to their smart phones, which is soon to be introduced to members as an idea for shaping the future.

Weak and strong ties and their effect on Fjärdhundraland

An essential part of FHL’s goal is to bring SMEs together, create new partnerships, and increase the interaction between members. Hence, there is a formal, coordinated establishment of social relations that may not have occurred if FHL was not implemented. The social network theory is a useful tool when studying how people, groups and organizations are connected as well as how they interact with each other (Kadushin, 2012). Social relations between people appear either as strong ties (close relationships, for example family and friends) or weak ties (acquaintances or work-related connections) (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1983; Jack, 2010). Members in a coordinated network, such as FHL, are connected mainly through weak ties due to their work-related relationships. These weak ties can be seen as bridging social capital and provide benefits for the members who gain relevant information and other resources (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Granovetter, 1983; Strobl & Peters, 2013). The informants stress that they highly value their weak ties with other entrepreneurs in FHL. It has provided them with advantages and increased their possibilities of identifying and realizing business opportunities. Many of the entrepreneurs are supporting each other through sales and marketing. For example, Ibba and Staffan cooperate with Per through them purchasing Per’s vegetables for their restaurant and café. Many of the entrepreneurs also sell other members’ products in their farm shops as well as provide visitors with information of the other entrepreneurs via word of mouth and/or by possessing a folder with information of the members in FHL for the visitors to look at when deciding where to go next. They also support both each other with for example knowledge and transportations, as well as the whole area by arranging events within the association to gain visitors to FHL. Thus, as stated by Granovetter (1983), the network provides advantages for sales in the businesses, both in the start-up process as well as in the ongoing business process, even if it was mentioned by the informants that FHL was of even higher importance during the start-up due to the importance of receiving a solid customer base.

Bonding social capital (also known as strong ties) is shown to be more important in the beginning of the start-up process of entrepreneurship (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Granovetter, 1983; Strobl & Peters, 2013). As stated, family and friends are important to the informants. All experienced more or less support from the family, who provided encouragement during the start-up process, and some experience even further support due to the fact that they started the business in confidence with their partner. Stefan and Per took over their family farms and were thus able to start their businesses with at least a solid physical resource. Discussable is also the correlation between time for business start and hence FHL's effect on the amount of time the entrepreneurs had to put on holding weak ties. Stefan and Per both started their current businesses in the 1980s when formal coordinated networks were not as common as today, according to Per. Thus they relied more on their own abilities to create bridging ties, gain social capital and hence integrate into the market. So when entering FHL, they already had a solid customer base and did not have the same need for being part of a coordinated network, compared to the other entrepreneurs who started their businesses between the years of 2005 - 2012. Rather, they emphasize that the most important reason for them being members in FHL apart from the marketing advantages, is to support other entrepreneurs, and thus indirectly the community and prosperous countryside. However, what is in common for the informants is that FHL has been a valuable source for social relations and weak ties. As argued by Granovetter (1983) they have integrated into the community, received access to both resources and more and new information beyond what would have been accessible in their own limited social circle. Additionally, Smith and Stevens (2010) discuss arm's length ties and embedded ties, the latter being most referable to the entrepreneurs of FHL. Embedded ties are more dependent on trust and companionship than on specific rules to maintain reciprocal exchanges and good relationships. This is suggested to occur in FHL since the entrepreneurs work for both themselves as well as the common goal - maintaining a prosperous countryside - a crucial goal for them as rural, social entrepreneurs, SBOs and embedded inhabitants.

5.5 Summary of discussion

The following summary is thought to serve as a smooth transition to easier grasp the most prominent results of the study and will thus provide the base for the conclusions. It covers both how the entrepreneurs are affected by the three contexts as well as how the entrepreneurs affect the contexts.

5.5.1 Spatial context

The entrepreneurs are deeply embedded within the location. Running a business in the countryside is associated with their desired lifestyle. Being placed in the countryside is as crucial as the business itself. Moreover, the entrepreneurs' self-confidence increase since their businesses are home-based - they know the area, the people and FHL and are thereby able to control and assemble resources with confidence in their own ability (Mirchandani, 1999). The entrepreneurs in FHL work to increase the tourism and the more firms that become established in the area, the more attractive it becomes to visitors. What is more, the area is envisioned to become an established tourist destination, like Österlen or Tuscany, which will reshape and develop both its intrinsic essence as well as its physical appearance. Also, thanks to the allied entrepreneurs there is a united way of communicating the message of the community's vibrant countryside. Thus, the area is seen both as a united and uniting context.

5.5.2 Institutional context

To provide a clear illustration of the institutional context, the following summary is divided into the subheadings of formal respectively informal institutional contexts.

5.5.2.1 Formal institutional context

Laws and legislations can create all too high obstacles for the already strained SBOs, especially during start-ups. Two thirds of the entrepreneurs mentioned having difficulties in the beginning since the legislations were perceived bureaucratic. Furthermore, it is hard for the entrepreneurs to affect laws and legislations.

5.5.2.2 Informal institutional context

The informants are not *directly* affected by other people's opinions and values. They demonstrate typical entrepreneurial features, such as being risk embracing, goal oriented and courageous. However, they are *indirectly* affected by norms, values and stereotypes which are deeply embedded within both people and society, and thus affect us all without any particular reflection upon them, since the stereotypes and norms are normalized.

Furthermore, both women and men in FHL tend to be involved in businesses typically associated with traditionally female respectively male sectors, for example women are more often owners of cafés and B&Bs, while men are more often owners of farms and similar. This also supports the stated perceptions in theory that women choose professions where they use their more communicative and caring characteristics, and/or the fact that men and women are affected by stereotypes associated with their sex (Gupta *et al.*, 2009).

As stated, it is hard for the entrepreneurs to affect societal norms. But at the same time, since our entrepreneurs live and act in a society based on norms (as we all do), they ought to influence them, since norms, values and stereotypes are created by people in society. However, in this study it cannot be exactly defined how they affect society. In FHL, gender does not seem to be of any particular meaning, the members are all *entrepreneurs* who work for their individual businesses, for the network and for the community. Most were surprised when asked about gender and it was not something anyone had reflected upon before. Nevertheless, there are more women than men that are members in FHL, which in turn may be due to women's greater attraction to coordinated networks /the belonging to groups and their sometimes reduced access to resources (e.g. Ettl & Welter, 2010; Welter *et al.*, 2014).

5.5.3 Social context

Men seem to be members in networks based more on practical advantages, such as marketing and sales collaborations. Moreover, there seems to not exist networks especially designated for men. This can be referable to the perceived male-associated characteristics of being independent, risk taking, aggressive as well as their higher belief in their own ability (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). The women are shown to be more drawn to networks, both female networks and other. They provide the same reasons as provided by the men, but also emphasize their need for, and appreciation of, more informal support and feeling of group belonging. This can be referable to typical characteristics associated with women, such as being caring, communicative, supportive and having perceived lower belief in their abilities, and/or to the aspect that women generally have lower access to financial, human as well as social resources and therefore need increased support (Ettl & Welter, 2010; Gupta *et al.*, 2009; Santos *et al.*, 2016; Welter *et al.*, 2014).

Family was not by any bigger means affecting the entrepreneurial process other than being supportive. It may have to do with the fact that most of the informants are “done” with the typical family life and thus are more free to make choices that do not at the same extent affect other family members. However, Anna still has a small child and running the business from home has simplified the combination of family- and work life.

Since the entrepreneurs are embedded in the community, so is FHL. FHL is the uniting liaison in the entrepreneurial cluster and thus serve as the core that encourages local entrepreneurs to come together and interact. This is shown through for example the webpage, the meetings, the events, the home visits, the collaborations and mutual recommendations. Additionally, FHL has strengthened the interviewed entrepreneurs. It has contributed with both tangible and intangible assets, such as marketing, increased customer bases and inspiration. Furthermore, the entrepreneurs have established social relations, particularly weak and embedded ties, with other entrepreneurs. These ties have in turn increased collaborations which has led to more established existing businesses. The entrepreneurs are not competitors, but co-workers, and are to some extent dependent on each other to gain customers and to achieve the common goal: a prosperous countryside.

Finally, the entrepreneurs have directly and indirectly inspired others and each other to initiate new businesses, which has contributed to a more vivid rural area. Thus, the increase in entrepreneurs in FHL has created a good milieu for entrepreneurs to thrive as well as has provided a solid platform for increased realizations of ideas. The more members of FHL, the more favourable for the overall values of the area.

6 Conclusions

The final chapter provides the conclusions of the study, the thesis's overall contribution to existing research as well as suggestions for further inquiries.

The aim of the study is to investigate how the three different levels of contexts interact with rural entrepreneurs in a coordinated network and thus affect the gendered entrepreneurial process.

To reach the aim, the study addressed the following research questions:

- How are the rural Fjärdhundraland entrepreneurs affected by spatial, institutional and social context?
- Likewise, how are the contexts affected by the rural entrepreneurial process in Fjärdhundraland?

Thus, the examined entrepreneurs have been investigated with a lens of gender based on their interaction with three contextual approaches regarded to their membership in FHL. Due to these specific alignments, the thesis contributes with new approaches and broadened knowledge to the concept of entrepreneurship, with a focus on rural entrepreneurship and its entrepreneurial process.

A general conclusion of the study is that it is challenging to separate the three different contexts since there is a constant interplay between them. However, this was also why they all were chosen to be a part of this study, which purpose was to get an increased understanding of how external factors affect the entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial process. As shown, especially for rural entrepreneurs, the spatial context is of high importance since they are often deeply embedded in and dependent on the location. The area is seen both as a united and uniting context. Moreover, gender was viewed as being part of institutional and social context. It was shown that stereotypes, norms and values possess an indirect effect on the entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial process, through for example the choice of business alignment. Furthermore, women tend to be drawn to the participation in networks based on the same reasons as men (marketing, collaborations *etcetera*), but also due to intangible factors, such as gaining support, inspiration and to feel group belonging. This can both be based on female characteristics as well as women's sometimes reduced access to human, social and financial resources. However, the similarities between genders were more prominent than the differences - the reasons for being rural entrepreneurs were shown to be the same, as were their entrepreneurial characteristics. Also their perceptions regarding how spatial and institutional context affect them as individuals and entrepreneurs were similar.

The authors of this thesis realized FHL is more important to the entrepreneurs than first expected. Rural businesses are special in the sense that the people's identities are prevailing through the whole essence of the businesses. As Bosworth (2011) and Korsgaard *et al.* (2015) emphasized, rural businesses contribute with added values that pass financial measures. They exist also for maintenance of the environmental surroundings and to create an accessible countryside. But is FHL different in the sense that it does not only work for the individual entrepreneur, but rather for the whole community, for the rural and for preserving the history of the area? Indeed, the entrepreneurs work for themselves, to make a living and to achieve their personal dream. But part of that dream is to contribute to a flourishing area, to not be one

of those people who move to the city and leave the rural to fend for itself. All the informants including chairman Mats, could not dodge to say with pride that the people in FHL are not competitors, not even when running similar businesses. Rather, the people in FHL are co-workers, each other's supporters and inspirations. As Marih said: "*Sometimes it's even more fun to sell someone else's products than my own!*", or Staffan, who meant that "*It would be a disaster if we were the only café in the area! No one would come!*". Thus, present study indicates that FHL, or at least the studied entrepreneurs, connect to each other in a combination of weak and embedded ties. The entrepreneurs are experiencing a strong sense of belonging to the area in which they are embedded. To maintain the prosperity of the area, they create and use the weak ties that exist between each other. Because, they all work to achieve the same thing in the end – a vibrant countryside and thriving rural businesses.

Future inquiries

There are many areas within the addressed topic where further research would be beneficial. It would be interesting to examine contextual aspects in combination with personal characteristics to gain a broader understanding of individuals' entrepreneurial intentions. Also, it would be of interest to carry out a longitudinal study of same type as the one performed, since entrepreneurship and context are phenomena that characterize by complexity and processing over time (Ahl, 2006; Landström & Löwegren, 2009; Welter, 2011). Thus, a longer performed study would probably have increased the understanding of the topic additionally. Furthermore, it could be beneficial to perform a study of quantitative type to gain a more general perception regarding how a greater number of rural, social entrepreneurs experience and interact with the different levels of contexts.

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Lindqvist, Susanne, owner Sussis Gårdsbageri, personal meeting 160225

Sellin, Stefan, owner Domta-grisen, personal meeting 160222

Sjödin, Marianne, owner Kråkvilan, personal meeting 160222

Thorburn, Mats, chairman of Fjärdhundraland, 160330

Appendix 1: Interview guide for entrepreneurs

Company:

Name:

Age:

General information about the company

- What is your company about? What services or products do you offer?
- When did you start your business?
- Was it an initiative made only by yourself?
- How did you decide what kind of business you would run?
- (How do you come up with new ideas?)
- How do you differentiate your business from others?
- How many hours do you work per day?
- Do you have a distinct business strategy? Do you think it is important?

General information about the entrepreneurs

- Are you the owner of the business? Is it a family owned business or a business only run by yourself?
- Did you have another career before starting your business? What kind of career?
- Do you have some form of education? (Course, university, qualified vocational education, etc.?)

Entrepreneurship

- Do you see yourself as an entrepreneur? Why/why not?
- Why have you chosen to start your own company? What is the most important reason?
- What was your driving forces for starting your business?
- What are your driving forces today? Motivations?
- Do you think your personal character have affected your choice to become an entrepreneur?
- What do you think makes you an entrepreneur?
- What kind of personal attributes do you think an entrepreneur should possess? Name five.
- What makes you a successful entrepreneur?
- Did you have sufficient access to the resources required to start up a new business, including money, access to credit, ownership of property (including land) that can be used as collateral to obtain loans, etc.?

Gender

- Why do you think there are less female entrepreneurs than male entrepreneurs?
- Do you believe being a woman/man affect the way businesses is run? Is this also the case with your company?
- Do you think there are positive or negative aspects of being a woman/man when being an entrepreneur? Have you noticed any of these aspects?
- What kind of problems have you encountered during your entrepreneurial process, from startup until present time?
- Do you perceive that the problems can be referred to your gender?

- As a woman/man, do you feel you get extra supported from others of the same gender? For example female networks.

Context

Social context:

- How do you think your family feels about you being an entrepreneur?
- Are they a part of your company in any way - official or unofficial?
- Do you have entrepreneurship in the family, present and/or historically?
- How has being an entrepreneur affected your family life? Work more/less, work from home.
- Would you say that you adapt your company to the family, or opposite?
- Has your family supported you in your entrepreneurial process?
- If so, in what ways? Do you feel that your family is an important asset?
- How does your network affect you and your company? Do you get support from friends?
- How important would you say your network is when running your company?
- Did it play a big role when you started your business? How?
- Do you get support from other entrepreneurs? How?
- Do you support other entrepreneurs? How?

Spatial context:

- Was your choice of business affected by your location, or was your choice of location affected by your choice of business?
- Was your choice of business affected by someone you know?
- Has the association Fjärdhundraland helped you in your business activities?
- Do you gain useful experience or other uses thanks to the association? For example, creating new partnerships with other small rural businesses in the area. Or, if gained more visitors/customers since being a member of the association.
- Are you a member of another entrepreneurship group or association aside from Fjärdhundraland? Why? Why not? Useful experience or other gains?

Institutional context:

- Do you feel that your line of business is gender stereotyped? (For example, running a café is seen as feminine?)
- Did you experience some kind of public support system when starting up? Have you got any financial support? From whom?
- Have laws and regulations affected your business in a way so you could NOT run the business in the way you wanted?

Other

- What would you be doing if you would not have your business today?
- What are your plans for the future?
- Are you pleased with the way the company is today or do you have further plans? New investments?

Gender difference – Couples

- What are your chores in the company? What are your responsibilities? E.g. finance, practical chores as caring for animals, being in touch with customers.

- Do you as a woman/man have the same access to your communication network as your partner? E.g. information, social networking.
- Who if you are the official company manager? Why? Unofficially, do you share the leadership role or is the company manager also the leader when it is not “only on paper”?
- Who makes the important decisions that regards the company? E.g. new investments, who you are selling to (new restaurants or similar).
- Is one of you the most energetic entrepreneur, or both? Who is looking for new opportunities?

Appendix 2: Interview guide for chairman

The start

- How and why did the association start?
- Who started the project?
- What were the driving forces in the beginning?
- Were the driving forces different in the beginning compared to today?

Today

- Describe the association
- What is the main purpose of Fjärdhundraland?
- What are the driving forces today?
- How do the members collaborate with each other?
- How do the members influence the association?
- How does the association differentiate from other associations?
- Has the association affected the area? In what way?
- Has the association encountered any problems from the time it started until now?
- What are the plans for the future?

Gender perspective

- What proportion of the members are women owned enterprises, respectively men owned enterprises?
- What proportion of the members are family owned enterprises?
- Do you have knowledge about the allocation of the responsibilities in the family?
- Do you think the members' choice of business type is affected by gender?