

11 - Comparative Perspectives on Entrepreneurship, Organisational Culture, and Social Changes

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The work of Fredrik Barth in *The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway* (1963), was a seminal anthropological work illuminating the role of entrepreneurs, the meaning of a working environment and organization to understand processes of social change. Now – in the middle of the pandemic – it is time to make a new seminal workshop on social changes.

Over the years, we have witnessed a move towards understanding entrepreneurship more in line with a neoliberal approach, more individualistic and self-centred. Entrepreneurs are defined as neoliberal subjects where they craft their subjectivities, their identities, and are the optimal examples of the embodiment of neoliberalism. In these narratives, the role of the working environment or the organization, as a space of cultural and social meaning-making, have receded to give way to individuals in their economic drive, self-making and identity practices – analyzed independent of work settings, collectives, and community belonging. Furthermore, ethnographic studies on local and social entrepreneurship have been signalling empirical variations of the nature and role of entrepreneurs; as not necessarily economic and utility maximizing agents. As such the role and production of entrepreneurship is contested and empirically differentiated.

By providing fine-grained ethnography, anthropologists can illuminate the cacophony and intrinsic complexity of entrepreneurship.

Stories about individuals, analysed within the larger cultural context of both their 'communities of practice' as well as the 'global marketplace' in which we are all entangled. Thick descriptions can challenge static models and taken-for-granted trend analyses, so that we can have better-informed discussions on social changes in our current era.

In this session we are inviting empirical and ethnographic based studies on entrepreneurship, organizations and social changes from a diverse range of cases. Topics related to, but not limited to, the following themes are welcomed:

What are the roles of entrepreneurs and who are they? How is the diverse ways of entrepreneurship practices and organizational culture manifested in ethnographic works of today? How do we understand the relationship between entrepreneurship and organized action in the Global North and the Global South? Does entrepreneurship transcend the current polarizing tendencies? Do they contribute to them? How can anthropologists contribute to the concept and debate of indigenous, spiritual, and social entrepreneurship?

This panel should be of interest to anthropologists doing ethnographic studies, but also anthropologists working for NGO's, public organizations, or private firms who are extending the boundaries of the discipline through their work and by engaging anthropology as a source of intervention and knowledge production.

Moral money making and entrepreneurship maneuvering - economies of abundance and economies of scarcity

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An anthropological view of entrepreneurship may heed the processes of creation by highlighting the embeddedness of economic activity, and the moral aspects of novel *translations* between different spheres of economic considerations (Barth, 2013; Bråten, 2013). Most notably in western culture, is a polarization between the embedded economies of abundance where a complex whole is relevant, such as family, love and community, and economies of scarcity where money makes comparison easy.

When one wishes a creative output, which cannot be specified in advance (Hjorth 2003; Meyer 2007), the economy of scarcity suffers from a failure of not being able to predict anything that has never happened before. Daniel Hjorth takes on this problem of a society now wanting innovation and entrepreneurship, but within the controlled environment of the organization. In the book titled "Organizational Entrepreneurship"(2004), he claims organizational entrepreneurship is a contradiction in terms, since entrepreneurship demands creative destruction and a disregard for conventions and moral boundaries, whilst organizations need some kind of control. Yet, organizations have to balance exploitation of existing resources with exploration of new possibilities to remain relevant in an economy where change is ever-present. This paper presents several examples of how this problem is handled with navigating between the different economies of abundance and scarcity.

Being part of the community

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The Armed Forces are stereotypical known to be rather conservative, top-down controlled hierarchical organisations. These organisations do not give much space for either individual or institutional innovation and entrepreneurship. However, like all institutions, there are always exceptions. The military special operations forces are unconventional units, which over the last decades globally have been prioritised with resources. Even in the military, innovation takes more than money and political goodwill. It takes an entrepreneurial mindset and skillset: an ability to connect resources in new ways and be willing to take risks to do so (Brøgger 2010). Special operations forces need an entrepreneurial mindset to accomplish special missions. The Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commando (*Marinejegerkommandoen*) has a large number of entrepreneurs. Throughout their apprenticeship, *Marinejegere* are encouraged to use their initiative and creativity to “improve things,” “invent stuff,” and “make things work better.” They learn from their masters, peers, and other special forces operators during exercises and deployments—and use their gaze and sense to use resources and concepts in new ways. It is part of their unit’s culture (Danielsen 2018).

According to Barth (1962: 1) “entrepreneurs must initiate and coordinate a number of inter-personal relationships in a supervisory capacity to effectuate his enterprise”. This paper will describe and discuss how some *Marinejegere* use their entrepreneurial mindset and skillset even when they leave the unit – with the support of their military community. People join in kinship-like relations because “they long to belong” (Strathern 2005). The selection and training of special forces are hard and makes solid ties and social networks. It gives them a strong belonging. Petter, Didrik, and Børge served as *Marinejegere* almost three decades ago. After they left the unit, they all started small adventure companies. Over the years they kept working together whenever needed and supported each other in different ways. This paper investigates how military ‘brothers’ still makes their supervisory capacity in their entrepreneurial activities.

Innovasjon, organisasjonskultur og sosial endring i offentlig sektor

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Hvordan skaper man innovasjon i en organisasjon der ansvaret for endring overlates til systemet, og hvor menneskene gis begrenset mulighet til å påvirke måten man jobber på? Hvordan forbedrer man produkter og tjenester, eller utvikler nye, bedre og mer effektive måter å løse oppgavene på, når kravene til måloppnåelse, styring og kontroll ikke gir rom for kreativitet, prøving eller feiling?

Spørsmålene stilles på bakgrunn av 20 års erfaring fra helse- utdannings- og forsvarssektoren.

Regjeringen har bestemt at offentlig sektor skal være gode på innovasjon. Politiske og strategiske målsetninger definerer rammene for hvordan dette skal skje. Til grunn legges prinsipper om handlingsrom, insentiver, lederskap og kompetanse, samt detaljerte beskrivelser av hvilke ferdigheter, tankesett og praksiser regjeringen mener er nøkkelen til god *innovasjonskultur*.

Krav til effektivisering i offentlig sektor innebærer samtidig at færre mennesker skal produsere og levere bedre og billigere tjenester enn før. Ledere på ulike nivåer tar stadig initiativ til forbedring av egen virksomhet. Organisasjonen endres, arbeidsoppgaver flyttes, og rutiner og arbeidsprosesser blir redefinert. Når initiativet likevel ikke kommer fra de som faktisk skal produsere eller levere tjenestene, forblir endringene strukturelle, og verken velmenende ledere eller tavlemøter med de ansatte klarer å endre vesentlig på etablert praksis.

Ikke alle ledere er fortrolige med å rette et kritisk blikk mot egen rolle og egen kultur. Dette virker å være særlig fremtredende i hierarkiske organisasjoner med høye krav til kontroll og produksjon, og hvor først og fremst sjefene synliggjøres ved suksess. Konforme lederne ønsker gjerne kultur- og verdidebatten velkommen, men kun så lenge det ikke utfordrer ens egne handle- og væremåter.

Innovasjon krever først og fremst modige og endringsvillige ledere som forstår hva som skal til for å skape en organisasjon som rekrutterer og verdsetter kreative, nytenkende og risikovillige medarbeidere. Mangelen på gode kulturanalyser gjør det imidlertid utfordrende å argumentere for betydningen av dette internt. Som antropolog i offentlig sektor vil jeg argumentere for at det er behov for mer forskning og flere virkelighetsbeskrivelser av disse forholdene.

Smallholder as entrepreneur? The quest for business potential in rural Latvia

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Based on a long-term field research on organic and bath house farms in Latvia from 2010 to 2012 and repetitive visits in 2020 this article illuminates complexities of conceptualizing entrepreneurship and innovation in the context of rural development discourse in Latvia. While challenging policy makers' conceptions of rural areas as sites of backwardness and spaces where entrepreneurs lag behind due to inability to adapt to changing circumstances, the author focuses on entrepreneurial micro-practices and articulations of innovation in smallholdings.

Entrepreneurship in this article is seen as the creation and exploitation of new economic niches. The role and character of rural entrepreneur as a change maker is subjected to ethnographic scrutiny and discussed from economic and anthropological approaches, questioning the simplicity of economic assumptions and illustrating the role of tradition within innovation. By portraying innovation as the capability to discover opportunities that are matters of cultural interpretation, the article highlights innovative and cultural component of entrepreneurship and maintains that a polarized view of innovation and tradition, economic productivity and lifestyle reflect neither the potential of the rural space nor the entrepreneurial spirit.

From underprivileged youth to technology entrepreneurs: a South African public-private development project.

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Since the end of apartheid in the early 1990s politicians, educational institutions and different foreign actors have promoted a discourse of upward social mobility, encouraging South Africa's youth to dream big. Yet, unemployment rate is close to 40 percent and many young people struggle to find stable employment. In this context, the state has tried to advance upward mobility by fostering entrepreneurial behavior, through education and business policies. In congruence with international corporations and their corporate social responsibility programs, NGOs, politicians, and other actors expect entrepreneurs to contribute to social change by solving sociopolitical issues like economic inequality, turning them into instruments of neoliberal restructuring.

In this paper I investigate how the socioeconomic background of trainers and to-be entrepreneurs influences how they understand and enact entrepreneurship in a Johannesburg based startup incubator, where, aspiring entrepreneurs receive training, internet access and opportunities to network. The setting mimics incubator in US and Europe, while finding inspiration from famous technology entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk. Drawing in ethnographic data gathered during a 12-month fieldwork in Johannesburg, I show how the incubator operates in a complex field characterized by constant grant hunting and attempts to attract contracts with foreign donors, to secure funds for its daily operations. The underprivileged youth, who constitute the 'target population' of the betterment schemes of the incubator, work in a field where entrepreneurial traits like personal initiative and resilience are explicitly valued. Nonetheless, in lived reality, education and social background are often more important to succeeding as entrepreneurs. To uncover the different dynamics at the incubator I ask: What are the effects of this contradiction on the incubator and on its aspiring entrepreneurs? How is entrepreneurship practiced in this environment? How is the neoliberal discourse on personal initiative contested?

Entrepreneurial complexities in the Indian Ocean

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The entrepreneurial processes I will focus on in this paper are taken from the Hadrami diaspora around the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean context is full of variation, over time, in terms of different waves of globalization, and in space in terms of markets, currencies, trade goods, understandings of values in different religions, and generally of economic systems. Hence, it is a good place to reflect on what processes of commercialization are about, about how such processes are linked to processes of entrepreneurship and what Jane Guyer calls "composition", rather than "accumulation" (Guyer, 1995). Entrepreneurship is embedded (Polanyi, 2001) and as Barth states, "profit" is not only monetary economic profit, but may also "take the form of power, rank, or experience and skill", and hence entrepreneurial activity is related to linking the economic with such other values (Barth, 1962).

In spite of all the variations in Hadrami identities and processes of ethnic assimilation, Hadramis always consider themselves to be Muslims. Over time the migrant individual's ethnic identity seemed to be pushed into the background and became subordinate to religious identity. Such a religious identity is expressed through specific actions and is also shaped through participation in religious organizations. But it also has a global element, in that Muslims, as part of the umma, are considered members of "an imagined community" with a global reach. At the same time, religion's global dimensions must be balanced against its local expression. This is also the case with Hadramis. Hence, the processes producing tensions among the Hadramis have changed from an internal process relating to the stratification system consisting of groups of Sadas and non-Sadas, to one in which the Hadramis are but one of several Muslim communities producing candidates for international terrorist activities through capital owning interests.

The Hadrami early trade links have remained important to this day, and the diasporic links and entrepreneurial initiatives are still important in producing a rather exceptional position for Hadramaut within Yemen, the wider Islamic world and global trade.

Entrepreneurial role of the CEO

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The communal values of indigenous sharing economies are deliberately used by commercial Native-owned corporations to brand themselves as extensions of tribal communities in Alaska.

It is my contention that those corporations have generated “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) and consolidated ethnic self-determination for indigenous people in ways that conventional constitutional recognitions of Native tribes in the U.S. could not have achieved otherwise. However, the relevance that these corporations have for Alaskan Natives exposes a basic dilemma as there are zones of cultural frictions and discourses in the indigenous shareholding communities about the nature of these corporations. They strengthen and might even reinforce Native identity by applying symbols of a subsistence lifestyle in their marketing. But because of their investments in unsustainable large-scale extraction of Alaska’s gold and oil deposits, these business operations pose a potential threat to fish and game resources on which their rural shareholders depend. The corporations’ involvement in the extraction industry is deemed incompatible with the subsistence lifestyle of their indigenous stockholders.

Various facets of the corporations’ importance for people in the community will be scrutinized through the role of the CEO. In his capacity as a cultural and entrepreneurial broker, he mediates between the needs of the company to work efficiently for-profit maximization and the needs of his employees to procure country foods and maintain a subsistence lifestyle. His mediating role demonstrates on an interpersonal level the everyday challenges of running a village corporation in rural Alaska. Along with the ins and outs of a factionalized bush community, the manager must become familiar with the local subsistence traditions that play an important role in people’s lives. I will show how the CEO handles situations in which the subsistence needs of employees collide with the requirements of their office jobs and disrupt the smooth functioning of the company.

Sosiale entreprenører i statsforvaltningen

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Den norske statsforvaltningen er ifølge [europeiske studier](#) i dag av høy kvalitet og nyter stor grad av tillit i befolkningen. Vår statsforvaltning håndterte oljerikdommen slik at den kommer fellesskapet til gode, som et eksempel på hvilken betydning en statsforvaltning kan ha for sosial endring. Men hva med sosialt entreprenørskap i statsforvaltningen?

Rundt 160.000 mennesker jobber i den norske statsforvaltningen. Lov- og regelverk, som er grunnlagt i historien, gjør statsforvaltningen på mange måter konservativ innenfra, og det er et ufravikelige krav om politisk styrbarhet. Statsforvaltningen kan dermed synes som et kulturelt system med lite rom for entreprenørskap. To eksempler vil vise at det likevel er mulig. I 2012 opprettet toppledere SKATE (Styring og Koordinering Av Tjenester i E-forvaltning) som et samarbeidsforum mellom virksomheter som har ansvar for nasjonale felleskomponenter. Først senere ble dette formalisert med mandat fra Regjeringen (Difi-rapport 2014:07: [Mot alle odds](#)). Det andre eksempelet handler om ildsjelens betydning som er blitt påpekt i arbeidet med å hindre frafall fra videregående skole (Difi-rapport 2014:07: [Mot alle odds](#)).

Tre trikotomier vil belyse dette: [Eduardo Ongaros](#) beskrivelse av offentlig forvaltning som vitenskap, håndverk eller yrke er tre måter å forstå statsforvaltningen. Gjennom de tre kunnskapsparadigmene kollegiet, hierarki og nettverk, som Tian Sørhaug har beskrevet, kan vi se ulike sosiale konstellasjoner som gir forskjellige muligheter for entreprenørskap. Til slutt ser FAFO tre roller hos arbeidstakeren ([Fafø-rapport 2007:15; Ledelse og samarbeid i staten](#)). Entreprenørskapet kan videre belyses med at statsforvaltningen kan sees som et forestilt fellesskap, og [statsansatteundersøkelsen](#) har vist gang på gang at statsansatte har høyt jobbengasjement. DFØ-rapporten [Da statsforvaltningen flyttet hjem](#) beskriver til dels engasjementet og hvordan statsansatte vurderer muligheter og mening i arbeidssituasjonen.

Between enterprise and ecosystem. Social entrepreneurship in the Peruvian highlands

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An unresolved issue in social entrepreneurship research is whether it has wider societal impact or not. The argument in the paper is that the question about societal impact is due to a conceptual limitation in social entrepreneurship theory and not empirical social realities. Social enterprises must be conceptualized as entities separate from the incessant flows of relations and business exchanges to come into view. However, to document their wider societal impact, it is necessary to map their social dependencies and then the enterprises as such 'disappear' from view. We test this proposition in a study of an NGO as a social enterprise working in the Peruvian highlands. The social enterprise works with the most marginalized people in Peru, the indigenous population, who lives under the most marginal conditions, the highlands. The conclusion is that it has impact on both business and society, but that the impact appears only when its operations are analyzed in terms of both social enterprise and social ecosystem.