

## 10. Entrepreneurship as boundary work: deviating from and belonging to community

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### ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS BOUNDARY WORK: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

Entrepreneurship is usually seen as a solution to problems in community development – through new firms, new industries and community mobilization, stagnating regions and cities are expected to return to growth and prosperity (Cornwall, 1998). While this solution is almost undisputed, the question of what entrepreneurship is and how it emerges often remains unanswered or neglected (Spinosa et al., 1997). There is also an underpinning positive assumption that all new firms or entrepreneurial acts are good for any local community and that they are well received by the locals (Welsch and Kuhns, 2002). Moreover, it is said that industries should be built on local resources, competencies and culture – the question is how we can develop our town and local area out of our existing traditions, culture and habits. We can find this ideal of the embedded industrial cluster throughout the world.

In France there are different wine and food districts, there are US cities where all activities are built around car manufacturing (e.g. Detroit), there are regions inhabited by numerous glass and crystal manufacturers (Småland in Sweden, Bohemia in the Czech Republic). There are the famous local specializations of northern Italy with their emphasis on civil society, not to mention the notorious US case of Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 2000). We have thus many examples of clusters where traditions and cultures are part of how to and what to produce, and where people have been able to construct affluent communities out from their local culture. Behind the visible products and local specialities, the inhabitants of these areas have together created strong regional cultures that support and maintain certain behaviours, identities and social relationships – enabling but also limiting individuals in relation to tradition. In less fortunate areas, economic activities are likely to be more diverse (Welsch and Kuhns, 2002), but still performed in a close and harmonical relation to the

local community (Mort et al., 2003). Not surprisingly, many regions have been convinced about this harmonic cluster strategy and actively try to reinvent them at home.

Entrepreneurial action that means deviations from culture and traditions or bringing new ideas in from the outside are rarely considered in these analyses (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003), despite the fact that entrepreneurship is often described in terms of change, newness and deviation. Not least in the sub-genre of entrepreneurship literature that deals with the fates and fortunes of successful individual entrepreneurs, it often stands clear that being an entrepreneur is about deviating from norms that others follow and in the creation of new norms. Still, this is a masculine image characterized by conflict and conquest that is unusual to find in the social entrepreneurship and/or community entrepreneurship literature. What should be of interest to entrepreneurship research is thus a discussion about how entrepreneurial action can be embedded in local history and tradition at the same time as it challenges and stretches these taken-for-granted boundaries of how and what to think, and how and what to act. The aim of this chapter is thus to contribute to a developing understanding of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship as boundary work in relation to local cultural context.

Taking a social constructionist view, we argue that entrepreneurship, both as concept and practice, emerges dynamically in social interaction between people. People always interact in different forms with each other through meetings, through reading what others have written, through the Internet and so on. Even in those cases when one entrepreneur has indeed 'singlehandedly' performed the entrepreneurial act, interaction with a social context has still taken place (through upbringing, local culture, inspiration, idea generation, support, resistance and so forth). Although different persons have different impact, and differ in their importance to the process, we could recognize the entrepreneurial process as a complex web of reciprocal interactions between culturally embedded actors closely connected to each other (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003; Hosking and Hjorth, 2004). With a social constructionist view entrepreneurship is something 'in becoming', a movement, in which pluralism and emancipation from structures are consequences (cf. Spinosa et al., 1997; Steyaert, 1997; Chia and King, 1998; Janssens and Steyaert, 2002).

The notion of entrepreneurial action as a process of constructing and reconstructing the cultural boundaries of everyday life is extensively discussed by Spinosa et al. (1997). They maintain that entrepreneurship is a way of making history (that is, changing the way in which we understand and deal with ourselves and with things), and that it rests upon certain entrepreneurial abilities. These can be found in almost any human being, and are based in the sense of an anomaly or disharmony in any of the worlds in which life is lived. They

adopt a Heideggerian view of worlds – that a world is a self-contained set of interrelated socially constructed meanings that link things, purpose and identity to each other – and find such disclosive worlds in tribes, professions, subcultures, academic fields and so on. While the usual human behaviour may be to live on with such an anomaly or disharmony, getting used to it and even making it a part of one's identity, entrepreneurial action would imply hanging on to it in order to change the way in which the world is perceived.

This is done, Spinoza et al. claim, through handling the anomaly/disharmony by innovation and social interaction with others in the same world, socially constructing the innovation as both sensible and strange. Sensibleness is about constructing belongings to the world, about changing practices, and strangeness is about constructing deviations from that world, about making history. Entrepreneurship as boundary work is thus a process of socially constructing deviations and belongings in a certain world and maintaining these tensions long enough for historical changes to materialise – establishing a new way to see the world rather than constructing a brief diversion that in the end reinforces tradition.

Entrepreneurship is thus about changing the way we see the world, that is, that our style of relating to people and things are changed. While most new products and services and the subsequent changes in daily practices do not imply a change in style, entrepreneurial acts do. Spinoza et al. discuss three different ways in which styles in our way of viewing our world are changed. Entrepreneurial change – a change in style and not merely a change in practices – in/of these worlds happen through articulation, reconfiguration and cross-appropriation. Articulation means that a style is changed as its practices become explicit, which in the case of social/community entrepreneurship would imply, for example creating awareness about some aspect of local culture and its importance to future development. Reconfiguration means that a style is changed as a marginal part of established practices gradually becomes dominant following some sort of practical transition, for example local patriotism is redefined from being old-fashioned small-mindedness into becoming a common force in mobilizing and uniting people. In the discussion about entrepreneurship as boundary work, the notion of cross-appropriation is perhaps most important in the sense that practices are brought in from other worlds (that is, from outside the boundaries) and made useful, thereby stretching and redefining boundaries.

## THE STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES

In this chapter, entrepreneurial processes are studied through narratives – in order to get an understanding of individual participants' interpretations of

them. These data are then subjected to an analysis where the story – the narratives of the participants – are re-written by the researcher in order to cover the events, conflicts and such that convey an understanding of the entrepreneurial processes (see also Steyaert and Bouwen, 2000; O'Connor, 2002; Fletcher, 2003). We can understand how/why problems arise, how/why people can perceive obstacles, how/why new ideas emerge, how identities are constructed, co-constructed and re-constructed and so on (Johansson, 2004). Since we view entrepreneurial acts as collective experiences, the empirical basis concerning an entrepreneurial act cannot be the 'visible' entrepreneur's narrative only. If different narratives from different actors involved are brought together in the analysis, understanding of events could be much broader (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003). However, it is also very important to carefully handle interrelated questions such as how language is viewed and used, the notion of discourses, and the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000; Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001; Fletcher, 2003).

In the following, we present an in-depth study of the Hultsfred rock festival in Sweden and how the actors behind the festival – organized through the voluntary non-profit association RockParty – have initiated a number of entrepreneurial processes over the years. The study is based on recurrent interviews, participant observation and documentation from the actors themselves. From the narratives we understand where problems appear, where obstacles have emerged, why some ideas are realised and others not (Kupferberg, 1998). Since we view entrepreneurial processes as collective interaction, it is also important to speak to several of the inter-actors (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003). The interviewees were asked to speak openly about the development of their operations, how they had worked together, what problems they had experienced, how they constructed and re-constructed the boundaries of their local context themselves, including their interpretation of the external reactions and attitudes towards them. In total, ten of the central actors in Hultsfred have been interviewed in-depth on at least one occasion. They have also read and commented upon the material, which is ethically important in this kind of approach.

The boundary work studied here is thus the ongoing interactions between a number of people that together construct boundaries for the sake of testing and stretching them. Their narratives are a part of their construction and co-construction of the content and context of their daily work, and give us as researchers a chance to understand how and why their common interaction unfold as it does. They convey to us their relational realities: the realities that they are creating together, the realities that are 'in becoming' – which is something different from factual correspondence between what is and what is said (Hosking and Hjorth, 2004).

## THE HULTSFRED CASE: FROM PUNK REBELS TO MUSIC INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Hultsfred is a small industrial town in the Småland region of Southeast Sweden, characterised by forests, lakes, farms and picturesque villages. The municipality counts about 15,000 inhabitants, half of them living outside the town. The social life of the town had not much to offer the young men growing up as punk rebels during the 1970s, and in 1981 some of them formed their own music club, RockParty, in order to arrange concerts and other happenings. Rock music, a reliance on voluntary work, and a determination that nothing was impossible were – and still are – mentioned by all interviewees as the foundation of RockParty.

Today, RockParty is the arranger of the Hultsfred Festival that has been held annually since 1986. The festival has steadily developed into one of the major summer rock festivals in Europe, and set a new record in 2005 with 31,000 visitors. RockParty also arranges several other recurring festivals with separate themes. The club has its own concert hall, which they had to build by themselves when the municipality ended their lease of the sports hall in 1990. It is situated at the edge of the town, in a small industrial block between the deep forest and the regional highway.

In the middle of the 1990s, the group realized that the success of the festival could be used for the good of the whole town. At the same time, the club was constantly close to bankruptcy and some of the employees were forced to form companies out of their specialities in the festival organization (catering, advertising, booking, call centres and the like) and sell their services to external customers too. With some exceptions this worked out fairly well, and it spurred RockParty to invest some small amounts in other business ideas related to the music industry, and they managed to attract public funding to establish an industrial development centre for the music industry. Today, the concert hall has been expanded with the addition of a large office building called RockCity, housing a number of small entrepreneurial companies, a national music industry centre, a business incubator, a university education programme in music management and a high school with a music profile. RockCity has also become the common brand name for the whole group that is owned by RockParty. As of 2004, the group had 44 employees and total revenues of 72 million SEK.<sup>62</sup> In 2003, RockCity CEO Putte Svensson was elected Creative Entrepreneur of the Year in Sweden, but he immediately noted that he was just the front member of a group of people that had worked together for decades: RockParty was started by Håkan Waxegård and Per Alexandersson, the former being the 'front face' and the latter the organizer. As the festivals grew in scope, more people joined the inner circle. Gunnar Lagerman became responsible for signing up artists,

Putte Svensson organized the voluntary work needed to build the festival area, and Per Alexandersson specialized in marketing.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Per Alexandersson left Hultsfred for a career in Malmö, and Håkan Waxegård was ousted from the board and replaced by Patrik Axelsson. Waxegård left both RockParty and Hultsfred, and it was then decided that Putte Svensson was to become the charismatic 'front face', and Patrik Axelsson the thoughtful administrator. RockParty still owns the festival and all the companies of the group, and Putte, Patrik and the others are regular employees with ordinary salaries. Since the club was created out of voluntary work, no one will ever be allowed to use RockParty to amass personal wealth.

After Putte becoming the driving force in the creation of new firms related to the festival – a strategic direction that is still a major source of conflict and discussion within RockParty – he gathered a new network around him to pursue the ideas on business development, educations and music industry research. The effort was called Project Puzzle, and they rapidly developed a set of complementary identities. In this network, Erkki Lahti was the opportunity searcher and idea generator, Putte the charismatic motivator, and Lasse Rönnlund the action-oriented 'doer'. They also placed their old friend Per Kågefors as business developer in the regional authorities, which meant access to all sorts of financing and funding.

In order to maintain the dynamics in the RockCity building, they try to question their roles and what they do, and they actively seek to involve new persons both as employees and as network contacts. Being a group consisting of men only, they made efforts to recruit women (Putte was replaced by Frederika Svensson as CEO of the largest company, Metropol), which has also generated projects aimed at improving the possibilities for young female rock musicians, led by Hanna Rotelius.

Since the members of the original team have now become fathers with families, they have had to redefine their way of working. They are not available around the clock anymore, and they need to plan for their interaction. Still, a lot of ideas and decisions happen informally around coffee tables, but they have also begun to see the drawbacks of too much informal networking in an organization with 44 employees. Hence, they are forming a professional board for the whole group and establishing a development company to handle all new ideas. Many employees outside the inner circle find RockCity to be the most creative and inspiring place they have ever worked at, but they also say that informal power, traditions and history are important – you need access to certain key actors if you really want your ideas to come true.

## NARRATIVES ON DEVIATING AND BELONGING

In the interviews with the (inter)actors in the Hultsfred organisation, a number of narrative themes on the relation between the entrepreneurial processes and context emerged. One such theme was the image of rock music and rock culture as rebellious and different as compared to the local culture of sports. Another theme was the perceived massive lack of local understanding for the special characteristics of the music industry, which was explained with reference to the traditional industrial structure of the region. The relation between the RockCity people and their context has also been characterised by an ongoing debate on the relation between culture and commercial business (see also Mort et al., 2003), which has also led to severe internal conflicts. It appeared that having been met with scepticism in the local arena, RockCity has instead focused on networking and collaboration in other arenas; regionally, nationally and internationally. Still, they all share a basic desire to make Hultsfred a better and more prosperous place to live, which represents an aim to contribute and be respected, to be seen as an important and relevant part of community development. These themes are described below through the voices of the (inter)actors in the RockCity organisation.

### **Rock Music Culture as Deviation**

The leading actors behind the club RockParty were all born in the end of the 1950s or in the first half of the 1960s. Those who grew up in Hultsfred tell the story of a quite traditional and stagnating industrial town, where almost every family was dependent upon a few large factories. All the factories had benefited from the Swedish postwar boom, and the local youth knew that they would get jobs right after school and be able to buy their own house before the age of 30. In that sense, life was easy and predictable, despite the economic stagnation during the 1970s.

When not working, the Hultsfred people got together in sports clubs and numerous other voluntary associations, but the teenagers not interested in sports had not much to do. During the punk wave at the end of the 1970s, Putte and others arranged concerts in their school and noticed that the interest in music was growing:

Most of us played in bands and we brought together the bands to concert evenings. The dean had a big meeting with us on how to stop violence and drinking among the pupils, and we started to arrange a new form of parties where the music was in focus. And then we graduated, and had no reason to continue to arrange school concerts. We then formed the club RockParty. December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1981. (Putte S)<sup>63</sup>

From the beginning they were seen as outsiders, but they also think that that has helped them in their ambitions:

Sometimes I think that it was good for us that everybody worked against us; crazy young rebels were not really popular in the beginning of the 80s. Well, perhaps they didn't work against us, but nobody ever listened to us. The local politicians lived in the old days; they were not bad people, but they did not understand that the local youth wanted concerts and festivals. Today, the official policy is that the festival is good for Hultsfred, but we have never seen any decisions to support the festival. I have been to some awkward meetings with the municipality board . . . It has become our strength that we have had to fix everything by ourselves. (Patrik A)

The RockParty board was a group of friends, which has meant a strong sense of collectivity but also difficulties in handling conflicts:

I think it was an initial strength that we were a bunch of old friends that were behind a lot of things. But it has meant difficulties in handling budget overruns or layoffs; we have not been professional in such occasions since we are all old friends. This is a sensitive thing, we must be professional but it shall also be fun to work here. (Patrik A)

The board of RockParty was relatively small, and the way to make big things happen was to use voluntary forces when needed. Voluntary work for RockParty became the opposite thing to spending time in school:

Our friends became the tools. At high school I was not popular among the teachers, because when we had concerts in the sports arena a lot of people were away from school helping us out. I've been at the dean's office several times and promised to stop doing this [laugh]. But today, many of our old teachers come up to us in the street and congratulate us to the successes. It was not that school was boring; we just did not see the practical use for all the theory. It was a relief to be able to slip off and do something practical. (Patrik A)

The club and the festival grew fast, and since nobody had any knowledge of accounting or business matters, they used a very simple business model:

We had indoor concerts every week around the year and outdoor concerts every second week during summer season. The tactic was to make a profit out of the outdoor concerts and to spend the money on our favourite bands at the club. Some sort of anarcho-capitalism, as I use to say. (Gunnar L)

Rock music and rock culture is not that deviant anymore, and the actors seem to think more carefully about when and in terms of what they want to challenge their context:

We are not that rebellious anymore, we are more of an institution now. We are forty instead of twenty years old, and we have assumed a more politically correct view



on things like teenagers getting drunk during the festival. We often did not listen to criticism before, today we do understand it in another way. (Nisse J)

The festival is still an independent thing, so in that sense we are still rebels. A feminist rock association is now being started up, and they have had a rookie-camp with Marit Bergman.<sup>64</sup> We will work more with things like that. (Putte S)

### **Music Industry as Deviation**

In Hultsfred, the RockCity building represents a deviance from the traditional way of working and living. When the members of the original RockParty board grew up, they felt predestined to lives as factory workers. The years they spent building up the club and the festival was something they did as a part of their youth rather than as a part of their working lives. Hence, even after more than a decade of festival organising, they saw themselves as just a bunch of rockers unable to do real business. The festival was not growing so much anymore, and they had constant problems in matching revenues and costs. However, they got indications that their experiences could be useful for other sorts of operations as well:

One day when I came down to the Unemployment Agency, there was a new adviser there that just had come to town, and she said that the battery factory needed a new CEO. 'I can't apply for CEO at the battery factory', I said, my high school grades didn't really match that job. And then she said that I had led festival projects with thousands of people involved, and at the factory there were only 400 employees. Then, we realised that we could start other business operations besides just arranging concerts. (Putte S)

The festival was also met by scepticism by banks and other institutions. When they built their first concert hall, they were forced by the bank to fully own the building themselves, since the bank did not trust the RockParty club to be a responsible debtor. The music industry represented a different economic logic from traditional industrial manufacturing, a logic that did not suit established models for credit evaluations:

We have had festivals where we lost big money, and we have tried to solve it by selling inventory and taking personal loans. The festival business is risky, you know. And the bank has not been keen to help, not even with temporary credit for costs that will be re-paid when the festival entrance fees flow in. The characteristics of traditional manufacturing are built into the bank world; it has shaped their view on judging business risks. We are different, which means that they must have trust in us instead. Which they don't. (Patrik A)

In some instances, there were also serious mistakes made, often due to over-optimistic assumptions on future revenues:

I was among those who were sceptical about this building, I thought it to be too large for Hultsfred. You don't really want to come down on the enthusiasts, but it appeared that our indoor concerts resulted in a loss of about one million the first year. The indoor concerts we have today are not at all of the same scope as intended from the beginning. We had a loss of about 40 or 50 thousand every weekend. (Gunnar L)

Music industry is still not fully understood, the actors claim. The only support and competence available is to be found in Stockholm, which is where the major companies in the industry are located. When they started IUC (the national music industry centre), the money came directly from the government, not from venture capitalists and banks, and the RockCity spin-offs also deviate in the sense that they aim for survival rather than fast growth:

Say that we have 60 per cent of our venture capital left in three or four years, then we will be really satisfied. But everybody around saw us as idiots; banks, venture capitalists, authorities. We had to break all these prejudice saying that you cannot do anything with music outside Stockholm. Our companies are not that profitable, they live on a level suited for self-employment which means careful spending habits and survival despite recession. These people are here because they want to be here. The business development manager at the municipality is not really happy about this; he now has dozens of small companies to take care of instead of a single big one as it was before. (Lasse R)

The actors themselves do not, however, think that their industry is that different. Instead, they want to be seen as a complement to other industries in the area, and they also want to learn from them:

We travel around a lot, everywhere in fact. We have stolen a lot from the manufacturing industry, they are 100 years ahead of us. They have been working with strategic development since the beginning of twentieth century, and the music business started to make money in the 1950s. We are lagging 50 years behind. So we look at what they do, what they are good at, and then we try to steal it. (Putte S)

### **Maintaining the Balance: Culture vs Business**

The decision in the middle of the 1990s to create spin-off operations from the festival reawakened an old ideological dilemma in the actor network. RockParty had always been different both in terms of lifestyle and music and as a form for economic value creation, and the general opinion was that they were a cultural association where money was a secondary thing. When it was suggested that some of the existing operations within the festival (such as catering) were to be transformed into companies aiming for profit, many feared that traditional economic thinking would become the norm for the whole festival:

There is a history here governing what you can do and not, a conflict between cultural and commercial values. The festival culture is still around, and some people have had rough times when trying to deviate from that. I think that it is important to stick to the original foundations for what we do. RockParty is the cultural part and the Metropol companies are the commercial part. (Frederika S)

Even though the festival has remained a non-profit activity, economic thinking has indeed influenced and changed their way of doing things:

Before, when you wanted a certain band, you just went for it. If someone younger wants to bring in an unknown band to the festival today, it might not be that easy. Today, everybody has a more developed sense of economic responsibility. Before, we brought in two famous artists and used the profits to pay for a bunch of unknown bands. We don't do that to the same extent anymore. (Nisse J)

Patrik Axelsson, longtime chairman of RockParty, has a dual role in both preserving the original ideology built on voluntary work and maintaining financial stability:

We earn decent salaries, but nobody has become rich. Some people in Hultsfred has earned a lot of money, like those owning the festival grounds, coffee shops, restaurants and so forth, but we are not among them. If we had owned this some difficult decisions could have been easier to implement, but the spirit in this building might not have been the same. In the end, it is about daring to test ideas. (Patrik A)

I'm a big critic and always ask who is going to pay for all this and who is going to make it happen. It's a pity that I always assume that role. But I can live with that, in the end it's always better not to let the visionaries run ahead all the time. I also have visions myself, but mostly I keep things together. (Patrik A)

The conflict became even more serious when Putte brought in Lasse Rönnlund to support a number of small independent ventures in the house:

Putte had decided to create spin-offs from the festival. The person that decides to do such a thing must be able to handle the reactions from the rest of the organisation. When he declared that we were going to do other things using the festival brand, a gigantic conflict broke out. If it had not been Putte, he had been thrown out at once. They wrote angry letters to each other and called me to meetings where they told me that I destroyed the festival brand and so on. My first year here mostly meant working internally to get permission to do new things, and I use to remind people about that now. It was just to take it cool, explain and deliver. (Lasse R)

No one at RockCity does, however, claim that they are mainly interested in money and business. Putte's view of this seems to be quite common among most of the actors:

Like everybody, I have had to work elsewhere and I've also been registered as unemployed. I worked at the paper mill, for example. I don't own anything of this, and that is a good thing. I was part-owner for a time, and that was not good; people started to think that we were earning money for ourselves. The envy that we have seen is rather a part of the mentality of an old industrial town, where no one was allowed to rise above others. I like doing a nice deal, but a nice deal is primarily an acknowledgement that I have done a good job that someone appreciates and put a high value on. Money is not interesting unless it can be used for something funny. (Putte S)

Still, Putte is most aware of the tensions, and knows that there will be future conflicts on the subject:

What happens if the commercial parts of RockCity become bigger than the festival? A lot of people work with the festival and are proud of that, and what happens if something else appears that is bigger and consumes more resources? If it is put that way, there will definitely be a hot debate. (Putte S)

### **Belonging to What? Local, Regional, National and International Arenas**

Relations with the local context have been problematic since the beginning. Rock music and rock culture was strange in itself (as compared to the traditional local focus on sports and dance), and they interpreted the municipality as reluctant to support what was happening:

Then [1990] we had a debate with the municipality about us having destroyed the floor in the sports hall. It later appeared that it depended on a construction mistake, and that it had been actually destroyed by the athletes. But it was really not about who was to blame, they just didn't want us on the premises. (Putte S)

The perceived lack of understanding has – among other things – implied that they feel that the festival is accepted, but never embraced:

The relations with the town are really bad; the expression that you never become a prophet in your hometown is an accurate image of what we have experienced. Look here, here's a new brochure from the municipality intended to promote Hultsfred. Look at the pictures. Forests, forests, an airplane, a lake. And on the back side, a small picture from the festival. The Jante law<sup>65</sup> still applies, and some people don't like that we have received public funding. Even though all the money has been well invested. (Hanna R)

Most of the blame for RockCity not having become an established part of the local business life is put on the local politicians, who do not understand that the rest of Sweden have forgotten about the traditional industries and equate Hultsfred with the festival:

In five years, there will be twice as many students, I think. And the festival, of course. 95 per cent of the Swedish population think of the festival when they hear 'Hultsfred', they don't think of any manufacturing industry. We have had a better relation with the inhabitants of the town than with the politicians; the politicians have not been seen as representative in this matter. They are very positive when media direct their attention to the festival, but when you scratch the surface you see otherwise. (Gunnar L)

The leading actors also think that their ambitions have taken them to another level, where the natural collaborators are to be found elsewhere. Two members of the actor network, Erkki Lahti and Per Kågefors, work with projects that include RockCity in developing the entire region, and through the music industry centre they seek to play a central role on the national arena:

The bigger we get, the more distance we get to the start of all this. It is not the same local connection as it used to be, and we are looking elsewhere for contacts and ideas. We don't pile up money in bank accounts, it is re-invested in new projects. There are other values to care for here. (Frederika S)

We have discussed a pure development company in which to gather all new projects, and we have also discussed to form our own venture capital firm here in Hultsfred for music industry ventures. There are no venture capitalists here, they are in Stockholm. But in Stockholm they know too little about the music industry and too little about working outside Stockholm, so that makes it even harder. (Putte S)

They also try to use different 'front persons' depending on what context they operate in. Some people are the faces of RockCity locally, Gunnar Lagerman symbolises the festival internationally, and Putte operates on the national level:

My strategy is not to be seen locally. I might be on the cover page of *Entreprenör*<sup>66</sup> and looked upon as the great businessman and all that, but at home I'm not seen at all. Instead, it is always the one that has been responsible or actually did the job that is to be seen. It's important that you always try to put the others in the light, and I've tried to do that for five or six years now. (Putte S)

Even though they are critical of the local connections, they are convinced that RockCity will nevertheless have a major impact on the town. In a way, this is already happening through the subsidiary RockCity AB, which is a joint venture between RockParty and the municipality. This conviction that their boundary work will one day be of central importance is even formulated in geographical terms:

In a long-term perspective, our relation to the town will change through the students. I'm not even sure that the traditional city centre will be the centre in the

future, but that is an unimaginable thought for the locals who built the big centre blocks in the 1970s. To us, the city centre is the road out here, and it might be more blocks of flats and businesses along that road than in the traditional city centre. (Putte S)

The long-term vision is far beyond Hultsfred, at the same time as it means expansion in Hultsfred. If Hultsfred does not go to Europe, Europe will have to come to Hultsfred:

The national music industry centre here has formulated a development programme for the Swedish music industry that we are now presenting to the government. It is a plan on how to develop the whole Swedish music industry, and in due time we will establish a European music development centre here in Hultsfred. That is the long-term target. (Putte S)

### **In Search of Relevance: Contributing to Society**

Already from the outset, the RockParty gang both loved and hated their home town:

The idea was that you should stay here in Hultsfred; you should be able to live here and still go to concerts with your favourite bands. That became even more important when the local factories here started to downsize. After high school, people moved to Stockholm, especially the women. The guys stayed here to a greater extent. We somehow felt that we should work against that trend. And our way of doing it, it was through music. (Putte S)

The problem with Hultsfred was – and is – economic stagnation and a lack of visions:

To many, this house might be a way to stay here in town. As compared to the days when I ran the record store, the town has stagnated. There are no commitment and enthusiasm there. This house is growing and there is rapid development here, but the city centre lags behind. The only thing you notice is that all houses are inhabited nowadays. Hultsfred has no business tradition, Vimmerby is the town of the merchants in this region. (Nisse J)

What they like about Hultsfred is knowing everybody, feeling that they are part of a community:

I have become a real Hultsfredian; you can actually find most things here. I'm not a big city guy, I don't like anonymity. I really enjoy staying and speaking to people I meet in the supermarket. In Hultsfred, everybody always say hallo to each other in the street, which astonishes my friends from other towns. I have travelled a lot in the world and have friends at many places, but it is nice to come home and know everybody you meet. I like life in the small town. (Patrik A)

Using RockCity as a tool for local development was not a natural thing, but it came to be through both emotional and business-related arguments:

It was not a natural thing to expand during the 1990s, but we saw that we have had many people working for us during the festival that then ended up in Stockholm. We wanted to give them possibilities to live and work here in Hultsfred. It was both about keeping competence and friends here; it is not so fun to see the removal vans driving away. We do have a responsibility to society; it is about keeping up shops, schools, childcare and so on. (Patrik A)

In this sense, business and culture unites in the struggle for their hometown:

Good business means you can invest in new projects, make your dreams come true, bring in more entrepreneurial people. We are trying to change our whole life here through establishing new businesses. I know several people who have said to me that they have stayed in town because of what we do here in RockCity. This house is for Hultsfred, anyone can borrow a key and go here! (Putte S)

## BOUNDARY WORK AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ROCKCITY

In the Hultsfred case, the question of deviating is central to the actors' conceptions of themselves in relation to society. They cherish their own self-image as deviators as a kind of prerequisite for their success, that is, their entrepreneurial processes imply co-construction of both the content of the process and its relation to the context. The relation to the context is mostly twofold, though, in the sense that it is usually constructed both in terms of deviating and belonging. In the early years, deviating implied rebellion, and rebellion implied that belonging was something sought for internally in the actor network and in the rock music culture. Today, deviating is to them the same thing as moving ahead of the rest of community, and belonging to society is taking responsibility for its future development rather than being conformist. In order to summarise this development and contribute to the ongoing discussion about how boundary work is socially constructed in entrepreneurial actor networks, we have identified three forms of boundary work that also imply re-creation and change of the world(s) they inhabit – including how they see themselves.

### **Re-constructing the Traditions of Local Community – Hultsfred**

The leading actors at RockCity constantly complain about the local community not using the Hultsfred festival as a marketing tool and not focusing any school education on music. The image of Hultsfred is rather constructed as not

being the RockCity and festival. Another problem with this relation between the local community and RockCity is that young people growing up in Hultsfred do not involve themselves locally to any significant extent. Instead people come from outside the town, for example the coast, and work or study for a while in RockCity. They then leave after some years for careers elsewhere and remain valuable network contacts to RockCity, but they do not improve the local community of Hultsfred.

If we only focus on the relation between RockCity and its local environment, the Hultsfred case could be seen as a case of 'liability of newness' (Stinchcombe, 1965, Aldrich and Fiol, 1994), where deviance from institutionalised norms implies problems for the entrepreneurial process. It is still not easy to convince the community of the benefits of what they are doing; compared to all the steady jobs at the local factories, rock festivals and music management is not really expected by the average citizen to imply any significant advantage for the town. In this case, however, newness has also been an asset for everybody involved – so much an asset that the RockCity gang has tried to preserve parts of it. Instead of conforming to norms, they build networks with those that share their view of reality – and their 'degree of deviance' also fluctuates over time. Their legitimacy and sense of belonging seem to rest not in the different entrepreneurial processes that they initiate – those are usually met with scepticism – but in the long-term ambitions and ideals that they try to maintain.

The local community of Hultsfred has been a threatened and stagnating environment throughout their lives, but it is also an environment that they cherish and want to protect. Through their interest in rock music they deviate from traditions about how and what should be done in this community; they create something new and unexpected in this peaceful little town. At the same time, you cannot live in a small community just as a deviant, and the members of RockParty soon realised that they also had an important mission where they lived. Still deviating at the same time as they are constantly networking to find allies and supporters, they actively work to make Hultsfred a part of the emerging TIME<sup>67</sup> sector in Sweden. In this work, the images of the local community as still focused on traditional forest industry and the town centre as a stagnating housing area are maintained as 'the other' to which they want to contribute.

Our interpretation of this boundary work is thus that the actors at RockCity are persistently working with changing the way people in Hultsfred view themselves and their community. From the very beginning, they have strived to make rock music a part of the local culture, initially through estranging rock culture from local traditions, later also through sensible and responsible interaction with the rest of the population in terms of business development, university educations and so on. Still, after almost a quarter of a century, there



is much more to do, not least because most Hultsfredians do not see the same anomalies and disharmonies in their society as do the RockCity actors. Disclosing the new world of the youthful, entrepreneurial TIME-sector Hultsfred community seems a long process.

### **Re-constructing the Boundaries of Actor Networks – RockParty and RockCity**

The core of the entrepreneurship definition – to be outsiders at the same time as they remain connected to and involved in the community – can be interpreted as central for the RockCity actors' identity construction. They have always had problems with legitimising their industry in the eyes of the common Hultsfredian; people cannot identify with rock music because they cannot link their own lives to that lifestyle. In the words of Spinosa et al. (1997), they succeed estranging themselves but fail to connect in a sensible way to actors outside their network. As an instance of entrepreneurship it is also outside traditional local identities, since it deviates from local traditions in terms of industry and through its emphasis on equality. From the beginning, the actors have also deviated as persons since they were punks, which meant that they looked different, acted different and thus created a distance between themselves and 'ordinary people'. Over time, they have become 'ordinary people' in the sense that they have bought houses, formed families and normalised their dress-code. It has meant that they are more likely to be accepted for who they are, even though their business deviates. Deviation is thus now an eternal process of trying to challenge boundaries, not least the ones that they themselves erect.

The actors at RockCity also see their organisation as a haven for continuous entrepreneurship; they never want to become just an ordinary firm. The founders still want their organisation to take risks, to challenge, and to contribute to the Hultsfred community. Newness is a part of the internal culture of the organisation, and a lack of external legitimacy is to a large extent something that strengthens their internal view of what is legitimate. They organize their new project ideas in a special department and they also have individual 'idea banks' for potential ventures that can be picked up later on. Often ideas rest for a while and are used when the timing is right (Cohen et al., 1972).

The notion of entrepreneurship as fun, creative – but responsible – deviations is also central to the culture within the RockCity organisation. They constantly strive to bring in young, enthusiastic people that will challenge and change taken-for-granted perspectives, but the long successful past is not always supporting this. A major internal conflict emerged when some of the members wanted to create a group of profit-seeking companies out of the festival brand; it was seen as too much of a deviation from the RockParty ideals.

And there are also examples of individuals that have left the organisation because they were too individualistic and that way of being is not accepted in the organisation. There are also examples of people that left because of the lack of structure and rules; there is an internal story about a man who continuously asked for a work description, and resigned when someone handed over a blank sheet of paper and a pen to him.

For a small group of deviant people whose ambitions are met by scepticism from others in the local context, it is definitely a challenge not to become victims of groupthink (Janis, 1972), and the focus on basic values (such as entrepreneurialism) rather than consensus on single projects seems to make this work. Externally, RockCity embraces all kinds of network contacts wherever possible. This kind of boundary work – constructing and re-constructing the limits of the actor network – implies the disclosure of new worlds of identities. Since the beginning of the 1980s, they have relied much on each other, and as deviators the construction of limits between themselves and ‘ordinary people’ has been central to their collective identity construction. In this process, they have sought external strangeness and internal sensibility. On the other hand, many of the problems that they experience (such as the debate on commercialism vs culture or the lack of women in leading positions) seem to be rooted in some of them being more strange to others in the actor network than they are to some ‘outsiders’. Identities are thus always in the making, constantly becoming rather than being ready, which means that the basic anomalies and disharmonies always appear anew in other terms.

### **Re-constructing the Boundaries of the World to be Changed – from Local to International**

Deviating in terms of international networks and building trust and belonging outside the local community is also something new in the local business life of Hultsfred. They work together with other towns in the region and with the regional authorities. They have established the national music industry center IUC, which is based in Stockholm and Hultsfred. The market for the festival and RockCity is not limited to southeast Sweden; people come to it from all over Europe. In that sense the RockCity group deviates from local industries, which produce local services and compare themselves with other companies in Sweden. RockCity orient themselves towards big festivals in Europe and the international music industry, and in that sense they deviate from how a typical Hultsfred industry would act in relation to local society. To protect and build industries upon local culture resources are important for many provinces in Sweden and other countries. RockCity use the name Hultsfred as a brand for the festival, but the resources they use are not traditional resources from that area in Sweden.

Ever since the start of RockParty, the central actors have identified themselves as part of something bigger or other than the local community. In several of their fields of operation, their natural collaborators are to be found elsewhere. At the same time, they do not see this as either surprising or discomfiting; it is rather that they want to widen the conceptions of what kind of world Hultsfred is, and is part of. From the sensed disharmony between what Hultsfred is and the positive consequences of making it become a part of something bigger, the RockCity actors have tried to re-construct the notion of locality. While that has been successful internally (that is, it is perceived as sensible), it has so far seemed strange to others in the town.

### ROCKCITY VS THE HULTSFRED COMMUNITY – PROMISES AND PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the words of Spinoza et al. (1997), entrepreneurial action and identity construction in RockCity in relation to the Hultsfred community involves articulation, reconfiguration and cross-appropriation. To a quite large extent, their boundary work and self-image as deviants seem to consist in articulating and making use of basic values that have been a part of local community for decades. They describe Hultsfred as a place where people are loyal to the town, where it is not acceptable to rise above others in terms of status and wealth, where people come together in clubs and associations and create things on a voluntary basis, where music and parties have always coincided. When constructing the RockParty/RockCity spirit as something different and radically new, they make use of many of the same values and practices that have always defined the Hultsfred community (cf. also Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003).

The entrepreneurial actions in the RockCity network have also involved reconfiguration – i.e. that hitherto marginal aspects of a style become central. As a small industrial town, Hultsfred has always been dependent upon national and international demand for wood houses, batteries and pulp, and the region is still the home of wood house manufacturing in Sweden. Still, the people at RockCity maintain that Hultsfred has been far too locally and regionally focused, and no one had any idea on how to keep the local youth from moving away to Stockholm. From the RockCity perspective, Hultsfred needed to embrace and make use of the national and international orientations that had always potentially been there, making the world coming to Hultsfred rather than the other way around. By explicitly defining their own operations as directed towards national and international markets, they wanted to show the rest of the community how such a re-configuration could happen.

In the relation between RockCity and the Hultsfred community – as it is perceived by the people at RockCity – there are thus several instances of more or less ‘successful’ cross-appropriation of values and practices (that is, the taking over from another world a practice that could not be generated in the present one, but that is still found useful). Within itself, the RockCity organization has been moderately successful in combining an idealist, rebellious, left-oriented notion of rock music culture with the harsh, ultra-commercial realities of the modern music industry through articulating and appropriating practices and values from local community. Even though this has involved serious conflicts in the organization – and even the threat of splitting it up into parts – it has still been a source of what is seen throughout Sweden as something new, exciting and challenging.

In relation to local community, cross-appropriation of what has been learned in the world of RockCity for the development of Hultsfred has not been that straightforward, though. In RockCity they think that their way of organizing both voluntary work and business operations are things that other industries and the local society should try, and they also think that they provide access to the TIME sector and other knowledge-intensive, fast-growing segments of the economy – things that should be essential and most useful to a small, stagnating industrial town far away from bustling ‘regions of excellence’. This has not been easy; they have worked with their own role as an anomaly in local community for years without finding a way to ‘get through’. Instead of their practices and values becoming new normalities after a temporary deviance, they are still stuck in a situation of seemingly eternal cross-appropriation without the construction of any other normalities apart from the traditional ones. This is visible not least in their maintenance of a self-identity as deviant rebels and their perceptions of the ‘local people’ as ‘others’ – a kind of dichotomization useful in many business-related situations but less so in processes of community development and change. On the other hand, Hultsfred has never experienced any major economic crisis like a sudden closedown of a major factory – which might otherwise have created an arena where the deviant voices of the RockCity people could have attracted a wider local audience (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003).

From the example of Hultsfred and RockCity, it might be concluded that community entrepreneurship in the form of establishing new organizations intended to move ahead of the community is not that easy. New organizations may help communities to articulate and re-configure practices and values, thereby changing the style with which inhabitants look upon themselves and their common concerns. As sources of new practices and values to be cross-appropriated into communities, new organizations like RockCity might be too homogenous, simple and un-bounded by history to be able to make substantial contributions to something as heterogeneous, complex and history-dependent

as a whole local society. Unlike the common business entrepreneur, community entrepreneurs must perhaps get used to the idea that work is done in an eternal process of constructing deviations and belongings, rather than expecting that their communities will, in a not-too-distant future, assume new values and practices and change the style by which they perceive people and things.

To conclude, entrepreneurship means doing boundary work in several ways, and boundary work means balancing sensibility and belonging for the sake of changed practices, rather than strangeness and deviation for the sake of re-defining how we see the world and handle it. This also means that entrepreneurial processes in communities may take much longer than processes of bringing new innovations to the market – if they finish at all. What keeps the community a community are the shared traditions and values with which its members identify, and the disharmonies that may appear are usually not more serious than ones that most people can live with throughout their lives. Community entrepreneurs must always assume the values and practices of their communities in order to belong, and they can never count on their fellow citizens to become part of deviating actions – other than during brief periods of crisis and confusion. Community entrepreneurship can, in the long run, be described as an eternal balancing act between deviation and belonging – constantly striving to make history without being able to leave anyone or anything behind.