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University of Turku

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SEMINAR & WORKSHOP

Dr Ulla Hytti



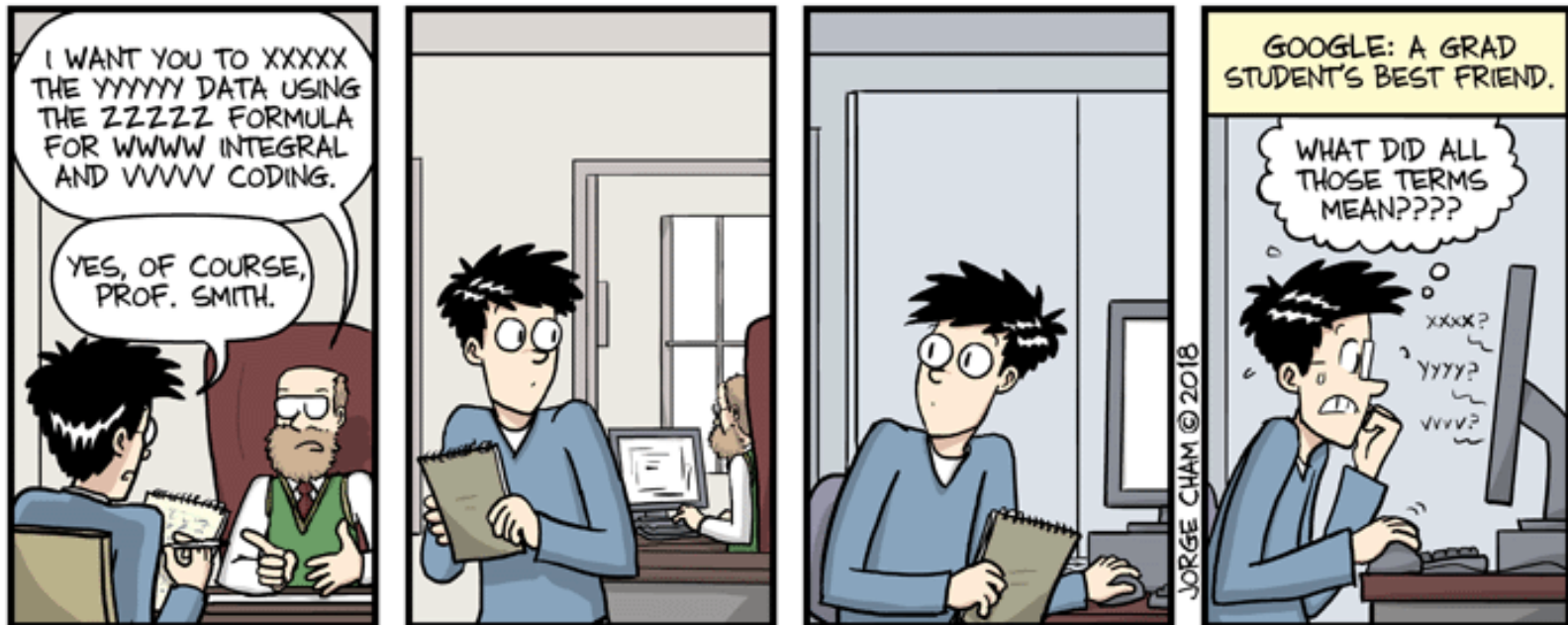


AGENDA FOR THE WORKSHOP

- **Introduction into Qualitative research & qualitative PhD example –seminar**
(Thursday evening)
- **Analysing qualitative research materials – workshop** (Friday evening)
- **Publishing qualitative research –workshop, Q&A, Post-course assignments** (Saturday)



INTERACT! ASK QUESTIONS!



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AGENDA

- LOGICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
- REALISTIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
- CONSTRUCTIVE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
- PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS
- QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IS NOT THAT EASY? 😊





WHY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

- **Studying complex business and entrepreneurship phenomena in their own contexts**
- **Understanding and interpretation, forming a holistic overview**
- **In qualitative research the interest can be focused on (Tesch, 1990)**
 - Language
 - Patterns
 - Meanings





WHEN TO DO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

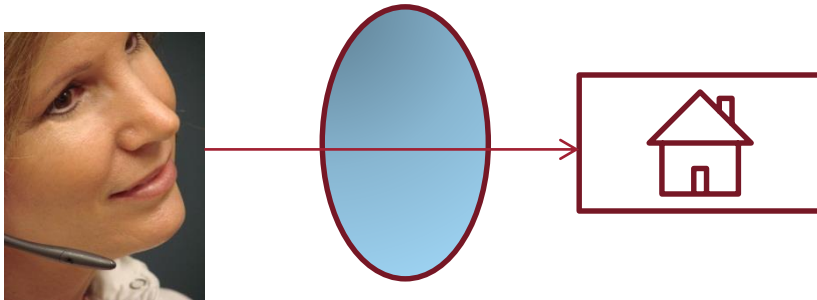
- **"Traditional answer":**
 - When no previous research or understanding of the phenomenon exists (ie. There is no theory to be tested)
 - Qualitative research is applied in theory-building (to be tested later)
- Currently also: **Qualitative research has its own place**
 - New research questions and designs that cannot be researched in other ways; or
 - Questions that qualitative research is best equipped to answer





PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Realism, objectivity
- Social reality exists independent of humans and their activities
- Social reality exists without the knower (a researcher)
- It is possible to get information of reality
- Relativism, subjectivity
- Social reality is constructed by humans
- Reality is constructed for the knower (researcher) as a result of social and cognitive processes
- It is possible to get information of reality through observations and interpretation





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REALISM

VS.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

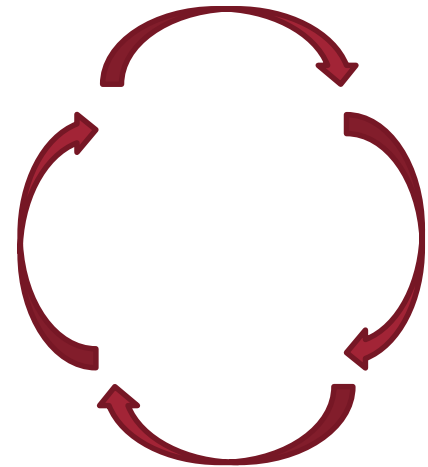
- Language channels information
 - Researcher aims for truth
 - Assess the ability and willingness to speak the truth
 - Data triangulation
 - Test questions
 - Text/talk is assessed only through the facts it mediates ("what information")
 - Informants talk about their thoughts and feelings (language is a lens to the inner world)
 - Building trust with the informants
 - Research material informs of the reality (separate)
- Text and talk is studied but it does not tell the reality
 - Observations are derived from research materials (what and how is spoken)
 - Researcher is not interested whether the informant speaks the truth but aims to find out why it is important for the informant to talk about the issue in that way (how)
 - Researcher is not able to access the inner world
 - Reality of the research material





QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND PLANNING

- Qualitative research does not necessitate a rigorous plan; process emerges throughout the project – surprises are included in the research design
- Yet, planning is important! (*do not run to make the interviews*)
 - 'Researchability' of the phenomenon/target
 - Research questions
 - Suitable methodologies
 - Suitable theories
 - Suitable methods to gather research materials
 - Qualitative research \neq doing interviews



TIME



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND METHODS

- **Research question as a starting point**
 - Link to theory and theory building
 - *"A workable research question must be answerable, interconnected and substantively relevant"* (Silverman, 2005)
 - What, how and why – questions are typical in qualitative research
 - 'Why' questions in a different sense and meaning than in quantitative research!
 - Focus on present situation (cross-sectional study) or process (retrospective or longitudinal study)?





QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND THEORY

- **Role of theory**
 1. "Grand theory": aim is to test and develop theory
 2. Theory guides research and offers conceptual tools
- **Empirical material guides the selection and development of the theoretical framework**
 - In practice: developing the theory framework simultaneously with collecting and analysing research materials



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND MATERIALS

- **Different ways to collect materials**
 1. **Primary materials** (collected by the researcher), e.x. by interviewing, observing, by asking the participants to write stories, diaries, to draw or present in some other way (e.g. drama, videodiaries)
 2. **Secondary materials** (exist irrespective of the researcher), different written materials, such as memos, documents, stories or visual materials, such as television programmes, films or e-materials, like company websites, social media
- **Selection of materials needs to be motivated**
 - Type of research materials but also within the type: (why these participants, why text from Financial Times, etc.)





INTERVIEWS AS MATERIALS

- **In our interview society (Silverman) interviews are taken for granted as a form of data collection**
 - They come with benefits but also restrictions
- **IMPORTANT!** Research questions \neq interview questions
- **Different interview types:**
 - Structured and standardised questions
 - Guided and semi-structured questions
 - Unstructured, informal, open and narrative interviews
- **Different types of interview questions**
 - Open/closed, simple/complex, neutral/targeted, direct/indirect, primary/secondary





YOUR OWN (OR NEIGHBOUR'S) THESIS PROJECT

- **What other materials than interviews would be interesting for your qualitative research project?**
- **What kind of research questions could be answered if your research materials consist of...**
 - Recorded tapes from board meetings of a Company Alfa
 - You work in a Company Beta as a Project Manager for a development project
 - Company trainees keep a diary for one week during their internship at the Company Delta



DIFFERENT QUALITATIVE METHODS

NOTICE!

**QUALITATIVE METHODS ARE 'UMBRELLAS'
THAT FIT UNDER THEM DIFFERENT CHOICES
AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESEARCH**



CASE RESEARCH

- **Case study research is popular in business studies**
- **The research question aims to understand and solve the case. Research analyses the case in its own context.**
- **Key question: What is the case in your study?**
 - What defines the case? One case/many cases?
 - Intensive case: in-depth analysis of one or few cases (research from inside; 'thick description')
 - Extensive case: identification of patterns and commonalities between cases
 - Different types of materials can be applied in case research (interviews, surveys, archival data...)





EXAMPLE

- Hytti, U., Stenholm, P. & Peura, K. (2011) Transfers of business planning and bounded emotionality: A follow-up case study, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 561-580.
- **RESEARCH QUESTION:** To investigate the transfer of business processes and the underlying reasons for delayed or unplanned transfers despite the feasible transfer plans?
- **METHOD:** Longitudinal, multiple case-study
- A-priori selection of six firms participating in a transfer of business programme
 - Homogenous and 'typical Finnish firms' (small manufacturing firms)
 - Both firms with 'natural successors' and without them but 'buyers'
 - The firms had completed the training programme and had a feasible transfer plan
- **MATERIALS**
 - Interviews with firm representatives in 2001, 2002, 2003 (for three firms) and in 2008
 - Background data
 - Participant observation of the firms during the programme in 2001-2002, and further informal discussions afterwards up until 2008





ETHNOGRAPHY

- **Ethnographies aim to study cultures or cultural meaning making processes**
 - Emic –perspective (vs. etic): understanding the culture from the inside, through the eyes of the "native"
 - Study of language and rhetorics typical
 - What people say and what they keep silent about produces meanings
 - Talk is socially constructed (affected by social and historical forces that lie beyond individual)
 - In business studies: organisational ethnographies e.x.
 - What it is like to be a CEO in a small firm?
 - What kind of new meanings brands are given by active consumers, for example, in social media?





ETHNOGRAPHY

- **Materials in ethnographies**

- Observation, interviews, documents...

- **Observation ('field visit')**

- Observation and level of participation (Outsider, working in the organisation)

- What to observe?

- Space
- Actors
- Activities
- Objects and artefacts
- Events
- Goals
- Feelings

How?

- Information from various sources (incl. interviews)
- Researcher's fieldwork diary
- Views and quotes from the informants
- Writing oneself into the study





EXAMPLE

- Eriksson, P., Henttonen, E. & Meriläinen, S. (2008) Managerial work and gender – Ethnography of cooperative relationships in small software companies, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 24, pp. 354–363.
- **AIM:** How women owner–managers of small software companies construct gender when working for the establishment and maintenance of various types of cooperative relationships?
- **METHOD:** The ethnographic research approach means that the issues under study and the meanings related to them are examined in their ‘natural’ contexts, i.e. in the course of the everyday life of the community being studied ... the researcher spends time in the community and with the people ... and documents her observations and experiences in her fieldnotes for research purposes.
- **MATERIALS** In each of the four companies of our study, we observed the woman owner–manager doing her daily work during week. The three of us ‘shadowed’ women owner–managers and wrote down what we heard and saw in our field notes. The fieldwork resulted in about 200 pages of field notes. In addition, we conducted interviews and collected documents and media texts ... to better understand the context of their work.





FOCUS GROUP

- **Researcher invites a group of people to discuss a theme**
 - In business life, for example, consumer studies
- **Focus group ≠ group interview**
 - Aim is to have the participants interact and ask each other questions
 - Focus is not on individual opinions
 - Interest lies in how it is spoken, not only on what is spoken
 - Discussion – feelings, tension, interruptions, body language, 'silence'
 - Focus groups as part of quantitative/qualitative researcher or as their own
- **Research questions in business studies**
 - What are the attitudes, needs, beliefs etc. of a group about a particular theme?
 - How the group constructs values, group norms and how they evolve during the discussion?





- **Support materials and techniques**
 - Different materials may be applied
 - Visual materials, e.g. ads, pictures
 - New products, prototypes, packaging, ..
 - Audio materials: radio programmes, music
 - Techniques
 - 'Brainstorming'
 - Ending sentences
 - Developing a campaign in a group based on the given theme
 - 'Remembering positive future'



ACTION RESEARCH

- **Starting points in action research**

- "Pragmatic problems have a priority in directing research"
- Empowering the actors
- "Inquiry with people rather than on people"
 - Emancipatory research

- **Stages in action research**

- Collecting materials
- Feedback from the materials "Analytic workshops")
- Analysing materials (jointly with participants?)
- Planning action (jointly with participants!!)
- Implementing action
- Evaluation

- **Action research ≠ consulting**





NARRATIVE RESEARCH

- **Different levels of narrative research**
 1. Method of collecting materials (e.g. life story interviews)
 2. Narrative analysis
 3. Narrative reporting of results
- **Starting point: "linguistic turn"**
- **Sosial constructivism**
- **Narrative knowing**
 - Through language we construct stories, narratives, out of the stream of thoughts and events
 - Meaning-making
 - Plotting, order of events, 'causality'
 - Stories are told in relation to something/somebody
- **Narratives: Metanarratives, personal narratives, group narratives**





- **Narrative research vs. other qualitative research**
 - Story of an event vs. event (ethnography)
 - Starting point: a story vs. text (discourse analysis)
 - Individuals' own interpretations of an event => the analysis aims at producing a researcher's interpretation of these interpretations
 - Interest focuses on
 - What and how is spoken
 - Participant researcher interaction in producing the materials (analysis) (reflexivity of the researcher)



EXAMPLE

- Hytti, Ulla (2010) Contextualizing entrepreneurship in the boundaryless career. *Gender in Management: An international journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 64-81.
- **RESEARCH QUESTION:** How the transition into entrepreneurship is constructed in the context of the boundaryless career? [Context: The paper focuses on a particular type of career transition driven by dismissal or unemployment.]
- **METHOD:** Narrative research has been suggested as a methodological tool for investigating both careers and entrepreneurship, at least partly in response to the call for methods “which take account of perspectivity, dynamic systems and emergent properties” (Collins, 1998, p. 420) and are capable of studying disjointed, discontinuous, non-linear and often unique events (Bygrave, 1989).
- **MATERIALS:** Research is based on unstructured life-story interviews with three Finnish female entrepreneurs. These three were selected from a larger study --- they had faced either dismissal or unemployment prior to their entrepreneurial career. Hence, all the stories that matched this criterion were inductively selected from the larger pool of stories. They were also selected for their capability of adding new insight into the process.





DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- **Discourse analysis (method & theory), here method**
- **Discourse analysis = analyses meanings that the text produces and mediates**
- **Two schools**
 1. There is no truth beyond the text
 2. There is another reality beyond the text but text and action are interrelated
- **Types in discourse analysis**
 - Foucauldian discourse analysis
 - Social-psychological discourse analysis
 - Critical discourse analysis





TYPES IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- **Foucauldian discourse analysis**

- Analysis of power-knowledge structures in organisations, control, historical specificities of management discourses
- Does not attach itself to the microanalysis of language; makes typically use of documents or historical materials

- **Social-psychological discourse analysis**

- For example, how identities are constructed, how individual position themselves towards others
- Often analysis of social, everyday situations
- Central concept: "Interpretative repertoire"

- **Critical discourse analysis**

- Social life is bounded by social structures and active processes that create change
- Critical approach: How social and political power are produced?
- For example, how power structures in an organisation marginalise certain occupational groups?





EXAMPLE

- Johansson, K., Lilja, M., Park, M. and Josephsson, S. (2010) Balancing the good? A critical discourse analysis of home modification services, *Sociology of Health & Illness*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 563-582.
- **RESEARCH QUESTION:** ... to explore the relationships between discourses and actual practices among street-level bureaucrats involved in home modification services...?
- **METHOD:** This study utilised a hermeneutic iterative process between data-near and iterative processes... we used two theoretical resources: critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis.
- **MATERIALS**
 - Documents (law texts and related guidelines, government programme, ethical codes)
 - Focus groups with 4 different groups





FEMINIST RESEARCH

- **Not a method but orientation that aims to question taken-for-granted assumptions of (wo)manhood in businesses**
- **Traditional assumption of gender-neutrality or sex is understood merely as a biological construct**
 - E.g. differences between men and women entrepreneurs are exaggerated in survey based studies (Ahl, 2002)
- **Research questions in business studies, e.g.**
 - What kind of gendered meanings are offered in advertisements of roles of women and men in families?
 - How media discusses the work-family life balance as a challenge to men and women?
- **NOTICE! Feminist research is not study of women by female researchers!**





CRITICAL RESEARCH

- **Not a method but orientation that aims to question taken-for-granted assumptions (of businesses)**
- **Emphases:**
 - Social constructivism
 - Power and ideology questions
 - Centrality of language
 - Central also: to whom the study is targeted? (political nature of critical theory)
- **Research questions in business studies, for example**
 - What kind of business ideology MBA-education produces and intensifies?
 - Is entrepreneurship always a positive phenomenon (to individual, firm and society?)





SUMMARY

- **The spread of qualitative research is enormous!**
 - This overview has not covered everything!
 - Philosophy of science (ontology, epistemology)
- **Methods in qualitative research are 'umbrellas', 'orientations'**
 - Researcher her/himself is a research instrument, no clear guidelines
 - the method is often a researcher's application of several methods
- **Choice of the method starts from the research question**
- **Good qualitative research provides arguments for choice of methods, makes explicit the type of materials that has been collected and why and how it has been analysed**
 - Researcher reflexivity is generally an advantage (the researcher is sensitive to her own place and position in the study)





BAD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

- **For example...**

- Researcher has a vague idea about the field of study but no idea of a research question when he/she hurries to make interviews by asking a bit of everything from anybody crossing their way...
- Researcher has no knowledge of previous research in the field due to not wanting to be influenced one's prior understanding
- Researcher has formulated a research question and in the interviews poses the question to the informants and reports the responses as results
- Researcher has a research material from where he/she counts frequencies of opinions and reports them as results; Or the case analysis is the informant's case description
- Researcher reports themes that 'arose' from the materials without being explicit how the researcher picked those themes up from the materials





FURTHER READING

- Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London, UK. (2nd Edition in 2016)

RECOMMENDED ALSO

- Read method books
- Read studies that have applied the method you have chosen or are thinking about to use in your study!
 - Dissertations
 - Research articles





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DOCTORAL RESEARCH.

**Kirsi Peura (2017) "Exploring agency
in entrepreneurship development
– A narrative approach"**

<http://www.utupub.fi/handle/10024/130921>



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AGENCY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

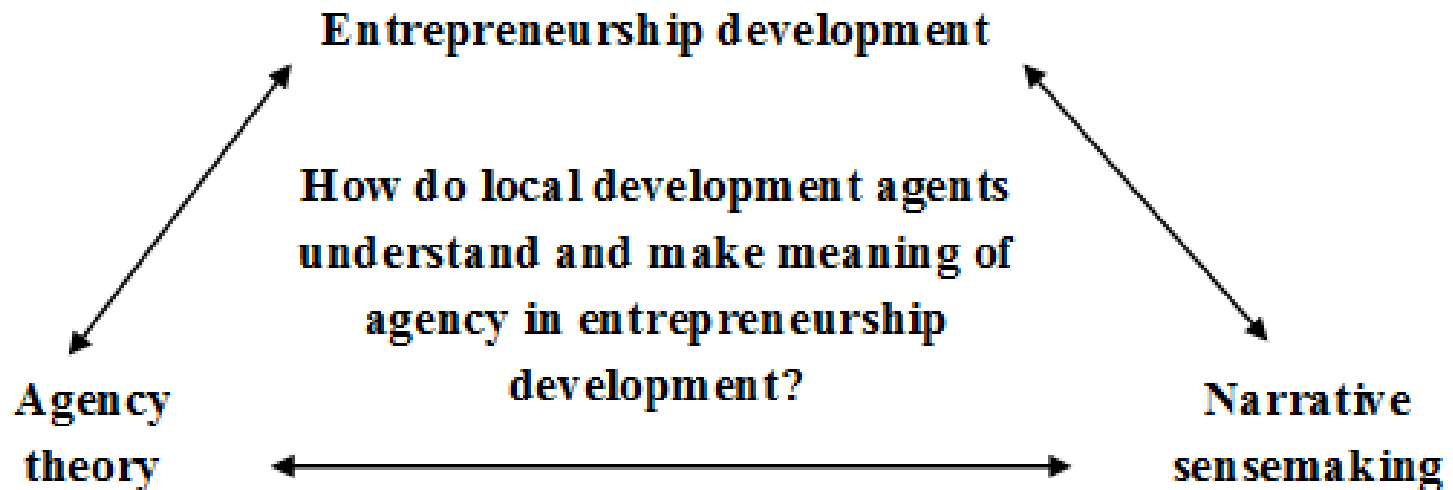
”Exploring agency in entrepreneurship development – A narrative approach”

- **Personal agency and subjectivity in entrepreneurship development work**
- **Individuals as unit of analysis**
- **Agency as individual’s capacity to act intentionally and planfully in order to produce effects**
- **Subjects (entrepreneurship developers) should be connected with action**





KIRSI'S RESEARCH APPROACH





USING NARRATIVE APPROACH

- **Different possibilities for researchers**
- **Here, narratives as one form of self-interpretation**
- **Interest in narrators' subjective configurations of concern in entrepreneurship development and how they are factored into sensemaking and assuming agentic positions in entrepreneurship development**
- **Kirsi's approach:**
 - (Open interviewing vs. narrative interviewing)
 - Narrative analysis of the research data
 - Narrative presentation of the data





KIRSI'S RESEARCH MATERIALS

**The research material
to be analysed is
the talk of the narrator.**



DATA COLLECTION

- **Criteria for selection of the study participants (*local development agents*) with "rich information"**
 - 10 years' working history
 - Intermediary or management position
 - In minimum, satisfactory skills in English (this varied among participants)
- **Two interview rounds:**
 - Exploratory phase – 1st interview round with 13 study participants in 2012
 - 2nd interview round with 4 study participants in 2014





REMARKS ON OPEN INTERVIEWING

- **Open interviewing method**
- **"Empowering" the study participants to tell freely about salient issues**
- **Open-ended questions**
 - "Tell me about your work" – vague (1st round)
 - "Tell me more particularly about x" – more specific (2nd round)
- **Withholding from defining the key concepts (entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship development) in order to allow study participants' constructions to emerge**





STUDY PARTICIPANTS

No.	Name and position	Organization type
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Education and research

1.	Nicholas, Professor	University
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Startup and growth financing

2.	Brett, Branch director	Commercial bank
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Regional business support and development services

3.	Darlene, Director	Center for entrepreneurship
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Academic entrepreneurship and technology transfer services

4.	Maurice, Director	Technology park
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DATA ANALYSIS

**Because we "see" and "hear"
differently, and thus produce
different versions of the reality,
we have to open the "black box"**





DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

- **Separation of**
 1. The "telling" (the process of the data production) – utilisation also of field work notes
 2. The "told" (the product of telling)
 3. The broader socio-cultural background (macro context and thematic grouping)
- **Why so many levels?**
 - Methodological literature recommends integration of different levels of analysis
 - Makes possible to address breadth and depth of the data



STARTING POINTS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

- **To look for elements that are factored into narrative sense-making of entrepreneurship development and have a structuring role in individual agency.**
 - **People usually narrate experiences,**
 - where there has been breaches between ideal and real, and the self and the society
 - that are emotion evoking or "remarkable"
- **Using tensions and breaches as analytical tool to reflect how agency is constructed**



SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED TO THE DATA.

- 1. How narrators assume power and control, how active the main character is and how active the subject is?**
- 2. What is the content of narratives and what kind of meanings are being connected with entrepreneurship development?**
- 3. How the narratives are told and what is their format (i.e. what is the point of the narration)?**
- 4. What kind of social positioning and interaction with other agents is being described?**

Analysing study participants telling 1) separately and 2) by comparing them to identify similarities and differences





DATA PRESENTATION

**Four reconstructed narratives
formed based on the interviews**





DATA PRESENTATION AS "FALSE DOCUMENT"

- **Reconstructions cannot reach "truth" or "reality out there"**
- **Reconstructed narratives are the researcher's interpretation: Writing is part of the analysis! Setting boundaries for the text**
- **Symmetrical stories to loosely follow Labov's model of narrative structure**
 - Introduction (not part of the main narrative)
 - *Start / an initiating event*
 - *Challenge / problem / complication*
 - *Resolution or evaluation*
 - Conclusion (not part of the main narrative)



EXAMPLE: MAURICE.

What is said about entrepreneurship development?

Focus is on supporting the “creation” of creative and innovative entrepreneurs (Schumpeter’s definition).

Means to do this is through entrepreneurship education and training.

Focus is on different educational levels (secondary and tertiary levels).



EXAMPLE: MAURICE.

What is the format? What is the point?

Narrative is told as a partially unfulfilled success story, where Maurice tries to introduce new courses on entrepreneurship.

Maurice repeats “the same story” as a narrative strategy to underline his point.

The learning from his telling is that the rigid independence and integrity of disciplinary borders are a threat to entrepreneurship development because they inhibit co-operation and introduction of new ideas.





EXAMPLE: MAURICE.

What kind of social positioning and interaction is described?

Narrative presents failed co-operation attempts with different external stakeholder groups.

Other actors mentioned in the narrations are educators, academics, and politicians, i.e., “bureaucrats” and “sheep”.

On the other hand, success, respect, and closeness are presented with entrepreneurs and the Park colleagues.

Juxtapositioning is used to polarize these different groups.





EXAMPLE: MAURICE.

What kind of agency is portrayed?

Maurice's narration is highly subjective.

His personal mission and expertise is brought forth strongly.

Maurice presents himself as a proactive agent, who tries to go against the grain.



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WHAT DID KIRSI GET FROM THIS

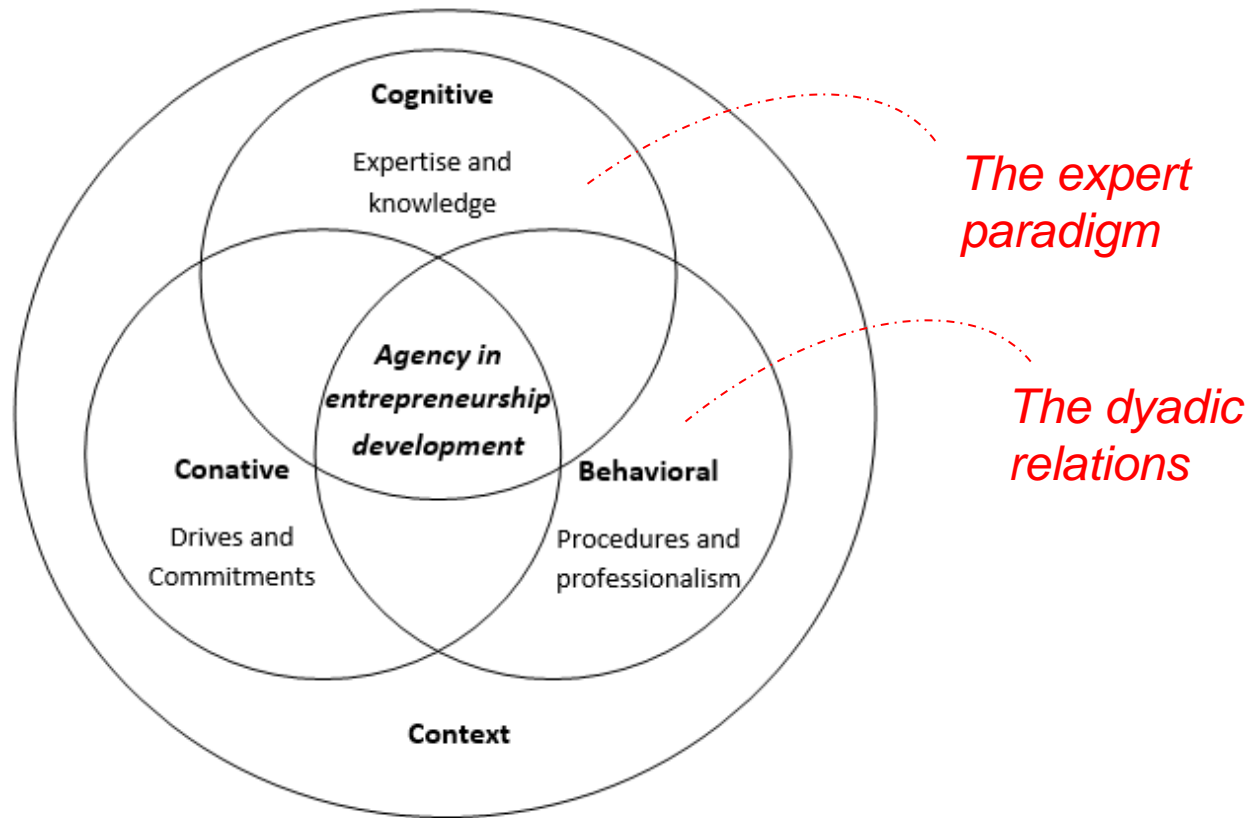
Why were the narratives told?



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BUILDING BLOCKS OF AGENCY





SOME CHALLENGES RELATED TO METHODS

- **Interaction with study participants**
 - Language
 - Appreciation of the selected approach
- **Interpretation, analysis and presentation is challenging**
 - Naturally unfolding narratives are messy and diffuse!
 - Requires skills in writing (the need to be entertaining? At least readable to bring the points across)

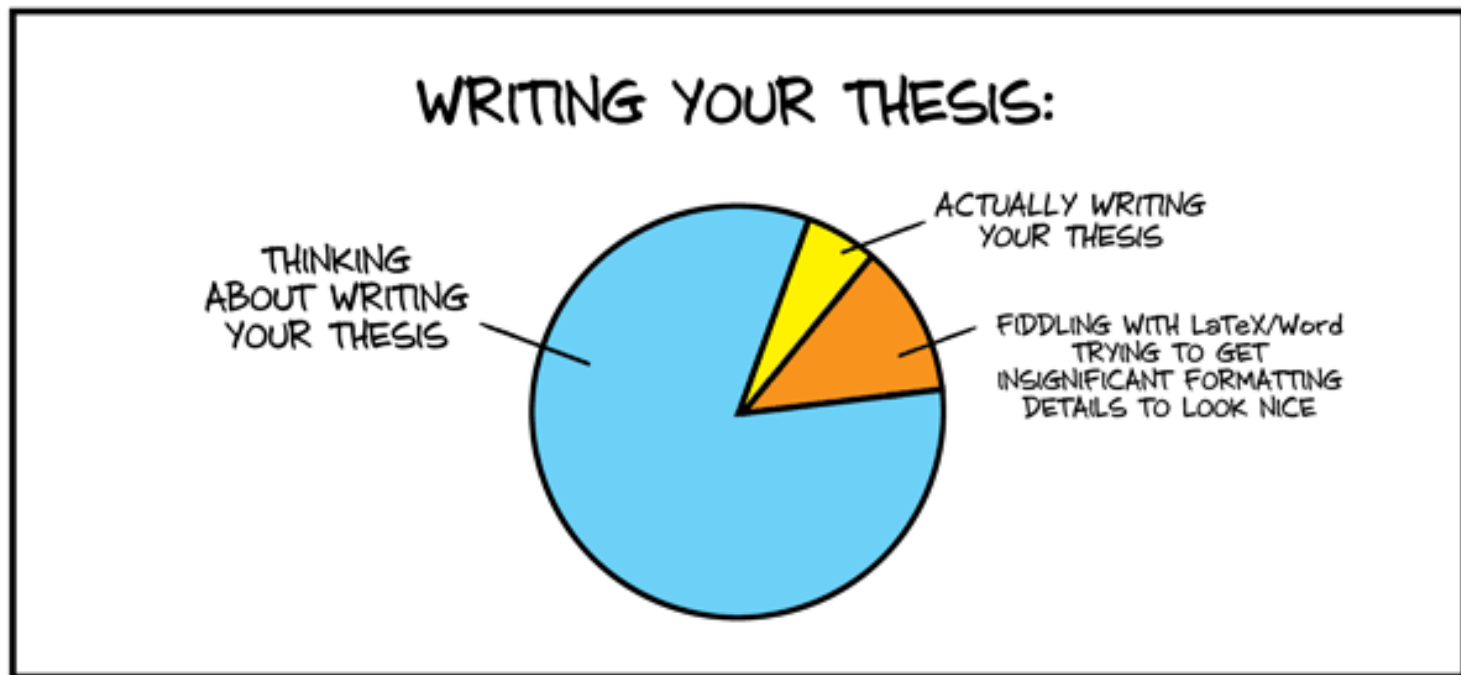


(POTENTIAL) ADDITIONAL WORK FOR FRIDAY EVENING

- **Did you read the Trivago CEO Rolf Schrömgens' interview?**
- **If you did NOT, make sure you'll read it during before the workshop!**
- **If you DID, good for you – you can have a nice rest and sleep and relaxing day!**



TIME AND PHD THESIS (OR RESEARCH)



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TIME IS A SCARCE RESOURCE

- **But PhD thesis (or research) is not completed without time**
- **Discussion: Working strategies for making up time?**
- **Resources**
 - Twitter: Hugh Kearns @IthinkwellHugh
 - #PhDchat @PhDForum @PhDComics
 - Guidebooks
 - Peer support
 - ...