International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship

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How women entrepreneurs build embeddedness: A case study approach

Introduction

Research fails to distinguish the socio-economic and institutional restrictions embedded within contextualised cultural norms, which consequently reduces the scope of those who can enter the field as a credible entrepreneurial actor (Marlow and Swail, 2014). Moreover, what appears is that the self-employed and women in 'high status' professional positions have been seriously 'neglected' by society, mass media and the academic community (Baker et al., 1997: 221).

Entrepreneurship inquiry emphasises the interpretations of contexts of human experience by using the term embeddedness. Entrepreneurship embeddedness in relation to women's practices is an under-investigated area in the field of entrepreneurship research. Prior research indicates that gender equality is negatively related to women's choice of self-employment in male-oriented industries (Klyver et al., 2013).

The purpose of this study is to examine how women entrepreneurs are building embeddedness in male-gendered fields[1] and how they create embedding in such fields in practice. We suggest that *embedding as a practice process* might be one way forward. We draw upon Lachmann's institutional approach and relate it to embeddedness creation and building as a way to challenge prevailing views about the ability of the women chefs to drive change in the institutional (Watson, 2013) and professional field. Lachmann's approach explicitly highlights how different institutional and structural characteristics are determining the prospects of creating

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[1] See: Fine (2010); Oakley (2015); Linstead and Pullen (2006) for discussion about biological foundation of sex and gender, and as socially constructed male and female.

a business by emphasising imagination rather than discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities. His assumption rests on cognitive psychology that privilege creation of novelty by *bisociation*, that is, the intermingling of unrelated ideas from various sources and knowledge domains (Garud et al., 2007:960). Lachmann's framework views entrepreneurship through subjective and individual lenses and provides a distinctive feature of the embedding mechanism that enables entrepreneurs to use specifics of the context to become a part of the institutional structure. Accordingly, his wide and generic view emphasises creation of novelties through '*expectations of an imagined future and exploit opportunities through continuous resource combination and recombination*' (Chiles et al., 2007:467). This, in turn, enables women entrepreneurs to use their own personal resources and challenge the accepted and institutionalised reality of their context.

An embeddedness view helps scholars to enter the worlds of women entrepreneurs, making sense of, and exploring the use of, for example, imagination (Lachmann 1977) and other skills and how those accounts influence the women entrepreneurs' interactions with their environment. This view goes beyond explaining the entrepreneurship process in solely rational and economic terms. We argue that the centrality of entrepreneurship is related to a reliance on contextual embeddedness, in particular, for women entrepreneurs, an approach that sets a premium on building embeddedness.

We contribute with illustrations of how women entrepreneurs create embedding in order to pursue and further exploit their opportunities. Importantly, we emphasise the women aspect in a male-gendered field *and* in the male world of entrepreneurship, and, we acknowledge the existence of socio-economic and institutional impediments for developing professional credibility. As such, we consider building embedding being conditioned by their imagination and

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creativity. By building embedding a women entrepreneur may access underlying resources and become apparent by indulging in imaginative entrepreneurial activity. The paper identifies gender and embeddedness as critical in entrepreneurship process and suggests the need for exposing the bias embedded within the current entrepreneurship framework.

The structure is: first, we consider the constituents of what is meant by embeddedness and dis-embeddedness related to entrepreneurship and gender. The methodology is then explained and case stories are provided, followed by findings and conclusions.

Entrepreneurship, gender and embeddedness

Entrepreneurship can be understood as a socialised process (Drakopuolou-Dodd and Anderson, 2007) or as a locality in which place gives meaning to actions taken and to identity creation (Anderson, 2000). More specifically, women entrepreneurs, embedded in masculinity and situated as outsiders, experience contextually related socio-economic barriers. Accordingly, analysis of traditional entrepreneurship research shows that the entrepreneur is linguistically described and predominantly associated with masculinity and not with femininity (Ahl, 2004). This has been amply documented (Marlow and McAdam, 2013), and criticisms have been directed against admired emancipatory images of entrepreneurs (Watson, 2013). When sharing these images, recognition of cultural and institutional constraints embedded within contextualised societal norms has been omitted. This gendered disparity can consequently determine and restrict the range of women agency and personal advancement as a reliable entrepreneur (Ahl, 2004). As such, an entrepreneur is predicated on contextual embeddedness and its institutionalised structures which bind gendered societal systems, thus preventing a

woman from realising new ideas and venture creations (Welter, 2011). However, the embeddedness perspective is not exclusively concerned with the study of context; rather, it is primarily concerned with the study of human practice viewed in relationships with others. This view rests on the belief that people, action and events have no intrinsic meaning that is separate from the meaning, for example, women entrepreneurs assign to them in the course of entrepreneurship. Indeed, this simultaneous emphasis on personhood (Martindale, 1981) and entrepreneurial practice is reflected in the term embedding. Therefore, embedding is dynamic and is constantly produced and reproduced through interactions.

Related to embeddedness in entrepreneurship research, there has been a strong focus on the importance of 'being in control of resources' (Baker and Nelson, 2005) and, as part of that focus, on being embedded, either in a local environment, in professional networks or industry. Specifically, embeddedness that limits or facilitates entrepreneurial activity may offer potential to progress by opening up for resource acquisition (McKeever et al., 2015). Embeddedness is related to the social capital of the entrepreneur and can be understood as 'socialized reservoirs' of professional knowledge, experiences and other occasionally restricted but beneficial resources (Jack et al., 2008) and can be associated with generating economic returns. It also plays a key role in imagining (Lachmann, 1977), creating and sustaining a business and uses the specifics of the context (Jack and Anderson, 2002:467). Accordingly, we define embeddedness as a comfort zone whereby an entrepreneur becomes a part of a local structure. In turn, to be dis-embedded means that an entrepreneur is out of her comfort zone, lacks context-dependent resources and is missing entrepreneurial opportunities. In the field of entrepreneurship, we know surprisingly little about the movement from being dis-embedded to

eventually become embedded, that is, if and how embedding conditions are fuelled by powerful institutional, cultural and traditional apparatuses.

In acknowledging constraints in the embeddedness process expressed by scholars with respect to women's entrepreneurship (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; Taylor and Marlow, 2009), theorising and practice, we propose an alternative approach to the role of embeddedness in entrepreneurship. We consider entrepreneurship as a contextualised activity and show women entrepreneurs' movement from being dis-embedded to building embeddedness. Embeddedness and dis-embeddedness are two separate but related concepts, acting in a mutually reinforcing manner and indicating two opposite ends on a scale. Translating the term of embeddedness into verb constitutes the concept of 'becoming embedded' (Vestrum, 2014) or to embed. We understand embeddedness as a process, in line with Korsgaard et al., (2015), which enables or constrains women's entrepreneurship. Indeed, as McKeever et al., (2015: 52) state, '*Embeddedness represents the nature, depth and extent of an individual's ties into environment and is typically perceived as a configuring element of business process,*' while others define embeddedness as a part of social and cultural structures (e.g. Vestrum, 2014). This opposite notion, dis-embeddedness, grounded on Polanyi's thoughts, is built on the ideas that there is a socially dis-embedded sphere of economic relations that have to be built to become embedded. It is an elevated process whereby an entrepreneur becomes a part of the socioeconomic context through systems of social relations, local networks and other useful resources (Jack et al., 2008) for venture creation.

Regarding the manner in which national and social embeddedness of a women's life course accumulates credibility for entrepreneurship, research has found that the number of ties affects available resources, and rises essentially from their capacity to apply the resources in a start-up process. That is to say, socio-economic and

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institutional barriers and impediments diminish women's strengths for beginning and developing their ventures (Jayawarna et al., 2014). To illustrate the working context of women chefs, we recognise them in a hierarchical ordering that is normatively masculine, which preserves the subordination status quo and puts women in dis-embedded positions. This signals an opportunity to explore re-entangle (Anderson et al., 2012) socio-economic relations with local institutional structures for entrepreneurship.

The context

This study is located in the southern part of Sweden, with a long gastronomic history in which culinary images often fail to recognise the women chefs. The New Nordic gastronomic movement began in 2004, when Danish chefs Claus Meyer and Rene Radzepi, the founders of the Noma restaurant in Copenhagen, organised a conference among the 12 leading Scandinavian chefs. Adopted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2005, the outcome of this conference became known as 'A New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto', which defined the movement's 10 key objectives (www.clausemeyer.dk). Radzepi and Meyer's vision has been incorporated across Scandinavian countries by chefs eager to return to the flavours, traditions and standards of their grandparents' generation. The movement put Scandinavian cuisine on the map, with Noma garnering the title of 'Best Restaurant in the World' and Scandinavian chefs sweeping the 2011 Bocuse d'Or competition.

This shift has lifted the culinary skills of Swedish chefs to an international position, leaving women out. Women displaying feminine attributes at higher levels of gastronomy remained omitted in a context that was bound to strong patriarchal cultural norms. The situation has been critical for many years despite a few talented chefs who are women at the top level. In 2016, the association called

'Take Over' was created (Buffe, June, 2016). This association consisted of 50 gastronomic highly skilled women chefs who joined to create visibility and to counter marginalisation in the industry.

Methodology

Our purpose is to examine how women entrepreneurs are building embeddedness into male-gendered fields and how they create embedding in such fields in practice. We are not aiming to test theory; rather we acknowledge the call from Henry et al., (2016) stressing the need for contextualised, qualitative studies on women endeavours. Any male-gendered field could have been considered, but we choose the gastronomic industry because of its averseness to top women chefs. This is, for example, confirmed by the lack of women chefs who have received a Guide Michelin star; further, in the gastronomic industry in Sweden, men hold the lion's share of powerful positions.[2] We focus on the feminine representation because it has been 'rendered invisible' in entrepreneurship studies (Hamilton 2013:90).

Following Stake's (1994) intrinsic[3] case study method approach, we evidenced many soft issues that impinge upon the complex nature of studied actors who could generate an empirically informed framework. For Stake (1994) the case is not a method but an object to be studied. Methodologically, the case-study approach has proved useful in examining an intrinsic part of how embeddedness worked for women entrepreneurs in practice and how they created fertile conditions for their

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[2] Thirty-five Swedish chefs are women, which is less than 10 % of the total (2011). Only one woman has ever won the Årets kock ('Chef of the Year') competition since it started in 1983: Kristina Pettersson, who won it 1988. Previously, there was a special competition for women (Wilhelmina), but that very quickly disappeared due to a lack of candidates.

[3]Intrinsic cases are exemplified by *Akenfield* (Blythe 1955/1969), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922/1984), and *God's Choice* (Peshkin 1986).

ventures. We have purposefully chosen three well-known women in the gastronomic field, which implies that they are well represented in the media. Because of the rich medial material we could learn in depth about the phenomenon under study (Patton, 1990). The life accounts of the women chefs and entrepreneurs open for a broad range of insights.

Our entrepreneurs are Tina Nordström, chef and media profile; Titti Qvarnström, the first Swedish female chef to receive a Guide Michelin star; and Nina Christenson, owner of several well-known and established restaurants in the south-western city of Malmö. From rich empirical data, life accounts have been constructed, allowing for an initial understanding of each individual. From the life accounts relevant issues could be identified (cf. Lawrence and Dover, 2015).

When reading and making sense of media material, we were guided by the meaning-centred perspective (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) rather than by focussing entirely on reporting facts and statistics. Utilising the interpretative approach, data was analysed manually. Drawing upon thematically analysed media material and interview data, key features were identified. Insights were confirmed not only within each case but also between the cases. We focussed on identifying first- and second-order concepts; the first-order concepts (Van Maanen, 1979) are presentational data or stories espoused by the women entrepreneurs either personally or in the media.

Second-order concepts explain the patterning of the first-order concepts. We used theories to organise, explain and forward insights from cases. Theoretically, we turned to Kvande's work (1999) for analytical tools to recognise the multifaceted dimensions of entrepreneurial activities of the women. For example, we identified how their individual imagination and exclusive personal assets such as analytical,

creative and practical abilities facilitated how they handled situations. From these analyses, a fuller recognition of the *embedding as a practice process* was aroused.

Even if the cases are contextually bounded it is possible to learn from them on a general level. Reliability is ensured in the following ways: the cases are well known, and there are an extensive number of published materials in media to rely on, which makes it possible to follow their stories both retrospectively and in real time. Personal interviews have been conducted with two of the chefs. The different data sources were triangulated to confirm experiences and interpretations.

The life account of Tina is based on media articles; Tina has been open about her professional and private life in the media and, some of the stories have become institutionalised (they are repeated several times). Stories about her childhood, why she entered this industry and how she handles her fame are themes elaborated in many articles.

The life accounts of Titti and Nina are based on personal semi-structured interviews and media articles. The lengths of the interviews were between 1.5–2 hours. The articles are from the database Retriever; we searched their full names in the Daily Press, and we included a few weekly magazines but not evening magazines. We analysed 150 articles concerning Tina, dated from 2000 to 2016, 68 articles about Titti, dated from 2009 to 2016 and 47 articles about Nina in media, dated from 2006 to 2016.

Titti and Nina have been interviewed in the weekly magazine *Galore Weekend*, a local magazine customised for different geographical areas of Sweden. The interview is written colloquially, and the journalist retains the voice of the interviewee.

The interview with Titti was conducted by one of the authors; Titti was uncomfortable taping the full interview and so the interviewer took extensive notes. The interviews were transcribed. Both authors interviewed Nina. Before the interviews, they read available articles; thus, questions were prepared to fill gaps, clarify information and to ask specific questions related to their life accounts.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Case: Titti

In 2015 at the age of 35 and as the first woman in Swedish history, Titti become awarded a Michelin star. She was both happy and sad – happy because it is one of the most glamorous awards a chef can receive and sad because the year is 2015, and she is the first woman awarded in Sweden.

Titti was interested in mathematics, physics and biology in her early school years. After one-and-a-half years in high school, she became tired of school and started abandoning her ambition to be a civil engineer. In her engineering class, she was one of two girls. She graduated and took short-term jobs in which she discovered the pleasure of working with her hands, seeing results and getting direct feedback – she appreciated finalizing tasks before leaving work. Titti went for a culinary education in Copenhagen Denmark, as their programmes include apprenticeship. She wanted not only to study but also to work in the kitchen. Applying for an apprentice is the same as applying for a real job. She got a good position and learnt a great deal. After graduation, she worked in another restaurant in Copenhagen for some years and then moved to Berlin. Her plan was to continue to one of the gastronomic countries, Spain or France. She met her husband, André, at the restaurant Weinbar Rutz in Berlin, a restaurant that worked with molecular

gastronomy, at that time a new trend. The restaurant received a star in Guide Michelin. She stayed for 3 years; thereafter she moved to Sweden.

In 2010, she was named 'Rising Star' at the White Guide annual celebration. Convinced of her vocation, she decided to work at the Bloom in the Park restaurant in Malmö, as a partner initially with a 30 % stake and then progressing to a 70 % stake (since 2012). The restaurant has an annual turnover of approximately SEK 5 million and employs 4 full-time and 4 part-time staff.

Case: Tina

In several interviews, Tina tells how her mother was responsible for the dining room in the family business and how she was always well dressed in high heels and with a smile on her face. As a child, Tina learnt to behave in this context, and still today she shows a façade to the public – things that are bothersome and hard become buried and forgotten. Metaphorically, she places such things into different chests, closes the lids and forgets them. She never digs into things that have been placed into the chests. She stresses the popularity of therapy when you look back, but she is certain that it does not work for her. When she speaks of things, they become real; if she does not talk about them, they do not exist, she explains – she casts cement over her chests. Things that are placed into chests include her parents' divorce; she does not talk about that with anyone. This approach is something she also trains her children in – to move on and focus on the positive things. Injustice and disappointments are hindrances if you want to move forward effectively, she explains. She invests in those things that give her something back, simply speaking. Things we cannot affect we should try to leave; those thoughts are focussed in several texts about Tina – most likely because she is known for her big smile and positive attitude.

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Tina studied in a restaurant school and she did not enjoy school at all; when she finished Primary school, she was tired of school. She has worked in Denmark for some years and in two well-known Swedish restaurants. Tina, known as 'Food Tina,' started her career on Swedish Television (SVT) in 2001 and her programme gained a large and loyal following of 1.2 million viewers.

In the United States, Tina is known for her PBS-produced show New Scandinavian Cooking and the follow-up show, Perfect Day. Tina always relishes a challenge; thus, Perfect Day features adventure and exploration, for example, playing beach volleyball for the first time or cycling. Perfect Day broadens the appeal of Scandinavian cuisine, including delicatessens at destinations across the entire Nordic region. The programmes travel across Scandinavia, introducing the audience to not only the food Tina is preparing but also the region's landscapes, culture and her own special rapport with the TV audience. The shows end with a party in which Tina invites either her own friends or local people to eat with her, making the places and her food even more attractive through her spoken interaction (talking).

Case: Nina

Nina grew up with her mother; her parents were divorced. Her mother has two more children and so has her father. She spent most of her time with the family of her mother, and her genuine interest in food started to bloom when she assisted her grandmother when she prepared for her cocktail parties. At the university, she studied marketing and project management, but she never graduated. Parallel to her studies, she worked in restaurants, which she really enjoyed. She says that she also started to study in the psychology programme and information technology, but she did not enjoy sitting still. Working was so much more fun.

To compensate for her lack of academic education, she has worked hard and established herself as a well-known entrepreneur in the restaurant industry. She wants to work with food in more-general terms and not only with restaurants. Most of her good friends are medical doctors, and her Achilles heel is that she does not have a university degree. As a child, she spent a great deal of time in art galleries with her mother, who is an artist. They also took long walks along the shore picking beautiful stones. Her upbringing was in a middle-class family, with a grandfather who was a professor in pathology. Her family did not really have any expectations of her. They said that she was a humanist – and that she could not count.

She sees the restaurant as a scene for social interaction – as a life in itself. Her life as an entrepreneur started when she took over the contract to run the restaurant located in the art gallery of Malmö. She leases the physical space from the municipality of Malmö.

To deliver excellent food, she employs good chefs. Today she is a brand, having started several restaurants during the last decade. She says that she enjoyed starting the first, a fine-dining restaurant located in a new urban area in Malmö. However, she never felt at home there, so she left. She remains part owner of the second restaurant she started, but she is not in charge of it. She indicated that she and her co-owner are not very much interested in money; they both want to deliver excellent quality. She started a third restaurant as part owner, but when realising that she and the co-owner had different ideas and values concerning the business, she left. She does not have to compromise and so she does not, she says.

Findings and interpretation

Having set out to explore our data, we first analysed how women entrepreneurs managed to overcome the 'door-stops' (Calas, 2008)[4] and hierarchical gendered ordering in the context of masculinised normality in the gastronomic industry by imposing some order and creating meaningful patterns and linkages. Second, by analysing their creative, practical and analytical skills, we explore how women entrepreneurs mobilised and imaginatively combine their available resources and cooperate with others *in practice* to build embeddedness for their life and business ideas. Finally, we analyse how they successfully created *female norms* in their businesses.

Overcoming the 'door-stops' in a masculine context

The women entrepreneurs are building embeddedness in the male-gendered field of gastronomy. They did it by overcoming the 'door-stops,' that is, they accepted the fact that the gastronomic field was male gendered and adapted to norm and values. That is to say, they were acting like one of the boys by emulating masculinity to fit in (Powell et al., 2009) and thereby they became one of the boys (Kvande, 1999). They all express how they were building embeddedness.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Tina enjoys competing, which is considered a male trait. When competing in the Nordic championship she cut herself; she had to take a break to be stitched in the hospital. She was stitched without anaesthesia to be able to continue the competition. She says in the article (Bodin, 2015, pp. 8-13) that it '*was painful but awesome to tell'*; she felt like a hockey player. Those types of stories are of course of great value, as they represent the male norm, that is, how tough and dangerous it

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[4] Martha Calas (2008:299) defines a door-stop as a wedge. The door-stop, like the 'glass ceiling', lets one see through but not necessarily go through. The door-stop is meant to keep the door from slamming shut but not necessarily to promote an 'open door' policy.

can be to act as a chef. During the periods of internship in school, she realised that there was a clear gender power order – the warm kitchen was for the men. As a woman, she was expected to be in cold buffet. She had to break into the warm kitchen. One day when she was in the warm kitchen preparing the herring, she was so provoked by one of the male chefs that she prepared a bowl with the disgusting left over water and she emptied the bowl inside the pants of the male chef. She won this fight and several more, she says, and she finally had a place in the warm kitchen.

Titti indicates in our interview that being a woman at the top of the gastronomic industry is not easy. She has been trying to do excellent work on her own, aware of sarcastic comments along the lines of '*let her do it and let's see how long she can keep it up*'. As stressed above, she is sad that she is the first woman in Sweden to be awarded a Guide Michelin star. She emphasises that to learn to know a restaurant well and to shoulder responsibility, you must work longer hours as it takes time for chefs to become involved in the creative work.

This practical marginalisation of the female-chef-in-charge is occurring in a traditional feminised craft-creative restaurant environment. Again, this practice reflects a discriminatory confirmation of professional excellence in terms of the status of a female chef (Bradley, 2007) based upon historical and contemporary socio-economic context and cultural constraints that still inform and sustain normative, hierarchical lessening, which impedes female life achievements.

Titti's experiences clearly illustrate occupational segregation, demonstrate customer penalising and sarcasm and show her being professionally dis-embedded in her great achievements. Patriarchal and culturally sustained masculine norms guiding the industry create a weak tie with the context of a restaurant and therefore

garner weak support from some customers, for example. Evaluated in those terms, the creative attributes and high professionalism of female chefs unravel the complex web of socio-economic realities when challenging excellent results and entrepreneurial success.

Each of the women chefs has a different background. We learn that Titti studied engineering in high school, and she was one of the two girls who served as an advantage, allowing culinary experimentation. It has also been also helpful in the development of her creative conceptions and in fulfilling her entrepreneurial and artistic potential, which also funnel her into such a competitive sector.

For Titti and Tina, it was important to be accepted as chefs and act as chefs, because among the gastronomic industry elite, the work of chefs involves managing the twin demands of tradition and context. It was when they had managed to create embedding in the gastronomic context that they first had a platform from which to develop. Moreover, to manage to embed, they had to overcome the 'door-stops' – in context, the warm kitchen that was and is a masculine norm today.

Nina did not enter the field as a chef; she started working in restaurants and enjoyed the industry and the atmosphere. She does everything except cooking. In the media she is attributed as the tavern queen; she tells us that the statement upset her so much so, that she phoned up the journalist to express her displeasure. For her, being a tavern queen implies that you are a criminal acting in the underworld, something she does not want to be associated with. It degrades what she has achieved. Nina indicates that there is a hierarchical order in the restaurant kitchen, being a chef is tough and hard. In the warm kitchen, there is a hard jargon; the language is hard and includes profanity, something she believes women do not

appreciate. It is also physically hard, and you should fend for yourself, not ask for help. After a shift, it is common to party together, a lifestyle incompatible with family life. According to Nina, there are changes, but it takes time to change a well-established culture. Part of this culture is expectations from outsiders, who see a low-class profession involving dirty money; even when that is not the case, such ideas exist. The lack of woman chefs is a part of industry culture that is hard to change.

Developing creative, practical and analytical skills in the context of masculinised normality

From analysing the life accounts of the entrepreneurs, the second-order concepts of creative, practical and analytical skills are identified; and they appear to be critical to and create embedding, which holds connections to Sternberg's (2004) successful intelligence. We refer to examples of their use of creative, practical and analytical skills. The extent evidence also indicates also that their professional qualification and creative potential (Henry, et al., 2016) reveal the imaginative and original way in which they act. However, we assert that Sternberg's (2004) intelligence can be learnt and developed *in practice* in order to build embeddedness and create embedding for their business ideas.

Initially we elaborate on the entrepreneurs' *creative skills*. For Sternberg (2004), creative intelligence is about originating new ideas. In addition to being inspired by Sternberg, we are also inspired by Lachmann, who emphasises imagination, and 'bisociation', the intermingling of unrelated ideas from various sources and knowledge domains (Garud et al., 2007: 960). *Practical skill* is about learning how to sell and to convince others to support an idea; we also see it as representing those skills that are inherited through apprentice in the gastronomic industry – by

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working for others and learning. This skill can be trained; it is about trial and error. Finally, *analytical skill* is to be able to evaluate whether an idea is good.

Below we show how the three entrepreneurs use the three different types of skills to build embeddedness and create embedding.

Creative skills – originating new ideas

Concerning creative skills, Titti's restaurant Bloom in the Park is a 'no-menu restaurant' allowing the chef to be creative and use available raw materials. She says: '*What is unusual and for me crystal clear is that I am following the seasons. I would never serve asparagus or strawberries in the winter. They do not have their appeal value then. It would be like trying to copy summertime. I have been educated basically in the French cooking tradition and I am not preparing ethnic, sushi and other trend-related dishes from other national contexts.*'

Being a 'no-menu restaurant' implies that it is possible to consider her customers' dietary and allergy restrictions. But also to act outside the box: '*I like surprises, and often invite our guests on a trip back to their past in terms of food elements. That means I use unusual ingredients.*'

Further, she uses the whole animal, from nose to tail, which includes innovative and eccentric uses such as bull and lamb testicles, goat meat, frogs and snails. Bloom provides a unique gastrosophic dining experience, including the total friendliness of the place, aesthetic fulfilment with not only an attractive ambiance and décor but also positive attitudes from serving staff, high standards of hygiene and an enjoyable atmosphere to go with creative food. Her goal is to develop new techniques and concepts, and she constantly improves her ideas.

For Tina it is important to create space. She says: '*I think we face opportunities all the time, in everyday life, without seeing them. I might sound like an over positive person, but I believe that it is in everyday life it happens. It is all about learning to see those doors that are open and enter new, unknown paths sometimes*' (Tina in Newnhamn, 2012, pp. 28-29).

But, it is when she leaves jobs, projects and so on that she is open for new opportunities (Newnhamn, 2012). When she accepts uncertainty, she starts to 'see' opportunities around her, things she would have missed if she were occupied with other things. She trusts her intuition and knows what is right and wrong for her and what she wants to spend time doing. '*It is only me who knows what I want to do. I know immediately what is right and wrong. I am not faithful [to] anything, except my husband*' (Tina in André, 2013, pp. 38-39), she expresses.

'*To be a TV-person is only a fraction of my work – it is the thinking, the creation and the compliance that is the huge part of the work*' (Tina in Eijde, 2013, p. 17). The preparation demands creativity.

Nina follows her intuition and develops business and artistic concepts; she says: '*If you have a physical room you have to build from below; what type of room is it, whom should I work with.*' She sees a challenge in developing restaurant concept, from the physical space to the food. To convince the civil servants of the municipality, when she applied for taking over the restaurant in the art gallery, she created a scrapbook in which she communicates the feeling and atmosphere she wanted to create. The people representing the art gallery loved the unique and creative approach.

Nina focusses on unique concepts and small scale. She says: '*I don't want to have ten restaurants with the same name. I don't want to create a business group.*' In an

article she says: '*Yuk, trend sounds like fashion. I have never been or tried to be trendy*' (Nina in Gustavsson and Nord, 2012, p. 8).

They are all aiming at surprising their audiences but avoiding trends; Tina, however, creates trends. When starting her TV programme, the channel had to contact the major grocery chains and inform them about the ingredients she would use as a large number of Swedes followed the programme and bought the ingredients after watching it.

Practical skills – convincing and learning from others

Concerning practical skills, they all challenge themselves and seek new accomplishments; at the same time they learn from others to overcome door-stops.

Titti and Tina have learnt through internships and jobs in very good restaurants. Titti's role models have been Paul Baucus, Marco Müller (Berlin) and René Redzepi (Noma, Copenhagen). Nina has learnt from working, for example, at the Grand Hotel in Lund, a well-known hotel with a good restaurant.

In an interview, Tina admits that working for the public television channel in Sweden was very safe; it was like a rock. They took very good care of her, and she had the opportunity to learn a great deal during this period.

The life accounts show that they are developing practical skills in different ways; Titti does it by being stubborn. Titti says: '*I am very fond of innovating and I am looking for enhancements all the time. That is good for me personally as I feel that there is nothing I cannot do better. The company brand and the name of restaurant arose out of my personal character and have been improved only by my being stubborn and a perfectionist. (…) I just want to be good or the best at what I do.*' Titti finds it difficult to admit that she is good, if she must explain why she is good.

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She says that it is because she enjoys doing what she is doing and that she has been practising a great deal. When she does something, she aims for the stars.[5]

Tina is doing several different things, and is not dependent on one specific business, and it seems like she is developing her practical skills by creating distance, as expressed above.

Nina is brave and relies on people: '*I am not saying that I don't know anything, but my strength is probably people. And, I am creative and brave. It is brave to open up a restaurant. It is brave to sign a contract without knowing what to do with it. To employ people is also brave. Brave for me. I am actually not that brave, but I have challenged myself*' (Nina in Ericsson, 2016). She also stresses credibility: '*I believe that a restaurant that meets the competition is a credible restaurant. Have an idea and stand up for it. Work with good ingredients and do what you are best at*' (Nina in Widehed, 2015).

Practical skills also relate to creativity and innovation. Titti stresses: '*I needed to go away to find out what I truly loved and understand and I really did so. I did understand that the world of cooking is a world of culinary creation.*'

Keeping up with their innovative professional creation has also been instrumental in strengthening their own positions and helping established each as a powerful actor in the field. This process ultimately strengthened their personal credibility, which is of utmost importance to manage to convince others.

Analytical skills – good or not

Regarding analytical skills, Tina and Nina have husbands who are trained in economics, and they take care of financial issues. Both have indicated that their

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[5] This was expressed in an interview in Galore Weekend.

husbands are in charge of the financial side of their businesses. Tina says: '*Sure I do good business, but it is not my driving force. My husband who is an economist is taking care about it, but of course I read balance results. Thankfully, it spins so I do not have to think too much about it*' (Tina in Bodin 2015, pp. 8-13). Nina says: '*He [her husband] takes care about the financial issues (...) it is he who has made sure that the salaries are paid in time, and the taxes; extremely important things in this industry too.*' In a media article, she says: '*He is an economist and that is the base for us to do it. If employees don't get their salaries on the payday there is soon a rumour – are they close to bankruptcy? It goes really fast. So, it is quite nice to have somebody – well he is doing things wrong too as he is human – but there is a structure. He keeps the control*' (Nina in Ericsson, 2016).

Building embeddedness has to be contextually and situationally understood; and those processes relate to development of skills and can thereby be understood from the emphasised skills presented above. The entrepreneurs were engaged in assessing current 'realties', in other words, they first built embeddedness and then created embedding and they did it through different skills. They were involved in imagining and then creating their own field of practice to develop their own ideas. Accordingly, their definition of the situation derived from being 'dis-embedded' occurred first as a serious impediment at the start of their professional livelihood. They were stepping out of their comfort zones, which at first appeared to be troublesome. They were missing from the dominant public image and started to work within its constraints towards the best means of improving professionally and personally.

Creating embedding by combining the above skills, the entrepreneurs manage to build what we call *embedding as a practice process*. More specifically, they were engaged in assessing meaningful realities while creating a new one.

Accepting a masculine context and building on women norms in new spheres of the industry

We understand the processes described above as *embedding as a practice process*. Further, we show the way how they overcame door-stops, how they have developed different skills, and now how to handle male-gendered fields and challenge those.

Titti missed having a network of colleges in Malmö and so she invited Malmö chefs to come to her restaurant to cook and socialise; this was the starting point of a network among chefs in Malmö. Previous research has shown that women tend to think about the industry context rather than focussing only on their own venture.

Tina's culinary TV endeavours entered a feminised niche and created a separate sphere of her own. Unfortunately, it was never followed up by other women chefs. Tina developed her business into new directions and has continued doing different TV programmes. She is working today to create time and space for herself in the future. As a celebrity she indicates that she can leave the scene for some time and still come back. She seems to find it difficult to rest; at the same time, she seems to balance the different parts of her life, that is, business, family and spare time. She has created a lifestyle characterised by combining extremes. This lifestyle is mentioned in several interviews – that she enjoys the idea of having her own aeroplane and being able to travel anywhere. At the same time, she enjoys simplicities. That is, she is inspired by travelling to develop her own brand further and find everyday family life stimulating. She has created a business group with diverse businesses, from writing books and selling her own wine to owning real estates. Her success is well 'hidden'; instead, the espoused image of Tina is her popularity among ordinary people. This popularity is her hallmark and most likely

her key to success. If she had been a man, focus would probably have been on the businesses and less on everyday life. Is this hallmark reserved for a successful women entrepreneur? Alternatively, she is strategic and knows that too much focus on businesses might decrease her popularity and make her appear less 'women'.

Nina has started several restaurants, but she also decided to leave some of them when she was not fully satisfied with either the new concept or the collaboration with the co-founder. She left the fine-dining restaurant because she did not feel at home there; she also left the last restaurant she was part of starting. She has received several suggestions about different types of collaborations, and she often says no. She thinks she has good intuition. When discussing what success is, she tells that it is to have a job she loves; a house, a family and financial resources so that she can travel with her family whenever she wants. It is enough.

She tells that if she had been a man, she would most likely have been acting as a consultant; implicitly implying that she would have earned much more money. Men, according to her, are much better with respect to turning what they know into a concept to sell. However, selling does not attract her; neither does money. Her restaurants are doing well; if they spend money on excellent ingredients, they earn less, but it does not matter.

Nina's husband has been an entrepreneur and when Nina started her career, he was a wage earner and so she could 'play' with her ideas. One story to tell about Nina is the story of a successful entrepreneur who is satisfied with what she is achieving, who does not compromise. Perhaps this approach is possible for her because she and her businesses are one part of something much larger. Maybe that belongingness creates space for interplay, for failure, for joy and happiness, essential driving forces for successful entrepreneurship and examples of a female

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norm. Perhaps female norms are possible only if a security net exists in Nina's case in terms of her family. With her achievements behind her and the support from her family, she envisions new projects aiming at supporting the development of the food industry in the south of Sweden.

The evidence suggests that *embedding as a practice process* is illustrated by all the three women. All emphasise the imaginative and pervasive way in which they have built embeddedness and created embedding.

Illustrations and arguments outlined above suggest that the women entrepreneurs imaginatively combine personal skills to elevate own professional performances. They do so by passing by institutional and societal constraints defined by masculinised norms that promote occupational segregation. Consequently, equally persistent they create embedding for their life and business ideas. What becomes apparent is that the *embedding as a practice process* reflects an informal, unceremonious, and a more silent and personal pathway through which embedding is enacted by the women entrepreneurs. Thus, it appears that in line with the thoughts of Bird and Bush (2002), our women chefs have an impact on their own entrepreneurial processes within the resources provided by the embeddedness building. Accordingly, our theoretical understanding evidently shows that the 'male norm' is prevailing. More pertinently, Marlow and Swail, (2014:88) also argued that '*using a feminist critique as a critical perspective, women business owners are more likely to be seen as lacking in regards to normative entrepreneurial standards.*' Instead of being a reflection of male-norm, female status quo exhibits a choice of creating a 'female norm' for their entrepreneurship.

Concluding remarks

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The findings of this study suggest that creating a sense of personal identification and status by making use of *embedding as a practice process* creates qualities that make it possible for women chefs to establish themselves as power players within the culinary industry. Embedding as a practice process has probably been crucial for their successful entrepreneurship. The study provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring the socio-economic situation of women in entrepreneurship and reveals that through the practice of embedding resources were constituted.

We show how *embedding as a practice process* allows women entrepreneurs to use new practices to create novelty with added values for their own progress. It was evident that the female chefs were acting from within the field of informal institutions and from a within position they have been created changes and thereby created their own field. This can be understood through the concept of 'historical backwardness' (Weick, 1979). According to Weick (1979:151), the '*backward group is able to leapfrog the pioneer and employ neglected actions to locate opportunities that prove beneficial'*. Our findings illustrate how the women entrepreneurs acted strategically to become one of the boys, applying 'the sameness' strategy to receive legitimacy in the professional field, a building block for embedding in the professional field. In other words, un-brainwashed or un-indoctrinated entrepreneurs are less likely to be influenced by past prescription or rules of the game concerning their actions and, consequently, are more likely to engage in imaginative entrepreneurship for their own purposes. The study demonstrates how persisting epistemological gendered biases revitalised their professional identity. In so doing, our anticipated conceptual framework is a theoretical illustration of the gendered relationship between being dis-embedded and becoming embedded in a professional field. The idea of historical

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backwardness in this study has fostered imagination and novelty and simultaneously challenged the notion that the 'men' whose images are built upon the masculine norm are not always correct in practice and should probably be challenged more often. We wish to focus scholarly attention on the opposite – on a feminine norm. This focus is an encouragement to entrepreneurship scholars to leave aside the patriarchal, traditional ways of doing research in entrepreneurship and consequently begin to study feminine norms and values in the process. By breaking taken-for-granted norms and values, new things will come true.

Implication

This study contributes to women's entrepreneurship literature in two main ways. First, by highlighting, tangible and intangible attributes of female practice in building contextual embeddedness – in entrepreneurship that is crucial to analysing its impact on the business process. We need to open agentic sites of women activities in various industries and reflect upon future possibilities to expose the embedded ontological bias in entrepreneurship inquiry. Insights from our research might shed light on some of the anomalies within the process of women entrepreneurs' venture creation in a masculine environment. It is essential to consider further exploring the conditions of embedding processes that women use to access resources. Second, we found how and why women entrepreneurs have to use their skills and imagination to pursue their roles as mediators of own business ideas in the unsupportive context. This new insight sheds light not only on successful entrepreneurial facilitation of business operation but also on showing that embedding building creates business opportunities.

One practical implication is to provide insights on the importance of the interplay of individual imagination and personal skills as embedding factors impacting

entrepreneurship processes. For policy makers this turns the attention on the need for integrated approaches to foster women's entrepreneurship that is not based on the denial, discouragement and financial constraints and promotes gender asymmetries. Within this discussion, we provide a new examination of women entrepreneurs that significantly furthers debate about the under-representation of women in gastronomic entrepreneurship. Additionally, the study of novices or women's entrepreneurship in relatively unfamiliar contexts could shed more light on women in competitive and creative sectors of our society. The research method at the conceptual and empirical level that stresses stereotypes between female and male characters can reify differences without adding anything new.

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Table 1: Brief Information About the Women Entrepreneurs

	Titti Qvaranström	Tina Nordström	Nina Christenson
Age	36	43	56
Family	Husband, sous chef at Bloom in the Park; no children	Husband, two younger children	Husband, an auditor, two children
Parents' work	Academics	Restaurant	Academics
Inspiration to enter the industry	Two of her close friends grew up in families with restaurants; as a child, she spent time there	Grew up in the family business	Spent much time as a child in the art gallery; took over the restaurant located in the art gallery
Practical training	Started working in restaurants as a teenager; enjoyed working with her hands	Worked in different restaurants	Worked extra as a waitress; enjoyed the atmosphere
Theoretical training	Did not enjoy secondary school; Copenhagen, 4 years education with apprenticeship; top restaurants in Copenhagen and Berlin	Did not enjoy school	Higher education in marketing and communication; did not graduate

Table 2: Presentational quotes related to overcoming the 'door-stops'

Presentational quotes related to overcoming the 'door-stops'	
Titti	'Men are treated more seriously by the industry than women, and the comments from the public can be extremely upsetting, for example, 'is it you who did the food tonight? Oh, such a "clever girl"! This kind of comment would never be made if my sous-chef André were to go out of the kitchen to talk to customers, and no one would say 'oh such a clever boy'.' 'I have met hundreds of men in my career, but the women can be counted on the fingers of one hand. That is not so good if the industry is going to develop.'
Tina	'I am quite thick-skinned; quite tough and like the boys. At that time, I had cropped hair, my fingers always smelled [of] fish, and I dressed carelessly. They called me junkie because I looked like a bum. I wore red pants of linen, a jumper and the hair on the shaft' (Tina in Bodin, 2015, pp. 8-13).
Nina	'Being a chef is quite hard, traditionally; it has been the hierarchical job, hard work and hard jargon. Historically, it has been so much liquor and they have gone out partying. It does not appeal to women, and they have got their positions in the cold kitchen or as waitress – so they have been out of the warm kitchen. This is my own theory and it's hard to change it.' 'I have a girl in the kitchen here. My colleague in the other restaurant has 2–3 employed but, unfortunately, they have quit. Two had problems with their back, the third probably because it

	was a too hard jargon.'