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The crafting of an (un)enterprising community: Context and the social practice of talk.

Abstract

Context is often treated as a separate externality, most frequently as the *where* of entrepreneurship. Yet, context is a complex, multi-faceted notion that is not static. This paper examines a 'deprived' UK community to identify *how* (dis)connections between context and enterprise are produced within accounts of a particular locality. We used a discursive psychological approach to discourse analysis to examine how the community depicted itself as a context for enterprise. Our analysis identified three discursive repertoires mobilised by a range of voices in the community, which combined to portray an unenterprising community and create a conceptual deadlock for enterprise. We suggest it is too deterministic to assume context is fixed and controls the potential for entrepreneurial development. Instead, we should consider the social practices, including talk, that help construct the contexts in which entrepreneurship is expected to occur.

The crafting of an (un)enterprising community: Context and the social practice of talk.

Introduction

Context is often treated as a separate externality, a backdrop to enterprise activity, most frequently as the *where* of entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011). Such approaches do not capture the complexity of context (Hindle, 2010; Williams and Vorley, 2014; Wright and Marlow, 2011) and fail to look beyond context as the features of a place in which entrepreneurial activity takes place (or not) (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2014). As the entrepreneurship field develops more contextualised approaches to research (Welter, 2011), there is a need to understand how context is crafted through social interaction (Sayer, 1992) and how that relates to enterprise.

'Deprived' or 'depleted' communities are frequently conceptualised as one context, or more accurately a setting, in which entrepreneurship is expected to occur. For decades, enterprise was expected to help turn around communities and neighbourhoods labelled 'deprived' but there have been strong criticisms of presumptions that structured notions of enterprise can fix so-called deprived communities (Blackburn and Ram, 2006; Southern, 2011). Conventional notions of enterprise might have limited purchase in depleted communities (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004) and embeddedness may constrain (Welter, 2011) rather than provide opportunities and resources (McKeever et al., 2014).

Reducing local or community contexts to 'place' overlooks the richness of the circumstances in which entrepreneurship occurs. Research on the relationship between place, small business and economic development (Acs and Armington, 2004; Benneworth, 2004; Fritsch and Mueller, 2004; Lyon et al., 2002; Mason 1991) has tended to treat place as an economic resource. However, geography scholars understand place as partly constituted by discourse and other social mechanisms, operating in a complex interplay of human, temporal and political-economic circumstances (Bjerke and Rämö, 2011; Harvey, 1990; Tuan, 1977; Wollan, 2003). In any community

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setting, income levels, geography, resources and such like are only a part of the context; to fully understand the context for enterprise in local communities it is also important to examine the social practices that go towards constructing the context.

The Latin origins of the word *context* (con = together; texere = to weave) indicate the relevance of understanding context as a fluid interplay, or weaving together, of circumstances and practices. There is, however, limited understanding of how circumstances and practices are woven together, become important locally and influence how enterprise is valued. Our focus is on the practice of talk operating at the level of the community, which provides more insights into the social shaping of context than examinations of individual entrepreneurs or firms (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004; Johannisson and Nilsson, 1989; Lionais, 2011). Sayer (1992) argues that one cannot understand context without understanding language, the two being intertwined and neither understood without the other. We examine how language is employed in a specific deprived community to shape the context for the relationship with enterprise.

That community is a UK coastal town - 'Upper Creek'- which is persistently categorised as deprived according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2010). Our analysis identified the discursive repertoires mobilised by the community in talking about their place, which combined to portray an unenterprising community. Analysis of the prevailing discourses in Upper Creek identified a tension between three repertoires that simultaneously projected Upper Creek ideal-typically as 'tight knit', fatalistically as 'no place for business' and progressively as a place where people were stuck 'on the bottom rung' with 'no bootstraps'[1]. The community mobilised these repertoires in co-constructing a context where enterprise was problematic and did not fit, in turn creating a disconnect between observed enterprise activity and the unenterprising context of Upper Creek.

Our contribution is to provide valuable insights into how (dis)connections between context and enterprise are produced within a particular locality. Our analysis highlights the importance of

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looking beyond a static notion of context as a given set of circumstances and challenges deterministic readings of deprived communities as constrained by their context (Lee and Cowling, 2013). Instead context is established in part by social practices, in this case through talk. Even people known to be engaging in enterprising activities negated such activities in talk; the performative function of this was to co-construct with each other and the researcher a context that was socially successful yet at odds with their understanding of prevailing notions of enterprise.

Our findings have implications for enterprise development in settings such as deprived communities. If people collectively construct their community or place as a problematic context for enterprise activity, top-down efforts to stimulate or support entrepreneurship may be ineffective. It is important for policy and research to appreciate how local social practices (in addition to material circumstances) can prevent positive versions of enterprise from proceeding. This performative effect of talk (Whittle and Mueller, 2010) might operate differently in growth oriented places or communities where economic and other circumstances are commonly perceived to be more positive. Fostering place-based enterprise cultures is not simply about investment and infrastructure but also about attitudes and prevailing discourses. Discourses are a key part of how meaning is negotiated, working fluidly with material resources and practices to both shape and respond to context.

In the next section we show how the key debates fail to explain important aspects of an (un)enterprising community, arguing that context and the social practice of talk is significant. We then explain how our method of discourse analysis identified three discursive repertoires that help craft the context for enterprise in Upper Creek. Our findings and conclusions discuss how talk not only portrays attitudes to enterprise but also becomes part of how the context itself is constructed. Implications are drawn for supporting enterprise development in settings such as communities labelled deprived.

Local context and entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been linked to the economic success (or failure) of places. Spatial understandings of context have highlighted an 'enterprise gap' between more and less prosperous regions (Benneworth, 2004; Lyon et al., 2002; Mason 1991) and conditions for, and experiences of, entrepreneurship are known to vary between places and localities (Baumol, 2004; Hjalager, 1989). There are studies that have established *why* certain places have lower levels of enterprise (Acs and Armington, 2004; Fritsch and Mueller, 2004) and others have suggested that embeddedness and attachment to place may inhibit entrepreneurial cultures (Shaw and de Bruin, 2013; Welter, 2011). Cultural distance from the ideal entrepreneurial type might explain lower levels of entrepreneurship (Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002). Positive perceptions of entrepreneurs have been associated with places that have a history of relative economic munificence (Dodd, Jack and Anderson, 2013). Place is not simply the location of an economic resource but is the scene of experience, action and meaning; meaning that is based on narratives, constructed in part through storytelling, legend and myth, enabling what might not be clear to become visible, to invoke place (Tuan, 1977, 1991). By taking language seriously we can understand better (though not completely[2]) the relationship between entrepreneurship and place and in so doing, add an expressive quality to explanations of that relationship (Tuan, 1991).

In the case of 'deprived' or 'depleted' communities, there may be a particular lack of fit between conventional notions of entrepreneurship and the local context (Southern, 2011; Williams and Williams, 2012). Depleted communities are defined commonly as failing economic spaces but persistently successful social places (Hudson, 2001; Johnstone and Lionais, 2004) and as potential sites of alternative or new forms of enterprise activity (McKeever et al., 2014). Scholars have stressed the need to address historical and cultural factors before spatial and economic futures can be meaningfully altered (Lindkvist and Antelo, 2007), particularly in areas where the economy is failing and alternative notions of enterprise could be relevant (Lionais, 2011; North, 2011).

Contributors to Southern (2011) highlighted the complexities and local variations in the relationship between enterprise, deprivation and social exclusion (for example, Bates and Robb, 2011; Pemberton, 2011) and, in line with earlier work (Amin, 2005; Blackburn and Ram, 2006), they critiqued the imposition of structured notions of enterprise on to local community contexts.

To date, research has focused on attempting to establish causal links between particular aspects of place and entrepreneurship but has done little to explore empirically *how* specific dimensions of context (Wright and Stigliani, 2013) enable or inhibit the development of different attitudes to enterprise at the local level. The links with enterprise cannot be understood just through economically derived logics employing normative measures of success and artificially bounded notions of place. Conventional readings of economies and their geographies need to be reconsidered as culturally and discursively constructed (Hudson, 2004) and the relationship between entrepreneurship and aspects of place needs to be understood as forged by discursive as well as material practices. Communities develop cultural norms that shape their response to economic and social problems (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2004) and place specific cultures develop, sustained through shared social practices and contested through social conflict and power struggles (Hudson, 2001). We should recognize how processes through which the valence of enterprise is negotiated and invoked in connection with a particular locality or community are shaped by, and shape, the local context for enterprise activity in that place. Local entrepreneurial cultures develop in part through the shared views that shape how people in a place understand and experience entrepreneurship (Spigel, 2013) affecting if and how they engage in enterprise activities. Inversely, enterprise engagement or experiences might affect how people relate to enterprise discourses.

Entrepreneurship can be perceived as both a complex product of its milieu and as part of how the social world works (Watson, 2013). It is accorded meaning specific to a particular time and place (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003), experienced and reproduced in daily lives (Cohen and Musson, 2000; Steyaert and Katz, 2004) and communally and relationally constituted (Fletcher, 2006). Social

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theories see entrepreneurship as embedded in local networks, involving institutional thickness (Amin and Thrift, 1995) and implicit sets of rules that shape and structure practices (Zafirovski, 1999). However, as such studies have tended to focus on individual entrepreneurs and rarely provide insight into entrepreneurship at the level of the community and fail to explain the influences on those who do not engage with enterprise and are not enabled. Greater understanding of these points can be gained through a focus on context and the social practice of talk.

Conception of discourse practice and context

The link between place, community and context for entrepreneurship requires specific attention to the role of language and discourse. Language is more than a passive medium (Hjorth and Steyeart, 2004) and we can see the significant role of social interaction in negotiating systems and meaning (Sayer, 1992). Meaning is carried through 'concepts-in the making' and discourses that travel globally are 'repeated locally and translated in specific contexts' (Ostendorp and Steyaert, 2009: 375). Discourses are a central means through which people invoke, and establish their relationship with, particular versions of reality, locate their own actions and accomplish social actions (Whittle and Mueller, 2010). Multiple discourses are available at any point and mobilised for particular effect to invoke the local context for enterprise. Focussing on this performative function, of what people choose to construct to the exclusion of other possibilities through talk, involves looking past the setting as context (Sayer, 1992) to the dynamic context of discursive practices that shape the more material local context. Discourse is therefore understood as both reflective and constitutive of context, working alongside other non-discursive or material realities. In any given community then, language is a vital medium through which social interaction shapes the context for propositions such as enterprise and allows them valence or not.

Previous studies of language within entrepreneurship research have identified valuable insights (for example, Cohen and Musson, 2000; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004; Parkinson and Howorth, 2008;

Ostendorp and Steyaert, 2009). Significant attention has focused on the meta level of language relating to the enterprise discourse, narrative analysis of entrepreneurial stories (Hamilton, 2006) and analysis of metaphors of entrepreneurship (Anderson, 2005). Increasingly, critical studies of entrepreneurship have examined power, emancipation and normalisation through discourse analysis (Mason, 2012; Parkinson and Howorth, 2008; Teasdale, 2012), while Cohen and Musson (2000) in particular have highlighted that people interpret enterprise narratives for themselves, rather than through an overarching hegemonic discourse. Yet there are still gaps between the structured discourses of enterprise and the language of entrepreneurs in certain contexts (Howorth, Parkinson and Southern, 2009). Empirical studies of discourse and entrepreneurship have been limited, and to the best of our knowledge, discourses at the community level have not been examined in entrepreneurship studies.

Critical theories of discourse seek 'not only to describe and explain but also to root out a particular kind of delusion' and 'create awareness in agents of how they are deceived about their own needs and interests' (Wodak, 2001: 10). This emphasis on creating awareness in agents is important for our argument because it marks a rejection of people as cultural dupes subservient to hegemonic discourses and emphasizes the social practice of talk. We have suggested here that pinning down the links between discourse practice and context is paramount for understanding how context is crafted, and that language and discourse are not only reflective of local context but, through interplay with non-discursive realities (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011), discourses can shape and be shaped by context. We propose that analysing discourses at the micro level of talk is central to understanding how local social practices shape the context in which enterprise propositions resonate. Being able to study how one discourse is occasioned and mobilised over multiple other discourses of enterprise available, for a particular purpose, provides an opportunity to reveal the performative effect of talk (Whittle and Mueller, 2010). As we show in the following section, by engaging with members of our case community, we wanted to explore how they derived the

meaning of enterprise in their community and, significantly, how the ways they negotiated meaning were related to what they believed could be achieved in that place.

Methodology: Exploring the context for enterprise in Upper Creek

Our research sought insights into how discourses are locally produced rather than driven by external discourses. We drew on Discursive Psychology (DP), a text based methodological approach that provides insights into what occasions different attitudes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). DP examines the 'verbal toolboxes' of social life used by people to characterise phenomena as they talk (Ostendorp and Steyaert, 2009). In DP, the interviewee's account is an 'active, productive process that draws upon and associates some culturally and historically produced resources of sense-making while neglecting or failing to associate others' (Ostendorp and Steyaert, 2009: 375). Analysis aims to uncover general effects across the data rather than individual sense making, patterns or attributions (Edley, 2001a). Therefore DP is particularly appropriate to capturing discourses at the community level, as well as helping us to extend our understanding of context. DP is especially suited to analysing discourses in ambiguity loaded or emotive fields, where there are likely to be dissensus, dilemma, complexity and ambiguity, such as entrepreneurship (Grant and Perren, 2002; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Ogbor, 2000).

We focus on the micro production of meaning through the local practice of talk. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2001), which seeks to understand how power is exercised through 'big D' discourses, DP focuses on 'small d' discourses, at the level of spoken text (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011). DP examines the performative effect of talk (Whittle and Mueller, 2010) and can expose how attitudes to enterprise are perpetually *in the process of being* produced by discursive processes, rather than the product of pre-existing internal or external aspects of context. Interview texts are sense-making tools that construct a version (or versions) of reality, forming part of situated social practice (Whittle and Mueller, 2010). By focusing on 'small d'

discourses, we gain insight into how the context for entrepreneurship is crafted through talk and attitudes to enterprise shaped at a community level.

We employed the interpretative repertoire, one of DP's central analytic concepts,[3] defined as 'recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149). These repertoires, smaller and more fragmented than discourses, 'place more emphasis upon human agency within the flexible deployment of language' (Edley, 2001a: 202). This emphasis on agency is important and differentiates DP from other forms of discourse analysis and through our identification of repertoires we can analyse how the case community co-created the context for enterprise.

The research was based on a case community, anonymized as Upper Creek[4]. Upper Creek is a UK coastal town of around 11,000 population, similar to many de-industrialised towns. Following a couple of centuries of economic and small business prosperity in its industrial heyday, the town is characterised today by decline. Low household income per capita, high unemployment and low qualifications, among other indicators, result in wards persistently featuring among the 10 per cent most deprived in the UK according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2010).

Upper Creek was selected as an interesting case because a disconnection had been observed between enterprising behaviors in the community and prevailing negative enterprise narratives[5]. There was a large number of small businesses in the town still, including some old family firms and new businesses regularly starting up. Informal enterprise activities were commonplace (for example, an engineer being paid in lobsters for fishing boat repairs, collaborations between the book shop, café and local teachers, or the fireplace shop running a gallery in a long-term empty shop). Local historians also had depicted the town as a resilient community that had survived decades of industrial decline, partly through enterprise and small business. Together these observations seemed to indicate that the community was enterprising in spite of economic adversity. However,

prevailing narratives continued to paint a bleak picture of the town and community. By asking local people about Upper Creek as a context for enterprise, our research explored how discursive constructions might affect any perceived role for enterprise in community.

Qualitative unstructured interviews were conducted with 20 individuals in 2007-8. Data were collected prior to the global financial crisis and are therefore not biased by the resulting recession. The interviewees all lived or worked in the case community. A purposive sampling technique was used to select interviewees that would provide a range of voices. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the interviewees, who included: men and women; incomers and locally born; and a range of ages. Local knowledge enabled us to identify individuals who had varying connections with enterprise: some were owners of established small businesses; others had recently started up businesses; some had family members with small businesses locally; some were public sector workers with enterprise in their remit; finally, some were people known to be involved in enterprising activities on an informal basis. The sampling therefore identified a range of voices with some connection to, but different levels of engagement with, enterprise in Upper Creek. They were not exclusively entrepreneurs and therefore more reflective of a wider range of community voices. In line with techniques of DP, the data were treated as one discourse event to analyse how the social practice of talk conditioned attitudes and context.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Interviews were based on a series of prompts, rather than systematic schedules, and all opened with the same general prompt, 'So tell me about [Upper Creek] as a place to live and do business'. Most were individual interviews, except for three co-interviews where friends and co-workers elected to be interviewed together. The co-interviews enabled social interaction to be with each other as well as the interviewer. Participants were informed of the overarching topic of entrepreneurship in deprived areas prior to their interview. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then read for

patterns of variability and consistency (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). We were interested in what was *actually said or written* rather than the general intention (Wood and Kroger, 2000). An abductive process identified themes and patterns that might signal the presence of discursive repertoires. We followed Potter and Wetherell (1987) in seeking patterns of variability and consistency and considering the functions and effects of these. Tentative categories emerged after three complete passes through the data that connected *themes*, *repertoires* and *discourses*. Once patterns were identified, analysis involved looking in detail at samples of data to understand how different discursive repertoires were operating within the data.

Findings: Recognising patterns and routines

Across the corpus of spoken text, three discursive repertoires were identified and present across the interviewees: an ideal-typical repertoire of '*tight knit' community* (R1)*; a* fatalistic repertoire (R2) that invoked the locality as *'no place for business';* a progressive repertoire (R3) that portrayed local people as stuck *'on the bottom rung'* of a ladder. Repertoires are not complete discourses that exist externally to the data; instead they are parts of discourses which are mobilised by human agency. Each repertoire is presented in turn with quotes used to illustrate how repertoires occurred across the corpus and the range of voices. Samples of text in boxes provide insight into how repertoires were built in conversation.

'Tight knit community': an ideal-typical repertoire

Across the data was a repertoire that depicted a strong and supportive community summarised as 'tight knit' (R1). This positive repertoire of community constructed Upper Creek in contrast to other places as special and dislocated: 'Don't know where else you'd get that.' (Trish). Even within alternative viewpoints, a sense of otherness prevailed: 'I'll say this though, [Upper Creek] is too friendly. They make everyone welcome, it's part of their problem' (Eric); 'There is a bit of a battle of

'us versus the rest of the world'. (Sheila). R1 featured emotive and stylistic language, characterised by exaggerated definition and clichés: 'It's a world away from [nearby town] and other places. But it's a town with *so much* community and *so much* heart' (Sheila). The repertoire focused on resilience ('been through worse times than this!' (Kirsty); '[Upper Creek] will be ok and will carry on about its business… it'll carry on' (James)), on solidarity ('a lot of people in [Upper Creek] are very tight and close to the community' (Charlie); 'the people are the salt of the earth, heart and soul. I've had people lobbying the Council for me, unbeknown to me' (Paula); 'People support each other here, a lot goes on under the radar' (Sheila)) and on reciprocity ('Deal is, I do this for you, you do that' (Andy); 'Everyone knows someone who knows someone else' (Kirsty); 'On the boats, if you need something, the other fishermen won't ask for money, [but] for small things like. Months later, someone will help them out' (Rob)).

However, the social factors invoked in R1 were rejected as being relevant to enterprise in Upper Creek. Where enterprise was invoked within the community repertoire it was as a rebuttal: '[Upper Creek] people are very community spirited. But it's very difficult in this day and age to set up a business, it's ridiculous!' (Charlie). Enterprise was constructed in the community repertoire as alternative or unconventional: '[Upper Creek is] in many ways quite enterprising in its own terms. But it's not the model the enterprise industry recognises.' (Harry); 'To say there are no entrepreneurials in [Upper Creek], well that's absolutely nonsense! [Upper Creek] must have the best grey market in the whole county! But the public sector can be so condescending towards these people. "What no business plan?"' (Dawn).

INSERT BOX 1 ABOUT HERE

Box 1 provides a segment of text that exemplifies the 'tight knit community' repertoire. This exchange with Kirsty took place towards the end of the interview after she finished a lengthy negative point about the locals' attitude to change. When the interviewer prompted her about the

townspeople themselves, the narrative became strikingly more positive. Kirsty's first point elucidates the strengths of the community, including community cohesion and solidarity. This positive repertoire was generally divorced from any conceptualisations of business or enterprise. The second part of the excerpt continues the positive claim but refers back to the historical narrative of industrial decline and traditional work as a source of resilience for community and individuals. The suggestion seemed to be that the resilience of the people will enable them to survive, if not prosper. Hyperbole was evident throughout this exchange and repertoire. Metaphors are clichéd, including 'cup half full'. 'Not even on the graph yet' cements the figurative nature of the language in association with the community. It is almost presented as a community beyond reproach. This is despite Kirsty's criticism of local attitudes immediately preceding this exchange (see R3).

Importantly, the community repertoire was usually occasioned by the interviewer testing out observed facets of the community, such as thickness of ties, reciprocity and informality. R1 was used to affirm the interviewer's observations initially to delineate a discursive boundary between the community and enterprise in Upper Creek. The performative effect of this was to dismiss facets of the community such as solidarity and reciprocal trading that could elsewhere be considered relevant to enterprise in a community.

'No place for business': a fatalistic repertoire

The second repertoire (R2) depicts spatial and historical problems of locality and is used by interviewees to rebut the proposition of enterprise in Upper Creek, presented by the interview topic and interviewer. Upper Creek is portrayed as 'no place for business' with 'no really big business opportunities' (Andy), where 'no-one with a business brain would come' (Ian). Interviewees distinguished between 'real' business that was 'big' and located elsewhere and local enterprises: 'It's family oriented things that survive in this area. It's when it becomes business it struggles.' (Kirsty);

'One time, up the high street there were 10-12 butchers, grocers etc. Now they just won't survive.' (Charlie). Andy stated categorically 'There is simply no appetite for enterprise in [Upper Creek].'

R2 is categorical in that factual propositions tended to be offered as absolute, unqualified claims. Greg stated 'That's where [Upper Creek] falls down. There's no customer(s). Not enough anyway.' Dawn stated 'They don't do blue skies thinking. They know what works here and stick to it. Nothing aspirational there'. Upper Creek was portrayed as dislocated and depleted: 'There's a disconnect from worldwide markets' (Harry); 'Our backwater' (Margaret); 'It goes into a pit' (Greg); 'What are the attractions?.. Nothing' (Eric); 'There's nothing' (Ian). Where examples of enterprising activity were provided, they were viewed disparagingly, for example 'There's that new tattooist, we'll see how well that does. Traditionally they do well in deprived areas…' (James). Cyclical traps are a common feature, for example 'We lack hotels in the area. But then you need the right customers… It's a chicken and egg situation.' (Kirsty). Dislocation and depletion became entwined in downward spirals that invoked futility and fatalism: 'Been there, seen it all and it won't get any better' (Sheila); 'Downhill, downhill swiftly' (Rob); 'Three generations of worklessness. They say once it's at three generations that's it.' (Dawn). R2 was therefore identified as fatalistic.

INSERT BOX 2 ABOUT HERE

Box 2 provides a segment of text that demonstrates this fatalistic repertoire. Of particular interest to the analysis, is how each time that a positive example of enterprise opportunities was introduced by the interviewer, it was acknowledged and then rebutted as the interviewees quickly fell back into the fatalistic repertoire. Rob and Andy's exchange was typical of the conversations with other interviewees. Note the reference to the historical past of Upper Creek, concepts of depletion ('isn't much... anymore') and a fatalistic and self-sealing question, 'Why would you?' Opportunities were presented as 'big business' and not applicable for members of the community. The interviewer

adopted a challenging stance and introduced new events or examples to attempt to break the interviewees out of the routine embodied in R2. Box 2 highlights that the fatalistic repertoire was so routine that new events were unable to break the pattern. Distance was created between the interviewees and positive opportunities by presenting them as exotic (for 'Americans' and 'all sorts') or temporally distant. Andy drew on a nostalgic collective memory of industry through the phrase of 'the old days' as a routine to draw the emotive distinction of the past as good for business, the present as not. Rob had an option to join his brother's business but did not see it as a positive opportunity. This exchange was typical of responses across the data.

R2 depicted a place for which enterprise was inappropriate in the face of enormous and intractable issues. The 'no place for business' mantra echoing throughout the responses was normative and historically conditioned. The past emerged as a key determinant of what was conceivable in the present. The area's industrial past was associated with employment not enterprise. 'Until our generation…, if you [were] good you go to work for [industrial company] and the less good go to the other factories. There was always someone out there to employ them. There was no concept of 'why not do it myself?' (Dawn).

The fatalism of R2 contrasted strongly with the more contingent third repertoire, which emphasised the need for progressive change.

'Bottom of the ladder': a progressive repertoire

R3 was a progressive, hierarchical repertoire which positioned business along a vertical spectrum, with local businesses down 'in the community' (Margaret). R3 explained enterprise in the form of social progress. encouraging the people of Upper Creek to get 'out of bed' and 'pull themselves up by the bootstraps' as they were stuck on 'the bottom rung of the ladder'. Local people were portrayed as not getting involved in things that were seen as 'too high end' (James). The function of

this repertoire was to position enterprise as a marker of progression. R3 was conditional in character, using conditional linguistic features that placed progress as contingent on the people changing. It tended to be divorced from spatial or historic context, focusing instead on generic traits of deprived or working class people. The linguistic devices in R3 were typical of polemical texts and included rhetoric, soundbites, metaphors and other devices that provided a scalar depiction of enterprise.

R3 mirrored R2 in that enterprise was presented as big business and located elsewhere. 'The guy who sets up a window round – that doesn't register. And people need a lot of support to get to even that' (Dawn). However, tangentially to R2, this repertoire suggested that enterprise *could be* relevant to the locality in future, contingent on fixing people deficits relating to (lack of) efficacy, effort and aspirations. The repertoire presented people as 'happy to tick along' (Karen) who 'don't want to push anything' (James), 'people with so many problems, such low expectations' (Sheila), 'from humble beginnings' (Margaret). The hierarchical repertoire thus posited enterprise as contingent rather than categorically irrelevant. Margaret typified deployment of the hierarchy in this repertoire: 'The key is for us to create action at the top so that existing firms can create a void and those moving in create a void further down. Most of what the [local] project is dealing with is only part time, your hairdressers, your window cleaners etcetera and they are very much *in* the community, aren't they? The hope is they'll make a success of it and then think, I can go on and there's an opportunity.' What is meant by 'at the top' was left unstated but 'further down' was qualified as 'in the community'. Businesses '*in* the community' were attributed a low value, marked by the words 'only', 'your' and 'aren't they'. The latter either marked the speaker's discomfort with the claim or that she sought affinity with the interviewer. It can be assumed that business 'at the top' was outside the community. The imagery of top and bottom in a value system was continued by the use of 'go on' in the final phrase compelling us to interpret 'on' as upwards.

The progressive repertoire was problematised in that when enterprises were noted as successful and 'further up the ladder', they were presented as unusual, extreme or not fitting, as depicted in Vivien's review of exemplary local businesses. '[Restaurant] is a very successful business, very forward thinking. That's at the far end of the spectrum. And then there's [name]. He could have taken it anywhere but he desperately wanted it to be here. He's rock solid about wanting it to be in his quarter of the world… We have friends with a computer business there, three local lads, very gifted, now a big company. A very good business, very clever.' (Vivien)

In this excerpt, business success was qualified as being 'forward thinking' at one end of a linear 'spectrum', implying the other end as unsuccessful. Ironically, the exemplar restaurant closed not long after the interview, the consensus in the local community being that it was too 'high end'. The conditional routine was implicit in that the second entrepreneur 'could have taken it anywhere' but did not, suggesting that 'anywhere' is better than 'here'. The third example of success privileged high tech and high growth ('clever') businesses. These were set in relief against the run of the mill businesses more commonly associated with the case community which were, by implication, less 'clever'. This extract demonstrates a conditional and qualified account of enterprise as aspirational and contingent.

Summary

Across the three repertoires, people co-constructed Upper Creek as a context that was socially successful but at odds with their understanding of prevailing notions of entrepreneurship. In so doing, they put up a discursive wall that blocked notions of entrepreneurial activities. Community solidarity and resilience, expected ex ante to be prominent in constructions of Upper Creek, in fact worked to suppress accounts of enterprising activity. The repertoires together created a tangential pull by simultaneously constructing Upper Creek ideal-typically as 'a tight knit community', fatalistically as 'no place for business' and progressively as a place where people 'on the bottom

rung' need to move themselves up to engage in enterprise. Tension between the prevailing discourses resulted in the community co-creating a context where enterprise as they perceived it was problematic and did not fit.

Table 2 presents the three repertoires in parallel, showing the tension between repertoires R2 and R3. The fatalistic repertoire (R2) of 'no place for business' sits alongside a progressive repertoire (R3) that suggests enterprise could be relevant if only people deficits could be fixed. In R3, themes of *effort, aspirations and efficacy* associate effortfulness (Gibson, 2009) with self-employment. Enterprise as self-employment is upwardly propelling, captured through metaphorical representations of spectra and ladders of social progress. Meanwhile, the ideal-typical repertoire of community (R1) is separated and the valence of community assets or enterprising behaviours is negated. Despite all the conceptual possibilities of enterprise, the rejection of enterprise in accounts of Upper Creek and its trajectory remain.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

By examining the social practice of talk we developed our understanding of imagining and articulating enterprise in relation to local contexts and gained insights into how the context for enterprise activity was constructed in Upper Creek. We are not suggesting that people in Upper Creek were stuck in certain repertoires, as dupes to hegemonic discourses, but that they were involved in constructing the context for enterprise through the 'flexible deployment of language' (Edley, 2001b), alongside material practices and processes. Discourses reflect but also shape contexts in which practices are possible, together with non-discursive, material 'realities' that constitute economies and geographies (Hudson 2001, 2004). Communities labelled deprived can become collocated discursively with lack of enterprise (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004; Southern,

2011). When asked about Upper Creek as a context for enterprise, community members and outsiders wove the circumstances they perceived relevant with the social practice of talk in order to resist the enterprise proposition.

Fatalism might be expected of the pervasively marginalised working classes (Whelan, 1996) and reliance on a fatalistic repertoire like R2 could be considered typical of the way in which deprived or working class communities are viewed. Psychosocial understandings of community suggest that for marginalised groups, awareness of difference is key (Cohen, 2002). We saw this in the fatalistic repertoire (R2) which invoked a sense of otherness, against which the identity of place and community were defined using graphically physical metaphors to depict borders, boundaries and marketplaces that resonate with previous studies of deprived communities' identities (Dawson, 2002; Dodds, Mellor and Stephenson, 2006). R2 worked against any notions of the place or people being open to enterprise. However, at the same time, the progressive repertoire (R3) indicated hope, contingent on deficits being fixed. R3 included echoes of the argument that cultural distance from ideal types leads to lower enterprise levels (Hayton et al., 2002), particularly through low aspiration; blame was placed on the working classes, with the onus on the more enlightened to help change aspirational deficits.

Two incompatible propositions thus created a pull between repertoires; fatalistic discourses pertaining to market-based business worked tangentially to socially progressive discourses pertaining to the working classes. This discursive stalemate is relevant for considering how context is constructed through talk. In our analysis, the factors that have sustained this particular locality through times of economic and social adversity are the same factors that were perceived to work against enterprise or entrepreneurship. The stalemate is also depicted directly through metaphors of circularity seen in references to 'chicken and egg' situations, for example. Meanwhile more positive versions of commitment to place in R1 were sidelined. Positive examples of enterprise opportunities, that offered alternative understandings of enterprise, were briefly acknowledged and then

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dismissed as individuals mobilised established routines or repertoires. The discursive stalemate and suppression of community assets combined to depose enterprise from this community's trajectory.

Our study shows *how* the lack of 'fit' between enterprise and deprived communities could develop and be sustained. It complements studies of *why* and *where* enterprise does not 'fit' that indicate a lack of collective self-efficacy might be expected (Dawson, 2002; Williams and Williams, 2012). Without indigenous entrepreneurial cultures or the ability to attract inward investment or external entrepreneurs, conventional entrepreneurship might have limited purchase. Johnstone and Lionais (2004) suggest that processes of disinvestment experienced in some deprived communities restrict their capacity to sustain local enterprise as the community becomes less capable of developing its own capacity for growth. From a deterministic perspective, Upper Creek might indeed be recounting itself as being beyond the point of no return (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004), away from the progressive prospects of the enterprise discourse (Southern, 2011). Indeed, for people connected with this community, enterprise featured in negative ways in the collective conscience (Cohen, 2002) that were more powerful than the infamous 'call' of the hegemonic enterprise discourse. Where Hobbs showed the role of entrepreneurial inheritance in the community's propensity for entrepreneurial activity (Hobbs, 1988), Upper Creek expresses itself as unenterprising.

Our analysis of repertoires demonstrated *how* affinity to (or alienation from) enterprise can become part of the context for entrepreneurship. By examining the social practice of talk in relation to Upper Creek, we gained insights into how the collective cultural consciousness (Cohen, 2002) can become the antithesis of 'enterprising'. This does not mean that the discourses seen operating in this research form a stable system of meaning. They are some of the discourses available that people draw fluidly on, in relation to Upper Creek, and are mobilised flexibly for particular performative purposes. Attachments to, and propensity for, entrepreneurship are complex and dependent on the people, processes and norms that characterise the place inwardly and outwardly. In this case, perceptions of lack of enterprise appeared entrenched and the almost complete rejection of the 'Big

D' discourse of enterprise indicated a complex, self-fulfilling process that was performed through discourse.

Understanding the power of pervasive discourses to suppress positive accounts of the local context for enterprise – differently in deprived than in prosperous communities - could be critical for enterprise development. In other settings or communities, different events and circumstances might be interwoven with alternative sets of discursive practices, involving different repertoires and routines. Neither the discursive practices nor the context that they help create are static. The negotiation of meaning in Upper Creek led to social ties and networks being immobilised discursively; in contrast to prevailing social theories, they were kept distinct from the entrepreneurial process (Granovetter, 1985; Jack 2005) and contained within a separate discourse (R1). Embeddedness in many of its possibilities – social, spatial, cultural, mixed (Kalantaridis, 2009; Kloosterman, 2010) might indeed be as much a problem for this deprived community as it is a positive entrepreneurial factor in more prosperous places. Of course, respondents might not be expected to talk of enterprise in their locality as a socio-economic entity centred on networks or institutional thickness (Amin and Thrift, 1995; Johannisson et al., 2002). However, the process of discourse analysis looks for modes of sense making and meaning (Edley and Wetherell, 2001). From this vantage point, how notions of local context operated in these data in reproducing the vicious cycle of decline and depletion, *to the exclusion of* virtuous aspects of the locality, is significant.

Unlocking the conceptualisations invoked by talk of the case community is not a simple task when they are sustained by entrenched cultural, historical and ideological binaries that make alternatives and positives redundant. A collective cultural shift may be required to alter the indelible memory of certain places as un-enterprising. Qualitative models of virtuous change put forward by Selman and Knight (2006) in the cultural landscape tradition, suggest that intervention aimed at increasing collective valuation of assets may be an important part of strategies to redress vicious cycles of decline, in tandem with material interventions based around enterprise, local economic

development or regeneration. Ideals of mutuality and cooperative working (Haughton 1998) too might have something to offer enterprise and territorial development in areas experiencing vicious cycles of decline. Lionais' place-based businesses, ideal for their ability to tackle the causes of geographically concentrated exclusion and inequality by grounding wealth generating mechanisms within communities and catalysing economic activity (Lionais 2011) offer an appealing alternative to social enterprise and high growth enterprise in the deprived community. Evidence of indigenous and solidarity alternatives (North 2011) make a compelling case for revisiting alternative forms of enterprise forgotten in our focus on capitalist models. To achieve this, we concur that non-economic factors need to be considered before trajectories can be adjusted (Lindkvist and Antelo, 2007).

We have offered here a different explanation of how a community negotiates the meaning attributed to enterprise. Our findings challenge overly deterministic readings of deprived communities as constrained by their context, and lead us towards an understanding of context as partly constituted by social practice. Perceived disconnects from enterprise in communities like Upper Creek cannot be simply explained in terms of 'dependency' resulting from intergenerational worklessness or reliance on the big industries, invoking notions of a strong but inward looking community. Instead, in the collective construction of their community or place as problematic for enterprise, the performative function of the repertoires is to prevent positive versions of enterprise from 'proceeding' or from being 'translated' through talk (Whittle and Mueller, 2010). Our assertion is that this performative function might operate differently in other settings, not least in communities where economic and other circumstances are commonly perceived to be more positive or growth oriented. If those communities with the fewest resources and most negative relationship with enterprise are to be engaged, policy and practice need to look to means of intervention that enhance the specific assets of that locality. More positive versions of enterprising communities, as they are mobilised and rehearsed, might help start a cultural reattachment to the possibility of enterprise, in tandem with or perhaps in spite of material circumstances.

Conclusions

Recognising the role of local discursive practices in helping craft the context for developing place-based entrepreneurial cultures, in addition to material interventions, is vital in places where structured notions of enterprise may have little traction and alternative or radical notions of enterprise could be important (Lionais, 2011; North, 2011). Understanding how context is shaped becomes particularly important for settings such as deprived communities, partly because of the faith vested in enterprise as a panacea for deprivation in areas such as Upper Creek. Policies promoting private enterprise as an escape route out of decline (Porter, 1995) have paid little attention to variations in local context (Southern, 2011) but expected all the 'promissory' benefits of enterprise from our least affluent areas and communities, capitals, resources or wherewithal aside. Altering vicious discursive cycles represents a major challenge and calls for research, policy and practice to understand the specific and entrenched factors driving communities' codes of what is conceivable.

We have acknowledged that the reasons why a community might feel disengaged from enterprise are established elsewhere. Far from trying to replicate this point, this research exposes *how* (dis)connections between context and enterprise are reproduced within accounts of a particular locality. In response to an apparent dilemma created by the proposition of enterprise in the case community, factors of the specific context appear conditioned by enduring, normative, structural associations. These associations dominate the collective consciousness and create a conceptual deadlock for enterprise. This cannot be reflective of any enterprising reality outside of these particular data. We are not claiming that discourse is everything; the relationship between what people talk to researchers about and 'actual' enterprise activity is understood as connected but not causal here. We are also not suggesting that places can be changed by changing discourses as if discourse operates somehow omnipotently and independently of structures and socio-economic conditions.

Rather, following Hudson (2004) our argument focuses on the discursive constructions, which alongside material constructions constitute concepts such as the economy or enterprise. It highlights the role of spoken accounts in establishing versions of the local context that influence attitudes to enterprise. We hope to have demonstrated that discourses are themselves performative, an activity or practice involving agency and choice. We suggest that intervention aimed at increasing collective valuation of assets as a means of redressing the vicious cycles of decline into a virtuously self-sustaining process (Selman and Knight 2006) could help break the vicious discursive cycle partly locking communities into collective self-imaging of inefficacy and inertia.

The interplay between discourses, material 'realities' and context means that efforts to stimulate enterprise for place development need to consider discursive as well as material barriers and assets. Attempts to contextualise entrepreneurship should recognise the constitutive elements of context, which operate beyond the immediate and often static notion of context as a setting. Discourses constitute as well as reflect non-discursive 'realities' and therefore also practice. Operating through the social practice of talk discourses become not only a lens on, but part of, how the context is constructed in the quotidian. An ability to look to the context beyond the context - the dynamic context of discursive practices that shape the more material local context - matters for entrepreneurship research because a reading of context as dynamic allows us to see research participants as involved in its construction rather than constrained or enabled by the context we choose to research. Our discussions contribute to the debate on contextualising entrepreneurship by demonstrating how perceptions of enterprise are both constructed in situ through the data and are conditioned by context-specific discursive routines.

The routines embedded in the discursive repertoires are not only a valuable lens on the context but, we suggest, a part of it. In the specific setting of a community labelled deprived, we can see how context is constituted by social practices, rather than as a static or fixed condition constraining that

community. How the balance of discourses might differ in communities experiencing more virtuous dynamics, where the enterprise proposition might present less of a dilemma, is not often considered. Further research is needed. If we do not look beyond entrepreneurs and conventional 'contexts' to the context in which attitudes are occasioned and conditioned, we will not be able to see how enterprise becomes disabled as well as enabled.

Notes

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[1] Having no 'boot straps' is a reference to the idiom, 'pulling yourself up by your boot straps'; meaning to 'improve one's position by one's own efforts'. Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford University Press, Online.http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bootstrap. Accessed 6 June 2013.

[2] We acknowledge that meaning and language can only be part of the explanation of place. We may also consider those who would refer to Heidegger and the idea that place is determined through human understanding (Wollan, 2003), but see too Harvey (1990) for a political-economic view on place, space and time. Importantly, Bjerke and Rämö (2011) also influenced by Heidegger, argue for an interplay of time, timing, space, place and an active-based entrepreneurship. While this discussion is outside the scope of the work here, we maintain that our efforts are not completely inconsistent with such perspectives.

[3] Gibson (2009) highlights the importance of interpretive repertoires in discursive work addressing social psychological issues, while Potter (2007) debates the future of the interpretative repertoire and discusses alternative techniques of discourse analysis. We drew broadly on the repertoire as smaller patterns than whole discourses, mobilised independently and performatively by human agents in talk.

[4] The name of the case community and individual respondents are anonymized. Although removing the name of the community might be considered in itself to neglect the context, the important point here is that it is discursive influences on the context that are the study's focus, beyond the immediate community or place. Naming the locality would in many ways emphasise an invalid aspect of context for this study.

[5] One of the authors had been living and running a business in the community for some years and often observed enterprising activities between people and businesses across the community.

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Box 1: Segment of text demonstrating R1

Kirsty:	It's so friendly, I have friends that three years ago I didn't know. Everyone speaks to you. It grows and then they know you, where you work. A lot come in about the [local issue]. They don't like it but they'll make the best of it. Always banter and a bit of 'craic'! Everyone knows someone that knows someone else. It was particularly obvious after the [local tragedy]. People really pulled together, it was marvellous. It's the same on [street name]. Whatever the weather, you see people talking in the rain. They always have time for each other, they're genuinely friendly.
Interviewer:	And how do you think they are adapting as a community?
Kirsty:	The majority are quite opinionated but, that said, they're flexible and adaptable and will change with the times. They make the best of it, cup half full, positive types. When you think of their history, the original industries have all gone … many people are moving on to their third or fourth trades. They just get on with it. They've been through worse times than this. It's not even on the graph yet!

Rob:	I feel there isn't much in [Upper Creek] anymore.
Andy:	People coming in see different potential, especially in the [National Park] etc. But there's no really big business opportunities that are worthwhile. You wouldn't bring a big huge supermarket here.
Interviewer:	Why's that?
Andy:	Why would you?
Interviewer:	People come for the [visitor attraction].
Rob:	People come from everywhere, Americans, all sorts. Brings a lot of tourists, but that's the only thing…
Interviewer:	What about the [annual festival]?
Andy:	Aye, that brings people in, that's a good weekend! On a yearly basis, that's the best income for [Upper Creek]. And people do see business opportunities cause there's so many people here. Like the old days of ship building. Cos there were so many people, there was a business opportunity. There's not a lot of people, cos there's not a lot here. So not many people see a business opportunity.
Interviewer:	At school, were you encouraged to think about enterprise?
Andy:	You can't just leave school and set up in business. You got to get the experience and the confidence. Careers advice sat you down... one question was would you like to be your own boss? Well, everyone would like to. But you have to have understanding of the job in hand…
Andy:	Yeah, well, you can't really go on your own in the world of electronics. Like I couldn't just set up on my own and do what I'm doing now...
Interviewer:	Aren't there going to be opportunities coming up in [electronics]?
Andy:	In that sense, yeah, but... not in my field...
Interviewer:	And what about you, Rob? You mentioned about your brother getting you more involved in running the business?
Rob:	Yeah, idea is to get a share in one of the boats and me end up being like, in [the] future. If there's still an industry left. .. It's going down the pan, I think. Like, working round here, it's knackering. In [nearby town], especially, they're scrapping boats. They can't afford to keep them anymore.
Interviewer:	What would you do it if did go down the pan?
Rob:	Don't know. Can't think of much else.

Table 1: List of Interviewees

Name	Gender	Relationship with enterprise	Interviewed with
James (J)	Male	Business owner	
Ian (I)	Male	Business owner	Eric
Margaret (M)	Female	Regeneration	
Paula (P)	Female	Business owner	Bill and Trish
Sarah (S)	Female	Enterprise support	
Sheila (SH)	Female	Social commentator	
Trish (T)	Female	Business owner	Paula and Bill
Charlie (C)	Male	Business owner	
Dawn (D)	Female	Enterprise support	
Bill (B)	Male	Family business employee	Trish and Paula
Eric (E)	Male	Business owner	Ian
Greg (G)	Male	Business owner	
Jen (JE)	Female	Business owner	
Kirsty (K)	Female	Regeneration	
Liz (L)	Female	Business owner	
Harry (H)	Male	Regeneration	
Nicola (N)	Female	Business owner	
Andy (A)	Male	Apprentice	Rob
Rob (R)	Male	Apprentice	Andy
Vivien (V)	Female	Enterprise support	

Table 2. Effects of the discursive repertoires across the data.

Functions and effects	**R1. An ideal-typical repertoire**	**R2. A fatalistic repertoire**	**R3. A progressive repertoire**
Sense of:	otherness	fatalism	change
Main topics:	community, support	place, business, market	individuals, aspiration
Focus on:	solidarity, reciprocity, resilience	dislocation, depletion, path dependence	effort and willingness, low aspirations, self-efficacy
'Enterprise' as	irrelevant separate from local facets	elsewhere, 'big business' dilemma	facet of progressive society way out
Difference conveyed in terms of	community strength and solidarity	heritage, territoriality	social and class hierarchies
Challenge to enterprise proposition as	Tight-knit community	no place for business	no boot straps; people deficits
Effect	**Uses tenets of R2 and R3 to define boundaries between community and enterprise**	**Tangential pull against R3**	**Tangential pull against R2**
Construction of context:	Attitudes conditioned by stalemate between structured discourses of market-based business vs the working classes. Alternative (local) versions inconceivable.		