'Becoming Other': Entrepreneuring as Subversive Organising

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Abstract

This paper discusses entrepreneurship as a process of subversive organising, a journey towards becoming *Other*. Employing the organising field of stand-up comedy in Finland, we argue that the desire to become an entrepreneur is not only an individual quest, but also a social, subversive desire to resist fixed, institutionally bounded professional identities. Subversive desire, performed through de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation, constitutes entrepreneuring as a social practice of creation: a nonlinear quest towards difference, discontinuity and intuitive futures yet to come. Subversive practice, in this respect, promotes and sustains, rather than resolves, the inherent tensions of entrepreneuring.

Keywords: becoming, entrepreneuring**,** institutionalisation, professionalisation, subversion.

Introduction

The concepts of entrepreneurial identity and more generally, identity construction have been widely discussed in the organisation studies literature (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Down & Reveley, 2004, 2009; Simpson & Carroll, 2008; Clarke, Brown & Hailey, 2009; Watson, 2009; Watson & Watson, 2012). These studies describe how and why some people become entrepreneurs and adopt relevant professional identities, whereas others do not (Cohen & Musson, 2000; Down & Reveley, 2004; Cardon, Wincent, Singh, Drnovsek, 2009). On this basis, individual-level identity approaches conceptualise professionalisation as involving how an appropriate individual is produced (i.e. identity regulation by an organisation), how an individual becomes something other than that regulated professional image represents (i.e., identity work, such as networking), and how those two elements affect and are affected by self-identity (i.e., who the person is independent of the organisation) (e.g. Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008).

Moreover, other research has explained how subversive practices – actualised through humour – affect management practice, and are in turn affected by it (e.g. Collinson, 2002). Primary results provide evidence that humour is a way to resist and, consequently, subvert practices that influence management styles (Kenny & Euchler, 2012). Following Butler, Olaison, Sliwa, Sorensen and Spoelstra (2011: 332), however, the notion of 'the playful worker is a productive worker' could be expanded to the study of other effects of humour in organisations; for example, identity work through practices of subversion (Westwood & Johnston, 2011). Although individual identity work has been studied extensively (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Down & Reveley, 2004, 2009; Clarke et al., 2009; Watson, 2009; Watson & Watson, 2012),

the subversive elements of entrepreneurship (Rindova, Barry & Ketchen Jr., 2009) have not been explained in detail (Bureau, 2013).

Specifically, we ask two research questions: First, how does subversive organising affect the construction of entrepreneurial identities? Second, does subversive desire relate to entrepreneuring and if yes, through which processes? To achieve this we examine identity construction as a process of becoming and unbecoming, a discontinuous process that can promote entrepreneurial behaviour through the subversion of dominant ideologies, institutions, and professional expectations and norms. Specifically, we expect that becoming / unbecoming constitutes a cyclical process that iteratively produces subversive organising.

In doing so, we use the current literature on entrepreneuring to obtain a better understanding of collective identity practices and their subversive nature. Therefore, studying identity as a process and entrepreneurship as a practice, we will be adopting the concept of entrepreneuring (Steyaert, 2007; Rindova et al., 2009), which captures the ontology of becoming (Chia, 1997; Chia & Holt, 2006). Accordingly, en-trepreneurial phenomena are associated with movement, which we suggest is maintained through subversive desire (subversion).

Entrepreneurial identity construction from the perspective of becoming has predominantly focused on social practices and discourses (e.g. networking and narrating) and the process of becoming an entrepreneur and establishing the professional identity of an entrepreneur (Cohen & Musson, 2000; Slay & Smith, 2011). The construction of such knowledge is a process that consists of discontinuity events and sometimes, subversive activities (Bureau, 2013). Recent studies of such discontinuity events position entrepreneuring as a transformative action, with

subversion a key driver of the process (Bureau, 2013, Bureau & Zander, 2014). Taking this work further, in this paper, we study subversive desire by following Bergson (1910, 1946) and his concepts of difference and intuition. These concepts are framed in relation to the individual and collective impact on both professional practices and institutional domains. Therefore, subversion and subversive entrepreneuring, in this context, describe a discontinuous process during which entrepreneurial desires and identity are practised (see for example Steyaert, 2007).

In our study, we explore entrepreneuring as subversive organising and focus on stand-up comedy as a loose organisational field in Oulu, Finland. The paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the concept of subversive desire, a discontinuous process driven by intuition and difference. We then describe the case of the stand-up comedy and our methodological approach. The second part of the paper, prior to presenting the concluding remarks, presents the findings. Here, de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation are proposed as the two processes through which subversive desire is linked with entrepreneuring. These, we will suggest, become productive forces – becoming and un/becoming the Other – and sustain entrepreneuring as a subversive experience.

Un/Becoming and Entrepreneurial Subversion: Difference and Intuition

In this section, we discuss the concept of subversion in entrepreneuring in relation to the Bergsonian (1910, 1946) concepts of difference and intuition. In the literature on entrepreneuring, the primary interest is in 'the factors that cause individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded—and, on occasion, the social order itself' (Rindova et al., 2009: 478);

however, little theoretical work has attempted to explore aspects of subversive activity in processual terms (see also Collinson, 2002; Fleming, 2005; Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Westwood & Johnston, 2011; Kenny & Euchler, 2012). In this paper, we focus on the identity work involved, that is, constructing the identity of what you are (e.g. Jones & Spicer, 2005) and what you are *not* (Carroll & Levy, 2008; Watson & Watson, 2012) and explaining entrepreneuring as an act of subversion.

Bureau (2013: 220) defined subversion as a 'specific context involving activists, entrepreneurs in this case, who are determined to destroy all or part of a system using efficient techniques and to provoke public scandals and controversy'. Yet, 'despite this diversity in usage, meaning and occurrence, the field of business studies barely uses this term [subversion], or only in very rare cases or rather anecdotal fashion' (Bureau & Zander, 2014: 125). As Bureau and Zander (2014: 125) argue, 'the absence of the term [subversion] is intriguing, as the conditions (both necessary and sufficient), which are required to create a potential of subversion are very similar in both art and entrepreneurship'. Addressing this absence, our work links subversion with discontinuity by suggesting the crucial role that unexpected events – the outcome of discontinuities – play in the process of entrepreneurship. In this process, difference is the key driver, and intuition is a means of imagining the unthinkable: the yet to come (Bloch, 1959).

Thus, we encourage a nonlinear understanding of space-time where entrepreneurial identity is not a fixed state of existence. In contrast, as the reverse of absolute logic (i.e., a sample representing a certain population), entrepreneurial identity construction is a flux process of becoming/unbecoming that challenges discipline-bound, dualistic

conceptualisations in favour of a more critical and dialogical framework of sustaining entrepreneurial desire. Becoming/unbecoming is a process in which discontinuities play the role of entrepreneurial events that signify collective creation and therefore serve to release the desire to overcome both the professional and institutional status quo (Hjorth, 2013). To explicate that, 'we must not forget that states of consciousness are processes and not things that if we denote them each by a single word, it is for the convenience of language; that they are alive and therefore constantly changing' as Bergson (1910: 196) suggests.

Thus, following Bergson (1910, 1946), having a set of traits is not the most outstanding issue of interest in an element of creation. Our inner world is a 'melody where the past enters into the present and forms with it an undivided whole which remains undivided and even indivisible in spite of what is added at every instant' (Bergson, 1946: 83). In the following section, we propose that subversive process, is constituted through difference (i.e., the performance of new/unrepeated elements of identity) and intuition (i.e., the practice of the ways of experiencing) – both concepts discussed by Bergson (1910, 1946), which when performed, maintain discontinuity in identity transformation and in turn promote subversive entrepreneuring.

Difference and Intuition as Properties of Subversive Entrepreneuring
Creation via intuition is a free movement and unconscious change that is called a (conceptual) difference in discontinuity. Action, based on the principles of difference, has the potential for subversion and in turn, actual transformation. According to Bergson (1946), difference has four forces: a) difference as differences of nature, which is the object of empirical intuition through the ways in which the real divides

itself in its embellishment; b) difference through an internal dynamic of open-endedness, ensuring that it differs not only from itself but also from everything like it; c) difference that operates through degrees of actualisation to tendencies and processes; and d) difference as movement through a process of differentiation, division, or bifurcation (Grosz, 2005). Hence, difference does not seek a union but seeks the generation of ever-increasing variation or differentiation because difference infiltrates the force of duration (a process of becoming and unbecoming) in all things. In this context, becoming is a self-differentiation process and a quality that emerges or actualises only in duration. Defining duration, Bergson states:

> …there is, on the one hand a multiplicity of successive states of consciousness and, on the other hand, a unity which binds them together. Duration will be the synthesis of this unity and multiplicity, but how this mysterious operation can admit of shades or degrees, I repeat, is not quite clear. (Bergson, 1946: 197 – 207)

Moreover, intuition has two tendencies that can meld into one another: the first tendency is a downward movement to a depth beyond practical utility, action, and definable results, but that is close to those moments of reflection during which one perceives inner continuity. The second tendency is a reverse movement in which this downward tendency fuels a movement back to the surface for direct contact with the material, duration with space, a movement whereby the one compresses itself as the Other.

Reading Bergson, Deleuze (1994) observes the proliferation of dualisms, such as becoming/unbecoming, not because reality is divisible or polarised but because each of these pairs is the expression of a single force. The one is not reducible but is the underlying principle or condition of the Other. Hence, 'becoming is thus not a capacity inherited by life, an evolutionary outcome or consequence, but is the very principle of matter itself, with its possibilities of linkage with the living, with its

possibilities of mutual transformation, with its inherent and unstable volatility' (Grosz, 2005: 12). Following this tradition, we are not interested in creative destruction as a reinforcing power to create a new venture (e.g. Bureau, 2013). In contrast, we focus on the subversive desires that have the potential to generate transformation at the organisational level of entrepreneurial un/becoming (see Bureau & Zander, 2014).

Thus, difference and intuition constitute discontinuity as the white space of an organisation (for example, Beyes & Steyaert, 2013), an in-between space (e.g. Hjorth, 2005), and an event that subverts the reigning order (e.g. an unexpected discussion in the corridor on the way to the restroom). Subversive desire therefore influences the process of discerning what we collectively are and, especially, what we could become (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004). Thus, discontinuity as part of a subversive process has a productive element; it is not a question of being as a representation per se, but it is a process that fosters unknown futures; futures yet to come. We attempt to research this productive element with the study we discuss below.

Methodology

Our research is based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and, thus, we did not have a hypothesis in mind that we wanted to test. We did know we wanted to find out how subversion and entrepreneuring are related. We thus decided to study the case of three entrepreneuring individuals who were associated with an organisation called Ookko Nää Nauranu (meaning 'have you laughed?' in Northern Finnish slang; ONN hereafter) in order to assess how individuals construct and de-construct their entrepreneurial practice in context.

Assessing this, we looked for elements or processes of subversion or subversive organising, that is, the ways in which resistance to rigid entrepreneurial identities is expressed in the everyday activities of three entrepreneuring individuals. This case is not spectacular, but, by contrast, reflects everyday entrepreneurial practices where subversive dynamics play a crucial role.

ONN is one of the few stand-up comedy event producers in Finland. Traditionally, stand-up comedy event producers provide stand-up comedians (individual entrepreneurs) to events that they organise at bars, theatres, colleges, and nightclubs, but sometimes also for individual customers and entertainment festivals. Often, stand-up comedy event producers are established stand-up comedians themselves. Yet, a number of up-and-coming stand-up comedians have not got sufficient followers to run their own gigs or produce stand-up comedy events themselves. These individuals (about 60 to 100 comedians) are trying to break into the field, primarily by enlisting their personal contacts or associating themselves with ONN. Our third informant, Ari-Matti, is an example of this group. Nevertheless, for the majority of comics in Finland, stand-up comedy remains a second career that is subsidiary to a job they already have, or hope to find.

During the fieldwork, we attended comedy clubs organised by the ONN entrepreneurs, Zaani and Ville. We were invited to after-show events and got to know established stand-up comedians, up-and-coming performers (including Ari-Matti), and their partners such as the other stand-up comedians performing in the club and the staff working in the clubs or in the cloakrooms. Finally, we spent long nights with all of these individuals in their 'office space'. This office space was where individuals

physically worked (including backstage) but also included virtual spaces such as public postings on web blogs and Facebook. These postings were also transcribed and analysed along with the material from our discussions and observations.

When analysing the data, we did not focus on a specific organisation as the unit of analysis, but on how organisational fields (like stand-up comedy) are disrupted and subverted by entrepreneurial behaviour of the actors involved. Through this we want to explore how entrepreneurial activities are framed and re-framed through the inherent tensions embedded in organising everyday entrepreneurial discontinuities (a process of iterative becoming/unbecoming). One of the crucial components in this process is to 'un-become' what other stand-up comedians have become: to converse with the 'other' in an intuitive way. The stand-up comedy field is thus used in this paper as a negotiated practice between agents' desires for subversive practices (i.e. to change the way stand-up comedy is produced) and institutionally bounded structures and regimes.

Particularly, we focused on how a fixed entity (ONN) was organised alongside the subversive tendencies of the ONN entrepreneurs and one up-and-coming stand-up comedian. We shadowed, listened to and recorded stories, and analysed public blog posts of Ari-Matti, Zaani and Ville, over a period of ten months, keeping a diary throughout. The duration of our recorded material with all three is 315 minutes. Each meeting lasted around two hours and was framed around organising as well as the process of becoming (an entrepreneur). Our approach followed Czarniawska's (2008) suggestion to concentrate on organising, rather than organisations, when combining ethnographic fieldwork with storytelling. As she writes, the point is not to identify

fixed things, but instead to capture the dynamics of organising in the empirical data (Czarniawska, 2008). By focusing on the *how* questions, we wanted to reveal the processes of discontinuity and the tensions experienced across the two realms; enacting fixed organisational identities and ensuring entrepreneurial practice remains subversive.

To achieve our aim, we analysed the stories of organising while at the same time, observing real-life interventions, in order to reveal the entrepreneurial emancipation that current literature describes (see Alvesson et al., 2008; Carroll & Levy, 2008). These are described as small, creative, and deconstructive actions that cannot be observed merely by analysing discussions and conversations because such emancipations occur (when they occur) in everyday practices and in the in-between spaces (Hjorth, 2005), yet they can be found in tales from the field (Van Maanen, 1988; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995). It was this combination of stories and observed interactions that revealed fluctuations in organising; a discontinuous relationship between what is structurally rigid and bounded (i.e. existing stand-up comedy institutions) and the desire for subversive practice (i.e. those needs and emotions to subvert and bring about change). In the next section, we explore further how this discontinuous relationship unfolds, by focusing on two processes, un/becoming de/professionalised and un/becoming de/institutionalised.

Entrepreneuring as Subversive Organising

Stand-up comedy is a field in which artists must convince not only the audience but also (and especially) their networks of their ability. Failing to do so can severely restrict performers' opportunities and the likelihood of becoming famous or

sustaining a career in comedy. Social acceptance is crucial for stand-up comedians and extensive time and effort are frequently needed to obtain sufficient bookings to become established. Finnish comedy venues are unlikely to pay travel and accommodation expenses for untested stand-up comedians. A comedian must cover those costs while simultaneously building interpersonal networks.

Therefore, the identity of a new entrant in the field is bounded by the desire to become a professional stand-up comedian, to conform to established practices, and to find ways of embedding oneself into existing professional networks. Yet, entrepreneurial practices related to those events show critical elements of (subversive) organising. In this section, we highlight two dimensions of such organising – de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation – that illustrate the fluid process of entrepreneuring as subversive organising.

Un/Becoming De/Professionalised

The story of ONN began when one of the founding entrepreneurs (Ville) was a student with an idea of starting a stand-up comedy club. It was an aspiration shared with his friend Zaani, with whom he was then producing TV shows. Both were frustrated with the quality of stand-up comedy clubs in Finland. Clearly, a stand-up comedy company was completely different from what they had previously produced together. One day while driving, Ville and Zaani began discussing the issues plaguing the stand-up comedy clubs in Finland. The passage below from one of the interviews shows Ville and Zaani reconstructing the starting point of their entrepreneurial adventure:

> *Ville: The lighting was like in this room now, completely green chairs for the audience. Well, I entered this room and thought, what the **** is going on here? Forty-seven people are sitting in a room for 300 people, and all the people are sitting far away from each other. I sat down*

somewhere in the back part of the auditorium and was looking around; there was no music at all. I felt like we were waiting for a wedding couple in a church. And then, suddenly, a stand-up comedian enters the room like, saying just 'Hi'. What a ******* atmosphere!
Zaani: And the microphone did not work. They did not even have a person responsible for the acoustics in there or anything. So, that was the starting point. Everything was missing.

Ville and Zaani wanted something other than what was available: in their words, better than the '******* badly produced clubs'. In one interview, Zaani explained how frustrated they were at that point:

*We decided that we will **not** (with emphasis) do this, and we will not do this, and we will not do this. For one and a half years, we observed and discussed. We started not to lose, so we had all the tactical plans. If somewhere there was an imaginative attack, we would be ready. This is the way…*

Becoming an entrepreneur, accordingly, means deciding what *not* to do. However, as Zaani explained in one interview, this concept is not a dualist process of negation of one for the other:

As *an entrepreneur …you should avoid comparing entrepreneurship and family life with each other. Instead, your own mental balance needs to be strong as an entrepreneur. That supports the family life, too. I prefer to go out and have drinks. I am honest about it. I have enjoyed that for many years already. It is a social hobby. I meet lots of good people that way. And that's it.*

De/professionalisation therefore is a *process of continuous reflection*, a personal/professional intuitive journey (a downward movement), and 'an imaginative attack' that maintains entrepreneurs' desire for subversion and creative art (the subversive practice of narrating). Reflection sometimes involves attacking a convenient professional atmosphere. According to Zaani, it is 'ridiculous' to highlight a good atmosphere at work because this is the default position of an entrepreneur. In one interview, Zaani recalled one of the professional venues he had worked at:

Many people might have bad experiences, so one knows him or herself. That is the issue that needs to be taken care of. One of the things is that a bad atmosphere at work is something that everybody talks about, but nobody reacts to it… You can always leave, and you will always survive.

Moreover, de/professionalisation is also about creatively exploring the environment and attempting to make new connections, even if that means leaving an unattractive workplace. Clearly, *creative exploration* is about being aware of where things stand and attempting to change the ways of thinking through creative collaborations and new formations, that is, the possibility of initiating change (Jones & Spicer, 2005). Subversive desire underpins that notion and fosters the process of entrepreneuring. Ville's reaction below signifies his desire to do things differently and subvert existing expectations and professional norms:

> *I can tell you, I have received negative feedback from being an entrepreneur. Well, I am an eight-year master's degree student in the Department of Technology. I am somewhere in the middle now, but it doesn't interest me. My family told me that 'now you should finish your school and start working for Rautaruukki (one of the biggest steel companies in Finland), and then you go to Tornio' and so forth. And then you will buy a family-style Volvo and make it in that way. ****, I will not do it that way! Well, it's that kind of thing where someone thinks that way and then comes to you saying something like that. The starting phase of a career as an entrepreneur goes in such a different direction than what people expect, but you won't do it that way.*

The story of Ari-Matti (the up-and-coming stand-up comedian who worked closely with the ONN entrepreneurs) demonstrates his intention to be subversive through negotiating his possible identities and their performance: 'It is not the real me on the stage; it is a representation of me', he explains. At the same time, he writes in a public blog post:

> *And in answer to the question of how far you can get in stand-up comedy in a year… The work trip of 28 hours consisted of a couple of aberrations, free alcohol, irregular eating, and much disturbed sleeping. Do I want to spend my weekends that way? No, definitely not, but I am ready to spend **all** of my working days in this way. (http://bugi.oulu.fi/~arimatti/entry/110905.php, blog, emphasis added).*

Therefore, one cannot simply repeat that which already exists; de/professionalisation denotes a constant need to *reconstruct one's identity* yet at the same time maintain dynamic open-endedness. Ari-Matti explains this further:

> *The first gig was the kind that I was already so frustrated when the first comedian was going on. I was so frustrated at that point, and that feeling remained; it took until about 15 minutes after my own gig, and I was still sniggering. The second gig was a more peaceful experience,*

> *as I knew that I could make it and perform there. I got about a seven-minute slot in the second gig in Tampere [a city in central Finland], and I knew that I could make it and my jokes were funny and the audience came along well. After that second gig, I had kind of an artist or star feeling, as I got an artist passport that allowed me to go everywhere in the festival area without paying any entrance fees and standing in the queue. I didn't need to, that happened at that second gig at the Tammer Festival in Tampere; I didn't need to have any kind of ticket, but I could go everywhere with my artist passport. That felt great.*

He showed that he is aware of the pressures towards professionalisation of comedy acts; yet, he was ready to explore other possible identities, experiment, subvert and re-establish himself:

> *I was hanging around with Zaani after the gig, and we went to a couple of bars before he took a train back home. At the train station, I wondered whether I should also go to sleep, as the other comedians who had families had gone to sleep already. Then I thought that no, damn, I am kind of 'a star', so I went to see what was going on there rather than going to sleep.*

He added when commenting on so-called professional behaviour:

> *There are stand-up comedians who go to every single event to perform. I've heard that there have even been weddings where a stand-up comedian has managed to ruin the whole thing by telling jokes that made the bride cry and so forth.*

He did not want to become a professional in those terms. During one of the interviews, when describing the evolution of their activities in relation to their establishment as entrepreneurs, Zaani stated with conviction, the importance of embracing liminality by practicing difference as degrees of actualisation:

> *Entrepreneurship needs to be kept as a parasite in a way that this company is a parasite for us, and we need to do so much work on it for it to work. In our case, that parasite likes us, and it does not suck on us too much. Some day, if that parasite becomes evil in nature and becomes a very big mite, then it might need to be replaced.*

For Zaani and Ville, there is always the option to abandon the whole idea if it begins to involve more work than pleasure, or if ONN comes to resemble all of the other stand-up comedy clubs in Finland. For them, this venture encapsulates the desire to choose a different course and become active agents of change. De/professionalisation therefore also means constantly moving towards un/becoming, seeking transformation by *embracing liminal positions*. Subversive entrepreneuring, in turn, is a process that

is constantly in flux: one cannot simply reproduce existing identities but must instead creatively explore others and by doing that, also subvert normative practice.

Un/Becoming De/Institutionalised

The desire for flexible communitarian professional relations and anti-conformist identities is combined with a realisation that certain activities require a form of formalisation and institutionalisation. The ONN entrepreneurs described an unsuccessful application for funding at from the municipal authority of Oulu. Ville explained:

> *It happened that when trying to convince the group of culture-focused administrators in Oulu, you should have a ******* programme [an idea for producing a cultural product]. For example, there should be a guy who craps on waxed paper and dances on it. And then the applicants also need somebody to watch that programme. And our company has been in those meetings in which there were about a hundred people presenting. And we are the only company that has something to say. Everybody else is something tingeli tangeli tingeli tangeli, and then those people are watching us in a way, like, 'there are these guys…'. And then they wished that we disappeared from the stage, and after us there comes a strange guy who lights himself on fire… leading to a situation in which you get the money if you have certain… stuff. In the near future, we will apply for a grant for a fictitious event, and then we will get 50,000 euros!*

Zaani continued:

> *But, then, if the only issue is how to get a grant and financial support from somewhere, then those are the wrong principles for a company or for some activity, if one only thinks about how to get a grant. Instead of that, you should think about how to produce a programme that is interesting and nice. Right?*

Ville concluded:

> *Right? The starting point cannot be based on the wish to get a grant… then those guys rent a place and spend the grant... And after that, those guys start to think that, oh ****, somebody should perform over there, and those actors should be paid as well. Where do we get the grant for the parts of the programme?*

Their descriptions convey a clear sense of anger and frustration, as the narration includes many non-words ("tingeli tangeli tingeli tangeli"; baby talk in Finnish). In addition, the frustration is evident, because the narrative constantly veers from one

issue to another. Ville and Zaani's linguistic interactions and the many swear words included reveal a process of attempting to convince one another that a certain method was how they should continue their stand-up comedy clubs, asking one another 'Right?' a couple of times, with the second person responding similarly: 'Yes, that is the way, right?' In that manner, Ville and Zaani established their 'hobby' as an entrepreneurial field of action that deserved funding based on institutional metrics. Nevertheless, they realised that the demands of establishing a business may lie outside what they call their 'creative practice' though they found this rather frustrating. Ville described the business side of their activities during one of the interviews:

> *We just went to the accountant and asked about the best form for the company; OK, Päivi (their accountant) has been kicking our *** for many years telling us that 'this has to be done like this and this like that'.*

For Zaani and Ville, re-constructing the professional boundaries of their 'business' was overwhelming at times and conflicted with their ideological motives. At one level, change emerges as an individual process of becoming other through the investigation of differences, natural articulations of the real (*identity transitions*). At another level however, actors *mobilised collective processes* and challenged the existing culture of Finnish stand-up comedy (see Bureau, 2013; Bureau & Zander, 2014). Trying to maintain inner continuity, they are determined that, despite institutional pressures for isomorphism, 'the context where stand-up works' has to evolve. Zaani explained how dysfunctional some established practices are:

> *The most difficult thing in our work is that people don't know how much it depends on the context of a stand-up comedy club and how difficult it is to build one. You need to understand that stand-up can be compared with a theatre play. It requires the full concentration of the audience. So, you cannot organise a cocktail event at the same time and play some music as well or give speeches simultaneously. And then the comedian comes: 'now, it's my turn'. No.*

Being able to maintain creative energy, a necessary component for subversive

entrepreneuring, is not simply a business-related issue but a social, collective issue; an issue that also involves civil engagement. This is demonstrated in activities that the participants are engaging with that lie outside their professional practice boundaries. For example, Ville photographed a sticker that protested against extremist religious group in Finland. The sticker had the following message: 'the [name of the group removed for reasons of confidentiality]—raping children since 1844'. He posted that picture on his Facebook profile and commented that 'finally, someone is right'[1]. Within an hour, 300 people shared Ville's photo. Following this, Oulu police got involved and his Facebook account was scrutinised. Based on the public interest in Ville's Facebook post, ONN published an advert about their next club night, noting in the following gig announcement, 'Ville is good at taking pictures'.

Creative energy, in this context, entails a dynamic yet integrative framing of entrepreneuring as a subversive practice. Through a movement, whereby the one compresses itself as the Other, subverting processes disrupt structures (using social media). Their Facebook page is used not only as a site where professional activities are shared but also as a space for political activity. When organising expresses a potent, communal desire to do things differently, entrepreneuring becomes a form of organising as the Other, a process of embedding an activity into a wider social practice, a creative process of changing how one views the world.

Organising differently here can be viewed as the interplay between two forces: the need to conform and adopt pre-existing norms and regulations, while at the same time subvert and disrupt socially accepted ways of organising. In other words, organising is constructed as subversive entrepreneuring: from intense desire to change the

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[1] There had recently been a great deal of discussion of paedophilia in that group in Finland. Ville wanted to express that he was against that activity, although it would be unfair to assume that all the people in that group mistreat children.

expected, established and conventional, to the pressing need to engage with institutional (and legal) structures so not to fail. That is, from the one hand, becoming fixed or 'crystallized' (Daskalaki and Mould, 2013) – through abiding to established processes and practices and on the other, constantly engaging with a process of un-becoming by maintaining a degree of fluidity which will allow for 'openings' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to bring about resistance and change. Being able to balance and creatively subvert contested forces of becoming different, and establishing new practice, while simultaneously working within current established institutional settings is crucial in entrepreneuring.

Therefore, as Table 1 shows, the two processes of de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation together co-constitute entrepreneuring as subversive organising and are co-constituted by the entangled performances of the interrelated properties discussed in this section. Continuous and creative reflection that mobilises collective action beyond established personal and professional practice boundaries as well as flexible boundary positions that embrace in-between identities, institute spaces where subversive entrepreneurial activities can emerge.

Properties	De/professionalisation	De/Institutionalisation
Entrepreneuring as Subversive Organising	Continuous reflection	Mobilise collective processes
	Creative exploration	Expand professional practice boundaries
	Reconstruct one's identity	Identity Transitions
	Embrace liminal positions	Pursue activities outside their creative practice

Table 1: Entrepreneuring as Subversive Organising

Accordingly, entrepreneuring as a subversive form of organising is performed through de/professionalization and de/institutionalization, a process that entails moving within and across different practice realms, maintaining fluidity, while at the same time performing alternative identities. These performances, we showed, can potentially reframe personal identities and at the collective level also challenge established practices and values. These two processes are entangled and co-dependent and highlight that subversive dynamics operate in both the micro individual and the macro/institutional levels.

Concluding, the two properties of subversive organising, de/institutionalization and de/professionalization are practiced through the interplay of intuition and difference as these were theorized, following Bergson, in the first part of our paper (see Table 2).

Properties	De/Professionalisation	De/Institutionalisation
Intuition as a downward movement: beyond practical action but that is close to those moments of reflection during which one perceives inner continuity. **Intuition as a reverse movement:** back to the surface for direct contact with the material, duration with space, a movement whereby the one compresses itself as the Other.	*Continuous reflection* Example from the data: *As an entrepreneur …you should avoid comparing entrepreneurship and family life with each other. Instead, your own mental balance needs to be strong as an entrepreneur. That supports the family life, too…*	*Mobilise collective processes* Example from the data: *The most difficult thing in our work is that people don't know how much it depends on the context of a stand-up comedy club and how difficult it is to build one. You need to understand that stand-up can be compared with a theatre play. It requires the full concentration of the audience. So, you cannot organise a cocktail event at the same time and play some music as well or give speeches simultaneously…*
	Creative exploration Example from the data: *Many people might have bad experiences, so one knows him or herself. That is the issue that needs to be taken care of. One of the things is that a bad atmosphere at work is something that everybody talks about, but nobody reacts to it…*	*Expand professional practice boundaries* Example from the data: *Ville photograph - protest against a group of extreme religious group in Finland and police's investigation of this issue. Furthermore, Zaani's statement "Ville is good at taking pictures" provides more evidence for this element.*

Properties	De/Professionalisation	De/Institutionalisation
Difference	*Reconstruct one's identity* **Difference as dynamic of open-endedness:** a force of internal difference. Example from the data: *I knew that I could make it and my jokes were funny and the audience came along well. After that second gig, I had kind of an artist or star feeling, as I got an artist passport that allowed me to go everywhere in the festival area without paying any entrance fees and standing in the queue. I didn't need to, that happened at that second gig at the Tammer Festival in Tampere; I didn't need to have any kind of ticket, but I could go everywhere with my artist passport. That felt great.*	*Identity Transitions* **Difference in nature:** the investigation of differences, natural articulations of the real. Example from the data: *But, then, if the only issue is how to get a grant and financial support from somewhere, then those are the wrong principles for a company or for some activity, if one only thinks about how to get a grant. Instead of that, you should think about how to produce a programme that is interesting and nice.*
	Embrace liminal positions **Difference as degrees of actualisation -** tendencies and processes expressed only in particular degrees. Example from the data: *Entrepreneurship needs to be kept as a parasite in a way that this company is a parasite for us, and we need to do so much work on it for it to work. In our case, that parasite likes us, and it does not suck on us too much. Some day, if that parasite becomes evil in nature and becomes a very big mite, then it might need to be replaced.*	*Pursue activities outside their creative practice* **Difference as a movement:** process of differentiation. Example from the data: *We just went to the accountant and asked about the best form for the company; OK, Päivi (their accountant) has been kicking our *** for many years telling us that 'this has to be done like this and this like that.*

Table 2: Entrepreneuring as Subversive Organizing: Difference and Intuition

That is, continuous reflection and creative exploration facilitate processes of de/professionalisation and signify both a downward and a reverse reflexive movement that ensures inner continuity while at the same time meets the Other through direct contact with the material. Further, de/institutionalisation is a process that challenges boundaries through collective mobilizations that embrace the continuity/mobility interplay. Finally, the four categories of difference (adopted from Bergson, 1946) highlight liminal identity positions and enact iterative identity transitions, which maintain tensions in entrepreneurial practice.

Concluding Remarks

This study suggested that that the desire to become an entrepreneur is not only an individual quest of becoming but also a social and unconscious process of resisting

the pitfalls of fixed and institutionally bounded professional identities. Through the case of stand-up comedy organising activities in Finland, we argued that entrepreneurial un/becoming performed relationally as a subversive practice, sustains rather than resolves, the tensions of entrepreneuring. Prior work on identity construction discusses individual identities in existing organisations; this study offers a perspective on identity as a social subversion process that is part of entrepreneurial creation. Subversive desire, the need to create something different is driven by intuition and difference, components that are discontinuously performed within professional boundaries and existing institutions. We thus suggested the study of entrepreneuring as subversive organising and explored entrepreneurial identity construction as a process of de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation.

Prior research on entrepreneurial identity (e.g. Watson & Watson, 2012) approached identity construction as an individual quest. Adopting this level of analysis, the destructive element is an individual desire for subversion. In this paper, we wanted to expand on this notion, and also to explore subversive desire as a driver for change that individuals achieve collectively. Hence we employed this specific case study, which does not describe a spectacular or 'heroic' entrepreneurial story (Ogbor, 2000); instead it shows how subversive dynamics can be identified in 'everyday entrepreneurial practices'. These practices, we propose, can potentially reframe identities and collectively, challenge and transform institutional fixities. Thus, desire for subversion is not only the intent to politically revolt (Bureau, 2013) but also a collective engagement that can create alternatives. We therefore urge scholars to take this quest further and examine the notion of collective subversive practices and how

they can create new organisational forms, especially when no organisation is in place initially (see Bureau, 2013; Bureau & Zander, 2014).

The ethnographic methodology adopted in this study – linking storytelling with participant observation – allowed the study of people who practice identity construction through everyday events or inherent discontinuities. Discontinuity is a critical element of entrepreneuring that signifies that identity construction is a constant process of transformation. The nature of entrepreneuring, therefore, involves destroying the existing status quo and reinforcing (rather than trying to amend) discontinuities in identity construction. More precisely, such a difference is based on an unconscious intuitive desire to de/professionalise and de/institutionalise the organisation of stand-up comedy; viewed as a perpetual movement rather than as a fixed state of existence. Additionally, the discontinuities in identity construction occur through the desire for otherness, for the other-yet-to-come; and this is what guides entrepreneuring. In that sense, discontinuity events cannot be placed in a time series to reflect a cumulative process. Instead, the nature of discontinuity events drives a nonlinear process of creation (Hjorth, 2013): the possibility to implement the desire for subversion in its productive form (e.g. the creation of an emerging organisation).

To summarise, we attempted to contribute to the literature on entrepreneuring in terms of comic organisation and subversive organising forms as follows. First, we explained entrepreneurial subversion through difference and intuition: both processes that promote discontinuities. Subversive entrepreneurial desire is not only about becoming someone else in terms of identity, but also about attempting to subvert the existing mismatches in a specific domain. Although the current research on identity

construction has offered examples of how identity is resisted, produced, or practised (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Down & Revley, 2004, 2009), we have extended those notions and conceptualised identity transitions as process of becoming/unbecoming, which via subversive desire, create something new, transforming the status quo.

Second, the desire for subversion involves a break from both what is already there and a move towards what is yet to come. Clearly, social encounters are embodied (see the concept of embodied social capital, Holt, 2008) and influence their future social performances. Social relations and power dynamics are performative acts and events (Butler, 1993). The process of becoming is clearly linked with the entrepreneurial contexts within which social relationships are conducted. Though a processual reading of Bureau (2013) and Bureau and Zander's (2014) work, we proposed entrepreneurial subversion goes beyond intention and actually translates into processes (de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation) through elevating individual desire to a social (civic), collective quest. Identities are indeed constructed within a social/professional realm and the tensions embedded within entrepreneurial practice highlight the fragile and dynamic qualities of both social institutions and social identities. Adopting a post-structuralist perspective we explored these subversive dynamics through everyday performances. These performances we proposed have the potential to reframe personal identities and at the collective level, challenge and transform structures; everyday performances are entangled in two co-operating trajectories; the micro/individual and the macro/institutional/social one.

Accordingly, spheres of action and rules are entangled with human behaviour, identities, and individual and collective practices and cannot be explored as separate entities with one doing something to the other. The world is an ongoing open process of 'mattering' through which mattering itself acquires meaning and form in the realisation of different agential possibilities (Barad, 2003). The fundamental issue is the exploration of the de-stabilisation processes (entrepreneurial subversive events), which reinforce and accelerate change. In this context, we proposed the processes of de/professionalisation and de/institutionalisation through which subversive desire is practised. Further empirical research is needed to explore other processes through which entrepreneurial identities are constructed as highly contentious and subversive experiences. We hope that with this work we have initiated this discussion and offered inspiration for more work on the role of subversion in entrepreneurial identity construction.

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