

WALKING A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN ARTISTRY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE STORIES OF THE HOTEL WOODPECKER, OTTER INN AND LUNA RESORT

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we tell a story about the artist/entrepreneur Mikael Genberg and his trilogy of housing, the Hotel Woodpecker, Otter Inn and Luna Resort which are looked upon as both art installations and acts of entrepreneurship. Taking our point of departure in Genberg and the trilogy of housing, we discuss the content of entrepreneurship by focusing on the following aspects: Creativity versus Imitation, Identity versus Legitimizing, and Opportunity creation versus Discovery recognition. Firstly, from a traditional Schumpeterian perspective Genberg could be portrayed as a very good example of a hero entrepreneur, an archetype of the creative artist/entrepreneur. But instead we have somewhat demystified Genberg and described him in terms of a creative imitator, an everyday characteristic of normal men and women. Secondly, the Schumpeterian “hero entrepreneur” is associated with a fixed and strong identity, clearly different from the “normal” individual. This picture of the entrepreneur has dominated entrepreneurship research. Challenging this picture we suggest that the use of double or multiple identities is important in the legitimizing work which is much more illustrative to the content of entrepreneurship than finding the true identity of the hero entrepreneur. Thirdly, we view discovery recognition as attributed to the individual – often linked to the hero entrepreneur – while opportunity creation signifies the process of making discoveries collectively shared. Hence, creativity, discovery recognition and the identity of the entrepreneur form the traditional image of the content of entrepreneurship. In contrast, we suggest that another image is worth taking into consideration if we are interested in broadening our understanding of what is going on in the black box of entrepreneurship. In this image imitation, jointly created opportunities and legitimization are made visible.

INTRODUCTION

In Västerås City, a town close to Stockholm, there is a city park as most towns tend to have. The park is generally a retreat for a pause at one of the park benches, a tranquil place for reading a book or a place for a pleasant picnic in the grass. However, this is one of the more usual days when one of us has to cross the park on the way back to work from a lunch in the city centre, a rainy day in April 1998. Suddenly there is the sound of a hammer beating from somewhere

around. Looking for the noise I catch a glimpse of someone with a lot of rubbish in one of the park trees. The person hammering is the artist Mikael Genberg who is occupied with building a tree cottage. At the time I had no idea what was going on but today, in 2005, that rubbish has become one of the trademarks of Västerås, attracting tourists and journalists from all over the world. This is a story about a trilogy of housing which today consists of the tree cottage the "Hotel Woodpecker" and the underwater hotel the "Otter Inn". The third and final project of the alternative housing forms, the "Luna Resort", is still a vision as it is under construction. The completion of the trilogy concerns the idea of putting a cottage on the moon.

With his motto "it is easier to get forgiveness than permission", Genberg and the story of the tree cottage the "Hotel Woodpecker" and the underwater hotel the "Otter Inn" have almost become legendary. This is not only in Västerås but also around the world thanks to TV, newspapers and the Internet's impact on distributing the story. The process of the Luna Resort proceeds today and no one knows whether this too is going to be another "success" or perhaps turn into a "failure". Anyway, it is an idea which has received a great deal of attention. As was written in one of Sweden's largest newspapers:

Neil Armstrong left an olive twig on the Moon. The artist Mikael Genberg wants to be a cut above. A red cottage with white corners could be his next installation. And the Swedish space establishment exults in the free publicity. (Dagens Nyheter, 2004)

Whilst sitting there in the tree during rainy as well as sunny days in the spring of 98, Genberg had time to reflect and consider other ideas. Looking up to the sky, perhaps to get away from his fear of heights, he began to wonder if it would be possible to someday build a cottage on the moon. This idea was, however, rejected at the time but stayed in the back of his head. When both the Hotel Woodpecker and Otter Inn were finished it seemed a good time to make the alternative forms of housing into a trilogy. The missing piece has been named the Luna Resort which is an attempt to put the third cottage at the moon. This is a project of quite a different magnitude than either of the other two forms of housing or installations he has been engaged in. In this project, as in the previous ones, he needs to evoke enthusiasm in a broad range of individuals, companies and public organisations. Hitherto he has made contact with the Swedish Space Institute and together they have made clear that the project is possible from both a financial and technical requirement point of view. The elucidation resulted in a preliminary study made by the Swedish Space Corporation in which technical details are elaborated on. Further, a number of private persons, companies and public organisations have shown interest in supporting the idea. Some of them have also shown interest in financing the project. By following the debate in the local newspaper it seems as though "Luna Resort" is an idea that does not leave anyone untouched:

I think that he is matchless, totally marvellous. He makes me feel in a good mood with his ideas. He is also a talented portrait painter, portraits which I have been completely touched by. I keep my fingers crossed to the full.

Completely insane. Stop the man before he completely ruins the city's tax payers

But good heavens, who will derive pleasure from this, no one will even be able to see it...

Surely, the guy must like himself and to be seen. Probably rather egofixated. Doesn't he believe that money should be put into more important things than this? Genberg should buy himself a packet of street crayons and draw a picture of a cottage on his garage drive.

(VLT, 2003-09-29)

Either people consider it completely insane, meaning that Mikael Genberg is a person who suffers from megalomania, or there are others who instantly commit themselves to the idea, wanting to take part in the process of Luna Resort. Hence, in creating and not least in carrying through a project of this magnitude Genberg must gain legitimacy, both for who he is and for what he wants to do. Clearly Luna is not a project that Genberg could pull off by himself. Luna Resort is simply not a one-man project.

The stories about Mikael Genberg and his trilogy of housing have, in a positive sense, provoked the public and potential co-entrepreneurs. He has also provoked us as researchers to theorize¹ about the content of entrepreneurship. Starting to turn the story over in our minds we stumble on several intriguing aspects, among them how the story seems to both irritate and fascinate, and how the borderlines between the possible and the impossible, the expected and the unexpected and between thought and action are made visible. The trilogy of housing gives rise to two questions: What is art? And, what is entrepreneurship? The borderline between art and entrepreneurship seems both to dissolve and become more distinct. A disputed question seems to be whether the trilogy of housing is art or entrepreneurship, or neither? We are interested not in either or, but in how entrepreneurship can be understood in a way which complements its traditional content as described in the entrepreneurship literature.

ARTISTRY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS DESIGN

The questions we ask determine the answers we receive, and as a consequence what we are able to see. Thus Sarasvathy (2004) challenges the research community to reformulate the questions we ask about entrepreneurship. She suggests that our focus should be on the "entrepreneur" as distinct from the "firm".

If we are to develop real content in entrepreneurship, we need to focus our attention on understanding it from the point of view of the entrepreneur. In other words, we need to develop questions that emphasize how the firm serves as an instrument in the toolkit of the entrepreneur.. Furthermore, how the entrepreneur designs particular firms that bridge or cleave their personal aspirations in relation to environmental possibilities would form the cornerstone of a variety of research projects that are hitherto either neglected or understudied. (ibid: 713)

Following Sarasvathy, research on entrepreneurship has had such a strong focus on examining "the firm" that our understanding of entrepreneurship becomes very restricted. Trying to understand Genberg we realize that he makes use of the firm as an instrument. He uses his "firm" to collect the rent income from the "Hotel Woodpecker" and "Otter Inn". He also has another "firm" in which he, together with two companions, sells rubber boats. And nowadays he is about to internationalise the Otter Inn from another firm, which means that underwater houses will also be installed at other places around the world. It does not make much sense, though, to analyze these firms from a growth or survival perspective as the amount of money provided

is fairly small. When it comes to the “Luna Resort” seen from the perspective of Genberg’s firm it is still a very small firm. But as an entrepreneurial endeavour the “Luna Resort” is really big, as it knits together a number of big companies and small firms as well as community people and a number of individuals involved that are driven by a range of different motives. In addition, the “Hotel Woodpecker” and “Otter Inn” represent much more than the rent income. They are both installations which can be viewed by tourists as well as citizens of Västerås walking through the park – as one of us did that rainy day in April 1998 – or taking one of the passenger boats for those who do not take their own boat on Lake Mälaren. As artistry it is difficult to say what gives the artistic experience, if it is to stay over night within the installation or just to pass by outside the installation as a spectator. As tourist attractions, the installations represent both an economic and cultural value to the city of Västerås and its citizens. The Luna Resort has, for instance, gained much interest in the public sphere where the project is discussed as a releaser for economic growth, stressing the potential of technological development and innovations. Genberg also suggests that the Luna Resort could become a global symbol for Sweden’s entrepreneurial capacity. However, he seems to ascribe the project other meanings too; meanings which involve values other than purely economic ones and that bring an eye-opening feature on how we want to arrange our society:

The Luna Resort, except from becoming the first work of art in space, will also be the first real symbolic act for a real human living outside our own plant. A house with white corners will become a warm, poetic and peaceful expression for our future challenges. (Project description of Luna Resort, 2003: 1)

When the house is standing there on the moon people can see the inhospitable environment. Perhaps they then realize that it is high time for us to be a little more concerned about our own environment. Starting to take a bit more care of mother earth. (Cited from a seminar by Genberg)

Thus Sarasvathy’s proposal of studying “the firm” as an instrument in the toolkit of the entrepreneur does not seem to be enough. If we study Genberg’s firms we only get a limited glimpse of entrepreneurship. Neither does it help us very much to study how he makes use of his “firms”. It is only when we make the city of Västerås, its citizens, the space technology companies or the global environmental issue as our frame of reference that we can begin to sense the content of entrepreneurship associated with Genberg’s installations.

Sarasvathy also challenges us to view entrepreneurship as a process of the design of interface between the inner environment (psychology of the individual, resources within the firm, etc) and the outer environment (life-cycle of the industry, technology trajectories, etc). What seems to characterize Genberg’s initiatives, ideas and installations is that they create an interface between Västerås and the outer world – including space! – as well as connecting the Västerås community and firms within Västerås with each other. This is a kind of entrepreneurship that belongs under the rubric of design. And we argue that entrepreneurship within such a frame is much more disclosing than Sarasvathy suggests. The limits are not the process of designing an interface between Genberg’s firm(s) and the outer environment. Rather, they have to do with the interface between outer environments joined together by first one installation, then a second and now the third.

By reformulating entrepreneurship as design, Sarasvathyⁱⁱ emphasizes the content of entrepreneurship. Genberg and the trilogy of housing have challenged us to observe other aspects

with regard to the content of entrepreneurship. We have, thus, in mind to create some tensions regarding certain elements in the traditional image of entrepreneurship reflected in the focus upon a special person – the entrepreneur – who is creative and who makes discoveries. What we have found striking in the stories of the Hotel Woodpecker, Otter Inn and Luna Resort are glimpses of imitation, jointly created opportunities and the need for legitimizing the projects by way of reference to the artist and the entrepreneur. These three themes relate to emerging concepts in entrepreneurship theory as well as challenge a more traditional picture of the entrepreneur with distinct identity as a creative and alert individual discovering opportunities in an existing environment. We therefore aim to deepen our discussion about the content of entrepreneurship by focusing on the following aspects:

Creativity versus Imitation

Identity versus Legitimizing

Opportunity creation versus Discovery recognition

CREATIVITY VERSUS IMITATION

From Schumpeter we have got the idea that entrepreneurship is associated with creativity. Indeed Schumpeter made a distinction between gradual and discrete change, the latter referring to “creative destruction” which brings distinctly new discoveries to the market. It seems as if Schumpeter unintentionally contributed to the emergence of an image of the “ideal” or the “hero” entrepreneur, an individual of great importance to economic development:

While in the accustomed circular flow every individual can act promptly and rationally because he is sure of his ground and is supported by the conduct...of all other individuals, who in turn expect the accustomed activity from him, he cannot simply do this when he is confronted by a new task. While in the accustomed channels his own ability and experience suffice for the normal individual, when confronted with innovations he needs guidance...Where the boundaries of routine stop, many people can go no further. (Schumpeter, 1934: 78-80).

Where many people can go no further, the Schumpeterian entrepreneur can. We thus ask how Genberg fits into this picture. 1986, at the age of 23, Genberg received the “Arthur Enok Andersson” scholarship. He fitted well with the description “young and promising” according to the board of the Västerås Art Association:

He has a fresh style, does not work conventionally but seeks his way forward on new roads. He works in a very free manner and his creations are original. We appreciate his vitality and diversity.

Also his croqui paintings are very originalⁱⁱⁱ

Even at a young age Genberg appeared frequently in the local newspaper. At that time he was described as a creative artist, not as an entrepreneur. It was when he built the “Hotel Woodpecker” and thus became a “hotel director” that the epithet of entrepreneur became relevant and useful, even more so after the ensuing installations. But to describe Genberg as an artist who became an entrepreneur leads us not to recognize the entrepreneur within the young artist as well as missing the artist within the entrepreneur of today.

When Genberg explained that his motive with the “Hotel Woodpecker” was to provoke the “artistic room” it confirms a characteristic of Genberg that is apparent in the newspaper articles from more than 10 years ago. In November 1995, Västerås citizens rushing for lunch were surprised by what appeared to be a crime scene on one of the streets. “Is this art, I was sure it was the place of a recent murder” one shocked bus driver passing by uttered. A place at the pavement was marked with roses, torches and a tower of lumps of sugar as a sign of a murder. This was one of several installations which Genberg together with 20 of his fellow artists in Västerås have exhibited.

Genberg has also made citizens reflect on what is and is not art by cutting his own paintings into carpet strips. (Later on he made a rag-rug out of these strings so that someone could buy and use it. The idea was to give the painting a function by way of the carpet and it could, in time, be worn out. Ironically, this rag-rug ended up on the wall of one of the museums.) He has also painted the Phantom on political campaign portraits all over the city during election time, together with a friend. Few people, however, knew about this at the time. During the years Genberg has also appeared as a very ordinary portrait artist, something he made a living at for several years. It is probably a mistake to explain that his provocative style was caused by a miserable or bourgeois childhood. He comes from a solid background and did very well at school. A more plausible explanation seems to be influences from the Västerås Art School, with its Dean Tore Hultcrantz, from which he graduated in 1986. There are many of his artist friends from this time, many of whom he has worked with, who have created installations of different kinds with the central theme to provoke and question. “Why not the opposite?” or “nothing is holy” are mottos well known in artistic circles at least since the beginning of the 20th century. Genberg was thus trained to challenge established values.

Without denying the apparent talent Genberg has as an artist, our story about him also makes it possible to somewhat demystify creativity. Genberg was not only born creative, he has trained himself towards becoming creative in the midst of tutors, colleagues and friends. One of the clues to the creative trilogy of housing is the principle of negation; why not think in the opposite direction? Another clue could be the principle to think in abstract terms. The following extract is Genberg talking about how he thinks entrepreneurs get their ideas and visions. The context is a focus group interview with young “entrepreneurs” associated with the “Kick-start programme” in the university technology park.

I used to say that the vision for me should be abstract. I have an idea about something I used to call abstract longing. That you have a picture of something without having a picture. That you don't really know but that you have to drive towards something. And as long as you have this it doesn't matter much what you are doing. Then you can make the vision concrete when you have a project...

On an earlier occasion when Genberg was asked how he got the idea to build the “Hotel Woodpecker” Genberg told the reporter how he got his ideas:

It is often by chance and not due to my brilliant brain. Woodpecker was actually born at a dinner with Tapio Hovebro, at that time the head of the city's culture department. He asked me what I was doing at the time and I said that I was going to erect an esoteric building in the woods. It was not a direct lie, but not true either as I did not have any plans ready, but still wanted to tell him

that I was doing something. Then, sitting on a platform in an old oak tree at my summer cottage – I was sitting there instead of doing the hard work of cutting the lawn – I got this brilliant idea. ‘A very good idea, you will never have the chance to realize’, Hoverbro said in a later conversation.

There is an apparent tension between creativity and imitation in the trilogy of housing story. The idea of putting a house on the moon appears as a creative and innovative idea. To our knowledge Genberg is the first one to seriously bring this idea into realization. But when we recognize this endeavour as the third installation in a row, an element of repetition comes into the picture. He has trained himself to negate the ordinary use of houses. Thus the “Woodpecker” idea in a way is the most creative. When he goes further with the “Otter Inn” and “Luna Resort” he imitates his own behaviour in a sense. And the story does not end with these two. Among his installations are also the water closet “Closette Cameleont” in which you can see the people from the outside but they cannot see you, the “Café Koala” situated up in the air with its 5 meter high table and chairs, and a gingerbread house of six square meters and 2,72 meter high.

We think that our story about Genberg in this paper has something interesting to tell us about entrepreneurship as creative imitation. On a philosophical level this is what Ricoeur brings up when discussing mimesis in his seminal work about Time and narrative.

If we continue to translate mimesis by ‘imitation’ we have to understand something completely contrary to a copy of some pre-existing reality and speak instead of creative imitation (Ricoeur 1984:45).

From Schumpeter we have the idea of the creative innovating entrepreneur who plays the key role. Imitators are assigned only a minor part in the growth of an economy (Schmitz, 1989:722). Even if Baumol (in Schmitz, 1989) has argued that imitation is what drives the economy, hitherto the concept of imitation has not received much attention in entrepreneurship research. Innovation still appears as the key to economic growth and imitation is seen as mere diffusion of innovations (Ziegler, 1985).^{iv} Imitative behaviour has often been portrayed as a rather mechanistic and intellectually uninteresting form of social action. Imitation as a means to obtain legitimacy has been discussed by institutionalists (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Meyer and Scott, 1983) but not linked much to entrepreneurship.

Inspired by Ricoeur, we suggest that our story about Genberg has something to say about creative imitation. We can view Genberg as being in a process of configuring a plot for his own life.^v The configuring of a plot is a creative act. It is creative because it involves the discernment between previous behaviour that is included in meaningful behaviour, and therefore imitated, and behaviour that is excluded from imitation and regarded as less meaningful. For Genberg it was meaningful when he had installed the “Hotel Woodpecker” to imitate this behaviour by making a new installation in the form of a house situated in a non-conventional setting. What is opposite to up in a tree if not under the water? However, it was not meaningful for him to find another tree for a second “Hotel Woodpecker”.^{vi}

From a traditional Schumpeterian perspective Genberg could be portrayed as a very good example of a hero entrepreneur, an archetype of the creative artist/entrepreneur. Instead we have somewhat demystified Genberg and described him in terms of a creative imitator, an everyday

characteristic of normal men and women. We have also considered the interactions that have formed Genberg to where he is today. We will now continue to challenge the picture of the strong and lonely entrepreneur (Ogbor, 2000; Gaddefors, 2005), and emphasize Genberg not as the entrepreneur but rather to view him as someone playing with multiple identities involved in the hard work of legitimizing his endeavours.

IDENTITY VERSUS LEGITIMIZING

At the start of our interview Genberg refers to himself as both an artist and an entrepreneur. On other occasions – for instance at a focus group interview two years ago, at one of his seminars and on other occasions when we have met – he has also used the same two epithets to describe himself. Likewise, he is addressed as both an entrepreneur and an artist by journalists as in the following extract from an article in the magazine *Entrepreneur*, published by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise:

The artist Mikael Genberg dreams too of a little red house, but it calls definitely for a view vaster than a lilac arbour. His little red house will, namely, be situated on – the moon. /.../ [H]e is certainly a driven entrepreneur and an ideas man of rank. (*Entrepreneur*, no: 5, 2005; emphasis is ours).

In Genbergs efforts to turn the odd into fine art he seems to walk a tightrope at the intersection between entrepreneurship and art, constantly referring to himself as both an artist and entrepreneur. Such intersections are often considered to have power implications as they position a person outside the norm and thus exclude and make the person an outsider (de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari, 2003). In this perspective intersections are seen as power relations based upon, for instance, gender, ethnicity, age, nationality, sexuality, and so forth (e.g. Crenshaw, 1991). This picture does not, however, seem to fit Genberg; he does not simply become an outsider in that sense. Rather, he can be seen as the opposite; the native who includes people in his ideas and also in the carrying out of these ideas. In our view, the intersection between artistry and entrepreneurship is interesting to elaborate on since it can enable us to understand the shift of meaning between power as excluding and power as a resource. Moreover, our thesis is that it is the act of balancing between those two epithets that makes it possible for Genberg to realize his ideas. This thus implies that Genberg, together with all of his co-creators, pushes the limits of our perceptions of art and entrepreneurship.

So what does this double-identity^{vii} reference really mean? We view the person as a social construct but argue that Genberg's persona is much more multifaceted and encompassing of various meanings than can be captured with guidance from the two epithets artist and entrepreneur. Rather, we are interested in how he relates to the somewhat stereotyped models – the entrepreneur and artist – which have been commonly constructed over a long period of time. We are, therefore, less interested in explaining how Genberg constructs his identities and more fascinated by the way he uses the two identities of artist and entrepreneur. Hence, we discuss the entrepreneur and the artist as two identities that Genberg is playing with. We have for some time pondered on why he uses these two identities, and argue that it is the drawing from both the artistic and the entrepreneurial identity which help him to create the much needed legitimacy for his projects, as for instance in order to make the Luna project become a reality. We thus mean that the identities of artist and entrepreneur are less connected to Genbergs personality than to his efforts in creating legitimacy.

Hence, the model of the entrepreneur and the artist seem to be at stake here. "Artists and authors have become uninterested in entrepreneurs as their activities are perceived as rather limited in terms of spiritual dimensions", writes de Geer (1994:20). The models combined seem to form a sharp contrast to each other. In short, these two identities could be seen to hold an antagonistic relationship. One reason for this perception is the enterprise ideology which has come to make up the establishment and the power base in our society (ibid). It is the same powerbase which has give rise to so much criticism of entrepreneurship in the artistic sphere. Hence entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs have been obvious targets for criticism, caricature and satire in the world of art (ibid). We argue that Genberg is challenging the antagonistic relationship between the artist and the entrepreneur. Because, as an artist, Genberg does not criticize the entrepreneur, instead he fashions himself in the entrepreneurial identity to move on with his ideas. Hence, he uses the antagonistic relationship to create legitimacy in both the artistic and industrial sphere.

Genberg seems to be very aware that he needs to relate to himself as both an artist and an entrepreneur in pursuing the idea of placing a cottage on the moon. "Otherwise I would never get the legitimacy I need to pull the Luna Resort off", he says. In referring to himself as an artist, the cottage becomes an artistic installation and is thus not called into question. "It wouldn't be possible to talk people into this project if it was only interpreted from a commercial point of view. Then everyone would expect me to be in this for the money only", he said at a seminar. The artistic perspective is very important and is also put forward as one of the four key rationales for carrying out the Luna project (e.g. the Luna Report, 2003). The artist is speaking, and even though he is playing with identities Genberg is above all referred to as the artist. But he does also need to know something about business to pull his project off and, as entrepreneurs are much sought-after today, this identity seems to be extremely suitable. Entrepreneurs are often talked about as the ones who get things done and the action man works as a backdrop in most conversations of entrepreneurship. Considering the constant reorganization of our society in terms of industrial restructuring, unemployment, globalization, and so forth, entrepreneurs are often portrayed as the ones who seem to give us hope as we come up against an apparently uncertain, and perhaps also depressing, future. Hence, to refer to oneself as an entrepreneur creates in itself legitimacy, as this is a figure that is connected to the creative work in developing and revitalizing society. As Steyaert and Katz (2004: 187) maintain, "entrepreneurs are the engine in a market economy". No wonder we feel at ease when we meet a person who conforms to this character.

O'Connor (2003) discuss that entrepreneurship could be seen as creating legitimacy for the ideas that one is about to pursue. Taken as a whole, the life of the Luna project can be seen to be founded on a need to increase its legitimacy. Without a doubt, Genberg cannot carry out the idea of placing a cottage on the moon himself, which is something that he frequently returns to during our interview. So he needs to inspire people with this idea to such a degree that they will themselves invest both energy and money in the project. When the idea was presented officially in September 2003 in the local newspaper, some work had already been done in creating legitimacy for Luna and we get a glimpse of this process:

Mikael Genberg made even more trips to Uppsala and Stockholm. He met technicians and researchers at the Ångströmlaboratory and at the Aflvénlaboratory at the Royal Institute

of Technology. It went on even more quickly. One day this spring nine associate professors and professors listened to the man with the Hotel Woodpecker and Otter Inn. The researchers sketched, the technicians calculated, and employees in key positions were informed. Genberg got help from a good friend. Patrik Dalson has been a sounding board and a promoter the whole time. Genberg's companion from youth Håkan Wählstedt, a member of the Environmental party who has been on the council, made as many informal contacts in the political sphere as he could. And those were fairly extensive. The idea of a house on the moon is known in both the town hall and the castle in Västerås. And, in the Cabinet Office and Ministries at Rosenbad. (VLT, 2003-09-26)

Ultimately, Luna has to achieve legitimacy, which is dependent on other people investing in the project; emotionally, economically as well as socially. The hard nut to crack before it is time to launch the cottage in 2009 is to secure the project financially:

Mikael Genberg realizes that there is still a long way to go. Because even if everything could be carried out, and even if both technicians and researchers shout with joy, there is a need for money. A first calculation stops at 400 million SEK. The Space Institute, that wants to guard itself, says 500 million. This money is not available today, but the people in the space world believe that the sum is attainable from a mix of official grants and contributions from private space companies and sponsors. Mikael Genberg has made his own stabs. What and how much does he want to keep for himself. Everybody thinks that the idea is exciting and most of them say "OK we are in, if that one or that one is willing to help". (VLT, 2003-09-26)

The project seems to depend not only upon getting people to invest in it socially but also in getting people to invest in Luna financially, in the procurement of capital. Both of these investments create legitimacy thus making it even more legitimate to invest. Consequently, a catch 22 situation is evident here. Our interpretation is that the avoidance of this catch 22 situation rests on Genberg himself and his efforts to create legitimacy by referring to himself as both an entrepreneur and an artist. In short, he needs to walk a tightrope between entrepreneurship and artistry. Clearly this is an act of balancing between, on the one hand, provoking people and, on the other hand, fascinating and seducing people. We would like to remind you of the initial quotes from the local newspapers in which Genberg is either seen as a genius or as a complete idiot. This shift in meaning is also visible in the magazine *Entrepreneur*, cited above, in which a picture of Genberg covers the whole front page accompanied by the following headline:

Yes, he is a Luna (tic)^{viii} – Mikael Genberg is building a cottage on the moon. (*Entrepreneur*, no: 5, 2005)

Inside the magazine he is described in another way, and at the beginning of the article the above statement is contested: "We can assure you – Mikael Genberg is not a lunatic". The above example is only one of many in which Genberg's dangerous walk in the borderland of reason is disclosed. Arguably, he is stuck in this borderland partly because of his reference to being both an entrepreneur and an artist. Hence, in giving Luna legitimacy he has placed himself at the intersection between the identities of entrepreneur versus artist. However, as he seems to be well aware of in his walk in this borderland, he takes advantage of the positions provided by his reference to the entrepreneur and the artist. So instead of being stuck, he plays them out. As a result, the projects, as well as Genberg himself, become ambiguous. But in spite of this

antagonistic relationship, there are also some connections between how we perceive the artist and the entrepreneur. If the models are mismatched in one way, they form a complete match in another way; artists and entrepreneurs are both seen as creative, in search of challenges – or new opportunities to use – and, not least, the model for both figures is illustrated by the middle-aged man in the Western world.^{ix} With few exceptions, such characteristics are put forward when Genberg is the topic:

As an artist one seeks challenges and carry them through (VLT, 2000-07-04)

[Genberg] is a skilled and talented artist and the pride of his hometown, Västerås. Besides, and not unimportant in this context, he is certainly a driven entrepreneur and an ideas man of rank. (Entrepreneur, no: 5, 2005)

The artist Mikael Genberg from Västerås has done the unexpected before. Now he hopes to do it again. His idea is guaranteed original. (VLT, 2003-09.26)

The Schumpeterian “hero entrepreneur” is associated with a fixed and strong identity, clearly different from the “normal” individual. This picture of the entrepreneur has dominated entrepreneurship research. Challenging this picture, we have suggested that the use of double or multiple identities is important in the legitimizing work which is much more illustrative of the content of entrepreneurship than finding the true identity of the hero entrepreneur. We have also illustrated the vulnerability and uncertainty involved in legitimacy work. From this we now move on to a well-known debate in entrepreneurship research between discovery recognition and opportunity creation.

OPPORTUNITY CREATION VERSUS DISCOVERY RECOGNITION

The balancing act of playing with identities we view as walking a tightrope between artistry and entrepreneurship. As discussed earlier, this also involves a shift between creativity and imitation. In entrepreneurship research, creativity has often been weighted in favour of imitation, and creativity is closely related to the discovery of opportunities:

In both the arts and the sciences terms like ‘creation’ and ‘discovery’ have been bound up with philosophical assumptions concerning nature and reality. Verbs like ‘finding’ and ‘discovering’ suggest that nature precedes human activities, and that discoveries is the uncovering of what is part of the real world but hidden for some time, and that the facts ‘out there’ are natural and creations that humans strive to capture. Such metaphysics supports the view that the scientist or artist is a privileged witness to nature. In contrast, terms like ‘creativity’, ‘invention’ and ‘design’, suggest that the facts are artefacts; that scientists and artists impose constructions on nature rather than merely represent it. However, “nature and society, discovery and inventions, are inseparably linked.” (Lamb, 1991:9)

There has been a controversy in entrepreneurship research regarding whether opportunities are to be seen as something objective “out there” waiting to be discovered (Kirzner, 1997, Shane, 2000, Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) or whether they are the result of a sense-making processes among individuals (Gartner, Steyaert and Katz, Weick, 1995). In the former case, opportunities

are seen as objective facts not known or seen by all parties at all times. Some people are more alert than others and if they also have access to valuable information they might discover opportunities, which make them entrepreneurs. In the latter case it is not a question of “seeing” or being “alert” but about “acting” and “making sense”, that is “the process whereby groups interactively create social reality” (Boyce, 1995: 109):

Opportunities would be the result of what individuals do, rather than the result of what they see. In addition, opportunities would be recognized as occurring within a stream of other events and activities (Gartner, Carter and Hills, 2003:110).

So how then can we interpret the story of the trilogy of housing? Does this story tell us about the discovery or the creation of opportunities? We argue that both should be taken into consideration if we are interested in the content of entrepreneurship. We view Genberg as someone who by way of creative imitation makes discoveries of how to perceive the world differently. However, to act on these discoveries he must gain acceptance from other people and we argue that it is in this process where opportunities are created. Consequently, the Luna Resort project has to do with changing people’s minds of what might be possible. As Genberg himself puts it, this is a matter of convincing people of wanting – and not the least of daring – to participate. For example, he puts forward the challenge of “uniting as many parts of the country” as is required in order to complete the Luna Resort project (VLT 2004-10-22). Moreover, during an interview he constantly comes back to the issue that the Luna Resort creates opportunities for co-operation not only between companies but also to join the industrial and the political arena together. This means that he has to make people see the discoveries and when they see them and act upon them opportunities are created. Hence, discoveries are transformed into opportunities by way of enactment and sense-making. We thus view discovery recognition as attributed to the individual – often linked to the hero entrepreneur – while opportunity creation signifies the process of making discoveries collectively shared. Opportunities and discoveries are thus linked and both shed some light on the content of the entrepreneurial process. We can all make discoveries but in order to create an entrepreneurial endeavour of them the discoveries must transform into mutual opportunities. Looking upon entrepreneurship in this way – as a socially collective process – makes it quite difficult to draw a line between where entrepreneurship starts and ends. In our view, entrepreneurship certainly neither starts nor ends with Genberg as a person. He might be the one who carries the epithet “entrepreneur”, but actions connected to this entrepreneurial endeavour stretch beyond him as a person and involve a number of other people who carry other epithets, such as co-producers, co-creators, co-operators, buyers of art, hotel guests, the Swedish Space Institute, and so forth. These people are neither defined as entrepreneurs nor as artists but they are, to a high degree, involved. When Genberg tells the story about himself a lot of people are involved. However, in the press the collective aspects of the entrepreneurial process are hardly mentioned. Surely other persons are named but they become peripheral. Genberg stands out as “The Entrepreneur”.

So does it matter if there will be a house on the moon or not? On one hand, from a sense-making perspective, one could argue that it does not matter as the project has already produced a collective image of a house on the moon. Even if a house is built on the moon we will not be able to see it, so what difference does it make? Our minds, imagination, and thoughts have

already been challenged by making this discovery, and perhaps also changed as it has now become a collectively shared opportunity. Even if the house will never reach the moon we still can visualize the inhospitable environment on the moon. We can then realize that it is high time for us be a bit more concerned with environmental issues. Conversely, the idea has also touched upon the issue of the distribution of tax payers' money. For instance, when the Luna Resort was made public the relevance of it also became a debated issue. In the local newspaper some expressed their anger over the fact that a house on the moon was getting more attention than other (according to writers of letters to the press) more important matters. For example, the situation of the homeless was highlighted:

All you who are supporting the house-on-the-moon-project should be ashamed. You should first make sure that the homeless and weak people get a place to live. Hallo! Wake up! (VLT 2003-09-30)

Taking into consideration that this is not the only letter to the press on this subject one could argue that the Luna Resort has drawn attention to a number of other issues such as the situation of the homeless. Whether people express criticism against the Luna Resort, or have become fascinated by the idea, the project process seems to have both revealed – and released – involvement in a number of societal questions. The process has, furthermore, moved the boundaries for what is regarded as possible. Likewise it has made new connections between economical, social, technological and ecological issues. We thus conclude that there are a number of disclosing features connected to the process of the Luna Resort.

DISCUSSION

In this paper we have used the stories of the Hotel Woodpecker, Otter Inn and Luna Resort to theorize on the content and interfaces of entrepreneurship. We have used the story of Genberg to reflect on the content of entrepreneurship taking our point of view in three pairs of concepts (see figure 1). Firstly, from a traditional Schumpeterian perspective Genberg could be portrayed as a very good example of a hero entrepreneur, an archetype of the creative artist/entrepreneur. But instead we have somewhat demystified Genberg and described him in terms of a creative imitator, an everyday characteristic of normal men and women. Secondly, the Schumpeterian “hero entrepreneur” is associated with a fixed and strong identity, clearly different from the “normal” individual. This picture of the entrepreneur has dominated entrepreneurship research. Challenging this picture we suggest that the use of double or multiple identities is important in

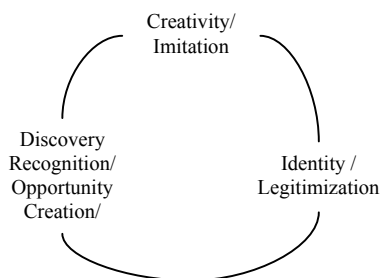


Figure 1 – The dichotomic concepts

the legitimizing work which is much more illustrative to the content of entrepreneurship than finding the true identity of the hero entrepreneur. Thirdly, we view discovery recognition as attributed to the individual – often linked to the hero entrepreneur – while opportunity creation signifies the process of making discoveries collectively shared.

The traditional image of entrepreneurship simply does not give us the whole image; it gives us one peep-hole through which to look into the black box of

entrepreneurship. However, we hold that there are also other peep-holes that could be worth looking into, and if we are interested in the complex phenomenon of entrepreneurship we maintain that there must be an ongoing research into new ways of looking into this phenomenon reminding ourselves that we can never see something without seeing it as something. We thus ask ourselves whether we are stuck looking at entrepreneurship in a certain way which holds us back from approaching this phenomenon from other perspectives. By separating the dichotomies we have used in this paper we get two distinct peep-holes which both give us a sense of the content of entrepreneurship. They thus do not exclude each other but offer quite different, yet also complementary, images.

The first peep-hole relates to a more traditional way of discussing the content of entrepreneurship (see figure 2). One could argue that the traditional image used to define entrepreneurship is made up by the idea of the individual – that is the entrepreneur – and thus who that person is, summarized by identity. This image also contains ideas on creativity as an important characteristic of the individual. As pointed out earlier, in a Schumpeterian tradition, creativity is often regarded as the core of entrepreneurship. As a consequence, entrepreneurial individuals become alert individuals who are able to discover opportunities not obvious or possible to detect by the average person.

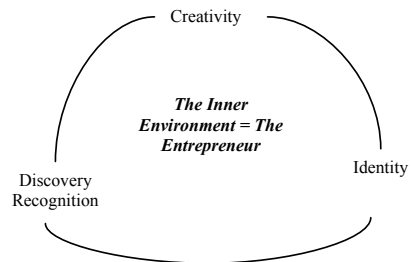


Figure 2 – The traditional view of entrepreneurship

The second peep-hole represents to us a perspective which has been less obvious in entrepreneurship research but which comprises a content we cannot neglect when we take the process of Genberg and the trilogy of housing into account (see figure 3). In this image we see no lonely entrepreneur. Rather, entrepreneurship stands out as a social process of creating opportunities by way of imitation and legitimization. Entrepreneurship is, in this sense, not so much about who the entrepreneur is, but about how ideas and actions are made sense of and become legitimate within a social context.

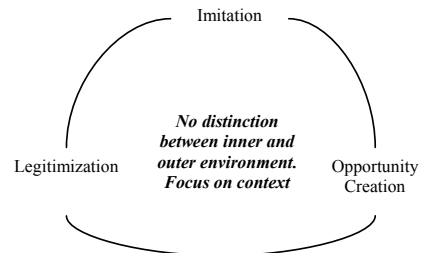


Figure 3 – A discernible contrast of entrepreneurship

We have in this paper challenged the traditional picture of the entrepreneur as well as the image of entrepreneurship. Paradoxically we have done this by taking Genberg as our example who easily can be interpreted as *the* hero entrepreneur. This is the ironic twist of our story as in all stories where the established order is at stake.

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NOTES

- i We use a narrative approach (e.g. Czarniawska, 2004) to make sense of interviews, focus-group interview, seminars, articles in newspapers, and other texts and stories about Genberg. According to this approach language use is the key dimension why conversation, vocabularies, metaphors, stories and the framing of various phenomena through the use of language are vital for the constitution of reality (Burr, 1995).
- ii Sarasvathy is drawing upon the work of Simon (1996).
- iii Statements by Pavel Vavruch, president of the art museum in Västerås and member of the scholarship committee, cited by the Västerås' local newspaper 1983-03-26.
- iv Genberg gives an example in the focus group interview about imitation, thereby indicating he himself aspires to be somewhat more creative: "Yes we say for example that you have sawed two cows into halves and placed them in formalin so that you can go right through them. And then people think hell what good artistry and you can read about it in all the newspapers. Then you know that what this artist will do in the coming ten years is to work with sawing animals into halves and put them in formalin so that people can go and look at them in different places. There will be no new creations because it worked and then it is repeated.
- v This is what we all are doing as human beings to create meaning to our lives.
- vi Although with other installations he has made the same installation in different places
- vii We comprehend identity as a social construct which is created historically, socially and ideologically (e.g. Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991), as Burr (1995:52) writes; "It is from the myriad forms of language exchange between people that the person emerges".
- viii In the headline, the Swedish word "mångalen" was used, but in translation we have found lunatic to be the most appropriate to describe the Swedish word game.
- ix The entrepreneurial identity is, according to, among others Ogbor (2000), Ahl (2002), and Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio (2004), gender-biased, ethno-centrally determined and excluding, unless one fits the model of the rational Western man. The artist is also built on similar assumptions. The model of the entrepreneur and the artist are thus similar in terms of gender and ethnocentrism. Genberg's appearance, and position, as a white man in the Western world does not stand in conflict with either the model of the entrepreneur or the artist. These two socially and historically produced models do not exclude Genberg from either a gender perspective or from an ethnocentric perspective.