

Department of Social Research
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ENTREPRENEURSHIP TALK IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

**Constructing the multifaceted, socially embedded,
and relational nature of corporate entrepreneurship**

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In today's increasingly competitive and global economy, many claim that entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior are paramount for established firms to grow and survive. To deal with these demanding business environments, academic discussions have emphasized the status of corporate entrepreneurship (CE) as a legitimate and self-evident strategy that firms must adopt. In underscoring the hegemony of firm-level CE strategies, however, the dominant functionalist research paradigm of CE has neglected to explicate the evaluation and implementation of CE and the position of individual organizational actors as practitioners of CE within firms. The present dissertation therefore adopts a fundamentally different research approach to corporate entrepreneurship. By applying a micro social constructionist and interpretivist research paradigm, the study explores what kind of versions and practical applications of CE individual organizational actors as hired employees of their firms subjectively construct in the social context of their daily activities, and how their versions relate to theoretical conceptualizations of CE.

The research material is drawn from individual interviews and meeting interaction recordings from three Finnish privately-owned business service firms in the metropolitan areas of Helsinki and Tampere during 2008–2011. The empirical designs make use of descriptive qualitative methods in generating and analyzing the research material.

The present study highlights CE as a socially embedded phenomenon that does not unproblematically become grafted into practical firm operations or self-evidently fit into established organizational arrangements. The study indicates that CE is a concrete, observable phenomenon in organizations, not merely an abstract characteristic of firms or a behavioral concept that produces change and growth in isolation. Instead, CE is a process that individual organizational actors collectively bring about and shape in their everyday organizational interaction. Organizational actors jointly negotiate contextually sensitive and target-specific practical applications of CE, and establish intra- and inter-firm relationships that are necessary to sustain long-term economic behavior. However, not all negotiations necessarily lead to a uniform commitment to these applications.

This dissertation further suggests that CE cannot be regarded as a permanent characteristic of firms, but is instead a process that requires continuous maintenance. The nature and practices of CE must be updated and renewed regularly as contexts and target groups in the firm's business environment change. Organizations can support the position of individual actors in actualizing these efforts through proactiveness that invites collaboration. However, institutional

problems in implementing CE may emerge if top management permits internal competitive aggressiveness and the related short-term maximization of profits to undermine the ability of organizational actors to fully realize their entrepreneurial potential.

This study presents a new, alternative perspective of entrepreneurship in the corporate setting by painting a context-specific, relational, and socially embedded picture of CE. Because CE is also a subtle communicative phenomenon between organizational actors and those in the market, the long-term maintenance of these relationships may critically contribute to how successfully firms are eventually able to legitimize and institutionalize CE for their benefit.

Tiivistelmä

Organisaatioiden ja johtamisen tutkimuksen funktionalistisessa tutkimusperinteessä yrittäjyyttä pidetään taloudellista kasvua ja toiminnan uudistamista tukevana strategiana, joka organisaatioiden täytyy omaksua selviytyäkseen kiristyvässä globaalissa kilpailussa. Yrittäjyys nähdään yritysjohton linjaamana, koko organisaatiota ohjaavana uutta luovana, ennakoivana ja riskejä ottavana toimintana, joka valmiina mallina ongelmitta solahtaa osaksi yrityksen arjen käytäntöjä. Väitöskirja haastaa tämän yksipuolisen, yrittäjyystutkimusta edelleen hallitsevan käsitteellistämisen tavan ja soveltaa sen sijaan mikrotason sosiaaliseen konstruktionismiin perustuvaa tulkinnallista tutkimusotetta. Väitöskirjan neljässä osatutkimuksessa tarkastellaan sitä, miten yksittäiset, organisaatioon palkkasuhteessa olevat työntekijät tulkitsevat yrittäjyyden periaatteita ja millaisia käytännön toimintatapoja he niistä rakentavat omista vastuualueistaan ja työtehtävistään käsin.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu yritysjohtajien ja myyjien yksilöhaastatteluista sekä johtoryhmän kokousäänityksistä, jotka on kerätty kolmesta pääkaupunkiseudulla ja Tampereella toimivasta, yrityspalveluita tarjoavasta yrityksestä vuosina 2008–2011. Tutkimusaineistojen analyysissä hyödynnetään laadullisen asennetutkimuksen sekä diskursiivisen ja narratiivisen psykologian tutkimusmenetelmiä.

Väitöskirjatutkimuksen mukaan yrittäjyys ei tuota kasvua tai uudistumista irrallaan organisaation muusta toiminnasta, kuten funktionalistinen tutkimusperinne yleensä olettaa. Sen sijaan yrittäjyys on yksittäisten, eri ryhmiä edustavien organisaation jäsenten yhdessä aikaansaama prosessi. Yrittäjyys johton linjaamana valmiina mallina ei siis välttämättä toteudu organisaation arjessa sellaisenaan, vaan organisaation jäsenten yhdessä tulkitsemana ja ylläpitämänä prosessina. Koska yrittäjyys syntyy ja siitä neuvotellaan organisaation vuorovaikutustilanteissa, neuvottelunvaraisuus voi myös estää yrittäjyyden toteutumisen käytännössä. Vaikka jäsenet pitäisivätkin yrittäjyyden toimintatapoja pätevinä ratkaisuin organisaationsa ongelmiin, neuvottelu ei aina johda tilanteeseen, jossa he sitoutuisivat noudattamaan näitä käytäntöjä päivittäisessä työssään.

Tutkimuksen perusteella yrittäjyys ei myöskään ole organisaation pysyvä, kertaluonteisesti hankittava ominaisuus, vaan prosessi, joka vaatii jatkuvaa päivittämistä. Päivittämisen tarkoituksena on uudistaa toimintatapoja aina sen mukaan, miten tilanteet ja kohderyhmät muuttuvat organisaation toimintaympäristössä.

Väitöskirjatutkimuksen valossa yrittäjyys organisaatioissa näyttäytyy sosiaalisena, kontekstiinsa sidoksissa olevana sekä sisäisiin ja ulkoisiin yhteistyösuhteisiin perustuvana prosessina, joka voi myös jäädä toteutumatta. Organisaatio voi tukea yrittäjyyden toteutumista kannustamalla jäseniään keskinäiseen yhteistyöhön. Yrittäjyyden hyötyjen saavuttaminen koko organisaation tasolla kuitenkin hankaloituu merkittävästi, jos yritysjohto sallii jäsentensä sisäisen kilpailun ja siihen liittyvän lyhytnäköisen voiton maksimoinnin tai jopa kannustaa heitä siihen. Koska pysyvien taloudellisten hyötyjen saavuttaminen perustuu toimiviin yhteistyösuhteisiin, näiden suhteiden jatkuva vaaliminen ratkaisee sen, kuinka hyvin organisaatiot lopulta onnistuvat sitouttamaan jäsenensä yrittäjyyden toimintatapojen käyttöön pitkällä aikavälillä.

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Helsinki, February 2014

Soili Peltola

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List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:

- I Soili Peltola & Kari Mikko Vesala (2013). Constructing entrepreneurial orientation in a selling context: The qualitative attitude approach. *Poznań University of Economics Review*, 13(1), 26–47.
- II Soili Peltola (2013). The practical application of entrepreneurial orientation: Proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness in the selling context. (Unpublished manuscript currently under review).
- III Soili Peltola (2013). The emergence of entrepreneurship in organizations: Joint decision-making about new sales practices in management group meeting interaction. *Poznań University of Economics Review*, 13(1), 48–67.
- IV Soili Peltola (2012). Can an old firm learn new tricks? A corporate entrepreneurship approach to organizational renewal. *Business Horizons*, 55(1), 43–51. Copyright © Elsevier. All rights reserved.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly competitive, fast-paced, global economy, many claim that entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior are crucial for established firms to grow and survive, and that a lack of entrepreneurial behavior even portends a firm's inevitable failure in the market (Kuratko, 2009) and the accelerated downsizing of its personnel (Hornsby et al., 2013). In organizational contexts, entrepreneurship aims to instigate new economic activity (Wiklund et al., 2011) by improving economic performance and rejuvenating strategies and operations (Rauch et al., 2009; Ireland et al., 2009). Entrepreneurship represents a growth orientation which best suits hostile and dynamic business environments characterized by high competitive intensity, unpredictability, and low customer loyalty (Green et al., 2008; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1989). To deal with these increasingly demanding environments, entrepreneurial firms engage in product and service innovation, explore the unknown by embarking on risky projects, and outperform their competitors by attaining leadership in the market (Miller, 1983). One can also view entrepreneurship in organizations within the framework of a wider discussion on how entrepreneurial actions presumably resolve economic dilemmas (e.g., Perren & Jennings, 2005; Jack & Anderson, 1999) and grand challenges (Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011) of contemporary societies.

Academic discussions have explicitly tailored entrepreneurship in the organizational context to meet foregoing theoretical and practical ends. For instance, strategic entrepreneurship has laid out theoretical models that define the antecedents, elements, and consequences of entrepreneurship for firms that face declining business performance and turnaround situations (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013, 2009; Dess et al., 1999; Ireland et al., 2003; Ireland et al., 2009). Entrepreneurial orientation, for its part, has been the most common conceptualization of entrepreneurship that emphasizes growth as the outcome of innovative, proactive, and risk-taking behavior (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1989, 1991; Miller, 1983). To date, these theoretical and empirical formulations have largely taken place within a functionalist research paradigm (Covin & Wales, 2012; Tedmanson et al., 2012; Rauch et al., 2009; Grant & Perren, 2002). Even though their theoretical and practical utility is widely acclaimed, the idea of entrepreneurship in the organizational context as a socially-constructed concept has begun to grow in importance (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009). To date, however, empirical research on entrepreneurship in the corporate setting has yet to provide major evidence of such development.

The social constructionist view of entrepreneurship focuses attention on discourses that construct the social reality of entrepreneurship in contextually and contingently different ways. Existing research demonstrates the wide variety of entrepreneurship discourses that individual actors utilize to construct their everyday reality. For example, previous studies have illustrated how government discourses on entrepreneurship portray entrepreneurs and their role in society (Perren & Jennings, 2005), how entrepreneurship policy implementers use entrepreneurship discourse to maintain and defend their mission (Pyysiäinen & Vesala, 2013), how social entrepreneurship balances social and economic behaviour to create both types of value (Chell, 2007), how entrepreneurial opportunities are relationally and communally formed and enacted (Fletcher, 2006), how narrative and dramatic processes construct entrepreneurial identities (Downing, 2005), and how these identities are constructed of different entrepreneurship discourses (Berglund, 2006).

As previous studies of entrepreneurship as a social construct demonstrate, entrepreneurship discourses can define and evaluate entrepreneurial phenomena in more ways than one. For instance, the meaning of an entrepreneur can range from the founder-creator of a firm to its owner-manager (e.g., Gartner, 1988). According to a widely recognized distinction, founder-creators pursue profit and growth, whereas owner-managers settle for making a primary living out of their firms (Carland et al., 1984). In cultural representations, evaluative meanings of the entrepreneur also include contrasting aspects, such as good–bad, predator–victim, and hero–villain (e.g., Anderson et al., 2009; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005). Further, entrepreneurship may serve as a case for the individual as either a practicing entrepreneur or an entrepreneurial employee in an organization, and even for the entire firm, as theoretical discussions on corporate entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation demonstrate (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013; Covin & Slevin, 1989, 1991; Miller, 1983; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). As a result of this variation in entrepreneurship discourses, what a particular entrepreneurship phenomenon eventually comes to signify is neither self-evident nor obvious. When theoretical concepts employ expressions related to entrepreneurship, such as the word *entrepreneurial*, one can rightfully ask what kind of version of entrepreneurship in organizations these discourses construct. A multitude of contextual and contingent meanings can therefore be attached to entrepreneurship in the organizational context also (see Anderson et al., 2012).

Within the functionalist research paradigm, entrepreneurship in the corporate setting is typically constructed as a *firm-level* phenomenon. These firm-level concepts treat entrepreneurship not as an attitude or a characteristic of individual employees, but as something connected with a firm's strategy-making process which thus encompasses the entire firm (Covin & Miller, 2013; Dess et

al., 1997; Gawel, 2012). These concepts emphasize the upper echelon's leading role in defining, encouraging, and evaluating their organization's entrepreneurial behavior (Kuratko et al., 2014; Ireland et al., 2006; Covin & Slevin, 1991), whereas managers on different levels of the firm share the responsibility of implementing the top management's visions of entrepreneurship in the practical reality of firm operations (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013). However, the theoretical models of entrepreneurship in the organizational context seldom explicitly explicate the position and role of *individual* organizational actors as practitioners of entrepreneurship within firms. Even though the top management typically sets the scope and pace for their firm's entrepreneurial strategy-making process, employees on other organizational levels may react to and view these visions differently and therefore act accordingly in ways not always aligned with the intended formulations. As Stevenson and Jarillo (1990, 24) state, *opportunity for the firm has to be pursued by individuals within it, who may have perceptions of personal opportunity more or less at variance with opportunity for the firm.*

Institutional entrepreneurship conceptualizes the potential variance mentioned above in terms of agency, interests, and change (Garud et al., 2007). According to these views, the key question for the emergence and maintenance of entrepreneurship in the organizational context is to understand how individuals within established organizational structures are able to instigate change, and get other organizational actors to adopt and apply these new forms of acting. Stated differently, entrepreneurship as a firm-level concept depends on individual organizational actors and how they pursue entrepreneurship within the practical everyday activities of their firm. Consequently, the individual's position within firms is not unambiguous or unproblematic for either the individuals themselves or the entire firm, as the theoretical concepts of firm-level entrepreneurship would seem to suggest.

More specifically, the institutional challenge of entrepreneurship is two-fold: first, how to bring about new economic activity or organizational change within existing structural arrangements, and, second, how to obtain legitimacy for these emerging new activities (Garud et al., 2007). From the individual actor's viewpoint, the professionally-run firm can often be an inferior context for entrepreneurship-oriented individuals to fully realize their potential compared to their positions in firms run by these individuals themselves (Shane, 1995). The paradox stems from the regulative and normative institutional arrangements that emphasize stability and continuity, and aim to reduce uncertainty, unfairness, and opportunistic behavior within organizations (Garud et al., 2007; see also Shimizu, 2012). These arrangements restrict the actions of an individual because the actions they instigate usually deviate from institutional norms and encounter resistance from other organizational actors. Before new

ideas gain wider legitimacy, they are likely to be considered an unusual and competing activity within the organization (Hwang & Powell, 2005). In short, the institutional perspective of entrepreneurship emphasizes the structural restrictions of an organization that individuals must overcome in order to launch and institutionalize new modes of acting.

In contrast, the micro social constructionist approach views individual actors as principals serving their own interest (Burr, 2003), despite any restrictive structures that might be present. Individual actors can also deliberate which principals, besides themselves, they choose to serve or, alternatively, to reject and resist (Vesala, 2013). Even though entrepreneurship discourses aim to create and maintain a relationship between individual actors and the entire organization (see Vesala, 2013; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) however tight or loose it may theoretically appear, individual actors may also reject such relationships and formulations. Individual actors can therefore utilize discourses to construct their own versions of any given issue, such as the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, and reject other versions that other actors have explicated. For instance, they can reject entrepreneurship discourses in general or established organizational structures in particular to further their own ideas about change and newness. Nevertheless, the central idea is to understand how individual organizational actors *make it happen* (Saravathy, 2004) as hired employees of their firms by choosing to serve the interests of the firm with efforts and ideas based on corporate entrepreneurship.

Regarding the ambiguous position of individuals within the firm-level phenomenon of entrepreneurship as a point of departure for the present dissertation, this study sets out to explore entrepreneurship in the organizational context from a micro social constructionist, interpretivist perspective (Vesala, 2013; Burr, 2003; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Grant & Perren, 2002; Anderson & Starnawska, 2008). The study explores what kind of versions of entrepreneurship the individual organizational actors that participated in this study construct and how their versions relate to theoretically-formulated conceptualizations of entrepreneurship in the organizational context. The original studies are designed according to descriptive methodologies typical of the interpretivist paradigm. They aim to give a voice to individual actors by providing them with the possibility to make sense of and to construct entrepreneurship as they view it through their own organizational positions, responsibilities, and work tasks as hired employees of their firms. The studies focus on the dimensions of autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness in the concept of EO (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, 2001), and the theoretical model of strategic entrepreneurship as explained by Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009). The empirical excursions that describe the practical application and sensemaking of organizational actors aim to add new depth and richness to entrepreneurship in the corporate setting by examining

entrepreneurship from the individual actors' perspectives and, thereafter, by comparing their interpretations to the firm-level theoretical concepts of corporate entrepreneurship.

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 Corporate entrepreneurship

Corporate entrepreneurship (CE) is generally viewed as the overall definition of firm-level entrepreneurial behavior in established organizations.¹ The main goal of CE is to generate new economic activity (Wiklund, et al., 2011; Davidsson & Wiklund, 2001) leading to growth (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013; Covin et al., 2006; Zahra & Covin, 1995). Such economic activity can take the form of corporate venturing (i.e., the creation of completely new businesses within or outside the existing firm structure), innovations that result from capitalizing on opportunities (Wales et al., 2013b), or the strategic renewal of the firm (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013; Covin & Miller, 2013; Sharma & Chrisman, 1999; Guth & Ginsberg, 1990; Gartner, 1985). Growth is most often operationalized as sales growth leading to growth of other financial and non-financial indicators, such as profitability, return on investment, headcount, and customer satisfaction (Audretsch, 2012; Wales et al., 2013a; Rauch et al., 2009; Wiklund, 1999).

Obviously, one can also stimulate growth with a variety of other strategic, competitive, and management orientations besides CE (Zahra et al., 1999). These orientations include, for instance, cost leadership, differentiation, and segmentation (Porter, 1980). However, innovation is what distinguishes CE from other approaches, as it forms the core of all corporate entrepreneurship activities (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013; Covin & Miles, 1999). Continuous streams of innovation create a sustainable competitive advantage for the entrepreneurial firm and differentiate it from the competition (Barney, 1991, 2001; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Ireland et al., 2001). Without innovative products and services or other types of newness and creativity, a firm cannot be considered entrepreneurial.

¹ The notion of intrapreneurship has also served to describe the phenomenon of entrepreneurship within existing firms. The theoretical content of intrapreneurship varies from a more limited scope, such as internal corporate venturing (Parker, 2011) and individual employees who turn new ideas into profitable outcomes (Pinchot, 1985; see also Section 2.2 on the autonomy dimension of entrepreneurial orientation), to descriptions of all-encompassing, organization-wide entrepreneurship, which shares many characteristics similar to those of CE explained here (see, e.g., Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001; 2003). In the latter examples, intrapreneurship appears as an interchangeable label to CE. In this study, CE serves as an umbrella concept that includes the notions of entrepreneurial orientation and strategic entrepreneurship.

Corporate entrepreneurship typically emphasizes the behavioral aspect of entrepreneurship because actions (and not dispositions or attributes) are what render a firm entrepreneurial (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). Entrepreneurial behavior consists of two key dimensions: the ability to recognize or create an opportunity and to exploit or commercialize it (Audretsch, 2012). Firms translate these opportunities into entrepreneurial projects that the organization then pursues (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011). To remain competitive in the future also, firms should balance the exploitation of existing opportunities for present success with the search for new ones (Ireland & Webb, 2007, 2009). In other words, firms should simultaneously take full advantage of their established business opportunities while searching for unexplored ones that could generate future revenue and profit. If firms emphasize only one of these, they could eventually see a continued decline in their market share or incur overwhelming costs, or worse.

Managers at different organizational levels play an important role in the successful formulation and implementation of entrepreneurial behavior throughout the entire firm (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013; Belousova & Gailly, 2013; De Clercq et al., 2010; Hornsby et al., 2009; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Barringer & Bluedorn, 1999). Senior-level managers articulate an entrepreneurial strategic vision for their firm and lay out a pro-entrepreneurship organizational structure (Ireland et al., 2009). Both the vision and architecture encourage and justify the systematic and continuous pursuit of opportunities throughout the firm. They help organizational members to commit to entrepreneurial behavior without the direct involvement of top executives. Middle-level managers, for their part, endorse and evaluate entrepreneurial opportunities and deploy the resources needed to pursue these opportunities (Kuratko et al., 2005). The role of first-level managers is to initiate entrepreneurial projects, solve problems related to these projects, and adjust current practices to the strategic initiatives of senior-level management (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

Generally, corporate entrepreneurship is considered a positive phenomenon that generates favorable consequences for firms. However, the theoretical literature also highlights precautions to and downsides of pursuing CE. First, CE may rapidly deplete resources if applied in inappropriate environments (Wales et al., 2013a; Phan et al., 2009; Covin & Slevin, 1991) and increase competition in the market by goading competitors to fight back (Miller, 1983; Covin & Covin, 1990). In addition, entrepreneurial actions do not guarantee pre-determined results because the outcome of any entrepreneurial action is inherently uncertain (Covin & Miles, 1999). In fact, entrepreneurial projects that focus on experimentation into the unknown may often end in failure (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011). Finally, CE should not be viewed as a quick engine of growth, but instead as a long-term, resource-consuming orientation that may take longer periods of time to

take full economic effect (Wales et al., 2011; Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014; Ireland et al., 2009; Dess et al., 2003; Wiklund, 1999; Zahra & Covin, 1995).

After the general outline of corporate entrepreneurship presented above, the next two sections explain two specific approaches to CE. The notion of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is the most widely-used theoretical concept to describe entrepreneurship as firm growth. Strategic entrepreneurship, for its part, conceptualizes entrepreneurship as firm renewal.

2.2 Entrepreneurial orientation

The concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) represents a particular strategy-making mode (Ireland et al., 2009; Dess et al., 1997; Mintzberg, 1973) based on decision-making that favors entrepreneurial actions (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). In recent decades, EO has been the most common conceptualization of entrepreneurship as firm growth.

To date, the theoretical and empirical formulations of EO have largely taken place within a positivist and realist research paradigm (Rauch et al. 2009; Covin & Wales, 2012). EO represents a real organizational, firm-level phenomenon that exists independently of its measurement (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). EO cannot be defined as a distinct, clearly observable entity, but is instead inferred from EO measures that seek indications of entrepreneurial dispositions and behavioral patterns within organizations (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). These indications are judged and evaluated by executive directors because the senior-most executive is assumed to possess the most relevant information on an organization to provide a firm-level viewpoint of its entrepreneurial actions (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003; Lyon et al., 2000). The original EO measure, the M/C&S scale (Miller, 1983; Covin & Slevin, 1989, see Appendix B), still continues to see extensive use in empirical research (Wales et al., 2013a). The measure includes not only indicators of entrepreneurial behavior, but also items that represent beliefs, preferences, and business outcomes related to entrepreneurship (Covin & Miller, 2013). Even though descriptions of entrepreneurship normally emphasize the behavioral aspect, this type of triangulation approach is not viewed as problematic because multiple indicators are considered the best way to capture the nature of entrepreneurship in the corporate setting (Covin & Miller, 2013).

EO describes firm-level entrepreneurship by foregrounding five specific dimensions. These five key dimensions include innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, 2001; Covin & Slevin, 1989, 1991; Miller, 1983). The earliest conceptualizations of EO (Miller, 1983; Covin & Slevin, 1989) consist of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking; the dimensions of competitive

aggressiveness and autonomy were added to the construct later (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The original conceptualizations view proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness as interchangeable (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Covin & Covin, 1990) because outperforming one's competition is a manifestation of proactiveness. Lumpkin and Dess (1996), however, argued for the specific inclusion of competitive aggressiveness by pointing out that competing with rivals and anticipating new opportunities in the market should be conceptually differentiated from one another, and consequently, operationalized a more precise distinction between the two dimensions (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001, see Appendix B). They further argued for the inclusion of autonomy by highlighting that independent action disengaged from organizational constraints is essential in the launch of a new venture. Counter-arguments claim that autonomy is built into the dimension of risk-taking, because risk-taking would be difficult to engage in without autonomy (Basso et al., 2009).

Innovativeness has become a major factor used to characterize the core of entrepreneurship and the outcomes of entrepreneurial behavior (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Covin & Miller, 2013). Entrepreneurial firms pursue new opportunities by engaging in and supporting new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative practices that may result in new products, services, processes (Dess et al., 1997; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), or any new combination of existing means and resources that eliminate the existing combinations (Schumpeter, 1934/1996).

Risk-taking, frequently used to describe entrepreneurship (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), is defined as the degree to which managers in a firm are willing to make large and risky resource commitments that have a reasonable chance of costly failure (Miller & Friesen, 1978). An entrepreneurial firm views these kinds of bold and wide-ranging acts as useful and common practice (Miller & Friesen, 1982). On a more general level, risk-taking refers to any bold action of organizational members in order to achieve their objectives, often in the face of unknown opportunities with uncertain outcomes (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, 2001).

Proactiveness represents a forward-looking response to opportunities in the market (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Proactive actions enable a firm to anticipate changes and needs in the market and to be the first to act on them. Proactive firms introduce new trends to the market by actively shaping the demand, not merely reacting to it (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; 2001; Miller & Friesen, 1978). Shaping demand involves, above all, introducing new products or services ahead of the competition. Proactiveness suggests a forward-looking perspective characteristic of a firm that has the foresight to act in anticipation of future demand to create change (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Anticipation and being ahead of the market are considered beneficial to economic performance, especially in dynamic, opportunity-rich environments (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Some previous studies (e.g., Tang et al., 2009; Vora et al., 2012) have suggested

that proactiveness occupies a primary position in encouraging and enabling entrepreneurial behavior in organizations. Proactiveness drives innovative and risk-taking behavior and enhances concrete, firm-level entrepreneurial activities.

Competitive aggressiveness, in contrast, is a defensive response to competitive threats (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Competitive moves enable a firm to forcefully secure or improve its position in the market. An aggressively competitive firm challenges its rivals directly and intensely to achieve entry or improve its current position in the market. The means for competing can be also reactive and unconventional (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; 2001) and include, for example, cutting prices and sacrificing profitability (Venkatraman, 1989). Aggressively competitive moves positively contribute to the success of entrepreneurial activities, especially when competition for clients and resources is intense (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). However, competitive aggressiveness may harm long-term collaborative ventures in the market if pushed to extremes (Certo et al., 2009). Firms with a reputation for competitive aggressiveness may even find themselves excluded from alliances based on mutual knowledge sharing and the exploitation of opportunities. Therefore, a more moderate level of competitive aggressiveness may result in more optimal firm performance than would drastic measures aimed at outperforming the competition (see Bhuian et al., 2005).

Autonomy in the concept of EO is defined as the independent action of an individual or team in seizing an opportunity and following it through to completion (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, see also Pinchot, 1985). The entrepreneurship literature and cultural images generally regard autonomy as a central feature of entrepreneurship and link it to individual actors. Thus, unlike other EO dimensions, autonomy functions primarily on an individual or micro-level, and its role is to set in motion and prime the other dimensions. A more recently developed autonomy measure (Lumpkin et al., 2009, see Appendix B) conceptually differentiates EO-related autonomy more distinctly from management-related autonomy, such as autonomy induced by decentralization or other structural arrangements. A firm and its leaders should promote, shield, and support the efforts of independently working individuals and teams that make decisions on their own about what business opportunities to pursue despite organizational constraints. These initiatives and input should play a major role when the firm identifies and selects suitable opportunities in the market. If an organization lacks the freedom to act independently, individuals and teams will create autonomy for themselves by, for instance, bending rules, bypassing procedures, and disregarding other organizational constraints (Shane, 1994). EO research has raised some questions about the potential negative effects of autonomy. For instance, some researchers have claimed that autonomy carried to extremes may actually diminish a firm's returns (Lumpkin et al., 2009).

EO research has also focused on whether the dimensions of EO can occur independently in various combinations or unidimensionally in a balanced combination in order for a firm to be considered entrepreneurial. According to the multidimensional view, the dimensions of EO can and should be emphasized in different ways depending on environmental and organizational contexts (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). In contrast, the unidimensional view proposes that a firm can be considered entrepreneurial only if it acts upon all the dimensions simultaneously and thus scores high on all the corresponding variables (Rauch et al., 2009; Basso et al., 2009). To date, most empirical studies have adopted the composite, unidimensional view and have therefore presumed that all EO dimensions add equally to the overall quantitative level of EO in any given firm (Rauch et al., 2009; Covin & Wales, 2012). EO scholars currently consider these two views representative of *different* constructs and not competing ones (Covin & Miller, 2013). The unidimensional view focuses on the commonality of the dimensions, whereas the multidimensional view explores the distinctiveness of each EO dimension (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011).

The concept of EO constructs entrepreneurship in the corporate setting as a firm-level phenomenon. More specifically, *firm-level* refers to each strategic business unit of an organization. Typically, non-diversified small and medium-sized enterprises are considered firm-level units in their entirety, whereas each diversified strategic business unit of a multi-business organization is viewed as if the unit were an entire firm in itself (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). The concept of EO further emphasizes sustained entrepreneurial behavior patterns (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Covin & Lumpkin, 2011) that firms can and should actively manage (Covin & Slevin, 1991). Entrepreneurial behavior must also occur on an ongoing basis. Therefore, firms do not merit the label *entrepreneurial* if their entrepreneurial actions do not persist over time.

Also, EO as a firm-level concept should pervade all levels of an organization (Covin & Slevin, 1991). However, recent developments in EO research indicate that EO may manifest in different ways across hierarchy levels, business units, functional areas, and the development stages of a firm (Wales et al., 2011; see also Zahra et al., 1999). EO scholars have also suggested studying more proximal outcomes of EO, such as whether entrepreneurial projects succeed or fail, in addition to the traditional firm-level outcomes of EO (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011). These theorizations recognize that organizations may contain heterogeneous conceptualizations of EO, and that these diverse conceptualizations and their different outcomes may enhance firm performance in varying manners. To fully tap into entrepreneurship and the positive business outcomes it promises, how individual actors in different functions of the firm involved in and carrying out entrepreneurial projects view entrepreneurship from their own positions in the organization is therefore relevant.

2.3 Strategic entrepreneurship

Whereas entrepreneurial orientation treats entrepreneurship as a particular *strategy-making mode*, strategic entrepreneurship represents a distinct survival and transformation *strategy* for established firms that face declining business performance and turnaround situations (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2013, 2009; Dess et al., 1999). In order to regain competitive superiority, strategic entrepreneurship requires firms to fundamentally renew themselves (Covin & Miles, 1999). Firms should redirect their current strategy and significantly modify their operational practices to change their declining position in the market.

Strategic entrepreneurship takes effect by linking renewal to the formulation of competitive advantage. The specific aim is to gain sustainable competitive advantage as a way to manage uncertainty and resources (Ireland & Webb, 2009; Ireland et al., 2003) by implementing a value-creating strategy that no current or potential competitor takes advantage of or is able to copy (Barney, 1991). New valuable competitive advantages in relation to the firm's external environment ought to be explored on an ongoing basis in order for a firm to continuously differentiate itself from its rivals (Ireland & Webb, 2007, 2009).

Theoretical literature depicts four forms of strategic entrepreneurship manifestations (Covin & Miles, 1999). These types represent varying degrees of how fundamentally a firm wishes to redefine itself in order to improve its competitive standing and reconstruct its business model (Ireland & Webb, 2009). The most common form is *sustained regeneration*, which develops internal cultures, processes, and structures to support continuous innovation, whereas *domain redefinition* creates a completely new market position for the firm. *Organizational rejuvenation* takes an internal look into the firm by developing the organization itself in strategy execution. *Strategic renewal*, for its part, changes the way the firm competes by aligning it successfully with the external environment. Strategic renewal implements a new business strategy that differs significantly from past practices and aims to utilize resources more efficiently or to exploit available product-market opportunities more fully (Covin & Miles, 1999; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009). Strategy renewal represents the most challenging form of strategic entrepreneurship because changes in strategic direction may be even harder for most firms than, for instance, implementing major internal innovations (Covin & Miles, 1999; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009).

The literature depicts theoretical strategic entrepreneurship models that define the antecedents, elements, and consequences of entrepreneurship in the corporate setting (e.g., Ireland et al., 2003; Ireland et al., 2009). These models place entrepreneurship in the realm of strategic management by prescribing ideal combinations of appropriate cultural, structural, and resource variables to support entrepreneurial behavior and by predicting success if firms conform

to these prescriptions. For instance, the model of Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009) emphasizes the importance of creating an entrepreneurial strategic vision and a pro-entrepreneurship organizational architecture to promote the pursuit of opportunities in the market. However, the strategic entrepreneurship literature fails to describe *how* actual entrepreneurship processes, such as the implementation of CE models, emerge in the everyday reality of organizations (Steyaert, 2007, 1997). In fact, the lack of a comprehensive model of the entrepreneurial process that would provide theoretical and practical implications as to the *how* of entrepreneurship is considered one of the most pressing problems in the study of CE (Moroz & Hindle, 2012).

3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The present dissertation adopts an interpretivist research paradigm to study entrepreneurship in the organizational context. The interpretivist paradigm takes a subjective and constructionist perspective of corporate reality and aims to describe how individual organizational actors themselves perceive their organization (Grant & Perren, 2002; Anderson & Starnawska, 2008). The dissertation therefore adopts a fundamentally different research approach to the phenomenon of corporate entrepreneurship than what has been achieved thus far. The study aims to describe how organizational actors construct and interpret the notion of entrepreneurship and to explicate the micro-level behaviors related to entrepreneurship that firms engage in as part of their everyday activities.

Conventionally, the dominant functionalist research tradition in entrepreneurship research emphasizes an objective, realist, and positivist perspective of organizational reality (Grant & Perren, 2002). The positivist paradigm formulates entrepreneurship as a phenomenon residing beyond the reality of entrepreneurship itself (i.e., the empirically-measurable reality of orientations, strategies, and behaviors of firms). However, scholars have increasingly begun to claim (see, for example, Anderson & Starnawska, 2008; Gartner & Birley, 2002; Ogbor, 2000) that this research approach has resulted in a somewhat narrow and one-sided perspective of entrepreneurship, as it has failed to attend to the unexpected, atypical, and unique nature of entrepreneurship. For instance, the functionalist paradigm has tended to explain variance in entrepreneurial activity in the corporate setting, but not the processes leading to that activity, and to search for regularities in entrepreneurial behaviour instead of looking at the multiple ways in which entrepreneurship can be enacted and defined across various organizational actors and contexts.

Within the functionalist paradigm, the theoretical formulations of entrepreneurship represent the central processes and dimensions that scholars consider relevant when firms strive for growth and survival by entrepreneurial activities. According to the interpretivist paradigm, however, any particular choice of theoretical dimensions and actions that functionalist entrepreneurship studies have outlined is already a socially-constructed phenomenon. These choices are not absolute, as their meaning and usage can vary according to context. In fact, entrepreneurship as defined in theoretical literature, entrepreneurship operationalized as a particular type of firm behavior, and entrepreneurship constructed in different occasions, circumstances, and contexts represent various versions of entrepreneurship that may overlap or differ. The lack of an absolute or

objective meaning of entrepreneurship does not prevent scholars from discussing entrepreneurship as a socially and discursively constructed phenomenon.

From these general points of departure, studying the interpretations that owners, managers, and other key actors responsible for the management and operations of firms actually construct is indeed feasible. In fact, some scholars have begun to call for interpretivist studies that promise a deeper understanding of the nature of entrepreneurship in organizations and the practical challenges and activities related to it (Carlsson et al., 2013; Grant & Perren, 2002; Zahra, 2007). Miller (2011), for instance, suggests interviewing executives and asking them to share their understandings of the EO dimensions and of the meaning of pursuing EO. However, even though the benefits of interpretivist inquiries are considered important in enriching our understanding of corporate entrepreneurship, empirical research has to date largely failed to take up such a perspective (Anderson et al., 2013; Vora et al., 2012; Tajeddini & Mueller, 2012; Lappalainen, 2009 notwithstanding).

In response to the underexplored interpretivist research challenge in the corporate setting, this study describes what kind of versions of entrepreneurship individual organizational actors construct and how their versions relate to the theoretically-formulated conceptualizations of corporate entrepreneurship. The aim is to examine how organizational actors either individually or collectively define entrepreneurship when they construct, interpret, evaluate, and apply it in the context of their day-to-day activities on different functions and levels of the organization. The study focuses on the theoretical model of strategic entrepreneurship as explained by Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009) and the dimensions of autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness in the concept of entrepreneurial orientation. These three dimensions were selected for analysis because their inclusion and operationalization in the concept of EO remains debatable (Rauch et al., 2009), and because few studies since Lumpkin and Dess (2001; 1996) have attempted to clarify their individual distinctiveness.

This study sets out to explore the following questions:

1. How do organizational actors react to the general idea of entrepreneurship? (I–IV; Section 5.1)
2. What kind of interpretations of entrepreneurship do organizational actors construct and how do they argue for or against these interpretations? (I, II; Section 5.2)
3. What kind of structural processes of entrepreneurship do organizational actors construct in their talk and for what purposes? (III, IV; Section 5.3)
4. How is entrepreneurship enacted and accomplished in everyday organizational interaction situations? (I–IV; Section 6.1.1)

5. How do organizational actors view their own entrepreneurship-related actions and those of their colleagues in relation to the entire firm? (I, III; Section 6.1.2)
6. What role do internal and external relations of the firm play in the construction of entrepreneurship? (I, II, III, IV; Section 6.2)
7. What are the institutional challenges of the legitimization and institutionalization of entrepreneurship in the organizational context? (I–IV; Section 6.3)

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Descriptive methodologies

This dissertation employs three descriptive methods to generate and analyze the empirical research material. Descriptive methods refer to research procedures that illustrate how societal entities, such as organizations, are regulated and maintained by, for example, status quo, social order, and consensus (Grant & Perren, 2002). The methods utilized in this study include discursive psychology, the qualitative attitude approach, and narrative psychology. They aim to collect samples of how the research participants subjectively interpret the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in the specific context of their everyday corporate reality. Particular attention focused on choosing methods that would cater to both the content-related and structural elements of the research material.

Discursive psychology served to explicate the different versions (or discourses) of corporate entrepreneurship that the research participants constructed in their ongoing interaction. Discursive psychology focuses on the content of language use in interactive situations, such as interviews and meetings (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Burr, 2003) and highlights the situated, constructed, and action-oriented nature of language use (Potter, 2003; Potter & Edwards, 2001). A variation in individual accounts is to be expected because the same phenomenon can be illustrated in a number of different ways (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Most importantly, discursive psychology views language use as action. In other words, individuals can use discourses to accomplish different purposes through their talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), such as to fulfill their own objectives or to satisfy their own interests. To construct and justify their own versions of social reality, individuals can draw on diverse resources, such as interpretative repertoires, categories, and rhetorical devices (Potter & Wetherell, 1995).

In addition to identifying the discursive variation in the research participants' talk about entrepreneurship, the analysis took advantage of established interaction structures and rhetorical devices that conversation analysis has already laid out. This structural approach to organizational talk about entrepreneurship proved useful in understanding how entrepreneurial processes unfold in ongoing interaction. These interaction structures included proposals (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Houtkoop, 1987; Davidsson, 1984), joint decision-making processes of access, agreement, and commitment (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012; Stevanovic, 2012; Stevanovic, 2013; see also Gunnarsson, 2006;

Huisman, 2001), complaints (Heinemann & Traverso, 2009; Edwards, 2005), and extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986; Edwards, 2000). Applying conversation-analytical tools to fine-grained analyses of discourse in this manner is common in discursive psychology (Billig, 1999).

The *qualitative attitude approach* (Vesala & Rantanen, 2007; Vesala, 2008) served to bring to the fore the qualitatively different interpretations about corporate entrepreneurship that research participants constructed in the interviews. The approach draws on discursive psychology and Billig's (1996; 1991; 2009) rhetorical social psychology, which emphasizes rhetoric as argumentation. Billig considers rhetoric to be the key to understanding the social nature of human thinking and suggests that the strategy of considering, searching for, and inventing not only arguments but also counter-arguments is basic to human cognitive processing. Individuals repeatedly face situations that demand decisions between alternate options, and therefore also need to consider and evaluate differing and opposing viewpoints. The qualitative attitude approach offers a systematic procedure for empirically studying the construction of attitudes in evaluative argumentative talk in interview settings. An attitude is studied as an either positive or negative communicative and evaluative viewpoint of a particular issue in a particular social context. When taking a stand, an individual usually justifies the stand and accounts for it, even when the stand is presented conditionally or with reservations. In such argumentative rhetoric, an attitude toward a particular issue seldom translates into one completely fixed position that applies unchangeably across different situations.

The qualitative attitude approach uses attitude statements, similar to those in quantitative attitude measures, as prompts for producing rich and open-ended argumentation about a particular issue (Vesala, 2008). This approach was considered particularly suitable because it offers sufficient latitude for the interviewees to reflect on entrepreneurship from multiple perspectives. In particular, the approach requires that the interviewer not define the concepts and ideas included in the statements, but instead permits the interviewees to define them. Even though exact (theoretically motivated) wordings can serve to formulate the statements, the interviewees are free to contest them and their relevance in each specific research context. Further, the approach offers an equal opportunity and position to all research participants as actors in their organizations to comment on ideas related to entrepreneurship. After that, it obviously remains to be seen whether and how the participants themselves will take up this opportunity.

Narrative psychology was chosen to examine how entrepreneurial processes unfold and link past, present, and future actions together (Down & Warren, 2008; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009; Steyaert, 1997), because time and context are crucial elements in narratives (Jones et al., 2008; Bruner, 2004). Narratives

typically take a retrospective look at events and structurally describe how they progressed over the course of time. Narratives further aim to provide or restore a sense of meaning and direction to how the events were experienced (Murray, 2008; Frank & Lueger, 1998; Gergen & Gergen, 1984). These features of narratives are consistent with entrepreneurship scholars' emphasis on studying realized strategies as opposed to intended ones (Venkatraman, 1989). During interviews, the aim is to encourage interviewees to talk freely about their experiences and opinions on a given topic in order to capture the longitudinal, temporal, and developmental nature of these experiences. Interviewees offer many narratives in response to open-ended questions, as they impose no pre-defined limits or directions on the type of narrative expected (De Fina, 2009). Consequently, interview topics are typically articulated in a general manner in order to keep as many views as possible open to interviewees.

4.2 The context of the study

The original studies of this dissertation explore interpretations of entrepreneurship in two everyday organizational contexts. First, Studies I-III take the perspective of one organizational function of entrepreneurship. Because EO may manifest in different manners across functional areas of a firm (Wales et al., 2011), the studies set out to explore the potential variation in the interpretations of EO in the sales function and the selling activities that organizational actors pursue in their everyday operations. The empirical research context of selling can be considered relevant to corporate entrepreneurship, in particular to EO, as the sales function combines the results of entrepreneurial efforts performed in other organizational functions. Salespeople typically operate at the firm-market interface by offering the outcomes of their firms' innovative efforts to the market and by having access to knowledge about competitor actions. Salespeople are therefore in a relevant position to evaluate how their firm's behavior is met in the market and with what kind of results.

More specifically, Studies I-III focus on individual salespeople either directly employed in the sales function of each studied organization, managing sales teams within these functions, or having personal sales obligations in other positions within the firm, either with their own sales targets to meet or the overall turnover of the sales function to attend to. This overview of sales activities on different organizational levels and viewed from different, and even simultaneous, organizational roles offers a relatively versatile perspective of entrepreneurship in the organizational context of selling. For example, management group members, on the one hand, serve as directors responsible for the entire firm and, on the other hand, also as salespeople with individual sales responsibilities to fulfill.

Second, in Study IV, the empirical research context is the entire organization viewed from the perspective of its managing director. Study IV therefore adopts an empirical research context and perspective typical of CE research. However, the methodology offers a different argumentative starting point for the managing director. Instead of being asked to complete a questionnaire about his firm's entrepreneurial activities and dispositions, the managing director was offered the opportunity to tell the story of his firm in an interview.

4.3 Research material

The research material comes from three privately-owned Finnish business service provider firms in the metropolitan areas of Helsinki and Tampere during 2008–2011. These firms are service providers that apply their specialized competencies, knowledge, and skills for the benefit of other organizations (see Vargo & Lusch, 2004). They claimed that their sales function was organized mainly around face-to-face meetings with representatives of their client organizations.

The material comes from individual interviews and authentic meeting interaction recordings. I carried out all the interviews but did not participate in the meetings. All of the meetings in Study III and all of the interviews in Studies I and II were conducted in Finnish. The interview of Study IV was conducted in English. All meetings and interviews were recorded for later transcription (see Appendix A) with the written permission of all participants. The translations of the meeting and interview talk presented in the excerpts of the original publications aim to maintain a clear sense of the research participants' talk and to keep it as close as possible to the Finnish original (cf. Houtkoop, 1987). A summary of the research material appears in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the research material.

Study	Size of enterprise (headcount)	Material collection period	Research participants	Research material	Duration of recording	Research method
I	Small	May 2008	Management group members (N = 6)	Individual interviews	29 min on average	Qualitative attitude approach
II	Large	Oct 2010–Jan 2011	Salespeople (N = 7) and sales group directors (N = 2)	Individual interviews	21 min on average	Qualitative attitude approach
III	Small	Jan–Feb 2008	Management group members (N = 6)	Recorded meeting (N = 5)	12 h 40 min in total	Discursive psychology, interaction structures
IV	Medium-sized	Dec 2009	Managing director (N = 1)	Individual interview	1 h 7 min	Narrative psychology, prototypical story forms

The individual interviews in Studies I and II (management group members, salespersons, and sales group directors) were conducted according to the practices of the qualitative attitude approach (Vesala, 2008). The general idea is to create comparability between individual interviews by using a semi-structured interview design, which organizes the interview into distinct sections. Each section involves a conversation which the interviewer begins by introducing and reading aloud each prompt statement, as well as presenting it in written form on a sheet of paper. All of the interviews introduced several statements of the dimensions of EO formulated to address the selling context and other organizational issues for the interviewees to comment on. The statements about autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness chosen for analysis in Studies I and II appear in Appendix C. While conducting the interviews, the interviewer has to accomplish two tasks: to elicit the interviewees' opinion about each attitude statement and to encourage comments while remaining neutral about the issue at hand. The interviewees, in their own words, take a stand on each statement and justify their stands. In Studies I and II, the interviewer also elicited clarifications from the interviewees by asking them to describe in more detail how an argument would present itself in practice. The interviewees also received recapitulations of their previous views in order to encourage more profound reflections on the statement or to ensure a valid understanding of the given views. At the end of the interviews, in order to give the interviewees one more opportunity to reflect on the statements, all the statements were presented to the interviewees at the same time, unless they explicitly said the interview was over or stated that they had nothing more to add.

The research material of Study III contains recordings of management group meetings. Recordings of authentic meeting interaction offer an opportunity to study organizational life as it unfolds as a joint achievement of the meeting participants. In general, meetings are the very situations in which firms produce and reproduce themselves, where firm activities are created and maintained, and where divergent issues meet and potentially merge (Boden, 1994; Drew & Heritage, 1992). Meetings can therefore be considered central places where entrepreneurship can also emerge and be maintained in social interaction (see Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009). In fact, some EO scholars consider meetings to be particularly informative in offering new insights into how directors discuss their entrepreneurial activities (e.g., Miller, 2011; Covin & Miller, 2013). The meetings of Study III were audio-recorded by one of the meeting participants. The same management group members that participated in these meetings were also interviewed in Study I. A summary of the recordings appears in Appendix D.

The individual interview in Study IV (the managing director) was conducted according to the interview guidelines of narrative psychology (Murray, 2008; Mishler, 1986). The study utilized the traditional upper echelon perspective of empirical entrepreneurship research in the organizational context (Rauch et al.,

2009; Lyon et al., 2000). The managing director's perspective was considered particularly relevant in this case because the managing director is arguably the one individual in firms who is typically responsible for leading firm-level change and renewal processes. In narrative terms, the managing director was considered the main character in organizational change. The interview topic was articulated in a general manner in order to encourage the managing director to contemplate his experiences as the leader of his firm from as many views as possible. He was asked to reflect on what had occurred in the firm since his appointment, what the firm's situation was at the moment of the interview, and what he expected to occur in the near future. No cues or directions as to entrepreneurship in general or CE strategies in particular were offered. The only issues that the managing director was explicitly expected to bring up in this talk were the temporal elements typical of narrative accounts (i.e., the past, the present, and the future; see Murray, 2008). During the interview, the interviewer's role was typical of narrative interviews: to serve as an interested audience for the interviewee's talk and to refrain from demanding clarifications until the interview ended.

4.4 Procedures of analysis

4.4.1 STUDIES I AND II: THE QUALITATIVE ATTITUDE APPROACH

The analysis in the qualitative attitude approach proceeds from details of the material to outlining general patterns of argumentation (Vesala & Rantanen, 2007). The analysis occurs in two stages. First, in the classifying analysis, the argumentative talk is categorized according to a literal reading of the research material. Second, the interpretative analysis brings these categories into a conceptual dialogue with theoretical concepts and discussions relevant to the particular study at hand.

The *classifying* analysis identified different explicit stands taken towards each attitude statement together with specific arguments intended to reason and to justify these stands (Vesala & Rantanen, 2007). The analysis also detailed the stand-taking that interviewees expressed in a conditional or hesitant manner (see also Billig, 1996). At this stage of the analysis, individual interviewees were not the primary analytical units. Therefore, different types of stands or justifications were also identified within one and the same interview. The different stands were then classified into categories: first, according to the type of stand (i.e., supporting, rejecting, or conditional), and thereafter on the basis of each stand's justifications. As a result, an overall view of multiple stand-justification combinations observable in the interview material emerged. These overall views appear in tables of the original Studies I and II.

The *interpretative* analysis elaborated on the initial classificatory analysis (Vesala & Rantanen, 2007) which aimed to identify general patterns of argumentation evident in the detailed categories of stands and justifications. These patterns were thereafter linked to the dimensions of EO and the theoretical discussions about the concept of EO. The interpretative analysis explicated the relational aspects of EO, targets of entrepreneurial behavior, and the relationships between the single dimensions of EO.

4.4.2 STUDY III: DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND INTERACTION STRUCTURES

In Study III, the departure point for the analysis was the explicit content of the meeting talk. The analysis focused on those sequences in which management group members, first, described behavior that could be interpreted to match the concepts of corporate entrepreneurship, in particular that of EO, and, second, depicted a specific purpose for this type of behavior. The object of analysis thus included those meeting interaction sequences in which members discussed both EO-related behavior and its purposes.

Sequences to be analyzed were selected on three grounds. First, sequences were selected in which members used specific EO-related theoretical vocabulary, including adjectives such as *proactive* and *innovative*. Second, sequences were also selected that depicted entrepreneurial behavior in ways that were in some way discernibly linked to the concept of EO. For example, *taking care of everything from the beginning to the end* can be considered congruent with the theoretical definition of autonomy. Third, the content of each sequence was checked for potential purposes of EO-related behavior. Because the theoretical concept of EO serves a specific purpose, namely that of firm growth (Wales et al., 2013a; Rauch et al., 2009), the analysis concentrated on those sequences in which members directly described in their talk why entrepreneurial behavior would be, for example, important to them. At this point, sequences that described EO-related behavior with no explicitly stated purpose were excluded from the analysis. For instance, cases in which members lamented the difficulty of innovation and speculated how much time they would need to spend on it were omitted. After the sequence selection, the analysis described in detail how EO-related interaction sequences as mentioned above were structurally organized in the talk of the management group members.

4.4.3 STUDY IV: NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND PROTOTYPICAL STORY FORMS

During the managing director's interview, it became apparent that strategic issues formed an integral part of his narrative. The analysis concentrated on this

strategy-related talk that comprised approximately the first half of the interview. The managing director's interview was analyzed in two stages; first, structurally and, second, according to the CE strategy model of Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009).

The analysis of narrative empirical material typically begins by explicating the narrative structure – in other words, how events are linked together (Larty & Hamilton, 2011). In Study IV, the narrative interview was analyzed as a specific narrative type. Gergen and Gergen (1984; 1986) depict three prototypical narrative forms: progressive, regressive, and stable. These forms typically establish a desired goal or another valued endpoint and describe preceding events so that the narrator approaches, moves away from, or maintains this goal. Narratives also anticipate future events (i.e., evaluate how the goal-related events will evolve in the future). The managing director's story was interpreted as a typical progressive narrative with four stages (see also Murray, 2008). These four stages group individual events together, and the relationships between these stages establish a particular order to the narrative. This order further motivates and justifies actions during each stage (cf. Gergen & Gergen, 1986).

Thereafter, the four stages of the managing director's progressive narrative were compared to the CE strategy model of Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009). When the analysis began (in May 2010), this model was one of the most recently-published CE strategy models. The analysis paid specific attention to the two elements that the model places at the core of supporting the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities: entrepreneurial strategic vision and pro-entrepreneurship organizational architecture. The analysis further explicated the outcomes of the renewed strategy in terms of desired performance.

5. SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINAL STUDIES

By taking into account all four original studies, the present summary answers research questions 1–3 (see Section 3) by first considering how the research participants reacted to the general idea of corporate entrepreneurship. The summary thereafter explicates what kind of interpretations the participants constructed of entrepreneurial orientation and how they justified their views. These interpretations are drawn from Studies I and II conducted according to the principles of the qualitative attitude approach. Finally, the summary section ends with an overview of the processes that the research participants constructed of corporate entrepreneurship in their interview and meeting talk in Studies III and IV.

5.1 The reception of corporate entrepreneurship

The research participants quite unproblematically and positively reacted to the general idea of corporate entrepreneurship that was either presented to them in interviews or constructed in meeting interaction. This observation is unsurprising because the phenomenon of CE is most prominently related to the economic sector of our society. This is not to say, however, that more detailed aspects of CE were met with mere acceptance or treated as self-evident. This section will show how CE was received both on a general and a more detailed level, and how different interpretations of CE were rhetorically managed in interaction.

In *Studies I-III*, the research participants seemed to be familiar with the phenomenon of corporate entrepreneurship and possess distinct representations of it. They effortlessly commented on the EO statements and applied EO-related vocabulary in both their interview and meeting talk. The participants described EO, for example, as an entrepreneurial spirit, attitude, and characteristic. Corporate entrepreneurship was relevant to the case firm of Studies I and III, even as an officially stated key aspect of its strategic goals. The participants also often utilized a metaphor typically related to entrepreneurs, namely *lone wolves*. This metaphor commonly describes the dominant image of entrepreneurs as *predators*, or aggressive and exploitative actors (Anderson et al., 2009).

Interestingly, the research participants presented no arguments against the *general* idea or importance of CE in their interview or meeting talk. This was

evident, for instance, in Study III, when the research participants often oriented to the entrepreneurial ideals as already existing: the entrepreneurial basis for the new sales practices was first presented as self-evident and only afterwards as something new by assigning to the ideal a somewhat new interpretation. For example, proactiveness seemed to be part of the participants' common ground because there was no need to explain why it was *too late* if the client approaches the case firm first. Thereafter, the new practice was formulated by proposing that the case firm should always be the first to contact the client.

Consequently, considerable consensus and shared understanding of the relevance of CE seemed to prevail within the research participants, notwithstanding individual differences in the tone of argumentation. In the organizational context of this study, the general notion of CE seemed therefore to occupy the position of an acknowledged ideal according to which organizational actors should pursue their daily business endeavors. In fact, in Study II, the interviewees either claimed that they themselves indeed conduct their selling activities according to the principles described in the statements or said that the principles represent ideals that every salespeople of the case firm should follow. These findings contrast with what some other studies in other empirical research contexts have suggested. In the farming context, for example, some of the Finnish farmers interviewed vehemently denied the relevance of entrepreneurship for themselves by stating that entrepreneurial ideals cannot be applied to farming activities (Pyysiäinen et al., 2011).

However, the individual dimensions of autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness did provoke qualitatively different interpretations among the research participants. They enumerated both positive and negative aspects and consequences of these dimensions, and their talk depicted several different perspectives of them. Overall, instead of directly refusing CE as a guiding principle of their daily work, the participants constructed preconditions, practices, and circumstances under which CE would function in full and produce desired business outcomes for the firm. Negative evaluations of single dimensions and proposals that contest current understandings and practices played an integral part in these constructions.

To manage their conflicting evaluations and proposals, the participants used rhetorical devices in their talk about CE. In the interviews, conditional argumentation in their initial responses to the interview statements served as just such a resource. In other words, once the interviewee was capable of constructing more than one view of the same object of evaluation, the argumentation became conditional and reserved. The conditional argumentation allowed the interviewees to adjust their stands later in order to ensure a thorough evaluation of the statement before reaching a more definite stand or a more comprehensive view towards the issue. In the meeting interaction, the potential problems

that might arise from presenting proposals that conflict with current working methods were expressed in careful formulations, such as conditional verb forms and softeners. The careful talk was further intertwined with more adamant expressions that utilized extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986; Edwards, 2000) and emphases to render the actual proposal explicit and unambiguous.

In *Study IV*, the managing director's interview talk contained no explicit references to CE. For example, he did not describe his firm's renewal process or any elements in that process as entrepreneurial. The link between the managing director's narrative and the CE strategy model of Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko (2009) therefore stems only from the analysis. However, the managing director did contemplate the strategy renewal process in relation to competitors (as in describing the acquisition of new clients) and emphasized that the firm should take a forward-looking perspective of its future actions. So, one important function of the strategy renewal process for the managing director seemed to be to deal with competition by proactive and aggressive actions. This observation is in line with the concept of EO in which proactiveness serves as a way to undo competition (see Section 2.2). Even though the managing director did not directly refer to CE in his *talk*, he did describe the *actions* of his firm in terms that can be interpreted to correspond to the theoretical formulations of CE. It is therefore reasonable to assume that organizational actors need not necessarily utilize explicit theoretically-motivated vocabulary about CE or be able to identify and label their behaviour in entrepreneurial terms in order to *behave* according to ideals that the theoretical literature describes as entrepreneurial.

In summary, the organizational actors of this study had many argumentative resources at their disposal to talk about and discuss corporate entrepreneurship, defend their personal stands about it, and accept or contest those of other actors. The next section will summarize these diverse interpretations about corporate entrepreneurship.

5.2 The multifaceted interpretations of corporate entrepreneurship

The original Studies I-II demonstrated the variation in how CE was understood, evaluated, and applied in the organizational context of this study. Even though the theoretical literature depicts CE in particular ways (see Section 2), the research participants regarded it as something more. Along with accepting views, the participants also constructed more problematic and nuanced views of CE.

Study I, '*Constructing entrepreneurial orientation in a selling context*', evaluated the idea of an autonomous entrepreneur in selling as both a positive and a negative phenomenon. Autonomy was evaluated positively when it

was connected to another EO dimension (proactiveness), but negatively when linked to another one (competitive aggressiveness). Consequently, the positive version was labeled *proactive selling*, and the negative one, *internal competitive aggressiveness*. The simultaneous presence of these two opposing interpretations suggests not only how firms may attain a positive competitive status in the market, but also how they can jeopardize their position and weaken their overall results. Therefore, contrary to what the concept of EO suggests, the relationship of autonomy with other EO dimensions, rather than the amount of autonomy as such, appeared to be a key question (see Lumpkin et al., 2009). However, autonomy failed to connect to the other two of the EO dimensions, namely innovativeness and risk-taking. This would have been possible, in principle at least, because of the open-ended interview design, as the link with proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness attests.

The analysis further highlighted the relational aspects of EO. The interviewees constructed their positive and negative evaluations by way of their external client relationships and their internal relationships that can, if non-existent or poor, harm external relationships along with their personal responsibilities towards the firm itself. Even though the prompt statement presented autonomy as an individual-level issue, the interviewees also considered the issue of autonomy in relation to the salesperson's co-workers, clients, and the entire firm. In the larger context of EO as a firm-level strategy-making process, it is paramount that individual actions be constructed as a firm-level issue.

The second study, '*Proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness in the selling context*', constructed the practical application of these two dimensions of EO to address two different groups in the market, namely competitors and clients (i.e., not only to the competition, as the concept of EO would suggest). The two constructions linked to competitors were labeled *competitive aggressiveness* and *competitive proactiveness*, and those linked to clients, *protective proactiveness* and *protective aggressiveness*. Clients as an important target group of EO in the practical context of selling brought to the fore the notion of *protectiveness* that was present in the interviewees' argumentation about both EO dimensions. Protectiveness can be interpreted to represent a practical means by which firms can protect and shield what they have *already won* from the market. To this end, the argumentation patterns of protective aggressiveness and proactiveness demonstrated how firms may gain, maintain, and nurture existing and prospective client relationships in their pursuit of economic success. The findings further suggest that the ability to construct practical applications of EO and to adjust these applications according to each target group and context is an essential characteristic of firms interested in applying EO for their benefit. The firm-level strategy-making process of EO may therefore require that each dimension of EO be translated into concrete, contextually relevant applications

that serve everyday firm operations before EO can provide positive business outcomes to its proponents.

Study II did not treat the dimensions of proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness as interchangeable, however, as the original concept of EO suggests (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Covin & Covin, 1990). Even though the both dimensions address the same target groups (i.e., competitors and clients) and therefore overlap, they both nevertheless play distinct roles in the practical application of EO (see Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). The most distinctive function of proactiveness is the specific competitive advantage it creates for firms. When a firm is the first business to identify and satisfy unmet client needs, the firm possesses the primary means to outperform its competition and differentiate itself from its rivals in the market. The distinctiveness of competitive aggressiveness relates, on one hand, to the firm's need to eventually resort to reactive moves if the practical competitive advantage of EO (i.e., competitive proactiveness) has not been constructed and has therefore failed to keep competitors at bay. On the other hand, protective aggressiveness may enhance the success of competitive advantages when translated into explicitly determined, respectful, and trust-building actions towards clients. Unlike proactive behavior, however, competitive activities must be controlled within firms. The pursuit of profitability serves as just such a practical controlling tool against haphazard, ill-directed competitive activities.

In summary, the empirical excursions introduced in Studies I-II painted a more multifaceted picture of corporate entrepreneurship than what has to date been laid out by the dominant functionalist research tradition. The descriptive analyses brought to the fore local, micro-level understandings of different actors on different levels of the organization. These actors constructed, interpreted, and evaluated the ideal and ideas of CE from multiple perspectives and by multiple argumentative means. Even though the participants did not outright reject the general relevance of CE to them and their firms, they did attach both positive and negative meanings to it.

5.3 Corporate entrepreneurship as processes of decision-making and strategic renewal

Studies III-IV originally described how the research participants applied the ideal and ideas of corporate entrepreneurship to practical, everyday firm operations. The studies depicted two specific implementation processes, namely those of joint decision-making and strategic renewal. These processes extend beyond mere theoretical prescriptions of CE and instead explain the actual stages that the case firms followed when attempting to implement CE for their benefit.

The third study, *'The emergence of entrepreneurship in organizations'*, conceptualized CE as a collaborative, four-stage decision-making process based on shared understandings of entrepreneurial ideals, contingent on the agreement and commitment of organizational members who bear the responsibility to apply entrepreneurial practices in their daily work. In their meeting interaction, management group members jointly negotiated new entrepreneurial sales practices, but failed to demonstrate commitment to their future application. Several reasons may explain why commitment decisions were entirely absent from the research material. For example, the practices failed to describe the desired entrepreneurial behavior in detail, but remained abstract instead. The participants in the meeting also used the practices in their negotiations to steer the conversation away from delicate issues and to avoid directly addressing complaints on a personal level. As a result, the argumentative purposes for which CE-related ideals are used in interaction may pose an obstacle to commitment.

From a structural viewpoint, the process of how the management group members negotiated the new sales practices exemplifies typical decision-making sequences in interaction (Stevanovic, 2012; 2013). In this process, complaints problematize past practices and proposals construct experience-based solutions to reach positive business outcomes. As the detailed analysis demonstrated, the process requires particular conversational subtlety in order to maintain good working relationships between organizational actors. To this end, proposals may be utilized to negotiate experience-based practices to reach desirable future states because they place all participants on an equal footing to evaluate and commit to the suggested action (see Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). However, if proposals are formulated in explicitly accusatory or declarative manners or unilaterally imposed on other participants, they may fail to meet with agreement or to evoke commitment. In Study III, this problem seemed to concern the autonomy dimension, and unlike the proposals about innovativeness and proactiveness, complaining about sales problems led to recommendations of personal responsibility that were also met with disagreement and overt rejection.

The fourth and final study, *'Can an old firm learn new tricks?'*, described CE as a strategic renewal process. In his story, the managing director explained how dire circumstances occurred for his firm, and how he and his management team set out to cope with them. The beginning of the managing director's story not only described the dramatic loss of a client as the reason for change in an effort to survive, but also motivated forthcoming action to reach this goal. In the first stage, the management group analyzed the firm's history, and formulated a future vision and a new competitive advantage for the firm. The second part depicted three activity processes that were utilized to implement these changes. These processes included redefining employee roles, downsizing personnel, and acquiring a new client. The third stage evaluated the success

of the implementation processes in terms of an improved firm image and a growing number of new clients. The managing director further anticipated two alternative continuations for his story, which were either stable or regressive. In the stable version, his firm manages to survive, whereas in the regressive one, his firm merely struggles in the market.

The results of Study IV underscore the progressive, proactive, and impermanent nature of CE strategies. The findings suggest that firms benefit from being proactive when formulating an entrepreneurial strategic vision for themselves. Also, the less-distant future requires proactive measures. Instead of merely reacting to market changes and demands, the firm should create its own business opportunities by offering proactive suggestions that create value for both the firm and its clients. However, not all clients self-evidently accept these suggestions, but they can obviously also resist or disapprove of them. Therefore, firms need clients and other external partners with equally ambitious business objectives in order to successfully implement their CE strategies. The impermanent nature of CE strategies can be linked to the idea of entrepreneurship as a short-lived line of events (Steyaert, 1997). CE strategies may therefore require constant renewal and maintenance within firms that wish to maintain their position in demanding markets. This finding suggests that the effects of strategic renewal do not necessarily extend beyond a limited period of time. However, one could rightfully ask whether the departure point for progressive CE strategies is always a major external shock or whether a new strategy can be implemented differently by, for instance, not laying off employees or by retaining a core of existing clients instead of procuring new ones.

In summary, the research participants in Studies III-IV constructed practical applications of CE in the form of decision-making and strategic renewal processes. These processes highlight CE as a growth- and results-oriented concept. The decision-making process aimed to introduce new practices to increase and improve the case firm's sales efforts. The process of strategic renewal, for its part, served to compensate for the case firm's dire economic circumstances and to improve its longer-term position in the market. These findings therefore indicate that, in everyday organizational life, several micro-level processes of CE which seek to improve economic indicators and business outcomes may be ongoing.

6. DISCUSSION

In the present discussion section, the micro social constructions summarized in Section 5 serve as starting points to further develop the theoretical concept of corporate entrepreneurship. These constructions underscore the socially embedded and relational nature of corporate entrepreneurship within established organizational structures and arrangements. Previous studies of the socially embedded and relational nature of entrepreneurship have highlighted entrepreneurs' ability to understand the social context in which they operate in order to identify relevant business opportunities and acquire resources to accomplish them (see, e.g., Jack & Anderson, 2002). The present study introduces these ideas to corporate entrepreneurship, from which they have thus far remained largely absent. In what follows, I briefly review what the functionalist research paradigm has thus far explicated about the theoretical premises of CE. Each subsection thereafter examines these premises from the perspective of the present findings drawn from the individual organizational actors' argumentation about CE. The aim is to shed new light on the current theoretical understandings of corporate entrepreneurship that tend to illustrate CE from a unilateral and taken-for-granted perspective by omitting the importance of the social context to the practical accomplishment of CE.

6.1 The socially embedded nature of corporate entrepreneurship

The functionalist paradigm typically regards entrepreneurship in the corporate setting as a socially isolated economic phenomenon (see Jack & Anderson, 2002; Gartner, 1985). Theoretical and empirical conceptualizations have focused on defining prescriptive models of CE that promise economic success (e.g., Ireland et al., 2003; Ireland et al., 2009), establishing a link between CE and financial performance (e.g., Kreiser et al., 2013; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Zahra & Covin, 1995), and specifying environmental and organizational moderators that enhance this link (e.g., Hamilton, 2012; De Clercq et al., 2010; Covin et al., 2006; Lumpkin & Dess, 2001).

In contrast, the findings of this study highlight corporate entrepreneurship as anchored and sustained in the social context of everyday organizational interaction and activities (see Anderson & Starnawska, 2008; Jack & Andersson, 2002; Gartner, 1985). This section answers to research questions 4–5 (see Section 3) by explicating how corporate entrepreneurship is accomplished

through talk, what kind of institutional problems may arise from individual CE-related behavior, and how these problems might be solved.

6.1.1 THE INTERACTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Functionalist studies of corporate entrepreneurship typically view entrepreneurship in the organizational context as a phenomenon that cannot be defined as a clearly observable entity within firms, but something that is instead inferred from survey measures that seek indications of entrepreneurial behavioral patterns (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). The paradigm also takes a retrospective look at CE (cf. Zahra & Covin, 1995) and regards entrepreneurial activities and their outcomes as already accomplished facts by utilizing, for instance, archival data and assessments of past activities when measuring the hypothetical entrepreneurial behavior of firms (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Rauch et al., 2009). Therefore, CE research has thus far focused on the measurement of past entrepreneurial behavior (see Wiklund, 1999) and has largely omitted the present situation as well as the potential future intentions of firms.

In contrast, the present study suggests that corporate entrepreneurship is not only an abstract characteristic of firms, but also a concrete, observable phenomenon in organizations. The study highlights CE as a socially embedded phenomenon that is created, maintained, and negotiated in ongoing everyday *organizational interaction*. CE represents a long-term interaction-based process in which past, present, and future activities are closely intertwined in the current interaction. CE therefore cannot exist as a one-off occurrence, but rather as a dynamic activity that must continuously reoccur and be renewed and maintained in the everyday interaction of firms to produce positive business outcomes in the more or less near future (cf. Boden, 1994; Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014; Ireland et al., 2009; Dess et al., 2003; Zahra & Covin, 1995). So, instead of considering entrepreneurial behavior something that takes place only when firms *actualize* their entrepreneurial projects (see Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011), CE can also take place when individuals *talk about* the normative ideals, preconditions, and obstacles of CE and how they should apply CE to the advantage of their firm on the practical level of firm operations.

In this study, the research participants interpreted CE in interaction in a variety of ways and constructed practical applications of it in their talk for subsequent use in their selling and strategy renewal tasks. On a more general level, individual organizational actors may contribute to their firms' practical entrepreneurial efforts by constructing contextually sensitive and target-specific applications of CE in interaction and establishing the intra- and inter-firm

relationships that are required to enact and sustain long-term economic behavior within their organization.

In summary, because CE can also be performed and implemented through talk, organizational interaction is a highly relevant context to the general enactment and accomplishment of corporate entrepreneurship. For instance, even though the official strategic talk in organizations may emphasize the importance of CE, it does not necessarily guarantee the presence of CE in everyday activities. This may result, for example, from organizational actors interpreting and evaluating top management's entrepreneurial visions (see Ireland et al., 2009) differently and constructing their own applications of CE that may contradict the visionary ideas of top management. In this respect, CE is similar to all other types of organizational behavior in that it requires continuous collective maintenance and the active participation of organizational actors in interaction situations. This observation may be particularly relevant for firms that officially espouse CE or tentatively explore its possibilities in an attempt to create ways of applying it for their own purposes.

6.1.2 INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The different ways in which the research participants oriented themselves to the dimensions of autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness illustratively capture the institutional aspects of CE. These aspects create a relationship between individual actors and the entire organization (see Vesala, 2013; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), and demonstrate the internal challenges of entrepreneurial behavior within existing structural arrangements (Garud et al., 2007).

According to the present study, the *autonomy* dimension of CE seems to occupy a double-edged position in CE, as it appeared to be overly dilemmatic for the research participants to become easily oriented to it as a self-evident entrepreneurial ideal. This was apparent in Study III, when proposals based on the idea of autonomy were met with disagreement and resistance, and in Study I, when the research participants evaluated the idea of an autonomous entrepreneur in two contradictory ways, both as an active relationship promoter and a self-serving lone wolf. These evaluations represented such distinct opinions that they could even be linked to two separate EO dimensions (proactiveness and competitive activeness). Therefore, the corporate setting of this study also challenged and criticized the autonomy that typically occupies the position of a celebrated hallmark of entrepreneurship.

The EO literature suggests that organizational actors are free to pursue their own interests and may, for instance, bend organizational rules and other

structural restraints to further their ideas (see, e.g., Shane, 1994). However, the research participants of this study did not in general take up such possibilities; rather, they positioned themselves as agents of the entire organization for which they worked. They accepted this position as self-evident by presenting themselves as protecting and pursuing the collective interests of their firm. The pursuit of collective interests may be interpreted to represent one way by which organizational actors respect the structural arrangements of their organizations, instead of bending these constraints to their own advantage. To this end, the research participants organized their own actions to serve both personal and overall organizational goals and criticized colleagues for selfishly serving only their own personal interests. According to this type of argumentation, individual organizational actors serve their own interests by meeting their personal goals and, by meeting their personal goals, thus serve the interests of the firm. This observation indicates that individual targets should be met within the process of attending to collective goals while, for instance, taking care of client relationships in the selling context.

In terms of institutional entrepreneurship, links between the autonomy dimension and the dimensions of proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness also construct a relationship between individual actions and the firm-level construct of corporate entrepreneurship. In Study I, these constructions were labeled *proactive selling* and *internal competitive aggressiveness*.

Proactive selling served to reduce uncertainty and opportunistic behavior among organizational actors (see Garud et al., 2007). Selling arranged according to the ideal of proactiveness did not restrict the entrepreneurial actions of an individual, but instead encouraged individual organizational actors to collaborate and share knowledge in order to achieve even better results with the help of the expertise of their colleagues. The potential of each individual organizational member is therefore best realized and put into the service of the entire firm through proactive collaboration. In the selling context, proactiveness displaced autonomous and short-term sales-maximizing activities in favor of external client relationships, and used internal working relationships to anticipate sales opportunities within client relationships to reach personal and firm-level goals.

In contrast, the construct of *internal competitive aggressiveness* is an example of how individual actors can violate institutional norms and structural arrangements to the detriment of not only the individual actors themselves, but also the entire firm. If organizational actors refuse to share their knowledge and experience with each other, they may jeopardize the attainment of their goals, because opportunities may go unnoticed or underexplored. Internal competition between individual organizational members can therefore wipe out any competitive advantage that firms acquire by applying CE in their practical everyday operations. As a result, both the individual and the firm fail to fully

meet their longer-term objectives. Unsurprisingly, the research participants of this study considered this type of behavior both illegitimate and inappropriate in the organizational context.

The phenomenon of internal competition has also been identified in other research settings that have studied how entrepreneurship fits into existing institutional arrangements. For instance, Finnish comprehensive school teachers deemed entrepreneurship inappropriate in the school context when they interpreted entrepreneurship as selfish competition (Korhonen et al., 2012). Even though teachers widely valued entrepreneurial behavior as a description of the behavior of a diligent pupil, they stated that over-emphasizing competition over good grades and other rewards widens the gap between talented and less talented pupils, discourages less successful pupils, and disrupts beneficial collaboration between pupils. From this perspective, entrepreneurship was viewed as a threat to traditional school values and principles, such as collaboration, solidarity, equality, security, and communal care.

In short, entrepreneurship in the corporate setting produces positive business outcomes not in isolation, but instead in the everyday practical activities between individual organizational actors. The position of individuals as autonomous practitioners of CE within existing structural arrangements can be supported and promoted by proactiveness, which invites one to collaborate. However, their position can be undermined if top management allows or even encourages internal competitive aggressiveness. From the perspective of institutional entrepreneurship, the present findings raise an intriguing question about the conceptual nature of autonomy in the concept of EO, in particular its relationship to innovativeness considered to be the core of CE. For instance, does any form of autonomy contribute to the level of EO even if unconnected to innovativeness or the processes of generating innovations? Or is it specifically the innovativeness-enhancing type of autonomy that should be considered relevant in the case of EO? Consequently, the theoretical and empirical formulations of CE should focus more attention on the institutional aspects of CE by exploring how autonomy links to the other EO dimensions and supports innovative activities.

6.2 The relational nature of corporate entrepreneurship

The present section answers to the research question 6 (see Section 3) by underscoring CE as a subtle relational and communicative phenomenon manifested in everyday organizational interactions. The analyses illustrated that a firm's internal and external relationships are interdependent on each other in successfully leveraging CE into new economic activity. The study therefore highlights the importance of relationships not only among colleagues within

firms (see also De Clercq et al., 2013), but also between organizational actors and actors in the market (see Vesala, 2005; 1996 on the meaning and social nature of entrepreneurs' relationships with the market). The internal relations link to collective negotiations about decisions, plans, and practical applications related to CE, whereas external relations highlight the importance of clients in effectively actualizing these plans.

6.2.1 JOINTLY NEGOTIATING ENTREPRENEURIAL DECISIONS AND PRACTICES

The theoretical and empirical literature on entrepreneurial decision-making aims to determine, which criteria are emphasized when making decisions about entrepreneurial projects and how individuals weight these criteria differently (Shepherd, 2011). Studies can address criteria such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, entrepreneurial experience, gain and loss situations, and high and low time pressure. This dissertation conceptualizes entrepreneurial decision-making from quite another perspective. Instead of underscoring optimal criteria and situation variables to reach the best possible decisions on entrepreneurial projects, Studies III and IV embed entrepreneurial decision-making in internal organizational interaction and collective efforts in order to effect change in organizations.

More specifically, in the light of Studies III and IV, entrepreneurial decision-making emerges in meeting interaction between organizational actors. In the present studies, the question was not about straightforwardly or unproblematically defining the meaning of entrepreneurship for the case firms, but instead about subtle collective negotiations that extended over a longer sequence of meetings (cf. Pyysiäinen, 2011). The management group members of Study III were involved in negotiation sequences in which the meaning and purpose of CE for the firm entailed making collective decisions about new entrepreneurial practices in selling. In addition, the management group members of Study IV negotiated in their meetings the strategy renewal process to improve the firm's longer-term position in the market. As the managing director explained, top management collectively took part in analyzing the present situation of the firm, defining what ought to be done to improve the situation and executing the required change. The management group members in Study III failed to commit to the proposed new practices, whereas the retrospective narrative account in Study IV described jointly agreed-upon strategy renewal actions that management group members decided on and put into practice together.

The tactful task of negotiation underscores the relational nature of CE as a joint decision-making process between relevant organizational actors and

the need to maintain productive internal working relationships during the process. Participants in negotiations about CE must manage two specific issues about their relationships. First, as Study III indicates, they must attend to their mutual relationships in the interaction situation itself by, for instance, carefully formulating and re-formulating their proposals. Second, this type of conversational subtlety can also be seen as constructing common ground for future collective negotiations of CE and how these joint negotiations can be managed in upcoming events. In fact, inviting organizational actors to participate in discussions which define the details of desired entrepreneurial behavior may be a useful vehicle for CE to actually take effect. For example, the dilemmatic dimensions of CE, such as autonomy (see Section 6.1.2), may need to be discussed together before any joint decisions can be reached.

Proposals may be particularly relevant to participation because they, first, initiate processes that lead to collectively-made decisions and, second, place all participants on equal footing to evaluate and commit to the suggested entrepreneurial action (Stevanovic, 2012; Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). Proposals also typically promote something that benefits all participants, not just the person who put the proposal forward (Stevanovic, 2013). In the present study, the proposed actions were constructed to benefit both individual organizational actors and the entire firm. In the corporate setting, proposals and their subsequent versions about entrepreneurial behavior may include suggestions about the exact content and targets of entrepreneurial behavior, the resources for and costs of this behavior (such as mutual collaboration and profitability), and those individual organizational actors who should eventually act according to the proposed entrepreneurial behavior. In this type of discussion, some participants may assume the position of defining the desired behavior while others co-participate by agreeing, rejecting, assessing, contesting, and reformulating this behavior, and actively steering the proposal towards a decision. Most essentially, permitting and encouraging competing perspectives and subsequent versions of current and future states as well as proposals to emerge may help organizations find wider acceptance and support for CE.

In short, instead of continuing to overemphasize the explication of decision-making criteria and individual differences in the weighing of these criteria, this study suggests that scholars should better understand the relational nature of the entrepreneurial decision-making process and how it plays out in internal interaction within organizations.

6.2.2 TARGETING CLIENTS WITH ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR

Theoretically, the concept of EO defines the entrepreneurial behavior of firms in relation to the market. This is evident in the M/C&S measure (1983/1989,

Appendix B), which treats the notion of *market* in three senses. First, the market is seen as the target of a firm's innovative efforts (i.e., an arena into which the firm's new products or services are launched). Second, the nature of the market is treated as an environmental force that impacts the risk-level of decisions firms make to reach their objectives. Third, the market is conceptualized as a collection of competitors that an entrepreneurial firm should be ahead of and beat. The measure explicates specific competitive moves that represent the actions of entrepreneurial firms towards their competition. However, if the market is viewed in its entirety as a place where buying and selling transactions traditionally occur, the M/C&S measure fails to take into account the buying activities in the market or the perspective of the client.

On the other hand, even though the EO measure does not take into consideration the buying activities in the market, the role of clients has been present in EO research most often in settings that address EO and its interaction with market orientation (MO) (Wales et al., 2013a). Some researchers claim that MO helps firms to create outstanding value for their clients by generating information about current and future client needs and by producing new products and services to meet these needs (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). MO is believed to enhance the positive business outcomes of EO which might, without explicit information of clients, prove to be insufficient for superior financial performance (Wales et al., 2013a; see also Atuahene-Gima & Ko, 2001). Previous research has also laid out the importance of relational support, such as the reputation of client organizations and the quality of communicating with them, to entrepreneurs' willingness to invest in cultivating long-term relationships with existing or prospective client organizations (e.g., De Clercq & Rangarajan, 2008; De Clercq & Sapienza, 2006; Yli-Renko et al., 2001).

The importance of clients to the success of CE was also evident in Studies II and IV. Study II illustrated, first of all, that the practical micro-level behaviors that firms engage in as part of their EO should be adjusted according to the targets of this behavior (i.e., both clients and competitors). These context-specific practical applications translate EO into concrete practices that firms can utilize in their pursuit of new economic activity. Further, the pursuit of clients should be conducted on the basis of assumed future profitability. Profitability, one of the most widely-used efficiency indicators of EO (Wales et al., 2013a), served as a strong argument against haphazard, ill-directed competitive activities. Study IV, for its part, demonstrated that firms need clients with equally ambitious business objectives in order to successfully execute their CE strategies. Superior performance as an outcome of CE takes place when client organizations also act according to the ideals of CE or at least strive for outstanding business results that the service provider can help the client to achieve.

The findings highlight the *bilateral* and *results-oriented* aspects of nurturing long-term client relationships on the basis of CE. First, CE did not appear to be a unilateral behavioral construct that would self-evidently produce results as long as the firm were simply to launch new innovative products and services on the market. Instead, in the business services context of this study, the results required proactive moves from salespeople towards their business clients. Because clients can obviously also resist any new ideas presented to them, the salespersons' role in understanding and explicating how these ideas eventually meet their clients' current or future needs seems crucial.

Further, the results indicated that the *primary* goal of mutually supportive, CE-based relationships between service provider firms and their client organizations is to provide positive business performance through the introduction of new products, services, and ideas. Even though extensive information about client needs and well-functioning mutual collaboration may indeed enhance the success of CE, client organizations ultimately expect positive business results that, in turn, positively enhance the business outcomes of the service provider as well. Economic indicators, in particular future profitability, regulate the relationships when deciding, for example, which clients to keep and which ones to hand over to competitors. These observations bring us back to the original idea of CE as an results-oriented behavioral concept. The optimal business results of CE are therefore obtained when both parties strive for business excellence.

In short, one could rightfully ask whether the role of clients as relevant actors in the market should in fact be explicitly taken into account in, for instance, EO measures. These measures already explicate what kind of behavior the entrepreneurial firm is typically seen as taking towards its competitors but the direct role of clients or other external relations has thus far been neglected.

6.3 Legitimizing and institutionalizing corporate entrepreneurship

According to Burr's (2003) macro and micro social constructionist views, when a certain version of reality becomes a legitimate way of viewing and making sense of the world, it encourages and sustains particular types of behavior and excludes other types of actions. Corporate entrepreneurship can be viewed as one version of organizational reality that, from the organization's perspective, should gain the status of a legitimate discourse that guides the behavior of individual organizational actors and produces desired business results. Individual actors should view CE as an internalized ideal according to which they organize, adjust, and carry out their daily intra- and inter-firm activities. The normative standards of firm-level CE therefore control and structure individual behavior for the benefit of the entire firm (see Burr, 2003). The autonomy dimension in the concept of

EO appears to entail just such controlling and structuring aspects (see Lumpkin et al., 2009 in Appendix B). It lays out general explicit guiding principles, first, for individual organizational actors, detailing how they should promote CE in their daily work, and, second, for top management, describing what type of autonomous behavior they should encourage and retain in their organization. For instance, instead of non-entrepreneurial, conservative actions, individual organizational actors should take the initiative to instigate change and growth in the organization.

On the other hand, individuals might not be aware of the control effects of the CE discourse to which they are submitted, but instead willingly accept it (Burr, 2003). According to this view, discourse constructs individual organizational actors as agents that serve the firm, yet may believe to act on their own behalf (Vesala, 2013). Nevertheless, however controlling the prevailing discourse may appear, individual actors still have the agency to defend, legitimize, and justify their own actions and opinions against it, and to deliberate which principals to serve or resist (Vesala, 2013). Therefore, individual organizational actors can also take up the position to modify the prevailing CE discourse to their own advantage and resist those versions that other organizational actors, such as top management, have formulated.

In this study, the research participants displayed their agency by adopting the perspective of individual organizational actors in the CE discourse. They both accepted and contested the theoretically motivated entrepreneurial ideals presented to them, evaluated individual EO-related actions from the perspective of the overall business interests of the firm, and legitimized their interpretations by adopting the perspective of the entire firm. The research participants also constructed their versions of CE for different functions. These functions included negotiating personal entrepreneurial orientations (Studies I and II, in which research participants argued for and against the dimensions of EO in very specific ways), utilizing the CE discourse for argumentative purposes (Study III, in which participants steered the conversation away from delicate issues and avoided addressing complaints by applying the CE discourse), and constructing entrepreneurial processes in order to solve specific problems, such as declining sales or strategy renewal and execution (Studies III and IV).

In response to research question 7 (see Section 3), CE represented a *legitimate* discourse that the research participants of this study could effortlessly use and orient themselves to. From the perspective of joint decision-making, the participants seemed to have easy access to the general notion of CE, so there was no need to build common ground for the overall acceptance of entrepreneurial ideals. The autonomy dimension of CE, however, was an exception. Despite the general controlling elements included in the autonomy measure (see Appendix B), the legitimacy of the CE discourse seems to hinge on how the autonomy dimension is treated in organizations on the practical level of firm operations.

To fully tap into the entrepreneurial potential of individual organizational actors, firms should link autonomy to the proactiveness dimension that underscores collaborative efforts and avoid any manifestations of internal competitive aggressiveness that result in nonfunctional internal relationships and undermine collective efforts to reach organizational objectives.

In order to *institutionalize* CE, the construction of practical everyday details of CE may require and be founded on a continuous line of collective decisions in which organizational actors negotiate concrete details of CE and try to convince themselves of their utility. However, the ideal decision-making process may not always actualize from proposals, access, and agreement to a final commitment (Stevanovic, 2013). This may occur at junctures between the different stages of the process when other participants, for instance, do not take up proposals presented to them or when they implicitly or explicitly steer the conversation to a non-decision (see Stevanovic, 2012), as in, for instance, collectively deciding not to pursue entrepreneurial practices in the first place. As this study indicated, organizational actors may possess easy access to shared understandings of the ideals of CE, and even relatively effortlessly acknowledge and agree on the content and benefits of CE. The joint decision-making process can, however, be blocked at the final commitment stage. These observations can be especially important in complex organizational phenomena such as CE. They may also represent one reason why CE is considered a long-term orientation that may take longer periods of time to take full economic effect (see, e.g., Ireland et al., 2009).

In short, CE is implemented by individual organizational actors who may view the entrepreneurial ideals proposed to them quite differently and therefore construct differing versions of them to better suit their own responsibilities, interests, and work tasks. Consequently, how these individual actors interpret and evaluate the entrepreneurial vision of top management is relevant. The theoretical literature depicts CE as the dominant discourse in which all firms must participate in order to grow and survive (see, e.g., Kuratko, 2009). The adoption of such a discourse, however, even when considered legitimate, is not a straightforward or uncontested process among individual organizational actors. As this study demonstrated, the institutionalization of CE seems to require the more active participation of individual organizational actors than what the research practices informed by the concept of CE thus far suggest.

6.4 Limitations of the study

Epistemologically, the findings of this dissertation represent a sample of the variety of local, micro-level understandings that different actors serving different organizational functions constructed to interpret and evaluate CE in the selling

context. Because the findings rely on research material drawn from three case firms, they obviously cannot offer an exhaustive description of other opinions or structural processes that managing directors, management group members, or salespeople in other business service organizations may hold or construct of CE. Therefore, generalization of the present findings cannot follow the logic of statistical generalization. Rather, the findings from the case firms demonstrate possibilities which may also be relevant for other business service organizations with similar interaction-based selling activities. The generalizability of possibilities is a view that social scientists generally adopt to explain the validity of qualitative research in social interaction (Peräkylä, 2004).

Because the present study examined CE by focusing on the autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness dimensions in the selling context, the findings obviously do not address entrepreneurship in the organizational context in its entirety. Even though some conclusions on the level of entire conceptualizations were reached, clarifying other interpretations and processes remains a task for future CE studies.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

The present dissertation points out that the conventional functionalist premises of CE studies may unnecessarily limit the development of the theoretical concept of CE and the understanding of its practical applications (see also Anderson et al., 2012; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009). An important avenue for future research therefore resides in the application of fine-grained, contextually sensitive, and interpretivist methods for studies that aim to further explicate the multifaceted, socially embedded, and relational nature of CE. These studies could focus on describing how the processes of enacting, legitimizing, and institutionalizing CE unfold in organizations across hierarchy levels, business units, and functional areas (see also Wales et al., 2011).

The qualitative attitude approach simulates well the controversial nature of CE-related issues. The approach is therefore well suited to make analytically visible the multifaceted variation that immediate commentary on the dimensions of CE produces. This could be particularly valuable when studying the institutional aspects of CE and clarifying the contextual relationships between innovativeness and the other dimensions of EO. Because innovativeness typically characterizes the core of CE, future studies could explicate what forms of autonomy, proactiveness, and risk-taking foster or hinder innovativeness in organizations. Once the analyses have established the differing individual opinions on these issues, this qualitative variation can thereafter be utilized to contest traditional, taken-for-granted, and often unilateral theoretical

understandings of CE. These new insights could, for instance, offer critical contributions to the future development of EO measures. In fact, Covin and Wales (2012) claim that the development of EO assessment saw practically no progress during the past decade.

Narrative approaches in entrepreneurship studies in general have drawn increasing attention (e.g., Watson, 2009; Down & Warren, 2008; Downing, 2005; Johansson, 2004; Hjorth, 2007; Jack & Anderson, 2002) and could continue to offer a longitudinal and retrospective perspective of the empirical process dynamics of CE (Busenitz et al., 2003). To contribute to establishing a comprehensive model of the entrepreneurial process (see Larty & Hamilton, 2011), narrative methods could focus on exploring the structural processes of change embedded in narratives of organizational actors on different organizational levels. Thereafter, these narrative structures could be interpreted in the light of the theoretical concepts of CE and combined to form a comprehensive narrative about organizational change in selected case firms. Specific attention could focus on understanding the actions of individual organizational actors in relation to the entire firm and its overall objectives.

Scholars interested in explicating more deeply the socially-embedded entrepreneurial decision-making process might want to study meeting interaction and how commitment that was lacking from the research material of this study emerges during the negotiation process. Obviously, decision-making related to CE may also entail other aspects besides deciding about entrepreneurial practices. These aspects can include assessing and deciding on new opportunities, competitive moves, high-risk projects, and new products or services, as current EO measures (Appendix B) suggest.

6.6 Practical implications

This dissertation demonstrated that entrepreneurship is a multifaceted, socially embedded, and relational phenomenon in the organizational context. Firms that choose to engage in CE or are interested in developing their existing CE strategies might gain from paying attention to these aspects in their intra- and inter-firm activities. This could be especially worthwhile in those business service firms where independent actors, teams, and business units are expected to collaborate to anticipate and meet client needs.

The first step for practitioners to implement and manage CE is to understand what the multiple and potentially controversial viewpoints towards it actually are within their organizations, and how organizational actors justify these views for themselves and for the entire firm. Awareness of all types of views may provide firms with better tools to manage their applications of CE, compared to a situation

in which, for instance, the downsides of CE fail to emerge. Therefore, allowing organizational actors to participate in negotiating concrete, everyday practices based on top management's vision of CE may prove crucial for new economic activity and other desired business outcomes to emerge. Participation may make explicit use of the structural process of joint decision-making that proceeds from proposals to constructing common access to the CE-related ideal on which the proposal is grounded and thereafter to negotiations of collective agreement and commitment. However, firms may wish to bear in mind that negotiation processes require particular conversational subtlety in order to implement CE in practical firm operations.

Firms may also benefit from considering carefully what kind of requirements of proactiveness, collaboration, and knowledge exchange they set for organizational actors who hold the responsibility to construct practical applications of CE for implementation in their daily work tasks across teams and business units. As it is crucial for entrepreneurship in the corporate setting that individual actions be constructed as a firm-level issue, firms should at least ensure that these actions do not override ultimate firm-level objectives, but serve as a means towards reaching collective goals.

Instead of waiting for major external shocks before launching CE strategies, firms should cultivate CE on an ongoing basis by creating their own business opportunities and not merely waiting for clients to provide orders to fulfill. Because the outcomes of CE tend to be impermanent and uncertain, firms should continuously experiment with proactive suggestions to their existing and potential clients. However, as previous studies also suggest, poorly accepted suggestions should be terminated early in order not to sacrifice profitability (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011). Firms may also need to enhance their internal collaborative routines to produce viable suggestions with the minimum consumption of resources.

A firm's external environment impacts the success of the firm's CE strategy, especially through its clients. Therefore, in order to leverage CE strategies in practice, firms may need to demonstrate innovativeness in choosing clients with equally ambitious business targets or outside conventional interest domains. The key question is to define which clients best suit the firm's CE strategy or, on the other hand, forestall the firm's growth by clinging to past ways of doing business or yielding future profitability that falls below minimum levels. Even though the best results emerge from collaborating with demanding clients, longer-term success may nevertheless depend on the firm's overall ability to cater to its clients

in innovative ways and with matching levels of ambition, irrespective of whether the client acknowledges the service provider firm's entrepreneurial efforts.

Finally, client organizations that receive proactive suggestions from their service provider firms might gain from developing their ability to identify potential opportunities that these suggestions may entail for them. Because service providers that act according to the ideals of CE strive to anticipate future needs and trends, their proactive suggestions may not, at first glance, appear valid or interesting. The challenge for client organizations is therefore to understand whether these suggestions (or certain elements included in them) may in fact benefit them either immediately or in a longer range. To enhance their opportunity identification, clients may wish to require and actively establish collaborative knowledge exchange practices with their service providers. Within these practices, both parties may jointly construct and regularly review a proactive service proposal portfolio that includes both actualized ideas and proposals that have been shelved for future development. Clients may also want to explicitly ensure that their existing service providers have relevant business information at their disposal in order for the service provider to proactively anticipate their needs and to create innovative solutions to meet these needs.

6.7 Concluding remarks

This dissertation has not questioned the importance of entrepreneurship in the organizational context. On the contrary, based on the research participants' argumentation, it has acknowledged the potential usefulness and relevance of CE in solving organizational problems and leading firms to new economic activity. However, this study has contested the unilateral view that the current theoretical formulations hold of the phenomenon of firm-level entrepreneurship in the corporate setting. In the pursuit to reach the status of legitimate, hegemonic, and self-evident discourse, corporate entrepreneurship has neglected to explicate the position of individual organizational actors as practitioners of CE within the social context of practical firm operations. This study therefore introduced the perspective of individual organizational actors to these firm-level concepts and offered individual actors the opportunity to construct their own versions of CE in the context of their day-to-day activities.

The present study highlights CE as a socially embedded phenomenon that does not unproblematically become grafted into practical firm operations or self-evidently fit into established organizational arrangements. The study further indicates that CE is a concrete, observable phenomenon in organizations, not merely an abstract characteristic of firms or a behavioral concept that produces change and growth in isolation. Instead, CE is a process

that individual organizational actors collectively bring about and shape in their everyday organizational interaction. In other words, individual organizational actors implement CE in their daily work tasks when discussing the ideals of CE and how they could apply these ideals to achieve their goals. Individual actors contribute to their firms' entrepreneurial endeavors by jointly negotiating contextually sensitive and target-specific practical applications of CE, and establish intra- and inter-firm relationships that are necessary to sustain long-term economic behavior. However, not all negotiations necessarily lead to a uniform commitment to these applications.

This dissertation further suggests that CE cannot be regarded as a permanent characteristic of firms, but is instead a process that requires continuous maintenance. The nature and practices of CE must be updated and renewed regularly as contexts and target groups in the business environment change. Organizations can support the position of individual actors in actualizing these efforts through proactiveness that invites collaboration. However, institutional problems in implementing CE may emerge if top management permits internal competitive aggressiveness and the related short-term maximization of profits to undermine the ability of organizational actors to fully realize their entrepreneurial potential.

The micro social constructionist and interpretivist research approach of this study served to present a new, different perspective of CE. In addition to what the functionalist research paradigm has already established about the relationship between CE and business performance, this study painted a context-specific, relational, and socially embedded picture of CE. Because CE is also a subtle communicative phenomenon between organizational actors and those in the market, the long-term maintenance of these relationships may critically contribute to how successfully firms are eventually able to legitimize and institutionalize CE for their benefit.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Transcription symbols

Symbol	Explanation
[the point of overlap onset
(.)	a micropause
(1.2)	silence timed in seconds
↑yes	rising intonation
↓yes	falling intonation
ye:s	lengthening of the sound
ye-	cut off
YES	increased volume
°yes°	especially soft sounds relative to the surrounding talk
<u>yes</u>	emphasis
#yes#	different voice quality relative to the surrounding talk
<yes>	slower speech
y(h)es	laughing voice
£yes£	smiling voice
heh heh	laugh
.hh	audible intake of breath
()	dubious hearings
(())	transcriber's comments

Appendix B: Entrepreneurial orientation measures

EO dimension	EO: Innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking The M/C&S scale (Miller, 1983; Covin & Slevin, 1989)	
	Entrepreneurial firms	Non-entrepreneurial firms
Innovativeness	<p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm favor:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong emphasis on R&D, technological leadership, and innovations <p><i>How many new lines of products or services has your firm marketed in the past 5 years (or since its establishment)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very many new lines of products or services • Changes in product or service lines have usually been quite dramatic 	<p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm favor:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong emphasis on the marketing of tried-and-true products or services <p><i>How many new lines of products or services has your firm marketed in the past 5 years (or since its establishment)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new lines of products or services • Changes in product or service lines have been mostly of a minor nature
Proactiveness	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically initiates actions to which competitors then respond • Is very often the first business to introduce new products/services, administrative techniques, operating technologies, etc. • Typically adopts a very competitive, "undo-the-competitors" posture 	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically responds to action which competitors initiate • Is very seldom the first business to introduce new products/services, administrative techniques, operating technologies, etc. • Typically seeks to avoid competitive clashes, preferring a "live-and-let-live" posture
Risk-taking	<p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong proclivity for high-risk projects (with chances of very high returns) <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm believe that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owing to the nature of the environment, bold, wide-ranging acts are necessary to achieve the firm's objectives <p><i>When confronted with decision-making situations involving uncertainty, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically adopts a bold, aggressive posture in order to maximize the probability of exploiting potential opportunities 	<p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong proclivity for low-risk projects (with normal and certain rates of return) <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm believe that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owing to the nature of the environment, it is best to explore it gradually via cautious, incremental behavior <p><i>When confronted with decision-making situations involving uncertainty, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically adopts a cautious, "wait-and-see" posture in order to minimize the probability of making costly decisions

EO dimension	EO: Proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness Lumpkin & Dess, 2001	
	Entrepreneurial firms	Non-entrepreneurial firms
Proactiveness	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically initiates actions to which competitors then respond Is very often the first business to introduce new products/services, administrative techniques, operating technologies, etc. <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong tendency to be ahead of other competitors in introducing novel ideas or products 	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically responds to action which competitors initiate Is very seldom the first business to introduce new products/services, administrative techniques, operating technologies, etc. <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong tendency to “follow the leader” in introducing new products or ideas
Competitive aggressiveness	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically adopts a very competitive, ‘undo-the-competitors’ posture My firm is very aggressive and intensely competitive 	<p><i>In dealing with its competitors, my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically seeks to avoid competitive clashes, preferring a “live-and-let-live” posture My firm makes no special effort to take business from the competition

EO dimension	EO: Autonomy Lumpkin, Cogliser, & Schneider, 2009	
	Entrepreneurial firms	Non-entrepreneurial firms
Autonomy	<p><i>My firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the efforts of individuals and/or teams that work autonomously. <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm believe that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The best results occur when individuals and/or teams decide for themselves what business opportunities to pursue. <p><i>In my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals and/or teams pursuing business opportunities make decisions on their own without constantly referring to their supervisor(s). Employee initiatives and input play a major role in identifying and selecting the entrepreneurial opportunities my firm pursues. 	<p><i>My firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires individuals or teams to rely on senior managers to guide their work. <p><i>In general, the top managers of my firm believe that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The best results occur when individuals the CEO and top managers provide the primary impetus for pursuing business opportunities. <p><i>In my firm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals and/or teams pursuing business opportunities are expected to obtain approval from their supervisor(s) before making decisions. The CEO and top management team play a major role in identifying and selecting the entrepreneurial opportunities my firm pursues.

Appendix C: Interview statements

Study	Interviewees	EO dimension	Prompt statement in English	Prompt statement in Finnish
I	Management group members	Autonomy	Each salesperson is an autonomous entrepreneur.	Jokainen myyjä on itsenäinen yrittäjä.
II	Salespersons and sales group directors	Proactiveness	We anticipate clients' needs before our competitors.	Ennakoimme asiakkaiden tarpeet ennen kilpailijoi- tamme.
II	Salespersons and sales group directors	Competitive aggressiveness	We compete aggressively in selling.	Kilpailemme myyntityössä aggressiivisesti.

Appendix D: Summary of the management group meeting recordings

Meeting	Duration	Participants
1	1 h 28 min	5 participants, two of whom left after 30 min
2	2 h 29 min	6 participants, two of whom left after 1 h 23 min
3	4 h 38 min	6 participants
4	2 h 16 min	3 participants
5	1 h 49 min	4 participants
Total	12 h 40 min	