

Strategic Entrepreneurship Practices at Robotdalen – A balancing act or Not?

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Abstract

In this paper we take an interest in Robotdalen - a Swedish robotics initiative with the goal to enable commercial success of new ideas and research – a small public organization acting in an inter-organizational context of both private and public organizations. By utilizing Robotdalen as a case example we have discussed and analyzed how they during the years have struggled with bureaucratic structures that tend to limit their entrepreneurial work, but also how these structures have been used as an opportunity. The perspective applied to analyze has been a quite new concept of strategic entrepreneurship that takes an interest in both strategy and entrepreneurship as a balancing act in established organizations. The findings suggests that conditions for strategic entrepreneurship practices in inter-organizational contexts is to keep it simple, communicate narratives and being flexible. Moreover, in theory entrepreneurial and strategic processes are considered as dual or the opposite of each other, but our findings rather indicate that they are mutually dependent i.e. they enabling each other's existence.

Keywords: Strategic Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship, Strategy, Innovation

Introduction

Strategic entrepreneurship is expressed by several scholars (e.g. Kuratko & Audresch, 2009; Schindehutte & Morris, 2009; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010; Luke et al., 2011; Foss & Lyngsie, 2012) as the most recent contribution to entrepreneurship research in established organizations'. Hence, strategic entrepreneurship as a concept started to manifest itself at the beginning of 2000 and has been growing steadily since (e.g. Hitt et al., 2001, 2002; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010; Luke et al., 2011; Foss & Lyngsie, 2012). The concept is strongly influenced by management through theories about entrepreneurship in established organizations, e.g. corporate entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2004), but also strategic management (Hitt et al., 2001, 2002; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010). Hjorth (2004) stresses that this kind of managerial form of entrepreneurship, and its attractiveness to managers lies in joining economics and behaviorism in the name of an enterprise, promising speed, flexibility and innovativeness. These are all aspects that are incorporated by the strategic entrepreneurship literature and reoccurring arguments for engaging in strategic entrepreneurship practices (e.g. Hitt et al., 2002; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Kuratko & Audresch, 2009; Luke et al., 2011). It is a practice that several scholars have pointed out to be a key differentiator regarding organizations' ability to compete in markets characterized by uncertainties and rapid changes (Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010; Luke et al., 2011). As such, scholars argue that this practice is of importance to both practitioners and policy-makers (Luke et al., 2011), as well as the private (Ireland & Webb, 2007; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010; Luke et al., 2011) and the public sector (Klein et al., 2013).

When it comes to the public sector new forms of collaborative relationships between public-private organizations have developed during the years (cf. Osborne, 2000; Rosenau, 2002). In short, inter-organizational relationships or hybrid organizations are organizations that consist of a mixture of private and public governed organizations (Kickert, 2001). These kind of relationships are interesting to study from a strategic entrepreneurship perspective as they pose important challenges to entrepreneurship and strategic management in several ways. For example it generates a strategic dilemma by the combination of public and private characteristics and objectives (Thomasson, 2009). But also that along the lines of a general trend of marketization in society (Hood 1991; 1995) inter-organizational relationships have been developed to support the public sector to fulfill its basic assignments e.g. to deliver services to its citizens through innovation and, not least, to boost the entrepreneurial spirit that has become so predominant in society (cf. Holmgren-Caicedo & Mårtensson, 2013). Then if we combine the two, strategy and entrepreneurship, in a context of inter-organizational relationships it enhances the strategic dilemma even more as entrepreneurship in established organizations suppose to challenge administrative structures in order to increase flexibility and dynamism which makes organizations more prone to respond to changes and uncertainty in the environment (cf. Hitt et al., 2002; Hitt et al., 2002; Kuratko, 2007; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009).

This tension between the dynamics of change and the statics of administrative structures has been identified among scholars the last decades as important to study (cf. Burgelman, 1983; 1985; Miller, 1983; Svensson & Jarillo; 1990, Ireland et al., 2003; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Löfstäl, 2008; Kyrgidou & Hughes, 2010). Nevertheless, for a long period of time strategic management and entrepreneurship seemed to be a contradiction in terms for many scholars i.e. an oxymoron (Svensson & Jarillo, 1990). Burgelman (1983:1362) stresses for example that “entrepreneurial and administrated economic activities have long been considered essentially opposite forms with little if any connection”. By the study of strategic entrepreneurship practices scholars have addressed parts of this expressed tension through the study of the balancing act of entrepreneurial and strategic activities or processes in organizations. However, so far, there is a lack of empirical contributions (cf. Kuratko, 2007; Kyridgou & Hughes, 2010; Kyrgidou & Petridou, 2011; Luke et al., 2012; Foss & Lyngsie, 2012), especially that take an interest in a qualitative understanding (Schindehutte & Morris 2009) of micro-dynamics of people and their doings (cf. Kuratko, 2007; Luke et al., 2012; Foss & Lyngsie, 2012). There is also a lack of studies on public organizations in a context of entrepreneurship and strategic matters (Klein 2013). In addressing this call for research, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the field of entrepreneurship in established organizations by the study of an organization – Robotdalen - that act in an inter-organizational relationship context of private and public. The research question stated is: how do organizations that act in an inter-organizational context create conditions for strategic entrepreneurship?

We will continue this paper by first addressing strategic entrepreneurship in relation to public organizations by a short presentation of the concept of strategic entrepreneurship and what has been previously done in public sector regarding strategy and entrepreneurship. Then we present the methods used. Thereafter we discuss the case of Robotdalen from a strategic entrepreneurship perspective. Last we make some concluding discussions.

Strategic entrepreneurship and public organizations

A large part of the strategic entrepreneurship literature has its foundation in strategic management and focus on combining aspects of entrepreneurship and strategy (Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Schindehutte & Morris, 2009; Kyrgidou & Hughes, 2010; Höglund, 2013). Both research areas are concerned with performance aspects of competitiveness, growth and wealth creation (Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland, et al., 2003) but their foci differ slightly. The work of Hitt et al. (2001; 2002), Ireland et al. (2003), Ireland and Webb (2007), Kuratko (2007), and Kuratko and Audretch (2009) among others, suggests that strategic entrepreneurship focuses on how organizations renew and create change (adapt or are proactive) by exploiting opportunities. Organizations therefore create wealth (e.g. growth and profitability) by exploring opportunities in their internal or external environment and then develop competitive advantages to exploit these opportunities (cf. Hitt et al. 2001).

In strategic management literature on public organizations (cf. Lane, 2008; Lane & Wallis, 2009; Poister, 2009; Boyone & Walker, 2010; Walker et al., 2010), there is a small but growing research field that has for

the past decade highlighted the importance of strategy and strategic thinking in public organizations (e.g. Joyce, 2004; Lane, 2008; Lane & Wallis, 2009; Walker m.fl., 2010; Poister, 2009; Boyne & Walker, 2010; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2012). For example, Poister (2010) concludes that if public organizations are to anticipate new problems and challenges, responding to them effectively and at least to some degree charting their own path toward the future, they need to think and act strategically and have the ability to control the outcome. In this context, research, as well as results from practice, shows that entrepreneurship can be a significant importance in public organizations to enhance the performance and add different aspects of value (e.g. Bartlett & Dibben, 2002; Albury, 2005; Moore, 2005; Kinder, 2012; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013). Thus, public and non-profit organizations are increasingly confronted with a need to innovate in order to create different aspects of wealth. The literature on public organizations show an enhanced pressure to not only produce better public value e.g. by the delivery of new products and services (Lane, 2008, Boyne & Walker, 2010; Osborne, 2010; Gnan et al., 2013), but also to become more effective (Moore, 2005; Verschure & Beddeleem, 2013). In order to do so it becomes important to be able to manage different aspects of innovation. This is often done with the help of techniques and tools from the private sector, which Verschure and Beddeleem (2013) argue is not always easy to implement in a context of the public as they often have other performance measures than in the private sector where different aspects of growth and profitability are central.

Performance measures are important in public organizations, thus they are expected to achieve high standards regarding several dimensions of performance to meet public needs and desires (e.g. Lane & Wallis, 2009; Boyone & Walker, 2010; Svårdsten Nyman, 2012). A problem though within strategic management literature on public sector is that scholars tend to only point out the importance of measuring performance without addressing the content or what could be measured. Plant (2009) and Poister (2010) argue that productivity and performance measures of public organizations is, nevertheless, elusive because the value of public inputs and outputs is difficult to assess quickly, quantitatively, and objectively. One of the few studies that suggests performance measures within strategic management are Lane (2008) who discuss that one way to create value for public organizations is to focus on the delivery of products and services e.g. number of services and products produced, quality of service, satisfaction with service, distribution of services and unit costs. Klein et al. (2013) argue that insights, tools, and theoretical relationships established in the fields of strategic entrepreneurship could be helpful in the study of public organizations and their performance.

Ireland and Webb (2007) state that strategic entrepreneurship practices include the ability to balance between strategic and entrepreneurial activities and processes. In order for organizations to engage in this balancing act there are some organizational aspects that scholars have identified to be of importance in strategic entrepreneurship e.g. structure, culture and leadership (cf. Ireland et al. 2003; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Morris et al., 2008). It emerges that the structural and cultural mechanisms required to support entrepreneurship differ from those needed to support strategy (cf. Ireland et al. 2003; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Morris et al., 2008). Thus when it comes to structure Morris et al. (2008) stress that to support

entrepreneurship, organizations need an structure characterized by decentralised authority, semi-standardised procedures, and semi-formalised processes. Ireland and Webb (2007) explain that decentralisation of authority enhances the potential effectiveness of an organization's ability to examine a relatively large number of potentially attractive market-related opportunities. On the other hand, to semi-formalize some of the decision-rules used for guiding entrepreneurship creates routines of knowledge search that have the potential to reduce the amount of financial and human capital that is inappropriately used or wasted (Ireland & Webb, 2007). However, too much formalization has the ability to stifle creativity among employees. If we put these arguments in a context of public organizations it is quite clear that it becomes complex as most public organizations are quite formalized, administrative and bureaucratic in its structure (cf. Osborne, 2006)

In order to understand strategic entrepreneurship as a balancing act, Ireland and Webb (2007) also stress the importance of defining the terms of strategy and entrepreneurship. In line with the thoughts of Hofer and Schendel (1978), they argue that strategy is about an organization's long-term development including, for example, decisions regarding scope, how resources are to be acquired and managed and intended sources of competitive advantage. Entrepreneurship is, rather, concerned with actions taken to create newness, for example by the creation of new organizational units or organizations, or the renewal of existing ones (e.g. Dess et al., 1990; Kuratko, 2007; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009; Höglund, 2011). Entrepreneurship in strategic entrepreneurship literature is therefore closely connected to innovation (Schindehutte & Morris, 2009; Höglund, 2011; 2013).

There are plenty of different views on what can be considered as innovation or not and the literature in general have debated this for decades. However, in line with the Oxford dictionary¹ it is possible to state that in strategic entrepreneurship innovation is more or less the same as different aspects of renewal (Höglund, 2011). Researchers in strategic entrepreneurship tends to discuss innovation from a continuum perspective of incremental innovation to discontinuous innovation (radical) (Schindehutte and Morris, 2009). Organizations looking to achieve radical innovation creates new markets, new customer value and reformulates or creates new competitive conditions. This is closely related to proactivity. Incremental innovation rather focus on renewing organization through existing abilities and improvements to the structure, processes and practices. Ireland et al (2003) argues that effective strategic entrepreneurship practices includes the idea of working with both incremental and radical innovations. Which has also been highlighted as important in research on public organization, although incremental innovations are more common in the current situation than the radical (Moore, 2005). Furthermore, in this context it is possible to envision at least five forms of strategic entrepreneurship practices based on the idea of innovation (Morris et al., 2008; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009). The five forms are the following: 1) *sustained regeneration* - exists

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary includes the following possible interpretations of the words innovate and innovation: *Innovate(verb)* - To change (a thing) into something new; to alter; to renew. ***Innovation (Noun)*** - The action of innovating; the introduction of novelties; the alteration of what is established by the introduction of new elements or forms.

when organizations exhibit an ongoing pattern of new product introductions and/or new market entries; 2) *organizational rejuvenation* - exists when organizations altering internal processes, structures, and/or capabilities in order to improve their competitive stand point; 3) *domain redefinition* - exists when organizations proactively seek to create new product markets that competitor have not yet been discovered or undersupplied markets; 4) *strategic renewal* – focus on how an organization creates value and compete in the market by fundamentally altering existent organizational strategies they use to successfully allying with external market and to better compete with rivals; and 5) *business model reconstruction* - exists when an organization designs or redesigns its core business model(s) in order to improve operational efficiencies or otherwise differentiate itself from industry competitors in ways valued by the market.

The first four forms of strategic entrepreneurship practices - sustained regeneration, organizational rejuvenation, domain redefinition and strategic renewal - have its foundation in Covin and Miles (1999). The fifth form of strategic entrepreneurship practice, business model reconstruction, was added later on by Morris et al. (2008). However, it is important to notice that these five forms of strategic entrepreneurship practices are not mutually exclusive of one or the other. This means that two or more of the different forms can appear at the same time. The main reason to present the five forms of strategic entrepreneurship practices separately in previous research is for theoretical conceptualization in order to clarify what is fundamental to each of the forms. It is also possible to view the five forms of strategic entrepreneurship as strategies but with no certain outcome i.e. what Covin and Miles (1999) refers to as innovative strategies. However Covin and Miles (1999) stress, since the outcomes of entrepreneurial processes are uncertain, one of the forms cannot be readily enacted as a deliberate strategy with the expectation that particular outcomes will necessarily be realized.

Method

We have used Robotdalen as a descriptive case of how a small public organization over the years has struggled to create their own strategic entrepreneurship practices as a way to deal with bureaucratic and administrative structures. Governed by a large University they have had some challenges in manage to be dynamic, changeable and leveraging on innovation. We will further elaborate on this in the discussion part of the paper. But first we need to address that most of previous research in strategy (Johnson et al., 2003) and strategic entrepreneurship has been made on large organizations in the private sector and has left out the doings of people and the methods used are mainly based on large surveys (Schindehutte & Morris; 2009; Höglund, 2013). In this paper we have used a narrative method in order to generate empirical material by letting the interviewed people narrate the meanings that they ascribe to their own and others' doings in the context of the prevailing values, practices, multiple perceptions and underlying structures (cf. Fletcher, 2006). To gain an understanding of the nature of the values in an organization requires methods that allow research participants to talk about their experiences and what they mean to them (Gartner et al., 1992). Accordingly we employed an interpretive approach based upon a qualitative research methodology. This

approach is well suited to acquire knowledge about human phenomena, thus in seeing the social world as being created in and through the meanings that people use to make sense of the world.

Empirical material in Robotdalen has been generated between 2009 and 2014 and consists of 25 interviews, several informal meetings, participant observations at meetings and document studies. Interviews has been conducted with board members including the chairman of the board, regional representatives, people representing financing bodies, several members of the operational management team within Robotdalen including e.g. the general manager, the internationalization manager, the innovation manager, each of the managers of the three core areas and the controller. The interviews have been characterized by being more of conversations between the interviewer and the interviewee, with a duration of 60-120 min, and all the interviews have been recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In addition to the interviews several recurring meetings, which has been characterized by being very open and informal, has been held with the general manager and the vice general manager. For us as researchers those discussions have been invaluable as a mean to get closer to the empirical setting by understanding the difficulties and special prerequisites from a strategic entrepreneurship perspective within an inter-organizational context. Between the meetings the general manager has also regularly sent us information of different kinds, e.g. press releases, extracts of e-mail conversations, power-point presentations, agendas for meetings where strategic issues has been highlighted and more generally news about Robotdalen.

In the next section we have analyzed the case of Robotdalen from a strategic entrepreneurship perspective. Firstly, we start by giving a short presentation of Robotdalen, then move along to discuss Robotdalen from a performance perspective as it is a central aspect in strategic entrepreneurship literature. Secondly, we address the structure of Robotdalen as the theoretical discussion in this paper has shown that structure are of importance to be able to balance between strategy and entrepreneurship. Lastly, we discuss strategic entrepreneurship practices by giving some examples of how Robotdalen in practice have been acting both strategically and entrepreneurial by leveraging on innovation.

The case of Robotdalen

In short, Robotdalen² started formally as collaboration project in 2003 between the two regional universities (Mälardalen University and Örebro University), a number of global enterprises e.g. ABB, Volvo, Altas Copco and ESAB, a greater number of SMEs, several municipalities, regional and local governments and hospitals. Robotdalen is situated in a Swedish region called Mälardalen, which covers three counties and several municipalities, and hosted by one of the regional universities, Mälardalen University³. Although it

² If we translate the Swedish word of Robotdalen it means the Robotic Valley.

³ Mälardalen University was founded in 1977 as a regional university of technology and over time it has developed into a broad academy. The total number of students at Mälardalen University is approximately 13,000 and the total number of employees is nearly 1,000. An important guiding principle for Mälardalen University is the close relationship to the surrounding society. The importance of co-operation with the surrounding society is stressed, not only in management rhetoric but also in the strategy of the university (Mälardalen University 2009; 2012). The cooperative culture has been characterizing the university all the way from the establishment of the university till today (Johanson & Mårtensson 2011).

started as a regional initiative Robotdalen has grown to become a project with far fetching national and international visions and ambitions. It is now financed, among others, by the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (10 MSEK/year), the EU regional development fund (6 MSEK/year), regional municipalities and counties (7 MSEK/year) and industry representatives (5 MSEK/year). The total yearly turnover is almost 30 MSEK/year⁴.

It is possible to state that Robotdalen as an organization emerged as a result of a call were there has been large investments on development and research projects in a regional context to enhance the innovative capability of Sweden and create a competitive environment (Holmgren Caicedo & Mårtensson, 2012). This call was made in 2001, by the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, an agency that invests in research in order to “strengthen Sweden’s innovative capacity for competitiveness, sustainable development and growth” (The Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, 2012). The call, from *VINNVÄXT - Regional growth through dynamic innovation systems*, “aims to promote sustainable development in regions by developing internationally competitive research and innovation environments within specific growth fields”. Robotdalen was one of the first to receive founding for ten years, 2003-2013. This founding have been renewed until the year of 2019, but this time with the condition that Robotdalen need to increase their founding from other actors, thus in the long run become self-sufficient, as such the founding will decrease for each year with start in year 2015. That the founding will decrease have been expressed as an important factor for future strategic direction of Robotdalen (internal documents). Thus, it has forced them to once again start thinking in new ways in order to renew the organization and different aspects of its structure.

Performance

As stated previous in this paper, performance is a central part of strategic entrepreneurship and it is argued that successful strategic entrepreneurship practices leads to enhanced performance (e.g. Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland & Webb, 2003; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009; Kyrgidou & Huges, 2010; Luke et al., 2011). When it comes to Robotdalen they are often described as a successful collaborative initiative that have led to several important performance aspects. In a recent published OECD report (2012:33-34) the following conclusions were drawn:

Robotdalen is unique among assistive robotics developers for its integrative approach to robotics research, corporate development for young robotics companies, local economic development and job creation. No other robotics innovation project offers a similar combination of research driven innovation joined with pragmatic strategic planning in order to build and scale new companies.

Moreover, they are successful because they seemingly achieves its goals, is continuously growing, receiving funding, delivering tangible results and developing a strong brand as well as contributing to several new collaboration projects (Holmgren Caicedo & Mårtensson, 2012). Robotdalen has thus, on its own statement,

⁴ 30 MSEK was in June 2012 equivalent to 3,3 M€

become a leading national and European actor with a number of strong strategic international collaborations. Internal documents shows it has resulted in around 20-30 pre-studies per year, financial project support with between 200 000-400 000 SEK per case and around 20-30 cases per year, financial support for 5-10 commercialization projects of about 1-3 MSEK/project. Such activities have resulted, according to Robotdalen's own estimations, in around 5-10 new products/companies per year and national investments in new products and production systems valued to around 100-200 MSEK/year. Robotdalen presents their performance as an enabler of commercial success in terms of results and impacts (se figure 1 below).

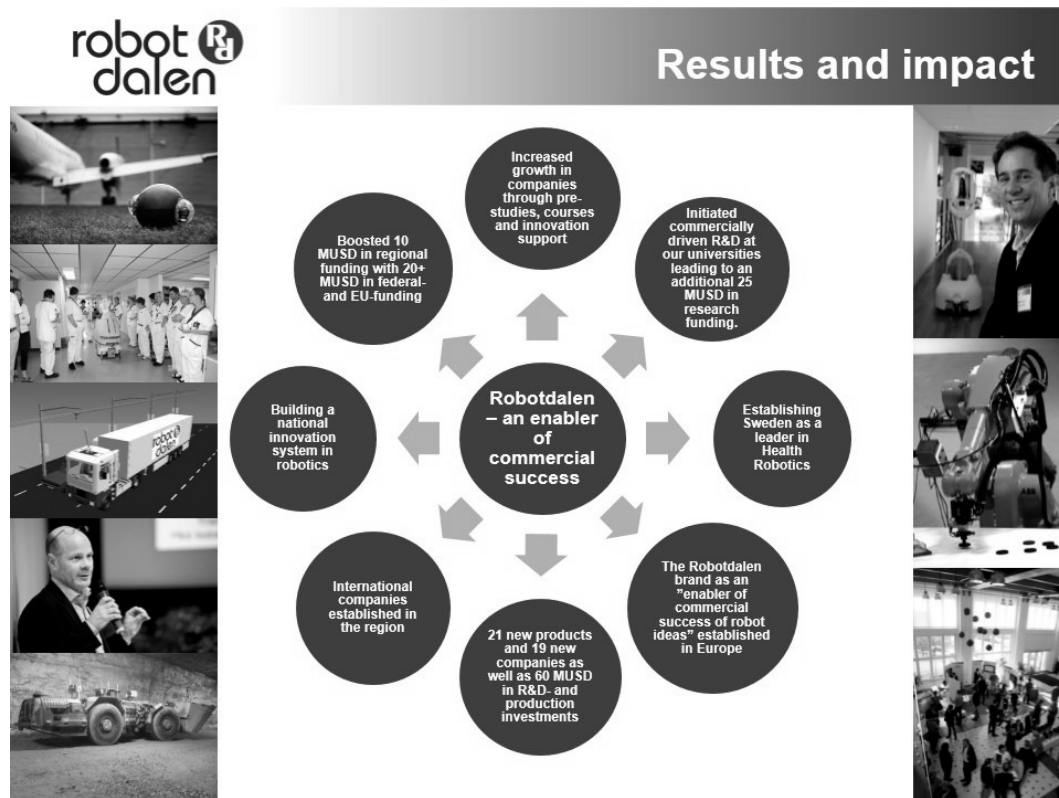


Figure 1: Robotdalen – results and impacts (Robotdalen, strategy presentation, 2013)

In line with strategic entrepreneurship literature on performance Robotdalen have chosen to mainly formulate their quantitative measurements on growth (cf. Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland, et al., 2003; Höglund, 2013), namely growth in: products and new companies. To focus on simple and clear performance measures goes in line with what has been identified as important regarding strategy work in public sector (cf. Lane, 2008, Poister, 2010; Plant, 2010). Lane (2008) argue that good performance measures in public organizations emphasize the delivery of products and services. Secondary measurements of importance is the use of individual key performance measurements (KPI's), which are developed between the general and individual manager. The key indicators are operationalized from the overall goals of Robotdalen, in this way every manager can relate to these. In that sense Robotdalen's goals seem to have a very central role in the operational management. The point is, as the general manager stressed, that as Robotdalen has increasingly

become goal oriented, everyone must know exactly how he or she contributes to it by way of their specific key performance indicators.

Structure

From a legal, as well as from a formal, point of view Robotdalen is hosted by, and a part of, Mälardalen University. Robotdalen is thus both autonomous in the sense that it is governed by a board of directors that consists of mostly financiers, and dependent insofar as it is subject to the rules and regulations that apply to a Swedish state governed university, which means that financial, legal and staff issues are all managed and controlled by the university. In practice, however, Robotdalen is a hybrid organization with several owners from both public and private sector. From internal documents and interviews with the board and management it comes forth that it is the owners who decide whether they should exist or not as an organization. Nevertheless, it is still the organizational structure of the university which set the overall framework for how Robotdalen can act regarding what procedures and structures that would be considered as appropriate or not. A structure that in many sense can be described as bureaucratic as most Swedish state owned universities. As Ireland and Webb (2007) highlights that too much standardization or formalization has the ability to stifle an organization and make them more prone to take on predictable strategic initiatives, thereby undermine entrepreneurial initiatives such as change, innovativeness and creativity. Despite this it is possible to conclude that Robotdalen can be seen as an organization driven by an entrepreneurial mindset (Holmgren Caicedo & Mårtensson, 2011). We will further elaborate on this.

From a strategic entrepreneurship perspective it would be possible to state that the discussion so far, indicate Robotdalen might have been too formalized and controlled (cf. Morris et al., 2008). However, even though goals and KPI's do play an important role in the long term strategic management of Robotdalen, discussions, often very informal ones, between the general manager and the members of the management team seem to play an even more central role. Thus, all of the members of Robotdalen stress the importance of informal contacts and that they try to live by the motto "no one is more than a phone-call away". In this sense management control practices are to a great extent canalized through non-standardized and informal channels. It also came forth in the interviews that the general manager spends a lot of time talking to all members of Robotdalen. These on-going discussions in combination with a structure that is simple and easy to understand (i.e. five KPIs) makes the organization apparently transparent and easy to adapt to (Holmgren Caicedo & Mårtensson, 2012), but also flexible regarding to make fast decisions as it is a flat organization structure with easy access to management. Moreover it also give the individual manger a space to make their own decisions as long as they perform in line with the KPI's.

Strategic entrepreneurship practices

An entrepreneurial mindset can be seen as a growth oriented perspective through which individuals promote flexibility, creativity, continuous innovation and renewal in organizations (e.g. Ireland et al., 2003; Ireland & Webb, 2007; Morris et al., 2008; Ireland et al. 2009; Kuratko, 2009). Ireland et al. (2003) and Morris et al. (2008) argue that, if an organization is committed to entrepreneurship, an effective entrepreneurial culture

is one in which new ideas and creativity is expected. Moreover, risk taking is encouraged, failure is tolerated, learning is promoted, product, process and administrative innovations are championed, and continuous change is viewed as a conveyor of opportunities. This could be applied to Robotdalen, and it would be possible to say that they are driven by an entrepreneurial culture. But as they are hosted by a Swedish state governed university it has been difficult at times to act with an entrepreneurial mindset as the structures tend to be quite rigid and inflexible as such they had to find their own creative ways of doing things. However, not always in line with the expectations of the host organization. We will in this section of the paper give some concrete examples of how Robotdalen have managed to find opportunities in this context and been taking advantages of the structures they act in.

At the website Robotdalen describe their core success factors as being an organization leveraging results. Firstly, the interviewed at Robotdalen claim that they understand and know entrepreneurship, industrial processes and marketing (a strategic aspect). Secondly, they claim that they dare to take the risk of combine formal analysis (a strategic aspect) and gut feeling (an aspect of entrepreneurship). Thirdly, they describe themselves as being hands-on and focused upon growth (an aspect of entrepreneurship). Fourthly, they are fast and non-bureaucratic (an aspect of entrepreneurship) (Mårtensson, 2011). A comment by the CEO of one of Robotdalen's products provides a colorful description of the action-oriented way of working at Robotdalen:

Robotdalen are the cowboys of the innovation system. They are more focused on doing the right things, than doing things right!

It is characteristic for Robotdalen that decisions are made fast (an aspect of entrepreneurship). This has, at least historically, generated difficulties for the administration of the hosting organization. As a Swedish university they are a public authority which make Robotdalen a subject to the same legislation and regulations as their host, e.g. to follow procurement instructions and conditions of employments, as other public authorities in Sweden (The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2012). Some of the interviewed, however, told us stories about how Robotdalen more or less on purpose ignored and eluded established administrative routines such as writing formal project decisions (a strategic aspect). One of the interviewed used the image of the cowboy once again:

The administration [at Mälardalen University] believes that we are like 'cowboys' and they were initially very upset when we bought stuff and when we did not follow the procurement instructions. And that is how it was; we were very wild in the beginning.

From the stories narrated it is possible to conclude that plenty of the strategic aspects had to stand back in the beginning of the establishment of Robotdalen. However, as the years went by several strategic aspects such as administrative structures, strategic formulation and planning has been given more attention by management. Sometimes it is expressed as something that has been forced upon them e.g. by financiers and other stakeholders. At other times, especially regarding formulation of strategies and reporting aspects, it has also been expressed as being proactive in formulating strategies as a way to manage and control possible

expectations in beforehand. As such not waiting for stakeholders and owners to dictate what they expect Robotdalen to do, rather dictate their own acting space and future direction by leveraging on results. To be proactive and at the same time deliver strategic results are important aspects of strategic entrepreneurship practices (Hitt et al., 2001).

Moreover, it is possible to state that Robotdalen has continuously worked on finding their strategic niche to act in since their establishment in 2003. After several revisions of the strategy, they did a larger renewal of the strategy in 2010. In this new strategy Robotdalen position themselves in a unique niche, when stated they compete as an enabler of commercial success. With this position they also intended to create a new market i.e. to do a domain redefinition which according to Kuratko and Audretsch (2009) can be seen as a result of a strategic entrepreneurship practice. With the renewed strategy they got a more streamlined and clearer strategic focus. For example, with the new strategy the business of Robotdalen was divided into three main areas: industrial robotics, field robotics (e.g. autonomous vehicles) and technology for independent life, from previously acting in six areas. They also got a stronger national and international focus, from previously mostly being a regional actor. They previously also did a lot of work towards education. This kind of change regarding core strategy could from a strategic entrepreneurship perspective be seen as an outcome of a successful strategic entrepreneurship practice of leveraging on innovation i.e. strategic renewal (cf. Covin and Miles, 1999; Morris et al, 2008; Kuratko and Audretsch, 2009).

It is also possible to state that Robotdalen has created their own balance of semi-formalized structures and procedures that support strategic entrepreneurship practices (c.f. Ireland & Webb, 2003; Morris et al., 2008). They has over the years become on the one hand an increasingly formalized organization that is very result oriented and governing operations via goals and KPIs and on the other hand it is an organization prone to act entrepreneurially by continuously renews itself and by being dynamic and flexible. In some regards, performance measures could be said to mostly be an instrument to be used externally to provide the organization with legitimacy and the ability to focus on Robotdalens core function i.e. to be an enabler of commercial success. Morris et al., (2008) stress that entrepreneurial activities and processes may lack appeal to several stakeholders, due to their experimental nature and the lack of certainty that positive outcomes will accumulate from them. A way for Robotdalen to manage this has been to leverage on results. By delivering tangible results and impacts they have positioned them self as successful and as long as the financiers are “buying” the positive results from Robotdalen, and for their own organizations, they tend to let Robotdalen make their own path including taking entrepreneurial action. An interesting question would be if this would be possible without the successful results. As Ireland and Webb (2007) argue, employees and stakeholders prefer leaders who take a consistent path, have a clear strategy and leveraging on results, while entrepreneurship is based on change and innovation which rather forces employees to take up new routines and stakeholders to be uncertain of the outcome.

To sum it up, by utilizing Robotdalen as a case example we have discussed and analyzed how they have struggled with bureaucratic structures that tend to limit their entrepreneurial work but also how they have

managed to take advantage of them. For example, by being proactive and creating clear and simple performance measures that has gained legitimacy towards owners and other stakeholders'. In this way they have managed to take off some of the governing aspects of the financiers/owners and thereby enhanced their autonomy and do things in an entrepreneurial way, which has been necessary in order to manage different stakes and interests of both public and private partners. In line with research on strategic entrepreneurship practices Robotdalen have during the years came up with several innovative solutions on how to perform their work, but also taken several actions to renew the organization e.g. strategic renewal, domain redefinition and organizational rejuvenation (cf. Covin & Miles, 1999; Morris et al., 2008; Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009). It is possible to state that it has been a challenge for Robotdalen to find their "their own way" through acting in an entrepreneurial manner. Nevertheless, they have at several times managed to see opportunities in taking an advantage of what strategic structures allowed and when necessary they have also ignored those. In table 1 we have summarized what the conditions have been for strategic entrepreneurship at Robotdalen that could be of relevance to other organizations acting in an inter-organizational context. We also give some concrete example of how Robotdalen managed it in practice.

Conditions for strategic entrepreneurship	Examples of doings from practice in an inter-organizational context
Keep it simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraging on results by few and concrete performance measurements that focus on growth. • Position in a unique and clear market niche.
Communicate narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint your own picture of who you are and how you want to be perceived. Narrate it internally as well as externally. • Report success-stories of performance and impact factors. • Narrate what is special and unique with your organization and why you can't apply to certain structures and rules. • Through individual meetings with important stakeholders. • Through informal and decentralized structures of communication internally.
To be flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast decision-making e.g. by sometimes ignoring formalized structures. • Easy access to management and informal procedures. • Creative interpretations of structures and rules. • Adjustments of personal goals (KPI) as long they are in line with overall performance measurements.

Table 1: A summary of conditions for strategic entrepreneurship in an inter-organizational context and examples of doings from practice.

Closing discussion

Our findings suggests that the balance of entrepreneurship (i.e. renewal through different aspects of innovation) and strategy (i.e. as an organization's long-term development including management of

structures, decisions regarding scope, how resources are to be acquired and managed and intended sources of competitive advantage) is created by increasing the tension between them. This is done within the organization through the establishment of entrepreneurial structures to counteract the force of attraction of administrative structures. Thus creates a space for action that is both strategic and entrepreneurial, i.e. a space within which both entrepreneurial and administrative structures must be taken into consideration. The creation of such space enables then actors within the organization to act in ways that incorporate both entrepreneurship and strategic matters by way loose couplings to both strategic administration and entrepreneurship whenever they are needed. In other words, the introduction of entrepreneurial structures creates a new interpretative space, which allows for new strategic entrepreneurship interpretations.

In theory entrepreneurial and strategic processes are often considered as dual or the opposite of each other, but our findings show that they are rather mutually dependent i.e. they enabling each other's existence (cf. Höglund, 2013). Drawing on structuration theories within entrepreneurship studies, Sarason et al. (2006:289) stress "a duality, as opposed to a dualism, presents two constructs that cannot exist, or be understood separate from each other". As the quotation indicates, the choice of terminology can be important to consider in the further conceptual development of strategic entrepreneurship. If scholars are still interested in portraying the strategic entrepreneurship process as a balancing, we suggest that the duality term is a better description of what is going on in practice. The terminology of duality, however, still in many ways draws one's attention to interpreting entrepreneurship and strategy as two separated processes, not as one.

Three debating points

- What is your thoughts on the idea that strategy (as an organization's long-term development including management of structures, decisions regarding scope, how resources are to be acquired and managed and intended sources of competitive advantage) and entrepreneurship (as the creation of renewal in organizations through innovation) are seen as mutually dependent? In other words not as two dual processes rather as one process of strategic entrepreneurship were they enabling each other's existence.
- Is it possible that management structures of more administrative character could be considered as beneficial for entrepreneurship in that sense it forces organizations and its members to be creative in order to accomplish what they need to be successful? In other words if there are no "tensions" it is easy to slip in to routines and do everything in the usual way i.e. no renewal takes place.
- Is it the individual "entrepreneur" or rather a team of people that together create the success of an organization like Robotdalen? In previous contexts were I have presented the case of Robotdalen people tend to position the excellent results due to the general manager and his individual actions. However, I can also see the importance of the "right" combination of people for example an entrepreneurial individual could benefit from interacting with more strategic people and vice versa.

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