Thesis Manuscript

Incubating Businesses

Author: Anna Alexandersson
Institution for Organization
and Entrepreneurship (OE)
School of Business and Economics
Linnaeus University, Växjö
E-mail:anna.alexandersson@lnu.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have participated in the dialogue creating this thesis. There is a long list of people who have made this possible. I wish I could be more original, but…Thank you!

The entrepreneurs and incubator managers, who participated in the study, generously gave of their time and made this thesis possible.

My supervisors, Daniel Hjorth and Marja Soila-Wadman, who have been an invaluable support in the process of writing a thesis and of trying to understand the mysterious ways of academic life. I am forever grateful.

Senada Bahto, Karin Berglund, Frederic Bill, Malgorzata Ciesielska, Mikael Holmgren Caicedo, Bengt Johannisson, Anders W Johansson, Magnus Klofsten, Jerzy Kociatkiewicz, Henrietta Nilson, Erik Rosell and Alexander Styhre, who have contributed with constructive feedback on earlier drafts of this text. I owe you.

All colleagues and friends at Linnaeus University in particular the cosy-trap, who have made the frustrating PhD-process bearable and fun.

Viktorija, who read my texts and made me dream of a research life after the thesis, always fun working with you.

My parents and my brother, who patiently have listened to me, always believed in me and put up with me and my constant companion, THE THESIS.

Andreas thank you for everything. There would not have been a thesis without you.

Kalvsvik, 28th of April 2015

Anna Alexandersson
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction: The Thesis

1.1 Background: Business Incubators
   1.1.1 Economic Development and Business Incubators
   1.1.2 From Landlord to Coach

1.2 The Problem of Managing Business Incubation
   1.2.1 More Incubator Management
   1.2.2 Killing the Joy of Creation
   1.2.3 Managerial Control and Creativity
   1.2.4 Understandings of Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubators
   1.2.5 An Organizational Entrepreneurship Perspective

1.3 Using Bakhtinian Concepts as an Analytical Framework
   1.3.1 Context and Creativity
   1.3.2 A Narrative Approach

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework: Entrepreneurship, Business Incubators and Management

2.1 Past and Present in Entrepreneurial Research
   2.1.1 Entrepreneurship in Economics
   2.1.2 Who is an Entrepreneur?
   2.1.3 Entrepreneurial Processes
   2.1.4 An Entrepreneurial Field?

2.2 Business Incubators and Business Incubation
   2.2.1 What is a Business Incubator?
   2.2.2 Effectiveness and Measures of Success
   2.2.3 Entrepreneurship and Management in Business Incubators
   2.2.4 Incubator Management

2.3 Managing Entrepreneurship
   2.3.1 Entrepreneurship in Management Literature
   2.3.2 What is Corporate Entrepreneurship?
   2.3.3 Corporate Entrepreneurship: Specific Obstacles and Critical Success Factors
   2.3.4 Controlling Entrepreneurship
   2.3.5 Managing Creativity and Organizing Entrepreneurship

Chapter 3 Analytical Strategy: Bakhtinian Concepts

3.1 A Bakhtinian Philosophy
   3.1.1 Dialogism, Prosaics and Unfinalizability
   3.1.2 Chronotope

3.2 A Bakhtinian Theory of Creativity
   3.2.1 Chronotopes for Becoming
3.2.2 Dialogue and Creativity ................................................................. 65
3.2.3 Polyphony as a Theory of Creativity ........................................... 71
3.2.4 Carnival and Innovation .............................................................. 73
Chapter 4 Methodology: Narratives, Interviews and Interpretations ........ 78
4.1 Narrative Knowledge ..................................................................... 78
  4.1.1 Life as Narrative ....................................................................... 78
  4.1.2 The Double Logic of Narratives ................................................ 79
  4.1.3 A Narrative Mode of Thought ................................................... 80
4.2 A Bakhtinian Narratology .............................................................. 81
  4.2.1 Meaning-making, Culture and the Chronotope ......................... 82
  4.2.2 A Dialogic Ontology and Epistemology ..................................... 83
  4.2.3 In Search of Voices ................................................................... 85
4.3 Constructing Narratives for Inquiry ............................................... 86
  4.3.1 What is a Narrative in this Study? ............................................ 87
  4.3.2 Fieldwork: Pre-study ................................................................. 87
  4.3.3 Fieldwork at Two Research Settings ........................................ 88
  4.3.4 Narrative and Ethnographic Interviewing ................................... 88
  4.3.5Narrating Someone Else’s Story ................................................ 89
Chapter 5 Empirical Overview: A System, Two Incubators and 30 Entrepreneurs ....................................................................................... 91
  5.1 An Incubator System ..................................................................... 91
  5.2 Minc in 2009 ................................................................................ 91
    5.2.1 Minc as Depicted by the Incubator Management ....................... 92
    5.2.2 The Incubator Program as Depicted by the Entrepreneurs .......... 97
  5.3 Chalmers Innovation in 2009 ........................................................ 109
    5.3.1 Chalmers Innovation as Depicted by the Incubator Management 109
    5.3.2 The Incubator as Depicted by the Entrepreneurs ...................... 115
Chapter 6 Analysis: Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubation .... 127
  6.1 Comparing Chronotopes ............................................................... 127
    6.1.1 Chronotopes and Genres ........................................................ 128
    6.1.2 Incubation Plots and Entrepreneurial Processes ....................... 128
    6.1.3 The Image of the Entrepreneur ............................................... 130
    6.1.4 The Depictions of the Incubator Space .................................... 133
    6.1.5 The Expressions of Time in Business Incubation ..................... 139
  6.2 Incubator Chronotope(s) and Entrepreneurial Processes ................ 142
    6.2.1 Two Official Chronotopes: Interactional Space and Specialized Development ................................................................. 142
    6.2.2 Many Entrepreneurial Chronotopes ........................................ 143
    6.2.3 An Incubator Genre? ............................................................... 145
  6.3 Summary and Conclusions: Understandings of Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubation ......................................................... 145
Chapter 7 Analysis: Incubator Management and Creativity .................. 147
  7.1 Exploring Stories about Incubator Management using Bakhtinian Concepts ...................................................................................... 147
    7.1.1 An Analysis of Incubator Chronotopes and Creativity ............... 147
References ........................................................................................................................................ 196
Appendix I: Interview Guide ..................................................................................................... 208
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: THE THESIS

This thesis is about the entrepreneurial process of starting a company in a business incubator and the incubator management intended to support it. The underlying assumption of the incubator concept is that the incubator can link innovations, know-how, capital and entrepreneurial talent (Smilor & Gill, 1986). This thesis contributes to our understanding of how this linking is narrated and enacted.

1.1 Background: Business Incubators

This section situates the business incubator and its managerial practices in a wider context: the role of the incubator as an economic development tool, its spread across the world and the latest trends in the incubation industry.

1.1.1 Economic Development and Business Incubators

According to statistics, approximately 70% of entrepreneurial endeavors fail within 10 years (Shane, 2008). Successful entrepreneurial activities have, however, been identified as the key to economic growth (Schumpeter, 1934/1983) and the prime driver of job creation (Birch, 1979). Policy-makers around the world have consequently tried to encourage entrepreneurship and support new ventures with different types of support measures. The idea of supporting entrepreneurial activities spread across the world in the 1980s and the promotion of entrepreneurship became essential for any government regardless of ideology (Alvarez, 1996). Alvarez (1996) named this worldwide movement an “entrepreneurial fervor”. The interest of governments was powered by reports that stated that entrepreneurship was vital for job creation (Birch, 1979). Fostering entrepreneurship has since then been on the political agenda and local economic development agencies, governments and other public institutions have adopted a wide range of policies to stimulate entrepreneurship (Stevenson & Lundström, 2001). A number of support
measures, such as business counseling, flexible loans, and business incubators, have been initiated to support entrepreneurship. The business incubator is an organizational form that provides a combination of support, services, funding and a physical home to entrepreneurial ventures for a period of time (Leblebici & Shah, 2004). The incubators are characterized by and known for the fact that they house the ventures they support in an office building. There is however a growing ambition to focus more on the development of new ventures rather than the provision of affordable office space and to create a social space conducive to entrepreneurial processes.

The business incubator is thus an economic development tool that has generated much attention from policy-makers, and it is a part of economic policies worldwide (Stevenson & Lundström, 2001). The incubator concept is based on the implicit idea of helping entrepreneurs through the difficult early stages of the development of their ventures by establishing a supportive environment (Kuratko & Sabatine, 1989). This is based on the assumption that through this support more businesses will be started and a larger percentage of these firms will also survive (Fry, 1987). The incubator concept originates in the economic crisis experienced in the Western industrialized countries in the late 1970s and the early 1980s (CSES, 2002). The rapidly rising unemployment that resulted from the collapse of traditional industries required new strategies to help regenerate crisis sectors, regions and communities. Incubators became a new trend in the provision of small business support to entrepreneurs (Smilor & Gill, 1986). The number of business incubators has been growing rapidly, from 200 at the beginning of the 1980s to over 3000 worldwide twenty years later (CSES, 2002). As their number has increased, they have become one of the most prominent forms of economic development. The dot-com boom and the interest in high-technology firms made the number surge in the late 1990s. Venture capitalists and business angels invested in dot-coms and provided a place for them in commercial for-profit incubators. The following burst of the bubble dampened the enthusiasm, but the incubator concept survived, primarily as a part of regional innovation systems (CSES, 2002). Incubators have become a concern of institutions such as the European Union, the OECD, and the United Nations. Governments worldwide, including Sweden, have launched national incubator programs as a part of their policies (Stevenson & Lundström, 2001).

1.1.2 From Landlord to Coach
Recent approaches to business incubation include stronger involvement on the part of incubator management in the development of the new ventures. The history of the incubation concept shows that incubators have been experimenting with different ways of supporting entrepreneurship over the years and new services have continuously been added to the concept. (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). The first incubators in the 1950s offered office
space, and in the 1980s, business counseling and networking opportunities were added to the concept. The evolution of the incubator industry has brought about a new role for incubator management because the debate in theory and practice has been suggesting a more active role for incubator management (CSES, 2002; NBIA, 2008; Rice, 1992; Smilor & Gill, 1986). The role of incubator management has changed in the discourse from “landlord” to “coach”: from offering affordable office space to taking an active, even operational role in the ventures. The background to the call for professionalized incubator management and formalized incubation processes has been attributed to incubators’ failure to show clear-cut results and the aftermath of the “dot-com bubble” (Leblebici & Shah, 2004). The reports have suggested improved “formal client monitoring arrangements” to create efficient incubation processes (CSES, 2002, p. 59). The mixed results of business incubation have been attributed to a lack of proper incubation management. The monitoring and evaluation process of incubator management by tenant companies should thus be improved.

The background to the thesis is thus the suggestion of increased managerial interventions in entrepreneurial processes in business incubators. In the following sections, I will discuss organizational entrepreneurship and business incubators as a research problem and propose a new theoretical approach to the phenomenon.

1.2 The Problem of Managing Business Incubation

The business incubator will be analyzed as a particular organizational context for entrepreneurship in this thesis. The problem of managing business incubation will therefore be discussed as a variation of managing the entrepreneurial process in organizations and discussed in light of research about entrepreneurship in other organizational contexts. A review of research on business incubation and entrepreneurship in organizational contexts reveals that the suggestions of increased managerial interventions are of interest for a number of reasons.

1.2.1 More Incubator Management

The idea about the importance of the managerial intervention is not new to the field. Since the beginning of the 1980s, research in the field of business incubation has emphasized the importance of effective incubator management (Bearse, 1993; Rice, 1992; Smilor & Gill, 1986). The role of the management is threefold— not only to ensure that the organization operates in an efficient manner but also to advise client companies and evaluate their progress. The consultation of incubator management is suggested as essential for companies (Lindholm Dahlstrand, 2004; Smilor & Gill, 1986). A study of Swedish
incubators found that incubator management teams spend most of their time consulting client companies (Lindholm Dahlstrand, 2004). The factor that differentiated them was the level of their involvement in the companies. Clear management policies, such as entry policy, tenant performance review and graduation, are also considered best practices (Mian, 1997; Smilor & Gill, 1986). Incubator management intervention in entrepreneurial processes is suggested to be crucial for incubators’ success (Fry, 1987; Rice, 1992; Smilor & Gill, 1986; Udell, 1990), but this hypothesis is largely unexplored. In addition, research has not yet been able to link specific management practices to the performance of an incubator (Autio & Klofsten, 1998) or to inquire into whether management is actually generative of entrepreneurship, as is often assumed.

1.2.2 Killing the Joy of Creation

The argument for the business incubator as a place for entrepreneurship has, however, caused some controversy. Some researchers have suggested that the inconclusive results of the evaluations of the incubation efforts may also be due to a lack of an understanding of the entrepreneurial process (Mian, 1997) or inefficient incubator management (Rice, 2002). Other scholars have questioned the very assumption that entrepreneurship may be fostered by managerial practices, however refined (Bjerke, 2005; Finer & Holberton, 2002; Johannisson, 2005). The main objection against the increased control and involvement are the detrimental effects these interventions would have on the motivation of the entrepreneurs because it takes the initiative away from the entrepreneurs (Finer & Holberton, 2002; Johannisson, 2005). The idea is that “in this environment, aspiring entrepreneurs have more freedom to be creative because their energies can be devoted to product development rather to the rigors of obtaining financing or managing an organization” (Smilor & Gill, 1986, p. 20). Finer and Holberton (2002) challenge this idea and stronger involvement by the incubator management. They use the example of the commercial incubators that were common during the dot-com boom. These incubators took care of all the everyday tasks of building a business, which freed the entrepreneurs to focus solely on developing “the next big thing”. This incubator model was characterized by a strong involvement by the incubator management team in the entrepreneurial ventures (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). The management team in this type of incubator monitored their tenants carefully, provided day-to-day operational support and access to a network of technological and managerial expertise. These incubators failed, according to Finer and Holberton, because this incubation model did not create viable and freestanding businesses and because they attracted entrepreneurs without the necessary experience, drive and belief. They argue that this incubator model was faulty because the stronger involvement took the initiative away from the start-up team. Johannisson’s (2005) critique follows a similar line of reasoning. Schumpeter (1934/1983) identifies the “joy of
creation” and the “will to conquer” as an essential part of the motivation for entrepreneurs. Johannisson criticizes the control element in business incubation precisely because it hinders the process by hampering these motivational factors.

1.2.3 Managerial Control and Creativity

The suggestion of increased managerial monitoring is also interesting considering the research about entrepreneurship in other organizational contexts. The monitoring of tenant companies is new to business incubation, but the discussion of the managerial control of entrepreneurial processes is well known from other types of organizations. The question is thus what are the lessons learnt from other contexts regarding controlling entrepreneurial activities. Would more managerial control enhance incubators’ capacity for innovation and for supporting entrepreneurship? It is worth noting in this context that the first corporate incubators were actually created in order to move new ventures out from too rigid organizational structures and practices that hampered their progress (Schollhammer, 1982).

Because innovation is considered vital for the survival of firms, managing innovation processes has long been a managerial concern (Burgelman, 1983; Burns & Stalker, 1961; Drucker, 1985). The real surge for entrepreneurship in organizations, however, came in the 1980s, when authors such as Peters and Waterman (1982), Kanter (1983) and Pinchot (1985) presented entrepreneurship as the managerial tool for innovation, change and renewal. Over the years, companies have experimented with managerial modes to allow for creativity and innovation while controlling the entrepreneurial activities in an organization. However, it has proved difficult to combine the creation of an ever more efficient organization with the creation of a new venture. The very elements of organizations that support their efficiency and productivity, such as hierarchies, standardization and specialization, also hinder creativity (Amabile, 1998). The need for control and coordination undermines organizations’ potential for innovation and employees’ ability to realize new ideas (Amabile, 1998). Classic elements of corporate management are to impose standards for each activity and to coordinate the whole process (Hoskin, 2004). However, in entrepreneurship, managers face a phenomenon that cannot easily be planned or forced through the normal managerial mechanism of specifying goals (Burgelman, 1983; Gunther McGrath, Venkataraman, & Macmillan, 1994; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Hjorth and Johannisson (1998) argue that it is precisely these aspects of control, planning and measurement in management that are at odds with entrepreneurship, which is a different mode of organizing. Management is a way of creating more efficient organizations, whereas entrepreneurship is about realizing new ideas. The conclusion of this research on entrepreneurship in established
organizations is that entrepreneurial processes present a challenge to management as ideology and practice.

The difficulty of combining rationality and efficiency with entrepreneurship and innovation has led to many different suggestions about how managers should approach the phenomenon. The issue of managerial control is pivotal for these discussions, although the views of its role in entrepreneurial processes differ. Some researchers argue that because innovation is a systematic activity not based on creativity, it can be controlled by normal managerial practices (Block & MacMillan, 1993; Drucker, 1985; Lindholm Dahlstrand, 2004). Others suggest that instead of normal managerial techniques for control, reward and planning entrepreneurship requires another approach and a different set of practices (see, for example, Amabile, 1998; Hjorth, 2005; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012; Soila-Wadman, 2003). The underlying assumption for these alternative approaches is that entrepreneurship is based on organizational and collective creativity. This creativity cannot be controlled by normal means and has to be supported differently. Managerial control has to be relinquished in favor of a shared leadership in the process. The main difference in these critiques of managerial control is the importance they attribute to the leader in the process, ranging from supporting a predominantly managerial approach, which attributes great importance to the manager and the leadership in the process (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Florida & Goodnight, 2005), to employing a critical perspective that questions management’s ability to affirm the new venture altogether (Hjorth, 2012; Steyaert, 2012).

The understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurship and management varies, but a major distinction can be made between those that maintain that entrepreneurship should be approached with normal managerial practices such as control and planning (Block & MacMillan, 1993; Drucker, 1985) and those that propose that it is a special phenomenon that is different from management and requires special measures (Amabile, 1998; Burgelman, 1983; Hjorth, 2005; Soila-Wadman, 2003). Regarding entrepreneurial processes and managerial control, the literature on organizational entrepreneurship indicates that the new role for incubator management requires a discussion of control and freedom in the context of business incubation. The discussions of entrepreneurship in other formal organizations have shown that supporting dynamic and creative processes may not be as straightforward as the system approaches to business incubation indicate. This would suggest that a new way of approaching entrepreneurship might turn “incubating” into more “entrepreneuring” than “managing”.

14
1.2.4 Understandings of Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubators

The discussion of managerial control in business incubation has drawn attention to the characteristics of entrepreneurial processes. By understanding the entrepreneur and the dynamics of the entrepreneurial process, incubators are assumed to more effectively utilize resources to help develop companies (Smilor & Gill, 1986). Some researchers claim that it is precisely a lack of this understanding that hampers the creation of responsive incubation processes (Chan & Lau, 2005; Mian, 1997).

However, scholars and practitioners have many different views of entrepreneurship and attach many different meanings to the phenomenon. If entrepreneurship is considered directional, linear, and basically a process of gathering the necessary resources (Shane, 2003), then business incubation is all about structuring that process. Regarding entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of creative organizing (Johannisson, 2005) entails that a standardized incubation process based on managerial control and evaluation becomes more problematic. The assumption that the entrepreneurial process is characterized by emergence, iteration, openness to uncertainty and failure as a part of the process (Austin & Devin, 2003) would suggest another approach, which can account for its complexity. Researchers in organizational entrepreneurship who manage creativity and collective creativity cite creativity as a vital part of entrepreneurship and innovation (Amabile, 1998; Florida & Goodnight, 2005; Hjorth & Johannisson, 1998; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012; Soila-Wadman, 2003; Steyaert, 2004; Styhre, 2013). As seen in the discussions of managerial control, the issue of whether entrepreneurship and innovation are creative and social processes could be crucial to the design of incubation processes.

The discursive research in entrepreneurship also alerts us to the fact that the discourse excludes many entrepreneurs, and the image of who is an entrepreneur is reproduced both in practice and in research (Ahl, 2002; Pettersson, 2002; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). This variation in understandings leads us to the important question of how incubation processes and managerial practices are understood in incubators. Assuming that the understanding of the entrepreneurial process influences the design of managerial practices and the usage of the incubation process, the performative definitions of entrepreneurship by incubators and entrepreneurs are of particular interest.

1.2.5 An Organizational Entrepreneurship Perspective

The incubation process will be analyzed from the perspective of organizational entrepreneurship. The analysis will focus on business incubation as a context for organizational creativity. The business incubator is a particular context for entrepreneurship. Although incubators and the
ventures are not formally part of the same organizations, they enact the same space. The new ventures are housed in the same building, and a wide range of services and managerial support is offered in this location. This characteristic is the factor that sets them apart from other entrepreneur-support measures (Bearse, 1993). The business incubation process is the business development activities that take place in a building, parts of a building or in adjoining buildings (Allen & Weinberg, 1988). The entrepreneurs move into the provided office space adjacent to other entrepreneurs. This assumed to add value to the entrepreneurial process by creating “a supportive, symbiotic environment that is not as easy to engender if entrepreneurs are dispersed throughout the community” (Allen & Weinberg, 1988, p. 214). The role of the incubator management is to develop “an environment conducive to camaraderie and mutual support among entrepreneurs” (Campbell, 1989, p. 58), “thereby reducing the anxiety of starting a new business” (Kuratko & Sabatine, 1989, p. 43). Research from the U.S. indicates that entrepreneurs value intangible benefits such as moral support and a supportive atmosphere, whereas incubators emphasize the provision of tangible services and facilities (Spitzer & Ford, 1989). By applying a creativity perspective, this study will add a new perspective to incubation research while investigating what organizational creativity is possible in the incubator context.

1.3 Using Bakhtinian Concepts as an Analytical Framework

The understandings of business incubation and managerial practices and the possibilities for organizational creativity will be investigated using concepts developed by Mikhail Bakhtin.

1.3.1 Context and Creativity

The incubator as a context for organizational creativity will be analyzed using concepts developed by Mikhail Bakhtin. Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotope provides the analytical framework by which the incubator idea may be explored in terms of the possibilities for entrepreneurial creativity in the incubator context. The chronotope gives meaning to a narrative and organizes the understanding of events, actions and people (Bakhtin, 1981). A chronotopic analysis of narratives is thus relevant for the discussion of entrepreneurial initiatives, managerial practices, and the potential of incubation as a space for entrepreneurship because it recognizes and acknowledges the varying possibilities and groundings for becoming. Bakhtin used the chronotope to discuss the “problems of reality and man’s potential, problems of freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 24) and a world where becoming could be real. The discussion of managerial control and the entrepreneurial initiative in the
debate on entrepreneurship and management noticeably echoes these concerns, and with the chronotope as an analytic device, it is possible to recognize them and explore how entrepreneurial initiatives are viewed and understood in the business incubator context. The chronotope will support the classification of different entrepreneurial processes and incubator contexts and their respective possibilities for becoming. The possibilities for creativity will be further explored with the concepts of dialogue, polyphony and carnival. Creativity from a Bakhtinian perspective is dialogical, polyphonic and carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984a, 1984b). Ideas are always developed in interaction with other ideas, and ideas of others are in a world based on freedom and playfulness. Using this definition of entrepreneurship, this study contributes to the research focusing on organizational entrepreneurship as creative and collective. Previous studies from other organizational contexts have also showed that Bakhtin’s concepts are useful and relevant for studying processes (cf. Helin, 2011).

1.3.2 A Narrative Approach

The Bakhtinian framework entails a narrative approach. Mikhail Bakhtin, a philosopher of language and a literary critic, developed the chronotope for literary analysis to study novels (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). He classified them according to how they conceptualized the relationships between actions, events and people in a context, a conceptualization he named the chronotope. The genres in novels, and their associated chronotope, offer us many different variations of how the relationships between people and the world may be comprehended (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The chronotope is thus the ground for relationships and the interactions. The time-space context is productive and not merely the backdrop for the action of the plot. The chronotope could thus be described as the cultural understanding of people, actions, events and places. The chronotope can be found in representations of events in narratives (Morson & Emerson, 1990), and these are thus the focus of the chronotopic analysis. The understandings of the entrepreneurial processes and managerial practices will thus be investigated through interpreting the entrepreneurial narratives about them.

Bakhtin directs our attention to how entrepreneurs organize the past, the present and the future in their narratives about their becoming. The narrative turn in social sciences began in the 1960s as a challenge to realism and flowered in the 1980s, fueled by a postmodern interest in the performance of identity and local stories as opposed to master narratives (Kohler Riessman, 2008). Hjorth and Steyaert (2004) identify Gartner’s “Words lead to deeds” (1993) as one of the earliest contributions to the language-based approach in entrepreneurship studies. A number of studies have since then captured the discursive practices of entrepreneurship (Berglund, 2006), the narration of becoming a new venture (Boutaiba, 2003), and the forms and structures of
entrepreneurial narratives (Smith & Anderson, 2004). These analyses have contributed to our understanding of the role of narratives in entrepreneurs’ organization of the past, the present and the future and of the generic structures of entrepreneurial tales. This analysis adds to the knowledge of how a particular time and place organize these narrations and how the generic structures of entrepreneurship tales are reshaped by this particular context.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

The departing point for the thesis is the continued interest in entrepreneurship and creativity coupled with trends in business incubation management and suggestions from organizational entrepreneurship research. The purpose of this thesis is to inquire into the relationship between entrepreneurial processes and managerial practices in business incubation to further the understanding of entrepreneurship in organizational contexts. The study describes and analyzes business incubation as a particular organizational context for entrepreneurship. Answering the following two research questions will fulfill this purpose:

Research question 1: How are incubation processes and managerial practices narrated and understood by entrepreneurs?

Research question 2: What organizational creativity is possible in the incubator context?

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

My exploration of business incubators as entrepreneurial space takes the form of eight sections. The first section introduces the research area of entrepreneurship in organizational contexts and discusses business incubation as a research problem. The purpose of the thesis is stated, and the possible contributions of the thesis are outlined. The next chapter contains the conceptual framework on entrepreneurship, business incubators and organizational entrepreneurship. The third chapter is devoted to how context and creativity have been conceptualized by Mikhail Bakhtin. This part develops the conceptual framework used to describe and analyze business incubators as organizational contexts for entrepreneurship and creativity. The fourth part focuses on the methodological approach and the fieldwork in two research settings. The fifth chapter presents how two different incubators are represented by entrepreneurs. The sixth chapter analyzes the narratives of entrepreneurial processes and discusses the different creative processes possible in these narrations from a Bakhtinian perspective. The seventh chapter describes how managerial practices are understood in different incubators and the possibilities for organizational creativity in these incubator
contexts. The eighth chapter discusses what business incubation could be possible based on the results from this study, research on organizational entrepreneurship and the Bakhtinian ideas of creativity. The ninth chapter concludes the thesis with the conclusions from the analyses of entrepreneurial processes, managerial practices and a Bakhtinian model of business incubation.
CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS INCUBATORS AND MANAGEMENT

This section is a review of research themes, theories and empirical findings in the research on entrepreneurship, particularly the entrepreneurial processes, the relationship between management and entrepreneurship, and business incubators.

2.1 Past and Present in Entrepreneurial Research

What is entrepreneurship? This question has been answered in many ways. Entrepreneurship is “innovation” (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 133), “the nexus of enterprising individuals and valuable opportunities” (Shane, 2003, p. 9), “creative organizing” (Johannisson, 2005, p. 2), “organization creation” (Gartner, Bird, & Starr, 1992, p. 15), “history-making” (Spinosa, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997, p. 2), and “social creativity” (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004, p. 3). “Entrepreneur” appeared as a concept for the first time two hundred years ago (Landström, 2000). Since then, researchers have been engaged in what has been called the “never-ending debate” on the meaning of entrepreneurship (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991, p. 13). There are many suggestions regarding the constant feature of entrepreneurship. Scholars have searched for ways to grasp the essence of entrepreneurship. Other scholars have questioned if such a thing can be found.

2.1.1 Entrepreneurship in Economics

Early conceptualizations of entrepreneurship appeared in the writings of economists. Frank Knight theorized that the entrepreneur was a person who had the ability to handle uncertainty particularly well (1921). The contribution
of the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter has had a significant influence on the ideas of entrepreneurship. His work, “The Theory of Economic Development” (Schumpeter, 1934), firmly placed entrepreneurship at the heart of economic theory as being essential to economic development. He defines entrepreneurship as implementing new combinations, such as the introduction of a new good, the introduction of a new production method, the opening of a new market, or the creation of a new organization of an industry. Entrepreneurship is the function that disturbs the supply-demand relation and thereby enables equilibrium at a higher level in the economy. Therefore, the effects of entrepreneurship are economic development and wealth creation. The entrepreneurial function implements these new combinations and innovations. “The carrying out of new combinations, we call ‘enterprise;’ the individuals whose function it is to carry out them we call ‘entrepreneurs’” (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 74). Schumpeter argues that this is a special process, which he called “creative destruction.”

Israel Kirzner is another economist who has contributed to the theories of entrepreneurship. He argued that the entrepreneur is an alert individual who can identify imperfections in the equilibrium in the economy and exploit them (1973). Central to Kirzner’s idea of entrepreneurship is “the entrepreneurial alertness to unnoticed opportunities” (1973, p. 81). He views the entrepreneur, “not as a source of innovative ideas ex nihilo, but as being alert to the opportunities that exist already and are waiting to be noticed” (1973, p. 74). Kirzner notes that “the important feature of entrepreneurship is not so much the ability to break away from the routine as the ability to perceive new opportunities which others have not yet noticed.” (1973, p. 81). Economists have left us with the image of an entrepreneur as an alert individual who copes well with uncertainty and whose function is essential to the economy. Although economists were mainly interested in the entrepreneurial function in the economy, the entrepreneur is at the heart of their theories.

2.1.2 Who is an Entrepreneur?
The demographic and cognitive characteristics of this enterprising individual have become important research themes in entrepreneurship. Economists were interested in the function of the entrepreneur, but they also envisioned a special type of person with certain characteristics. Schumpeter argues that the entrepreneur is driven by “the dream and the will to found a private kingdom,” “the will to conquer” and “the joy of creating” (1983, p. 93). Kirzner described an alert individual who observes opportunities (1973), whereas Knight’s entrepreneur copes particularly well with uncertainty and risk (2002). A famous contribution to this research is “The Achieving Nation” (1961) by psychologist David McClelland. He theorized that the entrepreneur, a person who implements new combinations, is driven by a high internalized need for achievement. According to McClelland, a person with this characteristic
thrives in the entrepreneurial role because it involves reasonable risk-taking, participating in innovating activities, assuming individual responsibility and receiving tangible feedback on the actions taken. Following McClelland, researchers have identified through empirical studies many psychological (motivation, core evaluation, and cognition) and non-psychological (education, age, career experience, social position, and opportunity cost) variables that characterize entrepreneurs (Shane, 2003). The study of the psychological traits of people identified as entrepreneurs is a category of research that has been called the “trait approach” (Bull & Willard, 1993). This research has attempted to describe entrepreneurs and differentiate them from non-entrepreneurs (Carland, Hoy, Boulton, & Carland, 1984). The basic unit of analysis is the entrepreneur, and the personality of the entrepreneur is assumed to be the key to explain the phenomenon because entrepreneurs create entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1989).

This approach has received much criticism because the underlying assumption appears to be “once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur” (Gartner, 1989). The critics have noted that this school of thought has produced an endless list of traits; therefore, we must conclude that “there is no ‘typical’ entrepreneur” (Bull & Willard, 1993, p. 187). Although Schumpeter (1983) argued that the process of creative destruction requires a special type of person who is able to break standards and routines, he noted that being an entrepreneur is not a lasting condition: “everyone is an entrepreneur only when he actually ‘carries out new combinations,’ and loses that character as soon as he has built up his business, when he settles down to running it as other people run their businesses” (1983, p. 78).

A famous contribution to the debate regarding the usefulness of the trait approach is Gartner’s article, “‘Who is an entrepreneur’ is the wrong question” (1989). Much of the research in entrepreneurship has focused on the personality of the entrepreneur and asks the question, “Who is the entrepreneur?” Gartner argues that this is the wrong question and that the trait approach will not help us understand the phenomenon. Instead of approaching the entrepreneur as a set of traits and characteristics, he suggests a behavioral approach that views entrepreneurship as a set of activities that involve organization creation. Entrepreneurship is therefore defined as organization creation or the process of organization formation. Notwithstanding the criticism of the trait approach, the main contribution of this research is that it introduced the human element to the study of entrepreneurship after years of economic research (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Another important contribution is exactly what the trait approach has been criticized for: its inability to find the typical entrepreneur. This approach has shown the heterogeneity of entrepreneurs and that entrepreneurs come in every shape and form.
2.1.3 Entrepreneurial Processes

Many scholars have determined that the search for the entrepreneur as a research focus has been exhausted and that there is a need for another research direction (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991; Gartner, 1989; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Steyaert, 2007). This presumption allowed a different research theme: entrepreneurial process or processes. The entrepreneurial process has been conceptualized in various ways.

Start-up Sequences

One process-oriented research approach has focused on new firm creation and has explored start-up event sequences. There are many sequence models that attempt to describe the entrepreneurial process and the phases in which a new firm is established. Many scholars have suggested a variety of activities that are necessary to create a new firm and a sequence of how these activities occur (Carter, Gartner, & Reynolds, 1996; Reynolds & Miller, 1992; Vesper, 1990). Miller and Reynolds (1992) used a biological analogy and studied “new firm gestation.” The four key events in the gestation process (from conception to birth) are the principal’s commitment, initial hiring, initial financing and initial sales. Miller and Reynolds found, however, substantial variation in the process. This evolutionary approach to the entrepreneurial process has been frequently used (see, for example, population ecology Aldrich, 1999). Gartner and Carter (2003) argued that sequence models offer some important insights regarding the activities involved and the resources required for firm formation. However, this research has proved that a multitude of entrepreneurial activities and a variety of sequences can result in the formation of a firm. This line of research has been criticized for its deterministic view of entrepreneurship, which ignores a discussion of this multitude of activities and variations in sequences (Landström, 2000). Gartner and Carter (2003) also question the mechanistic way of viewing the process: “seeing the entrepreneurial activity as a set of behaviors involved with assembling various resources that can ultimately be combined into an organization” (Gartner & Carter, 2003).

Perceiving Opportunities and Creating Organizations

An early conceptualization of the entrepreneurial process, which questioned the evolutionary approach, proposed catastrophe and chaos theory as a productive alternative. Bygrave and Hofer (1991) suggested a move from the characteristics of the entrepreneur to the characteristics of the entrepreneurial process. Instead of asking “Who becomes entrepreneur?” we should ask questions such as “What are the key tasks in successfully establishing new organizations?” Bygrave and Hofer proposed that “the entrepreneurial process involves all the functions, activities, and actions associated with the perceiving of opportunities and the creation of organizations to pursue them”
(1991, p. 14, emphasis in original). They argued that the unique characteristics of the entrepreneurial process is because it is “initiated by human volition, occurs at the level of the individual firm, involves a change of state and discontinuity, is a holistic, dynamic process that is both unique and involves numerous antecedent variables” (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991, p. 99). These characteristics of the entrepreneurial process have implications for the study of this phenomenon. They suggested that we should leave regression analysis behind and embrace alternative mathematical approaches that are inspired by chaos and catastrophe theory because of these characteristics.

Opportunity Discovery

The concept of entrepreneurial opportunities has been a part of entrepreneurship theories since the early economists. Shane and Venkataraman’s (2000) definition of entrepreneurship as the process of discovery and exploitation of opportunities has attracted much attention. They conceptualized the entrepreneurial process as

*Entrepreneurship is an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organizing, markets, processes, and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed (Venkataraman, 1997; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). (Shane, 2003, p. 4)*

In a later work, Shane (2003) developed this conceptualization into a general theory of entrepreneurship. He described entrepreneurship as “the nexus of enterprising individuals and valuable opportunities” (2003, p. 9). These enterprising individuals discover the opportunities and subsequently decide to exploit them. Shane reviews entrepreneurial research and identifies many factors that influence the recognition of and the decision to exploit opportunities. He argues that the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities can be explained because entrepreneurial decision-making is different from optimizing behavior, which means searching for the best solution in a known means-ends framework. Entrepreneurial decision-making involves several elements that make it non-optimizing, such as creativity, judgmental decisions regarding the future, the introduction of new means-ends frameworks and hypotheses concerning causal relations. Entrepreneurs make non-optimizing decisions because their decisions are not based on price. They exercise their judgment and make decisions on hypotheses that involve the future market. Making these decisions requires that they have access to different information than others or that they interpret the same information differently. Who are these enterprising individuals according to the author? Why do some people discover opportunities better than others and why do they decide to exploit these opportunities? According to Shane, people generally discover
opportunities easier than others for two reasons. First, they have better access to information. This access is influenced by their life experience, networks and manner of searching for information. Second, they are better at recognizing opportunities than others. This ability is mainly shaped by two factors, namely, their absorptive capacity and cognitive processes. First, prior knowledge regarding markets and industries will affect how information is interpreted. Second, cognitive processing influences people’s ability to recognize opportunities, such as differences in the ability to see relations and patterns and differences in imagination and creativity. Shane argues that people who are likely to exploit opportunities are not randomly distributed. Shane proposes that there are many individual-level differences that are associated with a person’s decision to exploit an opportunity once it is discovered. He groups the factors identified by prior research into psychological (motivation, core evaluation and cognition) and non-psychological (education, age, career experience, social position and opportunity cost) factors. Entrepreneurial opportunities are objective phenomena, and the process of discovering them is a result of the cognitive process and information asymmetry.

According to Shane’s (2003) model of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial process is ordered and linear as follows: opportunity discovery, opportunity exploitation, resource acquisition, entrepreneurial strategy, organizing process and performance. Once an opportunity is discovered, the necessary resources must be acquired to exploit it. According to Shane, the phase of resource acquisition is critical to the process. Acquisition is influenced by factors that characterize the exploitation of the opportunity, namely, uncertainty and information asymmetry. These factors make it difficult for entrepreneurs to acquire the resources that are needed to pursue opportunities. When the resources are gathered, the strategies are outlined and the organizing process begins.

Opportunity Creation
The view of entrepreneurship as opportunity discovery has been influential, but it has also been questioned (Fletcher & Watson, 2006; Johannisson, 2005). Critics have argued that opportunities are not readily available to be discovered but are created in a context over time. In addition, Hjorth (2005) urged us to abandon the ahistorical approach and view opportunities not only as being created but also as often in a place that is prepared for something else.

This idea of opportunities as created rather than discovered was advanced by Sarasvathy, Dew, Velamuri and Venkataraman (2003). The creative process view involves the creation of markets because neither supply nor demand exists. Opportunities do not pre-exist – either to be discovered or to be
recognized. This concept was originally constructed by Buchanan and Vanberg (Sarasvathy et al. 2003).

The key idea in this view, as Buchanan and Vanberg (1991) point out, is that telos is neither ignored nor imposed on the phenomena concerned. Instead, ends emerge endogenously within a process of interactive human action (based on heterogeneous preferences and expectations) striving to imagine and create a better world. (S. Sarasvathy et al., 2003, p. 155)

Sarasvathy et al. (2003) connected this idea to the philosophy of pragmatism and the theories of Hans Joas, who “sought to establish the creative nature of all human action” (2003, p. 155). Some approaches to creativity described a rift between creative action and the totality of human action; Joas thought this rift was artificial. He theorized that all human action is creative.

Key to his theorizing is a triad of arguments that demonstrate that action (as an empirical fact) is: (a) always situated (i.e., cannot presuppose purposes or be divorced from the sources of the actor’s intentions); (b) intrinsically corporeal (i.e., cannot be freed from the constraints and possibilities of the body of the actor; and, (c) essentially social (i.e., cannot originate or occur meaningfully in the absence of others). (S. Sarasvathy et al., 2003, p. 155)

This idea challenges the conception of human action as based on rationality. Human beings are not assumed to be rational actors, but human behavior is deemed to be inherently creative.

Joas shows that to the extent that an actor is capable of new/plural purposes, lacks control over his own body, and is not autonomous vis-à-vis his fellow human beings and environment, his actions are creative. In other words, they end up creating novelties in our world. Hence, in Joas’s conception, instead of being anomalies to be explained, surprise and novelty become natural desiderata of a theory of human action that is not confined to so-called “rational” action. (Sarasvathy et al., 2003, p. 155)

In the creative process view, we should thus pursue a creative model of human action and develop non-teleological theories, where values and meaning emerge from the process. According to the authors, the “effectuation approach” is an example of a non-teleological theory. Sarasvathy (2003) conceptualized the entrepreneurial process as entrepreneurial decision-making and named the approach effectuation. The theory proposed an alternative paradigm to predictive causal rationality. Effectuation does not involve
choosing among given alternatives but actually generating the alternatives themselves.

*Causal reasoning tends to begin with a universe of all possible alternatives and seeks to narrow the set of choices to the best, the fastest, the most economical, the most efficient etc. Effectual processes seek to expand the choice set from a narrow sliver of highly localized possibilities to increasingly complex and enduring opportunities fabricated in a contingent fashion over time.* (Sarasvathy, 2003, p. 208)

According to Sarasvathy, entrepreneurs are “more concerned with molding, or even creating, the part of the world with which they are concerned than with predicting it and reacting to the prediction” (2003, pp. 208-209).

Organization Creation
Apart from the effectuation approach to the entrepreneurial process, Sarasvathy et al. (2003) exemplify the creative process view with the enactment and sense-making theory of Weick. This is the theoretical framework for another process-oriented definition of entrepreneurship by Gartner, Bird and Starr (1992). They defined entrepreneurship as an organizational phenomenon, namely, the process of organization emergence. Informed by the theory of Karl Weick (1979), Gartner, Bird and Starr suggest that we view entrepreneurship as a type of organizing. In Weick’s view, an organization is an on-going process of interactions among individuals – patterns of interlocked behaviors. Gartner, Bird and Starr’s view of organizing is based on the assumption that the formation of organizations is fundamentally an “enacted” phenomenon and a particular form of socially constructed reality. An entrepreneurial theorist must study how these interlocked behaviors emerge and not take the organization for granted.

*Emerging organizations are thoroughly equivocal realities (Weick, 1979) that tend towards non-equivocality through entrepreneurial action. In emerging organizations, entrepreneurs offer plausible explanations of current and future equivocal events as non-equivocal interpretations. Entrepreneurs talk and act “as if” equivocal events were non-equivocal. Emerging organizations are elaborate fictions of proposed possible future states of existence. In the context of the emerging organization, action is taken in expectation of a non-equivocal event occurring in the future.* (Gartner, Bird & Starr, 1992, p. 17)

The entrepreneur’s knowledge of what to do and when to act is generated in the process of organizational emergence. The entrepreneur can engage in a
wide array of possible behaviors, which explains the variation in how and when the cycles of interaction are assembled. This could explain the endless variations in the sequence models. In addition, from this perspective, the entrepreneurial opportunities are created through the interaction between the entrepreneur and other individuals rather than discovered by the entrepreneur.

Entrepreneuring

In his review of process approaches, Steyaert (2007) emphasized the important contribution of the conceptual efforts in the creative process view. These efforts enrich the theories in entrepreneurship because they break with the dominant ontology in entrepreneurship studies.

The creative process view to which they all engenders a fundamental rupture with mainstream approaches that conceive of entrepreneurship as being located in a stable world, that work with a logic of causation and that, consequently, emphasize entrepreneurial activities as a kind of allocation or discovery. Following Sarasvathy (2001:261-262), ‘researchers have thus far explained entrepreneurship not as the creation of artifacts by imaginative actors fashioning purpose and meaning out of contingent endowments and endeavors but as the inevitable outcome of mindless ‘forces’, stochastic processes, or environmental selection. (Steyaert, 2007, pp. 470-471)

In the creative process view, Steyaert included the interpretive/phenomenological, social constructionist, pragmatism and chaos theoretical perspectives. He suggested “entrepreneuring” as an appropriate term to use in process theories. However, the term should be reserved for theories in the creative process view, excluding the discovery or evolutionary perspectives.

To move away from the methodological individualism in entrepreneurial research, Steyaert (2007) proposed a relational turn. He argued that we must transcend this methodological individualism that entrepreneurship studies have imported from economics and psychology to further the understanding of the creation process as a social practice. Steyaert also notes that even the critics of this individualistic focus tend to reinstate it in the interpretive and phenomenological approaches. He continues: “for entrepreneurship scholars, then, it will be no small transformation to embrace the complexities and possibilities within a social ontology of reality and to fully embrace the principle of relationality” (2007, p. 472). This urge to return to the entrepreneur is noted by many researchers, including those who argue for a process focus (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991; Gartner, 1988; Sarasvathy, 2003). Despite their suggestion to change focus, Bygrave and Hofer (1991, p. 17)
stated that “the essence of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneur.” Entrepreneurs often seem as if they are special people, which is, according to Sarasvathy, what has kept “entrepreneurship scholars steadfast in their pursuit of the mythical beast ‘entrepreneur’” (2003, p. 205).

Entrepreneurial Processes as Social Practice

To conceptualize the entrepreneurial process as a social practice rather than the product of individual cognition, Fletcher and Watson (2006) emphasized the relational dimension of entrepreneurial processes. Through relational thinking, they give “primary emphasis to the joint co-ordinations through (and by) which entrepreneurial opportunities are brought into being and realized” (Fletcher & Watson, 2006, p. 151). They challenged the idea of opportunity discovery that occurs as "‘light bulb’ moments in individual minds” (2006, p. 151). Instead, the enactment of opportunity is conceptualized as the result of interaction processes in a relational context, which includes the identities of people as well as the cultural, social and economic context in which they are located. Fletcher and Watson (2006) approached entrepreneurship as: “a way of making a living in which people with novel ideas for a product or a service create, develop and realize those ideas as part of their social becoming – something they do through envisaging how those ideas might in some way ‘make a difference’ and shape or influence the social becoming of their potential customers or clients” (Fletcher and Watson, 2005, p. 151).

Entrepreneurs and the business enterprises they establish are seen as always emergent and in a process of becoming without a fixed being. Therefore, they inscribe entrepreneurship in a social ontology of becoming. A vital part of their conceptualization is the element of social change.

This conceptualization means that we are concerned with the dialogic, interpretive and interactive processes through which market possibilities are formed into opportunities that enable personal, family and community change. (Fletcher & Watson, 2006, pp. 151-152)

Entrepreneurship is social change; it transforms the everyday lives of entrepreneurs. The effects of entrepreneurship are thus not limited to strictly economic outcomes. The idea of entrepreneurship as a force that transforms lives is not new to entrepreneurship studies. Although Schumpeter (1983) sought to construct an economic analysis, he noted that neither the reasons for nor the consequences of this introduction of the innovations to the economic system are strictly economic. New combinations mean that the old is eliminated by the new competition; this mechanism does not only apply to economic sphere but also to the social and explains also the rise and fall of individuals and families. A social consequence of entrepreneurship is that
individuals can rise above their own class by forming private fortunes. However, Fletcher and Watson’s conceptualization of entrepreneurship went beyond the importance and consequences to the individual. Entrepreneurship changes society. It changes the everyday lives of not only the entrepreneurs but also their customers. Fletcher and Watson argued that the ideas of entrepreneurs also make a difference to customers and shape their social becoming. Therefore, in accounts on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship is a process that transforms society but is also an inherently relational process. Steyaert and Hjorth (2006, p. 1) called this the “double sociality of entrepreneurship.”

The idea of entrepreneurship as a societal force and not merely an economic endeavor was developed by Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus (1997). They conceptualized the entrepreneurial process as a creative force that changes social practices and opens a new space for human action. The entrepreneur shares this special skill of changing social practices with political leaders and peace activists. Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus argued that entrepreneurship, citizen action and the cultivation of solidarity are three modes of innovative activity with the same structure.

_The entrepreneur, virtuous citizen, and culture figure find in their lives something disharmonious that common sense overlooks or denies. They then hold on to this disharmony and live with intensity until it reveals how the commonsense way of acting ought to take care of things and how it fails._ (Spinosa et al. 1997, p. 162)

Informed by Heidegger’s phenomenology, Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus argued that the entrepreneur holds on to the anomaly and produces new product, service, or practice in that space that reduces disharmony by reconfiguring the style of a disclosive space. A disclosive space is “any organized set of practices for dealing with oneself, other people, and things that produces a relatively self-contained web of meanings” (Spinosa et al. 1997, p. 17). All activities are organized by a style, which is how practices fit together. Therefore, the entrepreneur changes the style of the space and, thus, how others encounter things and people in this space. The genuine entrepreneurial skill as opposed to the other two modes is the ability to link innovation and the management of an enterprise.

_We see as primary what most accounts pass over – namely, innovation, establishing an enterprise, and the connection between the two. Many people can innovate and many can manage an enterprise, but it is the ability to link these two activities that is definitive of genuine entrepreneurial skill._ (Spinosa et al. 1997, p. 45)
In researching entrepreneurship, we should thus examine the entrepreneurs’ practices for innovating and forming a company and how they connect these two activities.

Narrative Approaches to Entrepreneurial Processes

Narrative and discursive approaches to entrepreneurial processes have introduced other ontological assumptions and contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon. Despite the multidisciplinary character of the entrepreneurship field, the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie the research are notably uniform. Several critics of this homogeneity have argued for the benefits of more diverse approaches to entrepreneurial research (Bjerke, 2005; Grant & Perren, 2002; Spinosa et al., 1997; Steyaert, 2007). Entrepreneurial researchers have adopted theoretical frameworks from many different disciplines, such as economics, psychology, anthropology, business administration and sociology. However, this diversity has not translated into multiple paradigms, and the functionalist paradigm is dominant (Grant & Perren, 2002). Informed by the reasoning of Burrell and Morgan (1979), researchers studied the philosophical assumptions and the assumptions concerning the nature of society that underlie entrepreneurial research. They found that the assumptions were functionalist; that is, the researchers took an objective view of reality and were concerned with explaining how organizations and society maintain order. Bjerke (2005) argued for another perspective of entrepreneurship and suggested that we should turn to a social constructionist and interpretive approach rather than reductive explanations. He argued that understanding the phenomenon through culture and language will be more productive than trying to explain it through process and structure.

The “linguistic turn” in social sciences and humanities has tentatively found its way into entrepreneurship (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004). Gartner’s “Words leads to deeds” (1993) is an early attempt and suggests that the words we use influence the way we consider a phenomenon. Discursive studies that are rooted in the work of Foucault have contributed to the understanding that entrepreneurial identities are formed by discourse and that there is an inherent power struggle that prioritizes one reality over another (Steyaert, 2007). The question “Who is the Entrepreneur?” again becomes the focal point of studies but from a critical stance. Ahl’s (2002) analysis showed that the male entrepreneur is the standard in the discourse and that this standard is repeatedly reproduced in entrepreneurial research. The discourse thus shapes “Who is the entrepreneur?” and “What is an entrepreneurial act?” In a discursive study on diversity in entrepreneurship and regional development, Berglund (2006) showed that entrepreneurs also use the discourse to shape their personal identities and to change their live orientations. This approach has shown that “the entrepreneur is never the sole author of his or her story”
narratives are always negotiated in a conversational process. Steyaert describes the narrative approach to entrepreneurship as follows.

As an ontological condition of social life (Bruner, 1991), narrative approach on entrepreneurship claims that new organizations are constructed through countless stories that perpetually repeat, contradict and extend each other. Thus, entrepreneurship is seen as a process of storytelling through which people become implied in what Davies and Harré (1990) call an ongoing emplotment: actors and networks continuously become connected and disconnected. (Steyaert, 2007, p. 463)

In narrative approaches, the researcher focuses on these stories, which are the primary form of knowledge that are used in everyday practices; through these stories, entrepreneurs organize the present and future (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004). Hjorth and Steyaert (2004) linked entrepreneurship and narratives:

In addition, in such entrepreneurial processes, the discursive nature of knowledge, including self-narratives, present a major challenge for subjects in entrepreneurial processes. Subject positions, or roles in discourse, have to become stabilized and related to others in dialogical and discursive practices of organizing desires, attention, resources, and images. Entrepreneurship as a dialogical creativity is located in between the possible and the impossible. Understanding the discursive reproduction of knowledge and practices often means a heightened sensitivity in the face of how ‘normalities’ are reproduced, and thus what force anomalies carry. Convincing others – directing desires, organizing resources, dealing with obstacles – and sharing images of ‘what could become’ is done in small narratives to which people can relate. (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004, pp. 3-4)

By studying how entrepreneurs narrate themselves, their business ideas and their enterprises, we can study the process of opportunity enactment. Entrepreneurship is conceptualized as a dialogical and discursive practice of organizing the present and the future.

2.1.4 An Entrepreneurial Field?

This review of entrepreneurial research is not exhaustive; the emphasis is on conceptualizations of the entrepreneurial process. Since the 1980s, the number of entrepreneurial studies has exploded (Sexton & Landström, 2000). The phenomenon has attracted researchers from diverse disciplines, such as economics, psychology, anthropology, organization, and social psychology.
The research focuses range from the cognition of the individual to population ecology (Aldrich, 1999). The question is then if there is a field of entrepreneurship studies? The multidisciplinary character of the field has been considered as both a strength and a weakness by scholars. Some researchers have argued for a universal definition and a general theory of entrepreneurship (Shane, 2003). Other researchers have concluded that without a generally agreed on definition, we must be explicit regarding what we are discussing (Gartner, 1990). The fuzzy boundaries of entrepreneurial research have also been suggested to be its strength and that domain- and discipline-based research can support and complement each other (Acs & Audretsch, 2003). Acs and Audretsch (2003) argued that the question of a distinct field is not as important as we may think and that we need both discipline-based research and a community of scholars with a common interest in entrepreneurship as a phenomenon in order to advance entrepreneurship studies. The current trend in entrepreneurial research is that the field converges, not into a distinct domain, but into several communities of scholars who share similar interests in specific topics in the entrepreneurial area (Gartner, Davidsson, & Zahra, 2006). The next section will address an area where researchers from different disciplines have gathered around a specific topic, the business incubator.

2.2 Business Incubators and Business Incubation

2.2.1 What is a Business Incubator?

Business incubation research is a relatively new field of inquiry. The business incubation phenomenon appeared in the late 1950s, but the first academic studies appeared in the early 1980s. An important area of study has been to define business incubation and the different types of business incubators (Allen & McCluskey, 1990; Allen & Rahman, 1985; Barbero, Casillas, Wright, & Ramos Garcia, 2014; Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005; Molnar, 1997; Norrman, 2008). This research has helped to differentiate business incubation from other types of business support. There is, however, still some confusion concerning the definition of a business incubator. The confusion can be attributed to the fact that terms are used interchangeably. Business incubators can be called, for example, enterprise centers, business and technology centers, or innovation centers (Smilor & Gill, 1986). Another contributing factor is that the different elements of incubator support are not unique and can be found in several other business assistance programs (Bearse, 1993). Bearse argues that what distinguishes the incubator is the range of services offered at one location. However, virtual incubators, or incubators-without-walls, do not apply to this rule (Nowak & Grantham, 2000). Barbero et al. (2014) have synthesized the different types of incubators into four archetypes, namely, basic research, university, economic development and private incubators.
Successful Configuration

Another important research area is the studies that focus on benchmarking business incubators and identifying best practices (Ateljevic & Dawson, 2010; Caiazza, 2014; Campbell, Kendrick, & Samuelson, 1985; Smilor & Gill, 1986). Norrman (2008) indicated that business incubators offer three main types of services: infrastructure, business support and mediation. Infrastructure refers to buildings and office services. Business support is counselling by the incubator employees. Mediation occurs when the incubator connects the incubator tenants with experts outside the incubator. Business support and mediation are often considered critical to the success of the incubation (Lin, Wood, & Lu, 2012; Robinson & Stubberud, 2014). This research has also identified best practices such as strict selection criteria and exit policies (Aerts, Matthyssens, & Vandenbempt, 2007; Bruneel, Ratinho, Clarysse, & Groen, 2012; Norrman, 2008). Screening practices and selection criteria are also often linked to specialization as best practices (Norrman, 2008; Schwartz & Hornych, 2008). Specialization is assumed to be connected to benefits such as high-quality premises, improved services and consultancy, and image effects (Schwartz & Hornych, 2008). This research orientation has been criticized for focusing too much on the incubator facility and ignoring the incubation process (Aernoudt, 2004; Autio & Klofsten, 1998; Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Mian, 1997). Critics have argued that the studies mainly focus on what the incubators should offer rather than how they should perform. Others note that claims regarding best incubation practice are still unfounded, and little evidence links practices and performance (Ateljevic & Dawson, 2010).

Business Incubation Processes

Several attempts in the business incubation literature conceptualize the process (Aernoudt, 2004; Becker & Gassmann, 2006; CSES, 2002; Hansen et al., 2000; Smilor & Gill, 1986). Aernoudt (2004) defined business incubation as an interactive developmental process and urged a focus on the parties involved. Hansen et al. (2000) conceptualized the incubation process as a set of institutionalized processes that structure and transfer knowledge throughout the incubator network to create conditions that facilitate the development of new ventures. They employ network theory to conceptualize the entrepreneurial process. Becker and Gassmann (2006, p. 4) define the process of incubation as “the engagement of the incubator with the new venture and the possibility to change over time due to the new venture’s current life cycle’s needs”. They use the new venture’s life cycle to define the entrepreneurial process.

An approach to business incubation is conceptualizing it as a system that specifies the basic configuration of the business incubator (Campbell et al. 1985; CSES, 2002; Smilor & Gill, 1986). The business incubator model below
(Figure 2.1) is from the European Commission’s report on business incubators (CSES, 2002). The inputs in this model consist of the inputs made by stakeholders (e.g., providing finance), management resources, and the projects advanced by entrepreneurs. The outputs are successful companies with positive job and wealth creation impacts on local economies. In the business incubation process, the various inputs are combined through the provision of incubator space and other services to companies.

Figure 2.1 Business Incubator Model (CSES, 2002, p. 25)

Smilor and Gill (1986) describe the incubator as a function that links entrepreneurial talent, technology, capital and know-how. They use the metaphor incubator to provide some guidance in understanding the concept. They conceptualize the incubator as an apparatus for the maintenance of controlled conditions for cultivation. Therefore, incubating emerging businesses implies the ability to maintain controlled conditions that are favorable to the development of new firms (Smilor and Gill, 1986). Smilor and Gill define a business incubator as “a facility for the maintenance of controlled conditions to assist in the cultivation of new companies” (1986, p. 1). By controlling these conditions, “the business incubator seeks to effectively link talent, technology, capital, and know-how to leverage entrepreneurial talent and to accelerate the development of new companies” (Smilor and Gill, 1986, p. 1). Consequently, the incubation process requires
the provision of certain conditions that are favorable to the growth of companies and an incubator management that can control these conditions. Both Smilor and Gill (1986) and CSES (2002) implicitly conceptualize the entrepreneurial process in a mechanistic way and consider entrepreneurial activity a set of behaviors that assemble various resources that can be combined into an organization. The role of incubator management is to link these elements together.

2.2.2 Effectiveness and Measures of Success
The assessment of the effectiveness of incubation programs and their impact on firm survival and growth is another important area of study (Moraru & Rusei, 2012; Schwartz, 2011). Researchers have tried to assess a business incubator’s effectiveness as an economic development tool by determining its impact on communities and regions. Incubator research has searched for critical dimensions of business incubation that are suitable to measure their effectiveness (Al-Mubaraki & Schröl, 2011). The measures of success have been, for example, job creation (Allen & McCluskey, 1990; Markley & McNamara, 1995; Molnar, 1997), the number of start-ups created (Udell, 1990), the growth rates of incubated firms (Molnar, 1997), aggregated sales (Molnar, 1997), the public sector cost per direct job created by business incubators (Markley & McNamara, 1995), and employment and sales measures (Schwartz, 2011). However, there is no universally agreed on model for measuring effectiveness (Al-Mubaraki & Schröl, 2011). The lack of a standardized way to assess effectiveness has been attributed to the diversity of incubator models and the institutional context in which they operate (Rogova, 2014). The inconclusive results have also been attributed to the fact that we evaluate and compare business incubators with vastly different goals and purposes (Norrmman, 2008).

The empirical findings are not conclusive regarding their outcomes and whether business incubators are effective economic development tools. The research cannot verify if they actually are efficient job creators (Campbell et al. 1988). However, the research indicates that the incubator is a relatively cost-efficient economic development tool (Markley & McNamara, 1995). The second issue is whether the incubator influences the survival rate and performance of incubated firms. Many studies have assessed incubation programs by comparing performance indicators between firms in the incubator and off-incubator firms (Colombo & Delmastro, 2002; Culp, 1996; Molnar, 1997). The findings from these studies generally indicate that the incubated companies outperform the control group. However, the studies have been criticized for the sample size, biased samples and the choice of control group (Bearse, 1993). A significant challenge is to create a control group of non-incubated firms whose developmental outcomes can be compared with incubated companies (Sherman & Chappell, 1998). A common assumption is
that incubation promotes firm growth, particularly after these firms have graduated from their incubator organizations (Schwartz, 2011). Schwartz (2011) notes that we still know almost nothing regarding the performance of incubated firms after they have completed their incubation. His results contradict the existing results regarding their performance and do not support the assumption of strong firm growth after graduation. Previous studies by Allen and Bazaan (1990) and Culp (1996) have shown that incubated firms outperform the control group but only while receiving support. These results call into question the long-term benefits of business incubation after graduation. Another assumption is that a business incubator increases the likelihood of survival for the tenants. Studies that analyze incubator impact on firm survival have shown that the incubator is only one factor and cannot ensure firm survival alone (Mas-Verdú, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Roig-Tierno, 2015). The empirical results have also shown that the sponsorship by the incubator organization and the provision of resources during the incubation does not always increase the survival rate but can even decrease it (Amezcua, Grimes, Bradley, & Wiklund, 2013).

Assessment studies have provided some evidence concerning the effectiveness of incubators. However, the impact of business incubators on the community and the incubated firms is disputable. Furthermore, there is still no consensus on what comprises effectiveness and how to measure it in business incubation. The assessment research still cannot determine whether a business incubator is a favorable environment for emerging ventures. Thus, the question is, what do we know about the development of new ventures in business incubators? What are the conditions for entrepreneurship in the incubators?

2.2.3 Entrepreneurship and Management in Business Incubators

Business incubation researchers have primarily focused on the research orientations discussed above, namely, successful configuration and performance outcomes, whereas less attention has been paid to the development of new ventures in the incubators. Some researchers claim that a lack of understanding of the entrepreneurial process discourages the creation of effective incubation processes (Chan & Lau, 2005; Mian, 1997). Hackett and Dilts (2004) argue that the research regarding new venture development in incubators has been primarily atheoretical and does not use the entrepreneurial research in entrepreneurial processes, venture creation and business assistance. They identify several implicit theories based on “economic development through entrepreneurship,” transaction cost economics, market failure theory, and structural contingency theory.

The research efforts in this area have primarily focused on networking (Hansen, Chesbrough, & Nohria, 2000; Johannisson, 1998; Lichtenstein, 1992; Sá & Lee, 2012; Schwartz & Hornych, 2010; Totterman & Sten, 2005;
Vanderstraeten & Matthyssens, 2012). This research has focused on both the incubator-internal networking and the incubators’ ability to promote networking outside the incubators. Lichtenstein (1992) concluded that network-relationship building is the most important value-added component of the incubation process. However, Johannisson (1998) found that the networks that were developed in incubators were less extensive than networks in traditional entrepreneurial regions. Tötterman and Sten (2005) examined how business incubators can support entrepreneurs to build business networks by focusing on social capital. The underlying idea is that business incubators can support new ventures in their development process not only by giving them credibility but also by helping them build support and business networks. Sà and Lee (2102) found that many different types of networks are created in an incubator environment and suggest further research that conceptualizes the inter-organizational interactions in incubators.

2.2.4 Incubator Management

Business incubation research has been criticized for being conducted primarily from the incubators’ perspective rather than the entrepreneurs’ (Chan & Lau, 2005; Spitzer & Ford, 1989). Spitzer and Ford (1989) claim that the entrepreneurial perspective changes the services that are considered important. The incubator organization favors the provision of physical goods, whereas the tenants consider the atmosphere and moral support the most important provisions. Robinson and Stubberud (2014) reached a similar conclusion in their study regarding how small business owners used the resources provided such as infrastructure, business support and meditation. Small business owners valued the intangible services, such as business support and mediation, over infrastructure, such as buildings and office equipment, which is often considered the primary benefit of business incubation.

Managerial intervention has been hypothesized as being the key to incubator performance (Ateljevic & Dawson, 2010; Rice, 1992, 2002). Business support and mediation are believed to be beneficial to companies (Robinson & Stubberud, 2014), but few studies investigate how business support and mediation are conducted. McAdam and Marlow (2011) explored how client advisors work with entrepreneurs in developing business plans and argued that the role of client advisors is undervalued in this sense-making process. Rice (1992) advocated a proactive role by incubator employees who actively coach the businesses rather than react to their inquiries. Rice (2002) applied the interdependent co-production equation to analyze the relationship between the incubator manager and the entrepreneur. He suggested that the incubator manager must strategically allocate the time intensity of business assistance interventions to the new ventures. Rice also indicated that entrepreneurs must be properly prepared to utilize the advice and insights that result from the
intervention. The process by which the incubation system is managed and created is a joint effort between the incubator manager and the new ventures.

Inquiring into entrepreneurship in business incubators has provided important insights concerning the incubation phenomenon. However, few attempts have been made to explicitly theorize regarding the relation between management and entrepreneurship. The exception is Rice (2002) who focuses our attention on the relationship between the incubator manager and the entrepreneurs and the incubation process as collective action. Rice hypothesized that managerial intervention is the key to incubation success but offered little insight in how the business incubation process can be managed. This study will operate with a slightly more open question that focuses on how managing is part of incubating and how managing can generate entrepreneurship in the context of business incubators. The next section will review research on entrepreneurship in organizations.

2.3 Managing Entrepreneurship

2.3.1 Entrepreneurship in Management Literature

The suggestions that involve the role of incubator management require us to examine more closely the relationship between management and entrepreneurship. Business incubators are a new organizational form that supports entrepreneurial ventures. However, they are not the only organizations that have attempted to create environments that are conducive to entrepreneurship. The following section is a review of the literature that examines the link between management and entrepreneurship and whether and how organizations can manage entrepreneurship. The principal objective of this study is to inquire into the relation between management and entrepreneurship in business incubators. However, what do we know regarding the management of entrepreneurship in other formal organizations?

The first question is why would large corporations\(^1\) or any existing business organizations be interested in entrepreneurship? What do they hope to gain from entrepreneurship? Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship can be traced to the early management literature. Penrose (1959) discusses management and entrepreneurship in her classic work on the growth in firms. Her focus is the role of management in the growth process but assigns entrepreneurship the important role of initiating renewal and growth (Hjorth & Johannisson, 1998). Sayles (1964) examined the managerial role of the entrepreneur in his book on managerial behavior in complex organizations (Mintzberg, 1973). Mintzberg

\(^1\) The research in intrapreneurship has, with few exceptions, concentrated on large organizations. Carrier (1996) explored intrapreneurship in a small business context.
advanced “manager as entrepreneur” again in the early 1970s (Mintzberg, 1973). He introduced “entrepreneur” as one of the ten roles performed by managers. The role as entrepreneur means that the manager “searches organization and its environment for opportunities and initiates ‘improvement projects’ to bring about change; supervises design of certain projects as well” (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 93). The activities associated with this managerial role is to attend “strategy and review sessions involving initiation or design of improvement projects” (1973, p. 92). Mintzberg concluded that this role was implicitly acknowledged in the literature but not analyzed except by economists, who are mainly concerned with the establishment of new organizations.

Strategic management and entrepreneurship were linked for the first time in 1979 when Schendel and Hofer launched the new strategic management paradigm (Guth & Ginsberg, 1990). Schendel and Hofer (1979) proposed a new way to view this field of research and identified many areas that required additional research. One of the topics was “entrepreneurship and new ventures”. In discussing the importance of the topic, Schendel and Hofer (1979) noted that the “birth process is necessary; and survival regardless of size requires a renewal of key ideas on which the organization is built” (1979, p. 526). Schendel and Hofer defined strategic management as “a process that deals with the entrepreneurial work of the organization, with organizational renewal and growth, and more particularly, with developing and utilizing the strategy which is to guide the organization’s operations” (Schendel & Hofer, 1979, p. 11; emphasis added)². Thus, they placed entrepreneurship at the heart of strategic management. However, entrepreneurship is typically considered simply a component of strategic management.

The real surge, however, for entrepreneurship in organizations did not arrive until the 1980s. Authors such as Peters and Waterman (1982), Kanter (1983) and Pinchot (1985) presented entrepreneurship in organizations as the managerial tool for innovation, change and renewal. The basic rationale with corporate venturing is that by internalizing the characteristics of small, innovative businesses, large corporations expect to attract and retain people with entrepreneurial talent. Corporate entrepreneurship is also expected to be a mean to instill innovative developments into the corporation, to explore novel business opportunities, and to develop corporations into viable, profitable entities (Schollhammer, 1982).

---

² Schendel and Hofer’s (1979) use of “entrepreneurial” is, however, different from the entrepreneurship theorists (Sandberg, 1992). They included established as well as new organizations and managers as well as founders.
The question is does it work? The research has indicated a link between corporate entrepreneurship and firm performance (Zahra & Covin, 1995). However, how and why corporate entrepreneurship produces superior firm performance is unclear (Covin & Miles, 1999). In addition, there are few empirical examples that corporations actually retain or attract entrepreneurial employees (Schollhammer, 1982).

2.3.2 What is Corporate Entrepreneurship?

Corporate entrepreneurship is entrepreneurial activities in existing firms. However, when management theorists discuss corporate entrepreneurship, they are often debating different phenomena (Miles & Covin, 2002). Sharma and Chrisman (1999) reviewed corporate entrepreneurship terminology and found 27 definitions that could be grouped in the following categories: corporate entrepreneurship (Burgelman, 1983), intrapreneurship (Pinchot, 1985), corporate venturing (Schollhammer, 1982), internal corporate entrepreneurship (Schollhammer, 1982), venturing (Hornsby, Naffziger, Kuratko, & Montagno, 1993), and strategic (Guth & Ginsberg, 1990) or organizational renewal (Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994). However, are any of these definitions of interest to business incubation research?

The label of corporate entrepreneurship has been attached to multiple organizational phenomena (Covin & Miles, 1999). Three of the most common situations that are often viewed as corporate entrepreneurship are the following: “(1) an ‘established’ organization enters a new business, (2) an individual or individuals champion new product ideas in a corporate context, and (3) an ‘entrepreneurial’ philosophy permeates an entire organization’s outlook and operations” (Covin & Miles, 1999, p. 48). The first situation is typically called corporate venturing and is according to their categorization found in the writings of Burgelman (1983) and Block and Macmillan (1993). The second situation is best known as intrapreneurship and to this category they assign writings concerning product and innovation champions (Kanter, 1983; Pinchot, 1985). The last situation has been labelled for example entrepreneurial management (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990) or entrepreneurial posture (Covin & Slevin, 1991).

Corporate Venturing

In the strategic management literature, the corporate entrepreneurship phenomenon includes corporate venturing and strategic renewal (Guth & Ginsberg, 1990). The principle difference between the two concepts is that corporate venturing involves the creation of new businesses, whereas strategic renewal leads to the transformation of existing businesses in the corporate setting (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999). Miles and Covin (2002) identified the following five dimensions that differentiate the types of corporate venture activities: required corporate involvement, required managerial attention that
is internal and external to the corporation, level of corporate control, and where the new venture resides.

Sharma and Chrisman (1999) suggest that corporate venturing can be classified as external or internal. “Internal corporate venturing” means “corporate venturing activities that result in the creation of organizational entities that reside in an existing organizational domain” (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999, p. 20). “External corporate venturing” on the other hand denotes activities resulting in the creation of autonomous units outside the existing organizational domain. According to the authors, external corporate ventures are for example those resulting from joint ventures, spin-offs, and venture capital investments. Thus, external corporate venturing has similarities with business incubation.

Schollhammer defines “internal corporate entrepreneurship” as “all formalized internal entrepreneurial activities” (1982, p. 211). Entrepreneurial activities receive formal approval from the organization and thereby resources for developing new products, improving existing products, or developing new methods or procedures. Schollhammer delineates five types of internal entrepreneurship, namely, administrative, opportunistic, imitative, acquisitive, and incubative (new venture management approach). His last category is of obvious interest because of its similarities to venture management in incubators.

According to Schollhammer (1982, p. 216) venture management refers to “the creation of semi-autonomous units in existing organizations for the purpose of (1) sensing external and internal innovative developments, (2) screening and assessing new venture opportunities, and (3) initiating and nurturing new venture developments”. The basic rationale for these units is that they are assumed to provide more beneficial climate for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Venture management units within existing companies serve as incubators for innovative, high-risk business endeavors; they combine bureaucratic efficiency and the resource capabilities of the corporation as a whole with the free-wheeling informality of a small business. The separation of new venture units is expected to approximate the start-up environment of independent entrepreneurs. (Schollhammer, 1982, p. 216)

The organizational phenomenon of corporate venturing shares many features with business incubators. Thus, the management of new ventures is also the concern of other formal organizations. Cooper (1985) even refers to the organizations that employees work for as “incubator organizations”.
Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship, or intrapreneuring, is an attempt to instill an entrepreneurial mindset and behavior in employees in existing firms (Thornberry, 2001). At times, the company wants all employees to act as entrepreneurs, but a more typical approach involves targeting middle management to act as corporate entrepreneurs (Thornberry, 2001). Companies want them to identify and develop spin-ups or create an environment conducive to innovation and entrepreneurial behavior.

Researchers have concentrated more on the corporate venturing process than the individual intrapreneur and there is little empirical evidence concerning the characteristics of intrapreneurs, or if they are different from entrepreneurs (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1991). The research that has been concerned with the individuals who implement innovations in the firms that employ them can be divided in two groups (Carrier, 1996). The first group attributes a set of psychological characteristics and personal attributes to the intrapreneur (Kanter, 1983; Pinchot, 1985). Kanter, for example, in her study of successful middle managers, identifies five characteristics: comfort with change, clarity of direction, thoroughness, a participative management style, and persuasive persistence and discretion. Pinchot, who coined the term “intrapreneuring”, defined the intrapreneur as follows.

*Any of the “dreamers who do.” Those who take hands-on responsibility for creating innovation of any kind within an organization. The intrapreneur may be the creator or inventor but it is always the dreamer who figures out how to turn an idea into a profitable reality.* (Pinchot, 1985, p. ix)

The second group concentrates on the role and functions of the intrapreneur and presents them as visionaries, change agents, corporate entrepreneurs and champions of innovation (Carrier, 1996).

Another trend in intrapreneurship research also identified by Carrier (1996) is the focus on the intrapreneurial process and the factors and conditions that induce innovation. In this research, some scholars view intrapreneurship as an organizational mode that is characterized by freedom and autonomy and allows employees to innovate (Pinchot, 1985; Covin & Slevin, 1991; Kuratko, Montagno & Hornsby, 1990). Other scholars view intrapreneurship as a managerial strategy to stimulate entrepreneurial behavior among employees (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This entrepreneurial behavior includes the search for and pursuit of opportunities (Burgelman, 1983; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Thornberry, 2001).
Entrepreneurial Management or Posture

According to some researchers, the term corporate entrepreneurship should be reserved to cases where the entire firm rather than individuals or parts of the firm act in ways that commonly would be described as entrepreneurial (Covin & Miles, 1999; Covin & Slevin, 1991; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). Although there is agreement that a firm can be entrepreneurial, there is no consensus regarding what it means for a firm to be entrepreneurial (Covin & Miles, 1999).

2.3.3 Corporate Entrepreneurship: Specific Obstacles and Critical Success Factors

Business incubation means that entrepreneurs enter a managed environment that is designed to support entrepreneurship. Planned and structured processes, which are controlled by the incubator management, are expected to generate more entrepreneurship. However, how do other formal organizations create environments that are supportive of entrepreneurship? The research on new venture management and intrapreneurship has yielded a considerable amount of characteristics that are believed to be associated with successful corporate venturing. Researchers have examined the following conditions for the corporate venturing process: the major obstacles, the critical success factors, and the type of climate and culture conducive for corporate venturing (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1991). This research has produced a long list of factors in a corporate setting that hinder or stimulate entrepreneurship.

Specific obstacles to the corporate entrepreneuring process have been identified. Macmillan, Block and Narasimha (1986) identified the major obstacles to corporate ventures: misreading the market, inadequate corporate support, unrealistic corporate expectations, inadequate planning, and operational difficulties. Schollhammer (1982) identified several internal constraints on entrepreneurship in mature organizations: the profitability-now syndrome, executive incentive programs, excessive formalization in organizational structure, intra-organizational boundaries, and resource allocation based on the generation of revenue. Corporate venture failure has been attributed to the lack of entrepreneurs, corporate culture, environmental factors, lack of long-term corporate commitment, and corporate management style (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1991). The extensive list of identified obstacles to corporate venturing has even led some researchers to conclude that entrepreneurship may be not be compatible with the management of an established organization (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1991).

Many researchers have attempted to examine the particular factors that are associated with success in corporate entrepreneurial ventures, such as incentive and control systems (Burgelman, 1983; Sathe, 1985), governance
ownership (Zahra, 1996), or market and entry approaches (Hobson & Morrison, 1983). Kuratko, Montagno and Hornsby (1990) suggested a focus on the factors that are essential to develop a perceived entrepreneurial environment for employees. If employees do not feel that the atmosphere in their organization supports their efforts, intrapreneuring will likely not occur. Kuratko et al. (1990) hypothesized that the degree of intrapreneurship is related to five factors: management support for intrapreneurship, appropriate use of rewards, resource availability, organizational structure, and risk-taking. There are many studies regarding the relation between organizational structure and innovation behaviors in existing firms (see, for example, Burns & Stalker, 1961). These studies have addressed the effect of organizational structure (degrees of centralization, formalization, complexity, integration, and openness) and interrelationships on innovation in organizations (Schollhammer, 1982). Schollhammer concludes that because this is a case of complex interrelationships, there is no single effective method of supporting entrepreneurship in mature organizations. According to Schollhammer (1982), there are, however, a few generally applicable guidelines to create a climate that is conducive to innovation and entrepreneurial processes: psychological security, continued stimulation, diffusion of authority and a flexible time and resource framework. Carrier (1996), in her study of intrapreneurship in the small business context, identified many organizational factors that are important in encouraging intrapreneurship, such as organizational structure, culture, management practices and the presence of rewards for potential intrapreneurs. She notes, however, that these were contributing factors, and no single factor was sufficient to explain the emergence of intrapreneurship. Covin and Slevin (1991) argued that for a behavioral model of corporate entrepreneurship focusing on the behavior of the firm and that the success of corporate entrepreneurship could be influenced by appropriate top management philosophies, organizational resources and competencies, organizational culture, and organizational structure. Pinchot (1985) introduced many “freedom factors” that are essential for an entrepreneurial environment, for example, patient money, cross-functional teams, corporate “slack,” and a tolerance of risk, failure and mistakes. In addition, Kanter (1985) identified resource availability, appropriate rewards and fair treatment of unsuccessful intrapreneurs as associated with successful intrapreneuring.

There are a number of themes in the corporate entrepreneurial research regarding what creates a conducive climate for entrepreneurship and innovation: appropriate organizational structure (Burgelman, 1983; Carrier, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1991), sufficient resources for innovative activities (Kanter, 1985; Schollhammer, 1982), management support for entrepreneurial activities (Burgelman, 1983; Carrier, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1991; MacMillan et al. 1986), the fair handling of mistakes and failure (Burgelman, 1983; Kanter, 1985; MacMillan et al. 1986; Schollhammer, 1982; Stevenson &
Jarillo, 1990), and new forms of reward systems (Burgelman, 1983; Carrier, 1996; Kanter, 1985; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). This research has indicated that there are many factors that can affect entrepreneurship in business incubators, but as Schollhammer (1982, p. 220) noted “as is so often the case with complex interrelationships, no clear cut answer emerge.” This research has thus produced a long list of obstacles and critical success factors vital to corporate entrepreneurship.

2.3.4 Controlling Entrepreneurship

The discussion above showed that corporate entrepreneurship becomes a tool for innovation and growth to be used by management. Thornberry (2001) stated that although much had been written involving corporate entrepreneurship in the previous ten years, very little was still understood regarding how to implement this tool in large corporations. Leblebici and Shah (2004) argued that new incubators assumed substantial roles in overseeing the operations of their new ventures “like a parent company”. How do corporations oversee and control creativity and new ventures? The opinions differ in the literature concerning the possibilities of management to control entrepreneurial activities.

Drucker (1985) argues that innovative activities require as methodical, organized, and focused management as established firms because entrepreneurial management is simply a different form of management. The discipline of innovation, according to Drucker (1985), is an analytical discipline: a systematic search for entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurs must learn to “practise systematic innovation” (Drucker, 1985, p. 30; emphasis in original). He argues that we must stop viewing innovation as a “flash of genius” and rather as a systematic, purposeful activity. He argued that entrepreneurship must develop principles and practices like management had already done, because innovation from his perspective is a practice that can be learnt and that does not rely on intuition or creativity. The same view is shared by Block and MacMillan (1993) who state that the corporate entrepreneurship as a process not only can but also should be managed. They add that “although it is obvious that a new venture has to be managed, managing the overall entrepreneurial process is a special task, requiring professional managerial skills” (1993, p. 9).

The literature indicates, however, that corporate entrepreneurship presents a challenge to management regarding control. Traditionally, corporate management was used to set standards for each activity and coordinate the whole (Hoskin, 2004). However, in entrepreneurship, the managers encounter a phenomenon that cannot be easily scheduled and controlled (Burgelman, 1983; Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990), or enforced through the normal
managerial mechanisms of pre-specifying objectives for each individual task (Gunther McGrath et al., 1994; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990).

The model also has implications for those charged with managing ventures...The firm cannot possibly benefit from pressuring venture managers to meet objectives that turn out to have been unrealistic in the light of experience, but it can benefit immensely from using this experience to understand and redirect the venture in directions that improve the venture team’s ability to reliably and consistently meet revised objectives. Particularly for highly exploratory ventures, it makes no sense if the team, unencumbered by any knowledge of the business or team experience, is forced to decide a priori what it can accomplish and then be held accountable for accomplishing this impossible task. Venture progress should rather be assessed in terms of the team’s ability to “find” its way to new competences, as signaled by the emerging ability to set and reliably attain redirected objectives and then to exploit these competences as they unfold. (Gunther McGrath et al., 1994, p. iv)

Covin and Miles (1999) note that the emergence of corporate entrepreneurship is not simply a matter of managerial choice because of the uncertain outcomes of entrepreneurial processes. The enactment of a particular corporate entrepreneurial strategy does not necessarily lead to the expected outcomes.

Burgelman (1983) has identified two approaches in the previous research regarding how to design and manage entrepreneurial systems. First, the “institutionalization approach” advocates that an organization can purposefully institutionalize a process to continuously generate entrepreneurial activity. In the second approach, the individual entrepreneur remains central and entrepreneurial individuals must be recruited. According to Burgelman (1983), both methods imply that the entrepreneurial process can be planned and controlled. Burgelman (1983) disagrees and proposes an alternative approach, which he calls “corporate entrepreneurship as experimentation-and-selection”. He argues that the role of top management is limited and that it can determine the overall level of entrepreneurship but not the content. Entrepreneurship should not be suppressed nor encouraged by the corporate management. He even claims that encouraging entrepreneurship could be dangerous in an organization since it could lead to opportunism and political games. Middle managers are assigned a crucial role in the strategic process because they are supposed to select the entrepreneurs and projects.

Control, Culture and Meaning
Control, as an important part of management, can also be traced back to some of the classics in management literature, such as the works of Taylor, Fayol
and Follett (O’Connor, 1996). However, management theory and practice have always struggled with how to reconcile this control aspect of management with the demand for freedom and autonomy in organizations (O’Connor, 1996). Early forms of management used direct control where management directly supervised the work and rewards, alternatively punishes, according to personal preferences of the manager or the standards outlined for the work effort (Deetz, 1998). However, how can management control and organize when it is impossible to directly supervise the work progress? The “knowledge-intensive” industries have intensified this struggle with workplace control and more subtle forms of domination have emerged (Deetz, 1998). Discourse produces a control more efficiently than managers could ever achieve by creating self-management by the employees who seek meaning and identity in their work (Deetz, 1998). Corporate culture has been suggested as the tool for achieving control and the approach assumes that organizational cultures can be assessed, managed and manipulated to enhance effectiveness and performance (Salaman, 1997). The culture approach is the most recent way for management to structure organizational behavior and the meaning of the work for employees; a long-term interest of management (Salaman, 1997). Salaman (1997) suggests that this government of organizations intends to shape, guide or affect the conduct of the employees by supplying corporate cultural narratives which constructs organizational reality by being frameworks of meaning. These narratives define the limits of our expectations, construct parameters for what is acceptable, locate us in particular organizational spaces, and provide ways of seeing things. These ideas are appealing to management teams who are given considerable agency, but less appealing to employees whose world view is assumed to be influenced (Salaman, 1997). Salaman (1997) urges us to not assume the impact of any structure of meaning and suggests that the process of how meanings are constructed, mediated or subverted must be empirically investigated. From this perspective the idea of entrepreneurship in organizations and how this is imposed by managers concerns disciplining the individual in order to accomplish company goals rather than actualizing new ideas.

2.3.5 Managing Creativity and Organizing Entrepreneurship
The critique against entrepreneurship as a concept of management that depends on managerial control to be accomplished comes from many different perspectives, such as entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2005, 2012), creativity (Amabile, 1998; Florida & Goodnight, 2005) and the collaborative arts (Austin & Devin, 2003; O’Donnell & Devin, 2012). These different lines of research introduce the idea of creativity as an essential part of innovation and move the focus from managerial control to the actual organizing of entrepreneurship. Creativity is not considered an irrational threat against the survival of the business but a path to reliable innovation and entrepreneurship.
Organizational Entrepreneurship

The view of entrepreneurship in the management literature has been criticized as a form of managerial entrepreneurship guided by economic rationality (Hjorth, 2003, 2005, 2012). Hjorth (2003) suggests a rewriting of entrepreneurship and an alternative approach to entrepreneurship in organizations, not merely as a concept of management. Companies want to be creative organizations, but the traditional assumptions in management thinking and practice produce a managerial form of entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2005). The relation between the established order (management) and organizational creativity (entrepreneurship) is central to all forms of organizational entrepreneurship, but this relation has been mainly theorized from a managerial perspective (Hjorth, 2005). By conceptualizing entrepreneurship as a tactical art of creating spaces for play (heterotopias), Hjorth (2005) contributes a theoretical framework to studies of creativity in the context of formal organizations from an entrepreneurial perspective. Central thinkers to Hjorth’s (2005) discussion are Michel de Certeau (who focuses on creativity in everyday practices) and Michel Foucault (who discusses the link between power, knowledge and freedom). De Certeau is concerned with the gap between what a discourse says and what people do with it; he is interested in how the official story is transformed in everyday practices and uses concepts as strategy, tactics, space and place to uncover this transformation. Foucault’s concept of radically other spaces, heterotopias, is used to describe the relation between the given places for work organized and governed by management and the entrepreneurial creation of spaces for play in these given places. The focus for Hjorth’s discussion is the tension between “the tactical art of making spaces for play and invention in work and the strategic, managerial appropriation of specific places for work” (Hjorth, 2005, p. 388). He notes that when we study entrepreneurship in the context of formal organizations, we must always consider the knowledge and practices dominating in organizations, which is management (Hjorth, 2005). The possibilities of employees are thus pre-defined and limited by the governing practices of management (Hjorth, 2005). Entrepreneurship in the organization is the tactical responses to managerial strategies, which create spaces for the invention of new practices.

Managing Creativity

Another line of research that shares the view of entrepreneurship as creative and collective but retains a managerial perspective and a top-down approach to creativity in the organization is the literature on managing creativity (Amabile, 1998; Florida & Goodnight, 2005). The first model of managing for creativity is the three principles developed by Florida and Goodnight (2005). They argue that the most important asset of companies is the creative capital, which is the people whose ideas can be commercialized. This creative class
comprises professionals whose main job description includes innovating, designing and problem-solving. They argue for three principles that should guide management to manage for maximum creativity from these people. The paradox is how to increase efficiency and raise productivity while accommodating the complex and chaotic nature of creative processes. An important assumption of this model is that creative capital is not merely the sum of ideas by individuals but the product of interaction among all involved parties. Florida and Goodnight argue that the secret to success is to harness the creativity of all stakeholders in the process.

Another perspective on managing creativity is a social psychological approach that focuses on intrinsic motivation as essential for creativity in business. Amabile’s (Amabile, 1998; Amabile & Khaire, 2008) research has focused on the question regarding the link between the work environment and creativity. Her conclusion is that it is possible to build organizations that can fulfill the requirements not only of coordination, control and productivity but also of creativity. However, this objective requires that we understand which managerial practices encourage creativity. She argues that striving for coordination, control and productivity unintentionally kills creativity, and this is systemic and not necessarily because of any one manager. According to Amabile, the creativity of an individual is the function of three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills and motivation. The motivation is the most important because it is the component that determines if the person will act. Motivation can be extrinsic or intrinsic, and according to Amabile, the intrinsic is the most important in relation to creativity. She argues that a manager can influence all three components, but motivation is the easiest. Amabile’s model for managing creativity is based on the following six categories of managerial practices and activities that can affect creativity: challenge, freedom, resources, work-group features, supervisory engagement and organizational support.

Artful Processes and Collective Creativity
A third line of research that discusses creativity in organizations focuses on how businesses can learn from aesthetics and the collaborative arts. Austin and Devin’s (2003) model is inspired by organizing artful processes in the collaborative arts. In the previous models, business creativity and artistic creativity are not the same (Amabile, 1998; Florida & Goodnight, 2005). Art is for the beauty and the sake of the artist (Florida & Goodnight, 2005), whereas business creativity is useful, appropriate and actionable (Amabile, 1998). Austin and Devin argue that businesses can learn from artists about innovation. Reliable innovation can be learned from the collaborative arts because no deadline in business is as unforgiving as opening night at the theater. The authors argue that particularly those who are in charge of managing knowledge can learn from these artful processes. Their main
concern was how to manage “skilled people engaged in creative activities” (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 49). These artful processes have the following four characteristics: “(1) Emergent yet reliable process, (2) Iterative, not sequential, process shape, (3) Openness to uncertainty, (4) Failure as a step on the way to valuable innovation” (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 49).

The “very essence of an artful approach consists in managing successfully when you don’t know (exactly) where you’ll end up” (Austin & Devin, 2004; p.50). Austin and Devin note that this approach may be considered risky by business managers but is considered important in fast-changing businesses. Working with emergence means working without a preconceived strategy, recognizing when strategies emerge and intervening when it is appropriate. The second characteristic of these artful processes is their particular shape as helical or iterative (Austin & Devin, 2004). Austin and Devin compare the shape of industrial and artful processes. Industrial processes are linear or sequential.

This is also the shape of many collaborative arts processes such as theater rehearsal: actions are tried, examined, and tried again, each time reconceiving old outcomes into something new. (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 51)

The third characteristic is openness to uncertainty. The traditional industrial response to uncertainty is to protect processes from it (Austin & Devin, 2004). Austin and Devin argue that “an artful manager keeps processes open to many sources of uncertainty, by design” (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 53). Development comes from “moves and countermoves triggered by uncertain events, not from intensive planning and execution of the plan” (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 53). Uncertainty and the unexpected action of another actor triggers unpredictable events. The last characteristic is failure and mistakes as valuable steps to innovation. They argue that in rehearsals for the theater company, the idea of failure does not make any sense. The current rehearsal is used as material for the next rehearsal. Each trial is necessary, and exploration cannot be limited by the fear of mistakes. At times, the mistake must be repeated many times before the innovative leap occurs. Artful accomplishment for managers is not to create an innovation but to assemble the team that is capable of making something entirely new.

Departing from this assumption regarding the characteristics of creative processes, O’Donnell and Devin (2012) describe how to organize collective creativity. They argue that collaborating groups that produce innovation work iteratively to an emergent outcome and undergo a particular process that consists of the following parts: preparation, discovering and creating given circumstances, reconceiving, divergence and convergence towards closure.
The first part of the process is preparation, which means the activities that the team members engage in to master their craft. They must learn and practice through experimentation and repetition to be ready to learn and do what must be done during the collaboration. Importance should be placed on extending the skills and the craft continuously outside the immediate task. This process is different from planning, which is connected to a particular task and is performed to decide what is needed to accomplish this task. According to O’Donnell and Devin, planning is part of industrial work, and determining the outcome in advance of the process is not part of the iterative process. The second step concerns discovering and creating “given circumstances,” which is anything the team members can discover or invent that has a bearing on the assignment. The team members’ responses to these given circumstances before they have time to think and edit are the very sources of the innovations. At each iteration, the “database” of given circumstances grows and is used to reconceive the project at each iteration. The next step is reconceiving. The team reconceives the project, which leads to an evolution towards the emerging outcome. This step is ambiguous and often scary, and it requires that the team members have confidence in their preparations and the given circumstances that they bring to the discussion. Reconceiving can appear scary because it means reconsidering the project at each new iteration as if it was the first time and combining experience and new ideas to discover what can occur next. However, reconceiving is also a freedom to use past experiences in new ways. The fourth step of the process is to try out a range of ideas to decide which ideas to keep. According to O’Donnell and Devin, this step requires the management of collective divergence and convergence. The divergence works through many possible ideas, and convergence integrates the team’s ideas into a coherent whole. The principle is that all ideas will at the end be part of the innovation in some way. The process ends when the team’s shared agreement is that further innovation will no longer improve the product. This process will inevitably produce innovation according to the authors. However, there is no way of determining where the process will lead. This process requires a long-term perspective because markets and customers may not be ready for it, and the innovation may have to remain in the pipeline for some time.

The authors note that this creative work requires a certain type of leadership and special practices. This process intends to create a harmonious whole out of a multitude ideas and visions. The leader attempts to perfect the process rather than an idea. Therefore, the leader should direct energy and then step back to observe what occurs while practicing deep listening. The role of this leader is not only to “get out of the way” but also to “clear the way” for the team by requiring resources and protecting them from pressure. This process also means that the team members take on leadership tasks at times. Therefore, leadership should not be an assigned role in this type of team but
rather a shared and passing responsibility. All members are expected to lead at some point, which means that they do not follow a leader unconditionally and consider their own preparations seriously.
CHAPTER 3 ANALYTICAL STRATEGY: BAKHTINIAN CONCEPTS

The analytical strategy for studying the relationship between managerial practices and entrepreneurial processes is based on the concepts developed for narrative analysis by the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. He had, as noted by Morson and Emerson (1990), a lifelong interest in creative processes and the meaning of action. To discuss these problems, he developed a number of concepts such as chronotope, dialogue, polyphony and carnival (Bakhtin, 1984a, 1984b, 1986). These are the analytical devices used to inquire into how an incubator organizes the relationship between management and entrepreneurship. In the first part, the Bakhtinian philosophy is introduced. In the following part, these concepts are discussed in relation to research on entrepreneurship, management and business incubation. In the final part of this section, the analytical strategy is further detailed and the research questions are specified. This section outlines how these concepts will be inquired into in the analysis of entrepreneurial processes, managerial practices and Bakhtinian incubation.

3.1 A Bakhtinian Philosophy?

But I hear voices in everything and dialogic relations among them.

(Bakhtin, 1986, p. 169)

Mikhail Bakhtin developed a number of concepts for the analysis of texts. Some refer to these concepts as part of a Bakhtinian philosophy rather than just a reading technique for interpreting text of various types (Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Holquist, 2002). However, what type of philosophy would it be? The analytical framework of this thesis is based on concepts developed by Bakhtin. Bakhtin never developed a theory or a model of his concepts. He has been rightly labeled “a messy thinker” (Wall, 1998). Rather, he developed concepts to discuss problems as they occurred to him. He used his new concepts to
discuss earlier phenomena, but he never sought to clarify the differences or links between them. Chronotope, dialogue, polyphony and carnival appear and reappear in discussions throughout his whole production. Some researchers have sought to clarify and order the mess by introducing hierarchies within the concepts (Holquist, 2002; Morson & Emerson, 1990), whereas others have argued against imposing arbitrary order (Wall & Thomson, 1993). My reading of Bakhtin is that there is no hierarchy between the concepts. My use of them will be non-hierarchical because there is no need to order them for this analysis, but I will present the concepts and their interrelationships as I interpret them.

3.1.1 Dialogism, Prosaics and Unfinalizability

Holquist (2002) argued that the concept of dialogue is the most important principle governing Bakhtinian thinking and introduced “dialogism” as a general interpretation of his philosophy. In addition to dialogue, Morson and Emerson singled out two other concepts: prosaics (their term) and unfinalizability to describe Bakhtin’s style of thinking and reasoning. They argue that these three concepts are essential to understand his theories and style of framing questions.

Bakhtin used the concept of dialogue in many ways and in different senses. In the broadest sense, he used it as an ontological model of the world (Bakhtin, 1984a). One of Bakhtin’s fundamental assumptions is the dialogic nature of human life itself:

*The dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.* (Bakhtin, 1984a)

His idea of dialogue is that it is the most important activity for people and that as humans we cannot exist without being part of the ongoing process of communication (Morson & Emerson, 1990). We need the dialogue to function and in particular the responses. Bakhtin expressed this necessity as follows: “for the word (and, consequently, for a human being) there is nothing more terrible than a lack of response” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 127). The Bakhtinian epistemology is, according to Holquist (2002, p. 15), “a pragmatically oriented
theory of knowledge, more particularly, it is one of several modern epistemologies that seek to grasp human behavior through the use humans make of language”. Bakhtin’s main contribution to narrative analysis is his emphasis on dialogue and how he conceived dialogue as the root condition of the human being. In everyday life, a dialogue would denote a conversation between people. From a Bakhtinian point of view, dialogue has however another connotation and a very specific meaning apart from the existence of a physical dialogue.

"...dialogic relationships are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life – in general, everything that has meaning and significance. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 40)"

In other words, dialogues in a general sense are not necessarily dialogic. Anything can be dialogic, even monologues. Dialogue is thus a relational property.

Prosaics is the term Morson and Emerson use to describe Bakhtin’s concern for the everyday, local and particular. They describe it as a philosophy of the ordinary. The basic characteristic of the prosaics is “a suspicion of system and an emphasis on ordinary events as the most important” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 32). They describe the Bakhtinian view of the cultural world as mess being the normal state; the cultural world in the texts by Bakhtin is a messy place. This cultural world consists of centripetal (official) and centrifugal (unofficial) forces. The official forces seek to impose order on the mess, whereas the centrifugal forces seek to disturb the order. This opposition is however not a unified opposition, but rather a collection of heterogeneous elements that may have no other relationship to one another than that they diverge from the official. The opposition is either purposeful or completely random.

"Centrifugal forces register and respond to the most diverse events of daily life, to the prosaic facts that never quite fit any official or unofficial definition. They are an essential part of our moment-to-moment lives, and our responses to them record their effect on all our cultural institutions, on language, and on ourselves. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 30)"

The philosophy of prosaics does not deny the existence of order, only that there would be a system and structure underlying every event. The assumption
is rather that the ordering and organizing must eternally “overcome the indefinitely numerous and heterogeneous centrifugal forces of everyday life” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 36). Everyday life is thus important because it has the potential to change our world with every word we speak and every gesture we make.

The third concept, according to Morson and Emerson, is unfinalizability, which advances Bakhtin’s conviction that the world is a messy place as well as an open place. Every moment has the potential to lead in many directions. He considered processes in everyday life open-ended:

Those processes are open to the future because they are and have been the product of accumulated tiny alterations constituting the daily “event of being”. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 40)

Bakhtin criticized structuralism and formalism for omitting the possibility of unfinalizability from the beginning. According to Bakhtin, the laws of systemic change made meaningful creative acts impossible. A model that would allow for creativity must locate unfinalizability in the everyday life and the daily work of people. The concept of unfinalizability also informed his understanding of history. Our historical past is the result not of perfect adaptation but the tinkering of people in the midst of the messy event of being. In understanding our historical past, we may only distinguish those possibilities that were in fact realized out of a multitude of potential opportunities.

Social formations are never perfectly designed; rather, they make do with resources they have at hand. Whatever forms they develop come complete with un-foreseen by-products, which have in turn the potential to affect future developments in unexpected ways. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 45)

Morson and Emerson interpret Bakhtin’s understanding of history as “neither random nor completely ordered, neither of which would allow for genuine becoming” (1990, p. 45). Social formations cannot from this perspective be structured, merely partially ordered, and rather aggregated than structured. Important to note about Bakhtin’s concern for openness is that he was not only a preacher of “holy foolishness” but also an “apostle of constraints” (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The idea of the carnivalesque worldview was measured by the understanding that without the right sort of constraints, freedom and creativity cannot exist. The absence of any finalization is as detrimental for creativity as complete finalization. Bakhtin’s interest for the local and
particular and his skepticism of underlying structures would place him among postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers (Morson & Emerson, 1990).

3.1.2 Chronotope

A concept essential for Bakhtin and an underlying assumption of many of his discussions is the chronotope. The chronotope literally means time-space and refers to “the interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.84). The chronotope was thus Bakhtin’s method of discussing how artistic visualizations in novels embodied meanings and how these meanings are produced by a certain time/space (Wall, 1998). Wall (1998) describes this as a process that materializes abstract ideas into concrete form.

In numerous passages, time and space are bundled together as essential components in the process of “embodying” meaning, that is, the transformation of abstract possibility into concrete, lived reality. (Wall, 1998, p.679)

The analysis will hence inquire into how abstract ideas such as entrepreneurship and incubator management are transformed into lived reality in the business incubator. These ideas materialize in the incubator and embody the meanings given them by this chronotope.

The chronotope is, however, not only a device for analyzing local effects in literary texts but also a tool for cultural analysis (Holquist, 2002; Vice, 1997) and a concept for discussing culture. According to them, it should also be used to study the relationship between the text and its times, its social and its political context, rather than just to draw up a topology of time and space in different texts. Bakhtin (1981) argued that actual chronotopes emerge in the created chronotopes in narratives. There is a connection between the lived reality and representations in the literature, but Bakhtin (1981) warns us against falling into the trap of naïve realism. The narratives are representations of the world; they do not correspond to an external reality.

According to Bakhtin, each genre suggests a different conceptualization of history, society and other categories for understanding culture. A chronotopic analysis means exploring a genre’s field of possibilities (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p.370):

Bakhtin understands narrative as shaped by a specific way of conceptualizing the possibilities of action. It is as if each genre possesses a specific field that determines the parameters of events, even though the field does not uniquely specify particular events. To
study the field is to study the chronotope, and no study of the particular plot of a given work exploits the work’s richness unless it illuminates the chronotope as well as the particular sequence of events. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 370)

This field that is to be explored in a chronotopic analysis is described by Morson and Emerson (1990) as a field of historical and social relationships.

In literature and culture generally, time is always in one way or another historical and biographical, and space is always social; thus, the chronotope in culture could be defined as a “field of historical, biographical, and social relations”. Because our lives unfold in a variety of such fields, an understanding of their characteristics is important to our lives as individuals and social beings. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 371)

They conclude that time is always biographical and space is always social in a Bakhtinian analysis. These genres and their attendant chronotopes constitute a particular society’s understanding of actions and events (Morson & Emerson, 1990). These genres can be very productive in shaping our thoughts and experiences. The given, the genre of the narrative, is however used and reshaped by the individual work. The genre is thus both productive and produced. Notable is that genres can be dynamic and provide possibilities but after some time become petrified and stay even after they are no longer useful for the society. Could a genre be better or worse? In Bakhtin’s exploration of different genres, he emphasizes that they can understand people and actions more or less profoundly (Bakhtin 1981). Morson and Emerson note that his evaluation of the chronotopes of these genres was to a high degree based on whether there was space for creativity. They argue that this might have been his reason for developing the concept from the beginning.

In the next section, the discussion will focus on Bakhtinian concepts in relation to creativity, which was central to his thinking. Creativity was part of “a complex of values central for his thinking: innovation, ‘surprisingness’, the genuinely new, openness, potentiality, freedom, and creativity” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 36-37). They interpret his concepts, such as polyphony, dialogue and the chronotope, as part of his vision of a world in which creativity could be real. These concepts “serve as ways of understanding how the world could be sufficiently orderly for genuine scientific knowledge and yet sufficiently open for true creativity” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p.38).
3.2 A Bakhtinian Theory of Creativity

Following Bakhtinian thoughts on becoming and creativity, the management of entrepreneurial becoming is investigated. Bakhtin never developed a theory of creativity, but rather a number of concepts that he used to discuss becoming and creative processes: chronotope, dialogue, polyphony and carnival (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a, 1984b).

Using his concepts, he argued against both the romantic and the classic model of creative processes. The romantic model represents the “creative process as a sudden burst of inspiration, whether from a muse, the unconscious, or an unidentified source” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 243). He argued that this model denies the importance of methodical work and “the moment-to-moment process of making decisions” (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 243). Creation within this model is not a process but only the recording of a full-blown work that comes to the author.

There is no place in the model for unfinalizable encounters altering the shape of what is to come. Instantaneously received and essentially complete from the outset, romantic inspiration does not allow for genuine, ongoing dialogic activity on the part of either the author or the characters. (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 244)

The classic model is an alternative model of creativity based on planning, structuring and specific goals. According to this model, the author follows a plan from the outset and fills the structure with details “with the rigor and care of a mathematician solving a problem” (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 244). According to Morson and Emerson, this model does not create but rather discovers because the solution already exists.

Solving a mathematical problem is really a form of discovery rather than of creation, because the solution in some sense already exists. By contrast, a polyphonic author engages in dialogues that can always potentially create something genuinely new. (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 244)

Bakhtin argued for another view of creativity, both of the processes and the result, which allows for creation rather than discovery or recording.

3.2.1 Chronotopes for Becoming

Bakhtin’s prime concerns in his discussions of different chronotopes were the possibilities for creative initiative and emergence (Bakhtin, 1986). He even preferred the novel, in particular the Rabelaisian chronotope, because it
allowed for change of both the people and the places they inhabited. Morson and Emerson summarized his thoughts on creativity/space for creativity in a number of questions that could be posed to each genre of narrative.

- “What is the relationship of human action to its context?
- Is the context mere background, or does it actively shape events?
- Are actions dependent to a significant degree on where and when they occur?
- Is a particular space “replaceable”?
- What kind of initiative do people have; are they beings to whom events simply happen, or do they exercise choice and control, and if so, how much and what kind?
- What kind of creativity is possible?
- Do personal identity and character change in response to events or are they fixed?
- What role, if any, do particular sets of social and historical factors play in shaping personal identity?
- Is there a concept of private, as opposed to public?
- Is the greatest value placed on the past, the present, the immediate future, or the distant future?” (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 369)

Bakhtin’s interest in emergence and becoming is reflected in the questions he posed and his line of inquiry. These questions revolve around the possibility for creativity, the becoming of man, initiative, and the relationship between human action and its context.

Bakhtin never produced any schemata for how to do a chronotopic analysis. However, he provided some examples of how the concept could contribute to the understanding of narratives. He wrote two essays on the chronotope: *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* (Bakhtin, 1981) and *The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historic Typology of the Novel)* (Bakhtin, 1986). In the two essays, he approaches the idea of becoming from two different perspectives. In the *Chronotope* essay, he discusses the becoming of the individual by focusing on the temporal aspect and the importance of the integration of historical and biographical time in the stories. In the *Bildungsroman* essay, he approaches becoming by analyzing which plots and conceptions of the world recognize emergence.

**Entrepreneurship: Possible Plots**

Bakhtin started his analysis by describing plots, i.e., the sum of the depicted events in the narratives. For Bakhtin, the plot was important because the chronototope makes certain plots possible and certain events plausible. A genre,
and its corresponding chronotope, decides how the story is told but also what is told. A Bakhtinian approach is thus both a narrative and discursive approach; he considered the structure and the content necessarily interconnected.

The classic adventure story with a plot centered on exceptional events in an exotic and dangerous world has a super hero who, unchanged, overcomes huge ordeals to (usually) marry the princess. This type of story makes certain heroes, landscapes and endings impossible, or at least most unlikely. According to Bakhtin, this plot does not allow for creativity or development. The hero is pre-packaged and does not change or age over time. There is no historical or biographical development. In this adventure story, the world is merely the background to the actions of the hero. The space is thus interchangeable and has no significance for the individual. From a becoming perspective, the formulation of the plot is important because it is mutually interdependent with the process of becoming and depiction of space. According to Bakhtin, creativity can only be real if it is present in the constant on-going processes of everyday life. Every past moment has the potential to lead in many different directions. The result of history is, according to his theory, messiness and tinkering rather than perfect adaptation.

Creative Time

Bakhtin’s next concern was the expressions of time in the narrative. The Chronotope essay largely addresses the aspect of time and how it is expressed differently in novels (Bakhtin, 1981). He discusses how biographical and historical time was integrated in the narration of the story. This integration means that both the individual and the world can change and develop. Bakhtin stated, “The primary category in the chronotope is time” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85). An interpretation of this insistence of time as the dominant principle in the chronotope could be his interest in becoming and emergence. There can be no change in the individual or in the world if there is no biographical and historical time. He argued that human emergence is only possible if a person can change. The discussion of time then becomes a means of discussing which types of narratives allow for change and development. Abstract time is of no interest for Bakhtin; it is only of interest in relation to space and to humans. Time is creative only if it is interconnected with space and people.

In the Bakhtinian analysis, the concept of time can be more or less creative. Creative necessity is another concept to discuss creativity and differences in creative work methods. The concept was developed from the literature of Goethe. Goethe’s interest was primarily in time rather than space. He imagined the connectedness of the past, the present and the future. Thereby, it was possible for him to “see time” in space and how this provides both constraints and possibilities for future action. Bakhtin used this concept to
discuss his view of the nature of creativity. Creativity is according to this view rooted in the actions of people, who use resources provided by the past rather than from divine inspiration.

A feeling for the fullness of time allowed Goethe to understand the nature of creativity. Creativity is always real, is always going on, and so cannot be understood as sudden, mysterious eruptions from nowhere. On the contrary, creativity is always a response to problems that are posed in particular circumstances at a particular time. Bakhtin is here opposing romantic notions of creativity to creativity conceived in terms of prosaics. It grows out of the fabric of daily life, responds and contributes to local opportunities and needs, and, in the process, plants potentials for future creativity. (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 414)

If the past exhaustively determines the future, then creative work is meaningless because real agency does not belong to people but to impersonal laws; if the past has no effect on the future, then human work is evidently also meaningless because it surrenders initiative to the irrational transcendent impulse that produces the creative product. (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 414-415)

Bakhtin considered the methods of Goethe and Dostoevsky as opposites with regards to time (Morson and Emerson 1990). Both their creative methods differed from the romantic and the classic model. Dostoevsky, as interpreted by Bakhtin, was able to present the world as simultaneous, in which everything happens at the same time. He also confined his heroes to small spaces, for example thresholds or corridors. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky had a special sense of time that created intense dialogues, and his chronotope was one of simultaneity (Morson and Emerson 1990). Morson and Emerson (1990) describe this accordingly:

Dostoevsky understood social phenomena by imagining a dialogue among them. He embodied trends in voices, and then forced those voices to encounter or quarrel with each other. To do so, he represented them as simultaneous, even if they were not. (Bakhtin 1984a, p. 28)

This is in sharp contrast with Goethe’s visualization, which focused on chronological time and development (Morson and Emerson 1990). Goethe perceived everything that happened and existed as being marked by the past and intimations of the future. Bakhtin saw advantages and disadvantages with each type of visualization. Goethe was able to understand development over
time and historicity, but he also ran the risk of making development more unified than it really was (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Dostoevsky was suited to representing openness and the messiness of the world, but that blinded him to change over time. Goethe’s works are full of everyday life and historical development, which was largely lacking in Dostoevsky’s work. These two authors understood unfinalizability according to Bakhtin’s interpretation but in different ways (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Goethe understood unfinalizability as endowed by potential in every instance but bounded by constraints. Changes happen because of a slow process of accumulated small decisions. For Dostoevsky, conversely, unfinalizability resulted from unpredictable dialogues in a world in which changes appear suddenly and surprisingly.

Space for Creativity
The third aspect that engaged Bakhtin was the view of the world in the narrative. His questions in the analysis concern the interaction between the individual and the depicted world. In the before-mentioned adventure story, he found no real interaction; the hero moves through an exotic and static world. In other types of stories, the world takes on significance for the individual, who learns and develops through interaction with others. In a few exceptions, for example the Rabelaisian chronotope, becoming happens along with the world, i.e., the individual and the world develop together. His chronotopic analysis thus revolves around the question of change and space, that is, whether the world can alter the individual and vice versa. In the discussion of space, he concluded that creative initiative might be understood very differently in different chronotopes. In some of them, creativity is impossible because the world is ruled by chance or divine force. In other stories, there is room for initiatives, but these can be either punished or encouraged. The space can be productive by controlling creativity but is also produced by human initiative. In his essays, he asks repeatedly whether the world or the individual can change, develop and become other than they were (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Morson and Emerson (1990) have formulated this as his quest for a world where creativity could exist. He is looking for a chronotope that allows for the process of becoming.

The Entrepreneur
The fourth and concluding theme in Bakhtin’s analyses of literature is how the image of the individual is constructed. Bakhtin argued that this construction is largely determined by the chronotope and that the image is fundamentally chronotopic (Bakhtin, 1981). He was interested in how people and their actions were conceptualized differently in narratives due to their chronotope. Bakhtin is preoccupied with what he calls the “principle for formulating the figure of the hero” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 10) and how this description is interlinked with other features of the story.
Since all elements are mutually determined, the principle for formulating the hero figure is related to the particular type of plot, to the particular conception of the world, and to a particular composition of a given novel. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 10)

According to Bakhtin, the construction of the hero in the narrative is interlinked with the plot, the conceptualization of the world and the individual expression in a particular novel. A genre is associated with certain characters, but this generic chronotope does not entirely decide the formulation of the heroine in an individual work.

A particular feature of the Bakhtinian analysis of characters is the focus on change; he uses the chronotope as a “unit for charting changes” (Holquist, 1981, p. xxxiii). This may be compared to Burke’s dramatic interest in the stage for the agents and in the characters’ motives for their actions (Burke, 1978). Conversely, Bakhtin is less interested in who and why, but rather in what and how. His overshadowing interest in the characters is whether they evolve.

In entrepreneurship research, the entrepreneur has been hailed as hero, villain, savior, and has-been. Some researchers have argued that the intense focus on primarily the man of entrepreneurship has drawn too much attention from other aspects such as the conditions for entrepreneurship or the process (See for example Steyaert, 2007). A Bakhtinian perspective on the hero of the story is that the entrepreneur as a person is a part of the construction of the story and cannot be ignored; conversely, the image of the hero is interwoven with the other parts. This type of analysis takes the entrepreneur seriously, but does not favor this image above the other elements of the analysis. Departing from a Bakhtinian framework, this analysis thus takes a serious interest in the construction of the entrepreneur, but recognizes that it is a construction and that there may be a wide range of these constructions. These constructions are culturally shaped, and this narrative analysis will inquire into the scope, variety, range and potential of those.

3.2.2 Dialogue and Creativity
Dialogue is an essential part of Bakhtin’s discussions of his concepts for creativity: polyphony and carnival. Therefore, this part of the chapter is dedicated to an exploration of his understanding of dialogue and its importance for creativity. By discussing his central concept, many of his fundamental assumptions become clearer before entering into a more detailed discussion of creativity.
A Dialogic Worldview

Dialogue is important for creativity according to Bakhtin because it is necessary for anything to move forward and for new things to be created. Dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense is, as discussed above, the root condition for all human activity but also, more specifically, is the process that may change us and life as we know it (Holquist, 2002). Bakhtin argued against a monologic worldview, which he thought imbued European ideologies in particular since the Enlightenment. He envisioned another type of ideology that allowed for a plurality of voices and consciousness. This discussion is also easily interpreted as a response against his own situation in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist regime.

Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou). With a monologic approach (in its extreme and pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other’s response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and the represented persons. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 292-293)

For creativity, it is important to avoid a monologic worldview because every idea is dialogic in nature (Bakhtin, 1984a). Bakhtin assumed that all human thought was dialogic in nature.

The idea lives not in one person’s isolated individual consciousness – if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of others. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else’s voice, that is, in someone else’s consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice-consciousnesses, the idea is born and lives. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 88)

He argued that all thoughts are “born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others’ thought” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92). This perhaps rather
extreme point of view means that without dialogue and interaction, there can be no thoughts. Therefore, the monologic world is dangerous according to Bakhtin. A monologic world does not recognize any other consciousness with equal rights (Bakhtin, 1984a). It does not recognize someone else’s thought or idea.

In an environment of philosophical monologism, the genuine interaction of consciousnesses is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence, idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses; someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error. That is, it is the interaction of a teacher and pupil that, it follows, can be only a pedagogical dialogue. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 81)

In a monologic world, an idea is either affirmed or repudiated depending on whether the idea is in accordance with the ideology of those in power. Conversely, a dialogic worldview is based on the premise that all ideas are treated equally and need not be confirmed or renounced. They are all part of the interaction, breeding and shaping new thoughts.

Outsideness and Potential
Outsideness is, according to Bakhtin, the “most powerful factor in understanding” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7). This is important because outsideness is a factor that can enrich the idea rather than just duplicate it. He argued that it is not enough to understand another culture by seeing the world through its eyes while forgetting your own culture (Bakhtin, 1986). For understanding to be creative, we must retain our uniqueness when entering into a dialogue with the Other.

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture, and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully,
because there will be cultures that see and understand even more). A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning; they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it, and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. Without one’s own questions, one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign (but, of course, the questions must be serious and sincere). Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging and mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

The process of dialogue can thus be creative because we are different and can supplement the culture’s own understanding. “Understanding” in this sense is thus not only to understand the culture’s meanings as the natives understand them but also reveal its potentials. There are always new semantic depths that may be reached in our interpretation of old and new cultures. This type of understanding is creative and active, according to Bakhtin.

To understand a given text as the author himself understood it. But, our understanding can and should be better. Powerful and profound creativity is largely unconscious and polysemic. Through understanding, it is supplemented by consciousness, and the multiplicity of its meanings is revealed. Thus, understanding supplements the text; it is active and also creative by nature. Creative understanding continues creativity and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity, the co-creativity of those who understand. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 141-142)

We should strive for this higher level of understanding to reveal the multitude of meanings possible and thereby continue the creative process. Based on his dialogic worldview, a basic element of creativity is the “co-creativity of those who understand” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142). This co-creativity also influences them because understanding is always dialogic. The person who understands is also changed by the interaction.

The person who understands approaches the work with his own already formed worldview, from his own viewpoint, from his own position. These positions determine his evaluation to a certain degree, but they themselves do not always stay the same. They are influenced by the artwork, which always introduces something new.
Only when the position is dogmatically inert is there nothing new revealed in the work (the dogmatist gains nothing; he cannot be enriched). The person who understands must not reject the possibility of changing or even abandoning his already prepared viewpoints and positions. In the act of understanding, a struggle occurs that results in mutual change and enrichment. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142)

The self/other relationship is essential for Bakhtin’s reasoning. Bakhtin considered very important the role of the others for whom we construct our story (Bakhtin, 1986). The addressivity, the fact that they are being directed toward someone, was essential for him.

Finally, according to Bakhtin, we also need to be able to understand “repeatable elements and the unrepeatable whole” for our understanding to be creative (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142).

Recognizing and encountering the new and unfamiliar. Both of these aspects (recognition of the repeated and discovery of the new) should merge inseparably in the living act of understanding. After all, the unrepeatability of the whole is reflected in each repeatable element that participates in the whole (it is, as it were, repeatably unrepeatable). The exclusive orientation toward recognizing, searching only for the familiar (that which has already been), does not allow the new to reveal itself (i.e., the fundamental, unrepeatable totality). Quite frequently, methods of explanation and interpretation are reduced to this kind of disclosure of the repeatable, to recognition of the already familiar, and, if the new is grasped at all, it is only in an extremely impoverished and abstract form. Moreover, the individual personality of the creator (speaker), of course, disappears completely. Everything that is repeatable and recognizable is fully dissolved and assimilated solely by the consciousness of the person who understands; in the other’s consciousness, he can see and understand only his own consciousness. He is in no way enriched. In what belongs to others, he recognizes only his own. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142-143)

Creativity does therefore require not constant searching for the familiar in the Other and her ideas but methods of interpretation that allow for the revelation of the new and the unrepeatable whole.
Dialogic Agreement

The final aspect of dialogue and creativity is *dialogic agreement*. Schultz (1990) describes this as how we agree upon change in the world when there are no authorities to coerce us. Dialogic agreement necessitates that the participants are able to actively disagree or agree to the proposition by the others. The meaning arises from the dialogue itself and not as a ready answer from an authority (Vice, 1997). It is also important to note that dialogic agreement is never final and continues endlessly. Ideas develop through these continuous evaluations and re-evaluations. The developing idea is central to Bakhtin’s thinking, according to Vice (1997). If not, it would be a monologic world with a ready-made truth that requires no answers, as noted by Vice (1997).

*His path leads not from idea to idea, but from orientation to orientation. To think, for him, means to question and to listen, to try out orientations, to combine some and expose others...Even agreement retains its dialogic character...it never leads to a merging of voices and truths in a single impersonal truth, as occurs in the monologic world.* (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 95)

The meaning, or the dialogic truth, emerges thus from the interaction but also from the interaction of two distinct voices (Vice, 1997).

*Active agreement/disagreement (if it is not dogmatically predetermined) stimulates and deepens understanding, makes the other’s word more resilient and true to itself, and precludes mutual dissolution and confusion. The clear demarcation of two consciousnesses, their counterposition and their interrelationships.* (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142)

Another important aspect of the evaluation is that it deepens understanding. According to Bakhtin, creative understanding requires the possibility to evaluate (Bakhtin, 1986). Evaluation is the final step in the process of understanding after perception, recognition and understanding the significance of the symbol (Bakhtin, 1986). It is an active type of understanding that questions previous assumptions and by doing so broadens and deepens the understanding of them, by rejecting, confirming or adding to them (Schultz, 1990). Schultz (1990) compares the outcomes of dialogic agreement with an intensive learning experience resulting result in a change of perspective.

The idea of dialogic agreement is a critique of the monologic truth imposed by authorities. Bakhtin could never voice his critique openly about the authoritarian rule in his own country, but used literature to argue for a more
democratic society. Dialogic agreement and dialogic truth oppose the idea of a unified truth that we all must adhere to.

_It is a form of consensus that recognizes the autonomy of individuals who may not be coerced, but may only be persuaded, to cooperate with one another. And it relies on the ordinary willingness of autonomous individuals to decide freely to cooperate with one another in order to further the welfare of the group._ (Schultz, 1990, p. 147)

The critics claim that this would introduce relativism, in which any viewpoint is as valid as another would be. Schultz describes dialogic agreement as “a form of consensus to which people voluntarily assent” (1990, p. 147). The key word here would be “voluntarily”. She argues that neither “chaotic disagreement” nor “complete fusion” with each other are the only alternatives to a monologic truth. The third alternative is “a voluntary assent to a unified truth which includes the partial truths of each point of view, but is greater than any one of them taken by itself” (Schultz, 1990, p. 145). Threatening perhaps to those in power who want to impose a monologic truth justified by the threat of a plunge into chaos and uncertainty.

In conclusion, a creative dialogue requires a dialogic worldview, a position of outsideness, and a possibility for active disagreement/agreement. These three concepts will be used to analyze narratives about entrepreneurial processes and managerial practices to discuss dialogue and creativity in business incubation. These requirements for dialogue will be further explored in the next section, which will introduce polyphony.

3.2.3 Polyphony as a Theory of Creativity

Polyphony is a concept used by Bakhtin to discuss the creative process and the creative result. Morson and Emerson (1990) interpret polyphony as a theory of creativity, i.e., that it describes a specific method of creation to create polyphonic works. Polyphony is about creating a vision of the world in which surprise, change and unpredictability were built into the process.

_The polyphonic author goes one step further and makes surprise part of his design so that it is supposed to be seen. He is genuinely caught unaware by his heroes’ responses, and the finished work retains that sense of unexpectedness. Indeed, the polyphonic work’s design can be realized only if there is genuine surprise, which is one reason why polyphonic design is incompatible with structure or_
planning in the usual sense. Polyphonic design can succeed only if characters are imagined as unfinalizable from the outset and as on the threshold of essential and unpredictable change. Clearly, a special sort of imagination is necessary for the creation of “living others” in this way. (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 257)

To create a polyphonic work, authors must subject themselves to a number of procedures. In summary, the role of the author is to (a) conceptualize full personalities, (b) set up open-ended dialogues, and (c) provoke characters to speak (Morson & Emerson, 1990).

First, for there to be polyphony, there must be independent voices in the narrative with their own ideas and sense of the world. This requires, according to Morson and Emerson, that there must be a dialogic sense of truth and the author must give up monologic control. The power does not only belong to author but also to several voices. She must confront these voices as equals. Bakhtin discussed this monologic control in terms of surplus. Each of us has a certain surplus of knowledge about other people when we see them. Polyphony requires that both parties meet on equal terms and neither can have a significant surplus. The author cannot retain surplus or merge with the characters by giving up his surplus entirely. Real dialogue between these parties demands that they are unfinalized with respect to one another.

Without trying to finalize the other or define him once and for all, one uses one’s “outsideness” and experience to ask the right sort of questions. Recognizing the other’s capacity for change, one provokes or invites him to reveal and outgrow himself. (Morson and Emerson 1990 p. 242)

The peculiarities of polyphony. The lack of finalization of the polyphonic dialogue (dialogue about ultimate questions). These dialogues are conducted by unfinalized individual personalities and not by psychological subjects. The somewhat unembodied quality of these personalities (disinterested surplus). (Bakhtin 1986, p. 151)

A polyphonic work can thus be created by the author, but once created, the characters partially escape the control of the author. The characters in Dostoevsky’s novels were beyond any determinants and could remake everything about them. Bakhtin considered this a rather naïve view and emphasized interaction with the social environment. However, he also acknowledged that each individual is not determined by the environment and that we all have a “surplus of humanness” that makes us unique and makes us transcend the environment.
Second, unfinalizable dialogues are a requirement for polyphony. Bakhtin imagined Dostoevsky’s creative process as an unfinalized dialogue with his characters (Morson & Emerson, 1990). He did not work out a structure, a plan or an overall plot of the work. Rather, he imagined specific voices with personalities with their own ideas and senses of the world. By provoking these carriers of ideas, he may make them create something new. The explicit and implicit content and the potential of these ideas are revealed through these dialogues. The plot is thereby not a plan that the characters must follow, but rather a result of what they say and do.

An important aspect of this process is that the plot that actually happens is only one of many plots conceivable.

Third, the characters must be provoked to speak to one another for them to change and eventually outgrow themselves. The aim for the polyphonic author is thus to create situations that provoke his characters and the author into dialogue. The polyphonic author thus must employ a number of techniques, including special methods of plotting, to allow the characters to argue with one another and thereby provoke unexpected reactions. The potential of an idea may be dramatized by letting it pass through different contexts. The problem of the creative potential of a place will be analyzed using the concept of polyphony. The incubator idea and applied managerial practices are explored in terms of possibilities for creativity in the incubator space.

3.2.4 Carnival and Innovation

Carnival is another concept that Bakhtin uses to discuss becoming and human initiative. If dialogue is the root condition of life, then carnival is the ultimate structure of life and an ideal condition to strive for according to Bakhtin (Pomorska, 1984). The discussion of historical carnivals was a way for Bakhtin to show how new relationships between bodies, language and politics could be created. The carnival is important because it discloses the possibilities of a completely different world order and another way of life (Holquist, 1984). Based on his own experiences of revolution, Bakhtin wanted to help to interpret the world and provide new conceptual categories for those who find themselves in between world orders (Holquist, 1984). He uses historical carnivals to discuss what it means for people to live through a time when practically everything that was taken for granted before is questioned.
Working through his experiences of the 1917 revolution and the subsequent harassments during the Stalinist era, he carefully explores the courage it requires to obtain freedom, the cunning it involves to keep it and how easily it can disappear (Holquist, 1984). Throughout his analysis of the carnival, he investigates “the interface between a stasis imposed from above and a desire for change from below, between old and new, official and unofficial” (Holquist, 1984, p. xvi). By exploring what was acceptable or punishable in the medieval world order, he sought similar boundaries in the 1930s. Bakhtin’s carnival is not a vent for popular feelings that could otherwise lead to revolutions; it is about revolutions and freedom. Bakhtin considered the carnival a “utopian kingdom of absolute equality and freedom” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 264).

Carnival vs. Official Festivities

The historical carnival as a form of popular culture is compared and contrasted by Bakhtin to official culture and festivities. The official feast strengthens the established order and social structures by emphasizing hierarchies and ranks. The status quo and prevailing truths about society are presented as eternal and incontestable. Bakhtin argues that the official culture imposed from above portrays itself as the only respectable model and dismisses all other cultural expressions as invalid or detrimental. Conversely, carnival is a temporary freedom from the established order. According to Bakhtin, it is a true fest of becoming, change and renewal in opposition to anything eternal and finished. For a time, people would enter “a utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 9).

They were sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. (Bakhtin, 1984b, pp. 5-6)

Carnivals offered a temporary space in medieval life in which the world order and human relations were different. The established world with its binding rules and conventions is turned upside down and for a time people enjoy certain rights and freedoms during the carnival.

Suspension of Hierarchies

An important aspect of this temporary space during carnival time was the suspension of hierarchies, classes and ranks (Bakhtin, 1984b). During official
feasts, rank was particularly important and everyone was expected to take the place corresponding to their position. The organization of the official festivities thus emphasized the already existing social structure and class differences. Conversely, during the carnival, people were considered equal.

The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized in their own way, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 255)

Bakhtin (1984b) notes that class society, with its hierarchically ordered social categories, creates fear, submission, hypocrisy and silence. The temporary suspension of hierarchies and rank during the carnival therefore made possible another communication that was impossible in everyday life. The fear and threat created by the class system was overcome by laughter, play and jokes. Powerful became powerless and for a time subjugated to the jokes and ridicule of the people. The turned tables gave a temporary intermission in the official system, with its prohibitions and hierarchical barriers. All participants were subjected to “the carnivalistic drawing-out of man from the usual, normal rut of life, out of ‘his own environment’” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 292) and lost their hierarchical place. The King was uncrowned and the fool told the truth.

All Truths are Relative

The carnival had a very strong element of play and was essentially a second life organized and based on laughter. The carnival time was liberated from the serious tone of medieval society associated with submission, fear and silence. Laughter for Bakhtin had a deep philosophical meaning because it was able to free people of inner and external censorship and, in particular, the self-censorship that had been accumulated in people for thousands of years (Bakhtin, 1984b). Laughter during the carnival was used to express not only peoples’ criticism and distrust of the official truth but also their hopes and aspirations.

Let us say a few initial words about the complex nature of the carnival laughter. It is, first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated “comic” event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent; it is gay, triumphant and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it
The laughter of the carnival thus has an important aspect of relativizing truths. The carnival with its travesties, turned tables and degradations communicates that all truths are relative (Bakhtin, 1984b).

A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life; “a world inside out”. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 11)

The message was that all claims of truth could or even should be questioned. There is no truth so sacred that it cannot be questioned. Conversely, the official culture tried to instill the opposite, a belief in an unchanging world order and eternal truths. Bakhtin also proposed that this static and conservative teaching is very powerful and cannot be overcome by individual thinking, but requires collective cultural movements.

Carnival is not a Spectator Sport

Bakhtin cautioned that the freedom of the carnival may easily disappear and the festivities become formalized and set in a fixed mold. The carnival is then no longer a second life but a diversion (Bakhtin, 1984b). This happened to the original feasts when the role-plays and costume changes lost their utopian element and became pure entertainment. The definition of the concept became gradually narrower until it only meant diversion and amusement. The carnival is not a spectacle to behold, but an alternative life to be lived. For a time, the boundary between life and play are erased. There are thus no spectators in the carnival, but only actors. According to Bakhtin, an extremely important part of the carnival was the fact that it was not provided by an external source. People need not gratefully accept the entertainment provided by the rulers. The carnival is organized by the people participating in their own way, not a static, fixed organization but a constant flux of creation and growth.

Carnival as Symbol

Although the carnivals transformed into pure diversion, the carnivalesque spirit and imagery has lived on in literature, and its formalization permitted it to be used in various ways (Bakhtin, 1984b).

In all these writings, in spite of their differences in character and tendency, the carnival-grotesque form exercises the same function: to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate them from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is
humdrum and universally accepted. This carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and enter a completely new order of things. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 34)

Carnival thus developed from a popular festivity connected to folk culture into a concept for transformations and new combinations, a way of seeing the world, another world, and a symbol with meanings beyond the original feasts. The carnival has become a concept encapsulating much more than a popular festive form.

In conclusion, there are several threats against carnival, i.e., threats against favorable conditions for innovation. A strong emphasis on hierarchies and established truths hinders carnival and turns it into an empty form. From an entrepreneurial perspective, the carnival is of interest because it is about creating new combinations and new practices, according to Bakhtin. Therefore, this concept will be used to discuss conditions for innovation in the incubators.
CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY: NARRATIVES, INTERVIEWS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter is devoted to the methodological approach chosen to examine the research problem and conduct the fieldwork. An analytical framework based on Bakhtinian literary concepts calls for a narrative approach that pays attention to the stories told about business incubation practices. The adopted narrative approach entails a particular approach to the fieldwork, the presentation and analysis of the empirical material and certain ontological and epistemological assumptions about the role of narratives in human lives. Narrative studies can be based on many different ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies (Boje, 2001). Narratologies can range from realist to postmodernist. In using narrative methods, there are many alternative approaches, and in this chapter, I outline the assumptions on which my study is based. In the following sections, I further develop what we can learn from narratives, how the narratives for this study were constructed and how they were analyzed based on a Bakhtinian narratology.

4.1 Narrative Knowledge

The basis for the analysis of business incubation is thus narratives told by entrepreneurs. Of particular interest, then, is what we can presume to learn from these narratives. From an ontological and epistemological viewpoint, the narrative approach is based on the assumption that our lives and knowledge are narrated and should therefore be studied as such.

4.1.1 Life as Narrative

Everyday knowledge is circulated through stories, and these stories are important because it is the process by which our lives and actions are turned into human experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). Through narratives, we create a
meaningful whole of the chaos that is our life and make sense of our actions (Boje, 2001). The narratives depict real events and tell us what happened, but they primarily reflect how the narrator makes sense of these events in retrospect. They are a way for us to explain our lives and organize our experiences (Bruner, 2004). We are even claimed to be *homo fabulans*, i.e., we as humans are characterized by telling and interpreting narratives (Currie, 1998 in Boje, 2001). Narratives are the way in which we both explain and create our lives (Bruner, 2004). The relationship is a two-way interaction; narratives imitate life and vice versa. The procedure of telling your life story is thus “life making” and creates reality. Bruner proposes that the way in which we tell our story becomes so routine for us that it becomes a recipe for structuring experience, directing our life narrative not only up to the present but also into the future. Bruner (2004) argues that narratives about our lives are not records of what happened but a continuing interpretation and reinterpretation of our experience. A narrative about entrepreneurial processes thus develops over time; it is not about what “really” happened but how this experience is interpreted by the entrepreneur at the time the tale is told. Extending this to entrepreneurship, it means that the fragmented and messy entrepreneurial process is integrated into a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle and end (Fletcher, 2007). The role of the researcher, according to Bruner (2004), is to understand how people put together their narratives about their lives and to consider how they might have proceeded.

### 4.1.2 The Double Logic of Narratives

An important point when studying entrepreneurial narratives is what we assume to learn from these narratives. O’Connor (2007) has noted that entrepreneurs are often asked to narrate their experiences so we can learn about how they have succeeded. According to O’Connor (2007), this approach is based on the assumption that these descriptions of business cases depict reality and supply facts rather than interpretations of the events. However, narratives have what she calls double logics: descriptions of real events and meaning-making processes. Narratives do incorporate real events and describe them, but they are also given a narrative order by a meaning-making process. O’Connor puts forth that these double logics are often disregarded in the use of entrepreneurial narratives and business cases. According to Czarniawska (1998, p. 2), a narrative requires “at least three elements: an original state of affairs, an action or event, and the consequent state of affairs”. However, the elements require a plot to make sense and become a meaningful whole and thereby become a narrative. Normally, this is done by introducing chronology, which in the mind of the reader translates into causality. The important point about that is that the plot must be put there.

O’Connor describes two aspects of the second logic, the meaning-making process: the transformation of real events into language and the narrativization
of real events. First, through narratives, these real events are transformed into language, into a symbolic form. These representations depend on, for example, time constraints, social contexts and social conventions. The story will thus be adapted to the audience and forum. The second aspect of the second logic is that the events are supplemented through meaning-making processes such as selection, ordering, interaction and moralization. Polkinghorne (1988) referred to this second aspect of a narrative logic as a configuration into a plot structure. It is this plot structure that shows the human experience described. White (1987) called these processes the narrativization of real events. White argues that it is a fundamental human wish and desire to narrativize events.

*What I sought to suggest that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary.* (White, 1987, p. 24)

The events are given meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole with a plot that structures their relationships. They are sequenced in a particular order that leads to the goal and are placed in relation to each other. The events that are included are selected from a number of events that could have been included. They are ranked according to how significant they are for the culture or social system involved. Including certain events when constructing a narrative is based on legitimacy and authority but also our need to moralize reality. According to White (1987), the moral of the story is an important part of the narrative, and it is not possible to narrativize without moralizing. The important lesson from these double logics is thus, in the words of Hayden White, that events do not “speak themselves” and should not be represented as “telling their own story” (1987, p. 3). Narratives are thus composed for a particular audience at a particular moment in time and must be understood as cultural artifacts that embody taken-for-granted assumptions and values (Kohler Riessman, 2008). From this perspective, they always have to be interpreted using a narrative analysis because the construction of a story is always mediated and regulated by a particular culture (Kohler Riessman, 2008). The fragmented process of starting a business in an incubator will be integrated into a coherent narrative with plot structures adding meaning to the events twice during this research project, both by the entrepreneurs during the interviews and in the analysis of the narratives.

4.1.3 A Narrative Mode of Thought

Narrative knowledge is produced by a narrative mode of thought, which is a way of ordering experience and constructing reality (Bruner, 1986). A narrative mode of thought is complementary to a paradigmatic, or logoscientific, mode of thought that has dominated as the legitimate form of
knowledge in postmodern times (Lyotard, 1984). Bruner (1986) compares and contrasts the modes of thought and notes the differences regarding causality and the level of abstraction. The paradigmatic mode of thought searches for general laws that predict human behavior and convinces us through well-formed arguments and empirical evidence. Narratives seek to persuade us through live-likeness and plausibility while establishing not universal truths but likely specific connections between events. Whereas the paradigmatic mode seeks to transcend particularity in favor of abstraction, the narrative aims to locate the human experience in a time and a place, abstract thoughts in the particulars of experiences (Bruner, 1986). As noted by Czarniawska (1998), narratives are not reliable based on the criteria of the paradigmatic mode of thought. She mentions several reasons for this unreliability: The reasoning is not founded on formal logic, the level of abstraction is low, and cause-effect associations can be created in a random way. Bruner (1986) sees the modes of thought as complementary and essential, two different ways of convincing others. Lyotard (1984), on the contrary, argues that science should not be considered as more legitimate, or even different, than narrative knowledge. He considers the scientific meta-narrative to be merely a particular sub-set of narratives. Polkinghorne (1988) argues that narrative knowledge is more useful with regards to human behavior because it captures the meaning of human action, and seeking general laws for prediction should be reserved for natural sciences.

Narrative knowledge has gained increasing legitimacy in entrepreneurship and organization studies as a way of understanding human action and meaning-making (Czarniawska, 1998; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004; Kostera, 2006). Narrative knowledge describes how everyday human projects develop over time and is therefore particularly useful when studying processes (Czarniawska, 1998; Dawson & Hjorth, 2012). Narratives create plausible connections between events and situate them in a time and a place. Because narratives locate phenomena in a particular context, they produce a highly contextualized empirical material and add complex empirical realities to our research (Dawson & Hjorth, 2012). Narrative knowledge thus contributes to our understanding of a phenomenon by adding particulars rather than reaching for higher abstraction. The Bakhtinian chronotope emphasizes this by locating abstract ideas in a particular time-space.

4.2 A Bakhtinian Narratology

Narratology is the study of narratives, but it can be based on many different ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, ranging from realist to postmodernist (Boje, 2001). The narratology in this study is based on the ideas
of chronotope, dialogue and polyphony and has a cultural and social constructionist approach to the analysis of the narratives.

4.2.1 Meaning-making, Culture and the Chronotope

A narrative approach is also about how to analyze the empirical material with narrative methods and about how the knowledge from the field should be presented and analyzed (Dawson & Hjorth, 2012). Narrative theory emphasizes the meaning-making process in discourse, as shown by the previous discussion of narrative knowledge. The notion of “events don’t tell themselves” is thus extended from the literature to entrepreneurial stories about business incubation. Events are always presented in a certain fashion, and narrative analysis is the study of how these events are worked into narratives (O’Connor, 1995). Narrative theory provides a set of distinctions for studying the way the events are presented and the particular interpretation of the phenomenon under study that the text promotes (O’Connor, 1995). The narrative analysis in this study employs a set of distinctions introduced by Bakhtin called the chronotope.

The meaning-making in the stories is thus explored using the chronotope. However, the chronotope is not only a device for analyzing narrative; it is also grounded in a culture and a historical context. Bakhtin uses the concept to discuss the social context of a text and how this context is reflected in narratives (Vice, 1997). According to Bakhtin (1981), historical realities are represented and reflected in narratives. The world outside a narrative serves as a source of representation for the created chronotopes of the world represented in the text, and the real world is part of the process of creating the represented world. However, Bakhtin (1981, p. 253) considers it as “methodologically impermissible” in relation to the chronotope to believe that the represented world in the text would mirror the world outside the narrative, an understanding that will also guide this study. From an epistemological point of view, this project will assume a social constructionist position regarding entrepreneurial narratives. Therefore, the focus is not to verify whether the events reported in the personal narratives correspond to other accounts to establish truth but to understand their meanings for the interviewees (Kohler Riessman, 2008).

From a Bakhtinian perspective, chronotopes are also historically situated cultural artifacts and have to be understood as a part of a culture in an epoch. Bakhtin has a particular interest in his analyses in how texts are related to their context and how chronotopes developed historically in different societies (Vice, 1997). Societies contribute with chronotopes with their specific way of seeing and understanding the world, which is productive while adding new insights about human life. Chronotopes are continuously added, and because some of them “stubbornly persist” while adding no further understandings,
there are a numerous chronotopes to choose between at any given time. Due to Bakhtin’s understanding of narratives and their chronotopes as an inseparable part of culture, his narratology has been named a cultural narratology (Neumann & Nunning, 2012). The Bakhtinian narratology requires a methodology that can capture the cultural context of narratives and the various chronotopes available. Therefore, the methodology draws upon the ethnographic interviewing practice, which has developed within anthropology as a way of studying and describing culture (Spradley, 1979). Ethnographic interviewing aims to understand everyday practices and language used in local contexts by establishing patterns in the interpretations of the culture’s members. The adopted definition of culture in this study is Geertz’s (1973, p. 5):

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

In his definition, culture is a complex symbolic system with many layers of meaning intricately woven together. All human action, and this case business incubation, is caught in these webs of meaning, and the only way of for the researcher to understand it is to study how it is interpreted locally by the cultural members themselves and the intersubjectivity in their interpretations. Geertz’s narratology is categorized by Boje (2001) as social constructionist, which is based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions of reality as socially constructed and narratives as acts of meaning-making. From a methodological point of view, the role of the researcher is to inquire into relative differences in constructions when analyzing narratives, which in this case is done primarily through the chronotope.

By extending the chronotope to entrepreneurial narratives, this study will thus apply a cultural and social constructionist narratology that views chronotopes as cultural artifacts and narratives as acts of meaning-making. Agreeing with Neuman and Nunning, (2012), I argue that the particularity of a Bakhtinian cultural narratology is that it is based on two ideas, dialogue and polyphony, which will be explored in the two following sections.

4.2.2 A Dialogic Ontology and Epistemology

Bakhtinian ontology is based on the idea of dialogue, and fundamental to his philosophy is the idea of dialogue as the root metaphor for life. All humans are part of the grand dialogue of life, which is an ongoing and open-ended dialogue. This idea, of course, also influenced his view of how we can gain knowledge about the world. True to this philosophy, he advocated a dialogic
epistemology when he was asked about his view of literary theory and cultural studies (Bakhtin, 1986). We as humans and researchers gain knowledge about the world and ourselves through dialogue with others. The research process, from this perspective, is two cultures engaging in dialogue. He questioned the value of the strong focus on merely trying to duplicate a foreign culture and to describe it as it is observed by the cultural members themselves, which traditionally has been the aim of ethnography.

There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one’s own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

“Seeing the world seeing through its eyes” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7) is a first and necessary step in the process of understanding a culture, but our understanding should be creative; therefore, we should also seek to supplement it by seeing it through our eyes. Our goal for research should be a dialogic one of creative understanding.

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

The outside position of the researcher and the members of a culture is essential for creative understanding because it creates the possibility for dialogue. Any culture holds meanings and new semantic depths such that it does not realize itself. Morson and Emerson refer to this as the potential of a culture. The potential of a culture reveals itself “only in the eyes of another culture” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.7).

We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. Without one’s own questions one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign (but, of course, the questions must be serious and sincere). Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging and mixing. Each retains its
own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. 
(Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

Morson and Emerson (1990) describe the research process as becoming mutually enriching because it educates both sides about themselves and the Other. The researcher asking the questions undergoes the same process, which helps her to comprehend potential in her own culture. Morson and Emerson (1990) note that the important aspect of this process is not the discovery of potential but that the process itself may activate potential by provoking answers to specific questions. The process of dialogue creates potential, which can be realized only through continued dialogue.

According to notes made by Bakhtin (referred to in Morson & Emerson, 1990), we should in our interpretations not merely try to understand the text as the author herself understood it but also seek to supplement it. Mere replication would not provide new insight into either side, and interpretation is viewed as co-creativity. The same argumentation about research contributing in the form of a novel reading can be found in organizational studies (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Czarniawska, 1992; O'Connor, 1995). Czarniawska (1992) argues that writing research entails constructing a picture of the collective action in the organization, which can help us understand the complexity of organizational life. Czarniawska (1992) notes that this picture is the invention of the researcher but also the contribution of the research. The contribution of the research is a new perspective on the organizing that took place and was accounted for afterwards. Following Czarniawska’s discussion on research contributions, the picture of business incubation in this study is my invention and my contribution. The contribution is a new perspective of the organizing that took place and was narrated in the interviews.

In conclusion, to understand a culture, the researcher must proceed dialogically. The application of a Bakhtinian framework to entrepreneurial processes in business incubators would thus be an attempt to creatively understand while enriching both research and business incubation.

4.2.3 In Search of Voices

The Bakhtinian framework also includes a narrative approach in search of voices. Polyphony is central to Bakhtin’s thoughts and should also be considered in relation to the study of narratives. Polyphony is about the possibilities for different voices to interact in dialogue. This narratology thus presumes that a culture is a polyphony of voices and ideas interacting. The implication for the study of narratives is a focus on identifying the voices interacting in the ongoing cultural dialogue and the relations between them, not a collective consensus on how to interpret business incubation. A polyphonic approach is, however, not the traditional way of narrating
organizational experience in entrepreneurship, management and organization studies. The general tendency is to write a single unified narrative of the organizational stories about the organizational experience and search for the shared meaning. The role of the researcher, within the dominant paradigm of narrative analysis in organization and entrepreneurship studies, is to create a narrative from many stories, a single-voiced unified case (Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 1992; Dawson & Hjorth, 2012). This approach has faced criticism because it does not consider that there are many stories in organizations that lack consensus on how to interpret the organizational experience (Boje, 2001; Hosking & Hjorth, 2004). Paying attention to alternative interpretations is normally considered irrelevant because the aim is to tell a single unified narrative based on a collective consensus. From a postmodern stance, Boje (2001) argues that by considering a multitude of stories, we can recover the polyphonic character of storytelling in organizations and improve the narratives of organizations because storytelling in organizations does not have the coherence and consensus that are often implied. Hosking and Hjorth (2004) argue along the same lines from a relational constructionist perspective that we should open up to multiple realities rather than imposing one reality over others in our research. The challenge is to work with multiplicity and resist the homogenizing drive towards a consensus.

4.3 Constructing Narratives for Inquiry

From a methodological point of view, a narrative approach involves collecting stories during the fieldwork and constructing a narrative from the tales of the field. The material under study for Bakhtin was literary works, primarily novels; therefore, extending his concepts from literary theory also means applying them to another type of narrative—in this case, entrepreneurs’ narratives of their process during an interview. The narratives for this study thus had to be constructed before any formal narrative analysis could take place, which is an important aspect of narrative research (Kohler Riessman, 2008). As indicated by the title, this research is based on the assumption that narratives are not “found” but must be constructed by the researcher. The interviews that the texts are based on come from two phases of interviewing in four different research settings. The storytellers are primarily entrepreneurs narrating their experiences of business incubation in retrospect. The implication of a Bakhtinian framework is a need for a methodology that can capture both the narratives and their context. The narrative approach will thus be inspired by the ethnographic practice and its focus on narratives in their everyday context.
4.3.1 What is a Narrative in this Study?

Because there is no consensus about the definition of a narrative (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008), I will start this section by outlining what a narrative is in this study. Among researchers working with first-person accounts for research purposes, the definition is often linked to the discipline (Kohler Riessman, 2008). The definition of a narrative can range from the strict definitions of social linguistics to the broader definitions in anthropology and social history. In social linguistics, the narrative is a discrete unit of discourse, an answer to a question about a certain topic, whereas a narrative in anthropology can refer to a life story constructed out of interviews, observations and documents. In the middle of the continuum lies research in sociology, with a working definition of a personal narrative as long sections of talk and extended accounts of lives in context that develops over a single or multiple research interviews; this is the definition used in this study. A narrative can thus come in many shapes and forms, from short bounded stories in a single answer to biographical accounts that refer to a whole life or career (Kohler Riessman, 2008). In this study, there are two main types of narratives constructed for the formal analysis. In the first chapter of the analysis, the narratives analyzed are longer biographical accounts that refer to the whole process of starting a business in an incubator. In the second chapter of the analysis, the narratives interpreted are brief stories about certain managerial practices.

4.3.2 Fieldwork: Pre-study

The fieldwork for the thesis was initiated by my participation in the 5th SISP (Swedish Incubators and Science Parks) incubator conference in 2006. During the conference, I discussed the issues of managing incubators and coaching entrepreneurs with incubator managers from Sweden and other European countries. The most attended workshop during the conference was “Effective coaching of academic entrepreneurs”. Following the research proposal seminar, I interviewed four incubator managers and eight entrepreneurs. The incubators for the interviews were chosen because they had differing management styles, ranging from heavy interventionist to hands off. The incubators were chosen from organizations that defined themselves as incubators; thus, the definition of an incubator is performative. The conference and these initial interviews were part of a pre-fieldwork phase to clarify and develop the research problem (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In addition to the interviews, this phase entailed fieldwork at a business incubator with minimal incubator management involvement. For six months, I worked in its incubator environment, which was an open-space office, and interacted daily with the companies. This extended stay in an environment that was intended to create networks and facilitate entrepreneurial learning helped clarify the research problem concerning the incubator as a space. During this phase, I
negotiated with a business incubator regarding access for an ethnographic study, but when access was ultimately denied, the research design had to be changed. Two incubators from the pre-study were chosen as cases of business incubation.

4.3.3 Fieldwork at Two Research Settings

To empirically investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial processes and managerial intervention in business incubation entrepreneurs, two incubators, Minc and Chalmers Innovation, were approached for interviews. These two business incubators were chosen because they had developed two different approaches to the incubator management of entrepreneurial processes. The basis for the choice was the degree of involvement by the incubator in the new ventures. The choice to compare two incubators that are normally considered to be different was also based on the Bakhtinian notion of the Other’s ability to reveal potential. This comparison is based on an ambition to maximize the differences rather than find the aspects they have in common. These incubators are both part of the national incubator program. The incubators adhering to the program are considered to be successful while being different from each other in terms of the level of involvement in the tenant companies. The organizations for this study are well-established incubators; they were founded in 1999 and 2001, respectively. Both are members of the Swedish special interest organization for incubators, SISP, and of its European counterpart, Incubator Forum.

4.3.4 Narrative and Ethnographic Interviewing

This study is based on interviews, which is the most common approach in narrative projects (Kohler Riessman, 2008). Starting in January 2009, interviews were scheduled with entrepreneurs at both incubators, and the field study included repetitive interviews over a year. I conducted ethnographic interviews with incubator managers, coaches and entrepreneurs from the two incubators. The interviewees were chosen to represent different perspectives on business incubation. These incubators each housed twenty ventures at the time of the study, and these ventures were approached by e-mail. Seventeen entrepreneurs were interviewed from Minc, and eleven entrepreneurs were interviewed from Chalmers Innovation. Each interview lasted from one to two hours.

The next step in the process was to transform spoken word into narrative text, a written representation of the interaction during the interview (Kohler Riessman, 2008). The audio recordings had to be transcribed, thereby transforming oral data from the interviews into a written representation. All interviews, with a few exceptions, were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. After the transcription, I conducted a number of interviews to follow up on themes from the former interviews, but I did not go back and
check all transcripts or interpretations with all entrepreneurs. The interviews were conducted at the same time at the two incubators, allowing for constant comparative analysis. The interview guide was also developed during the study. Ethnography is a cyclical research style, which means that the main tasks of asking questions and analyzing the empirical material are done repeatedly (Schwartzman, 1993). The questions thus changed during the fieldwork when new issues arose during the interviews.

Important to consider in regards to the production of text for narrative inquiry is how to facilitate storytelling in interviews (Kohler Riessman, 2008). Kohler Riessman notes that “the goal of narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers and general statements” (Kohler Riessman, 2008, p. 23).

Narrative interviewing has more in common with ethnographic practice than with mainstream social science interviewing practice, which typically relies on discrete open questions and/or closed (fixed response) questions. (Kohler Riessman, 2008, p. 23)

The interviews were conducted as ethnographic interviews addressing ordinary events in the everyday life of the interviewees. The interviews revolved around their entrepreneurial process of starting a company in a business incubator. The interview questions served to induce story-telling by focusing on “What happened then?” or detailed accounts: “Could you describe your last coaching meeting?” The interview guide is based the ethnographic interview technique developed by Spradley (1979). This type of interviewing requires the researcher to follow the trail of the narrator and give up control over the interview situation (Kohler Riessman, 2008). The ethnographic interviewing is also based on an assumption that not only the answers but also the questions to ask must be searched for in the social setting researched (Schwartzman, 1993; Spradley, 1979). The interviews were conversations and rarely followed the guide, but the guide indicates the type of questions asked and the themes discussed during the interviews (See Appendix I).

4.3.5 Narrating Someone Else’s Story

In this research, I tell the stories of others. The question of representation has, in the wake of postmodernism, been a part of the research discussion. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) note that although the focus of the research is elsewhere, in this case on interpretation, reflexive research should consider representation and authority. Boje (2001) raises the question about narrating someone else’s story; when a researcher tells a story she has not herself experienced, it is necessarily a different type of narrating. He refers to the experiences of ethnographic researchers and their struggles with this issue because they claim to describe someone else’s culture and meaning-making.
The problem of representing others has become an important issue and controversy in anthropology and in other social sciences due to influences from critical, post-structural and postcolonial traditions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Schwartzman, 1993; Van Maanen, 1988).

In an attempt not to silence the voices from the field, I have included lengthy quotes from the transcriptions to show the reader the text I have interpreted using Bakhtinian concepts. I have written about the two incubators in the empirical overview to show how the entrepreneurs depict the incubator space. These descriptions are aimed at contextualizing the narratives that will be further analyzed. The aim is to describe the incubation processes in a synthesized manner, and therefore, their representations are grouped together. The aim is to show tendencies and variations in the entrepreneurs’ stories in the two incubators, not to generalize their stories to all entrepreneurs. The particularities of the entrepreneurs’ stories are further detailed and discussed in the analysis. I have included lengthy quotes in an effort not to silence the voices of the interviewees and to leave room for other interpretations of their utterances. The quotes are numbered because I cannot reveal their identities. However, I recognize that by choosing and grouping of the utterances in this text, I necessarily tell one story while silencing others (Behar, 1993). The structure of my description of the incubation process is based on the interviewees’ ordering of the process, and I have strained to use the terminology used by the interviewees rather than ostensive concepts from the theoretical framework. As an introduction to the entrepreneurial descriptions, I have included images of the incubators from their websites, brochures, and interviews with the incubator managers. These images are chosen to contextualize the descriptions and to introduce concepts that are used in the second part of the empirical overview. However, the focus of the research was not the perspective of the business incubators, so to a certain extent, that is a voice silenced in this research narrative.
CHAPTER 5 EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW: A SYSTEM, TWO INCUBATORS AND 30 ENTREPRENEURS

5.1 An Incubator System

The Swedish national program for incubators was launched in 2003 by the Swedish government agency Vinnova (Lindholm Dahlstrand, 2004). The purpose of the program was to enhance economic growth and job creation through the commercialization of technology (Vinnova). By supporting the existing incubators, Vinnova aimed to support an infrastructure for innovation. Until the launch of this program, all incubators in Sweden had been regional and local initiatives. The first incubators were founded in Sweden in the nineties, primarily in science parks in close proximity to universities. The incubators that received funding from the national incubator had to meet a number of managerial requirements to enter the program. The program aimed to develop the incubator management and support the exchange of best practices. Professionalized incubator management is also the objective of two organizations, SISP (Swedish Incubators & Science Parks) and the Incubator Forum. SISP is a special interest organization for incubators and science parks in Sweden that works for the start and growth of knowledge-based companies in Sweden. SISP have 45 members and organize, with few exceptions, public incubators in Sweden (SISP). The Incubator Forum is a network for incubator managers in charge of technology incubators that have links to universities. In 2006, the network had 121 members in 27 countries (7 members from Sweden). The objective of the network is to professionalize the incubation industry.

5.2 Minc in 2009

This chapter is a representation of the incubator Minc as a place and process. The first part contains images of Minc from the website, brochures and
interviews to show how the incubator depicts the incubation process, entrepreneurship and its approach to incubation. In the second part, the depiction of the incubation process is based on the entrepreneurs’ view of the incubator.

5.2.1 Minc as Depicted by the Incubator Management

This section tells the story of Minc and introduces the in-house activities, the incubator program and the incubator’s target group.

About Minc

Minc was founded in 2002 and is directed towards knowledge-based companies in ICT, new media and design. The incubator targets companies that are very close to market and that preferably already have their first customer. The role of the incubator is to enable their growth. The companies are offered access to a network of professionals, business coaches and venture capitalists for two years. The incubator focuses on being an innovative environment and a meeting place. The vision is to create a house with a “dynamic and lively culture” characterized by networking in an environment that encourages meetings.

Minc was founded in 2002 in order to help entrepreneurs with business ideas and growth potential succeed in building stable businesses, as well as, creating valuable meetings and discussions between established businesses, entrepreneurs and research. (Minc/Incubator)

Since 2003, Minc has been a part of the political efforts by the City of Malmö to restructure the economy, to create a new economic base and to change the image of the city. The municipality, the City of Malmö, invested in the incubator to create viable companies. The expectations were that this investment would create tax revenue and jobs and contribute to Malmö’s image as a creative and entrepreneurial city. The organization is financed by Malmö City, Sparbanksstiftelsen Skåne, Innovationsbron Syd and by partner companies (Minc/Incubator).

Minc is a company owned by the City of Malmö and opened its doors in January 2003 in Anckargripsgatan, in the middle of an accelerating innovation environment, neighbor with Malmö University in the Western Harbor. Minc is a platform for growing businesses and highly skilled people from different industries. Minc contributes to the creation of valuable meetings and discussions in addition to being an important link between established businesses, entrepreneurs and research. Minc is the catalyst and the
entrepreneurs are the engine in Malmö’s and the region’s future business life. (Minc)

Located next to Malmö University in the Western Harbor, the purpose of the incubator is to contribute to the transformation of Malmö by supporting new knowledge-based businesses.

Incubator, Workspace and Meetings
The entrepreneurs that are accepted into the incubator program are welcomed to a yellow brick office building on Anckargripsgatan 3. Minc is located in the Western Harbor next to the university on Anckargripsgatan 3. The 2000 m² incubator office is distributed on four floors. Once accepted to the program the entrepreneurs may make use of the offers at their own discretion, but they have to move into the incubator office. The entrepreneurs are thus required to have an office at the incubator and preferably to be an active part of the networking. The ambition is to create a “creative and network based environment” (Så funkars det). Part of Minc’s vision is to create a meeting place for entrepreneurs, business people and researchers (Om Minc). To emphasize this aspect of Minc, the activities are formally divided into three parts: Minc/Incubator, Minc/Workspace and Minc/Meetings. Networking is emphasized in all three aspects of the organization:

Minc’s ambition is to help entrepreneurs to grow faster with a lower risk in a creative and network-based environment as well as create a meeting place for young entrepreneurs, traditional businesses, research and innovation. Perhaps you need a dynamic office space to work from or perhaps do you need advice and coaching to succeed in building a sustainable and growing business. (Så funkars det)

Under the same roof at Anckargripsgatan next to the incubator is Minc/Workspace. Minc/Workspace is an office space for already established companies, where they may rent furnished offices. The price starts from 2250 SEK per person per month (Workspace). The companies can choose to sit in an open office space or in an individual office based on the assumption that “all companies need an inspirational and dynamic environment” (Workspace), Minc markets the Workspace and its resources to anyone that “starts a new business, is establishing a branch in the Öresund region, or just needs a new beginning” (Workspace). The offer includes cleaning, wireless internet, access to a manned reception desk and conference rooms and also participation in the Minc network. The Workspace is located in the same building as the

4 www.minc.se Retrieved on the 8th of June 2009. The start page of Minc’s website features a picture of the building and the phrase: “Welcome to Minc!”.
incubator. The entrepreneurs who lease offices in this part of the building share the manned reception desk with the incubator companies and may encounter the incubator companies in the restaurant on the ground floor. They are also invited to events arranged by Minc. Many of the companies are former incubator companies and thereby retain their connections and relations with the incubator team and entrepreneurs. There is thus an ambition to create meetings between the entrepreneurs in the workspace and the incubator. Another focus is meetings between these companies and the surrounding society. Creating a meeting place is one of the goals of the organization.

*Minc/Meetings is a meeting place where young entrepreneurs meets established businesses primarily in ICT, design and media. A place where advisors and investors can meet start-ups. Simply a platform for interesting meetings. Minc has different kinds of meeting rooms and specially adapted meeting facilities that external companies can rent, but can also provide content to workshops, lectures and seminars.* (Minc/Meetings)

The purpose of Minc is thus twofold: to support entrepreneurs and to be a meeting place for entrepreneurs, researchers and business people.

The Incubator Program

The incubator program offers a “creative environment conducive to growth” by offering consultation, coaching, management support and access to networks (financial, technical and commercial) (Minc/Incubator). The incubator program at Minc offers entrepreneurs consultations, training, networks, contacts, coaching and services (Minc/Incubator). Consultations are offered within management, business development, PR and communication. The consultation is provided by either the incubator team or experts from the incubator’s network. In 2009, the incubator staff consisted of the CEO, three consultants, a project manager, a receptionist and a facilities manager (Medarbetare). The consultancy was provided by the CEO and the consultants. The consultants have different specialties: PR and communication, intellectual property law, and sales. The incubator also offers entrepreneurial coaching. Education and training in particular skills is offered in leadership, recruitment, sales, financing and public relations. The incubator mediates contact with development resources, industry expertise, investors and venture capital (Minc/Incubator). To participate in the incubator program, entrepreneurs must move into an office at the incubator. However, being part of the incubator program entitles the business to utilize office services at a reduced price. The price starts at 1100 SEK per person per month (Minc/Incubator).

The incubator program is two years long. For two years, the entrepreneurs are entitled to help from the incubator and may use the resources at hand. After
two years, the companies are expected to have established and positioned themselves in the market. Two years is the maximum time the businesses may be in the program, and the companies that have left the incubator are called Exits (Exits). These companies are celebrated by an exit ceremony when they move out of the incubator. The exit is from the incubator program but is not financial. The incubator has no ownership in these companies; therefore, it is not an exit in a financial sense.

Business Coaching

There was previously a coaching system with compulsory sessions for the entrepreneurs, but currently, the business counselling is optional.

*I do not believe in obligation, and therefore, I rather want to develop the entrepreneur’s own ability to take responsibility for their own business. We do not take an ownership share in the companies. That is a difference. Some incubators work like that. We have tried with scheduled coaching, but again, obligation. I think it is important to show that you are interested in closer contact, but then, you have to be able to offer something. Some of the companies come here every week. (Incubator Manager, Minc)*

The incubator manager emphasizes the importance of not taking away the initiative from the entrepreneur. The manager describes the relationship between the incubator management and the entrepreneur as follows:

*This is so very important. We have no ownership shares in the companies. Thus we cannot control the company. We are neither chairman of the board nor CEO. We are not even in charge of business development. It means that when you talk to the companies about their business development we use a consultative method. We ask questions such as: How are you thinking now? How? When? And when they have talked for a while you can broach the subject: now it sounds like you are trying to procrastinate. Why does it take that long time? Why are we having the fifth meeting about a PowerPoint-presentation that is still not finished? Why is that? Is it not fun? So what we are trying to do is to orient ourselves about where the entrepreneur is in their process. Do we disagree? Yes, we can definitely have different opinions about what would be a good way forward, but we (the incubator) are not the company. This is what is so important. Even if you own 15 % of shares in the company you are still not in charge, strictly from an ownership point of view. And it would be very strange if you as an incubator took over the management of the business, then you would clip the wings of the entrepreneur and say that ‘you are not grown enough*
to take care of your own business so you better hand it over to mom and dad and let us take of it”. I don’t think that attitude would be good. On the other hand I would never hesitate to tell a company if I think that they are taking it seriously. That is as far as we go in our method. But we would never ever take over the decision-making. (Incubator Manager, Minc)

However, the incubator manager points to the benefit of the business coaches, who are on-site and able to answer ad hoc questions from the entrepreneurs.

Picture yourself sitting here with your own company. Of course it is great to be able to come down stairs and ask questions. “I am going to make this phone call. How should I do it? Could you take a look at this contract?” Naturally you need someone to talk to and we can help reduce the anxiety surrounding the decision, but it is still the company that owns the decision. (Incubator Manager, Minc)

The first business coaches in the incubator industry worked at this business incubator. However, they are currently trying to move away from coaching to business development.

Business coaches? Yes, I believe we might be responsible for that epidemic, but we are trying to move away from that concept. It is a very difficult role. Coach means bus, but who should drive the bus. Or you can think of coaches as in sport coaches, but this is not training, this is for real. We do not train them for something. This is already for real. So I have more and more used the concept of business development and that we have a consultative method. (Incubator Manager, Minc)

Assessment Criteria
Both the entrepreneur and the business concept must meet a number of criteria to be approved for admission to the program. The incubator evaluates the following aspects: growth potential, business plan, business model, and the entrepreneur’s/the team’s motivations and ambitions (Minc/Incubator). The incubator program primarily targets start-ups in design, new media and ICT due to other local, regional and national efforts to promote these industries (Minc/Incubator). However, it is noted on the web site that anyone with a good business idea and the capacity and the ambition to start a growth company may apply to the incubator program. Regardless of industry, the company must have the potential to grow. The incubator targets “ambitious entrepreneurs” with the right attitude.
The difficult part is not to have a good business idea. The challenge is to translate the idea into practice. It requires endurance, creativity and not at least the ability to let yourself be inspired by others’ ideas, advice and experiences. If you have a business idea and that attitude, Minc/Incubator is the right solution for you. (Minc/Incubator)

The web site does not comment more on the business concepts but emphasizes the commitment that is required by the entrepreneurs both to their own company and the incubator space. It is noted again in a number of questions on the web site:

- Do you want to build a growing business?
- Are you 100% committed to your business idea?
- Do you need support within certain areas?
- Are you willing to share your experiences and your network?
- Do you want to sit in a dynamic and creative environment together with other entrepreneurs? (Minc)

The assessment criteria are about growth, commitment, and complementing the entrepreneurs’ knowledge but also about commitment to the incubator milieu. The entrepreneurs must also commit to contributing to the environment at Minc. They must be interested in being a part of the incubator and use the office. In the following section, the incubator is depicted based on the interviewees’ representations of their everyday life at the incubator.

5.2.2 The Incubator Program as Depicted by the Entrepreneurs

The two year period that the entrepreneurs spend in the incubator is called the incubator program. The incubator program starts with a screening-meeting and ends with an exit-ceremony. During this time, the entrepreneurs are offered consultancy, coaching, networking and education. The incubator admits companies continuously; therefore, the companies range from newly admitted to almost-exits. Of the interviewees, eight of them were preparing to exit the incubator in June 2009. The others had established themselves in the incubator in the fall 2008. In this section, the incubator program will be described based on the entrepreneurs’ narratives. The structure follows their narrations of the important phases in the program: initial interviews, pre-incubator, screening, incubator, and finally, exit. The incubator phase is largely unstructured, but the stories include coaching, seminars and the daily life at the incubator.

Initial Interviews

Entrepreneurs who contact the incubator are invited to discuss their idea with two members of the incubator team. There are two interviews: one interview
with each consultant. After these interviews, the entrepreneurs are either admitted to the pre-incubator or turned down. During these interviews, the entrepreneurs are asked about their business model and themselves. Aspects that were focused on during these interviews ranged from their commitment to the firm, their time to market, their potential to grow, and their ability to develop the business. Three of the interviewees were initially turned down by the incubator. In the case of one of the companies, their time to market was deemed too long and they had too much product development to complete.

_When we applied to come to Minc we met one of the business coaches. We talked to him about Venture Cup and he advised against participating because we have not come far enough. Then we also met another business advisor here at Minc. Both of them thought it was too early for us to come to Minc. It takes a long time to develop our product because there are so many new components, and normally they do not admit companies that have so much research and development remaining. They want you to be generating income during your stay here and to be able to publicly announce and launch your product while you are here. With us, that will not be possible because we are moving out before the product launch. However, when we won Venture Cup, the CEO of Minc called us and said that of course we should stay here at Minc. At that time, we also got an offer from Ideon Innovation to sit in their incubator._ (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

During the interviews, the importance of being a company with the potential to grow is focused on, in particular that the company is not a consultancy.

_For them, it is really important that it is not a consultancy. There have been a lot of consultancy firms here before, and they really wanted us to show that we were not a consultancy firm and that we had a product. Something that could grow bigger than charging clients per hour._ (Entrepreneur 20, Minc)

Minc has an exemption to accept design firms, although they are in general not considered to be growth companies and often remain small consultancies because the city has design as a focus area. The incubator admits design firms, but at the interviews with the entrepreneurs, it is pressed upon that they must be interested in growth. The design firms are, however, also admitted because their expertise is deemed beneficial for the other companies.

_Then we were admitted as an exception in the same way as the design firms. We do not have a product that we have developed and will not apply for a lot of patents in an international market. That is_
not what we do; we have expertise in marketing and we have different products within that. What they said, I have a friend who did the screening of us, is that they saw us as a huge resource for the other companies, and we have really been that. We have helped a lot of businesses with their marketing and primarily they have come with the market plan. (Entrepreneur 10, Minc)

A condition for participating in the incubator program is to set up a business in the incubator office. For many of the entrepreneurs interviewed, it was, however, the other way around. They searched for of an office and found an incubator program. Low rents and flexible leases attracted them to Anckargripsgatan 3.

*It was just that it was so easy. You could just bring your computer and start working. There were no complicated rent agreements and everything is here: conference rooms, printers and Wi-Fi. It was real great to not have to bother with that in the beginning when you have so much else to think about. It is also cheap.* (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

Many of the companies had started at home and were searching for a proper office. Others had started in the office of a client. Some of the design firms came from Ugglanhuset, in the south of Malmö, which is an office for creative professions, such as designers, photographers and journalists.

Five of the interviewees had also been in contact with other incubators based in the region. Ideon Innovation targets high-technology-based firms and is located in a science park in Lund. Some of the firms with this profile could have chosen to apply to Ideon. Ideon Innovation would have been the natural choice for four engineers that founded one of the companies, but they chose Minc because of the mix of companies.

*I happened to see an advertising sign for Minc. We are all from Lund University in Lund, and we all studied there. Our previous company and our previous employments have been in Lund. They have a similar thing in Lund called Ideon, and they call their incubator Växthuset. It would have been natural for us to go there, and we were on our way there. We had already talked with them when I saw the advertising board and I said, “I just have to call and see what this is”. When we understood what it is like here, we decided that the incubator here suited us much better. In Lund, it is very focused on technology and a lot of businesses with people like us with a background in engineering. Here, it is not at all like that. Here there is a mix, and we are one of the few new technology firms.*
There are a lot of designers and copywriters and everything that we do not have. That makes it possible for us to trade favors. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

This technology-based firm was attracted to a place that promised opportunities for collaboration and complementary knowledge. The prime reason for choosing Minc instead of other incubators is the expected exchange with other firms. Another interviewee that had started a knowledge-based company also expected a more beneficial exchange with the firms at Minc, but for another reason:

We looked at Ideon in Lund also, but we felt pretty soon that it did not suit us. It was not our type of incubator. They offer essentially the same thing... Another great advantage that we quickly discovered was the networking with the other companies in the incubator. I would say that is the greatest benefit; it overshadows all the other benefits. Just the fact that you are here with other companies in the same situation makes it easy to cooperate and help each other. The companies here suited us better. The difference between Ideon and Minc is that the companies here are from very different industries and that they are more focused on sales. They often have products and services already in the market or very close to market... In Lund, on the other hand, they often have a long time to market, usually technically very complicated products that have perhaps 3-5 years until they are ready for market launch, pure research and development. That is not at all what we are doing. We felt that we had nothing in common with those companies. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

The interviewees who had been in contact with other incubators stated that the incubators had the same offer, but they expected a better exchange with the firms at Minc. The stories display a variety of expectations on an environment that will facilitate both everyday enterprising as well as provide entrepreneurial inspiration.

Pre-Incubator

Those who are admitted to the pre-incubator can move into the incubator and use the resources offered by the incubator. The pre-incubator offers the same resources as the incubator program, but the company is not yet formally admitted to the program. The interviewees spent two or three months in the pre-incubator and tended to describe this period as a time when they continued to work according to their plans, which remained unaltered by the move into the incubator program. One of the interviewees also noted that pre-incubation
is also a possibility for entrepreneurs to see if this was the right place for them and their business.

Screening
After pre-incubation, the companies are screened. The companies are asked to present their company and their business plan to a committee made up of the incubator team and external experts. If the companies pass the screening, they are formally accepted to the incubator program. The interviewed entrepreneurs had not heard of anyone who has not passed the screening. The interviewees had all been accepted by the incubator and were all accepted to take part in the program. They described the screening as either a mere formality or a welcomed confirmation that they were on the right track.

*The screening process that you go through before you can come here is very good. You are thoroughly analyzed as an entrepreneur and also the idea you have. You get some kind of acknowledgement that what you have come up with is good.* (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

The Incubator
After a company is accepted, it may stay in the incubator for a maximum of two years. These two years are described as a non-formalized phase by the interviewees. There is no formal incubator program in the sense that the activities in the incubator are structured. The main activities mentioned by the interviewees were coaching by the incubator team, the afternoon tea seminars and the daily life at the office. These three activities will be described below.

*Coaching* is included in the incubator program and is provided by the on-site incubator team, as well as an entrepreneurial coach. The entrepreneurial coach is the newest addition to the team, and he coaches the entrepreneurs one day a week. All of the interviewees had taken advantage of the possibility to consult the incubator team. According to the interviewees, this coaching has several benefits. They mentioned the possibility to discuss specific questions on legal contracts, distribution channels and press releases. The members of the team have different specialties, such as intellectual property law, PR and sales. Most of the interlocutors used the opportunity to obtain legal advice from the consultant specializing in intellectual property law. He does not write contracts for them but reads their drafts or explains the content and meaning of contracts.

*An advantage is that there is a lawyer in the house so we can just go down stairs. We got our license contract delivered from the law firm; it was a twenty page long contract. They told us about the contract, but when we went through the contract in detail, we had a lot of questions. There were strange words and wordings that we did
not know. It was possible to go down stairs to the lawyer whenever and ask all stupid questions. So the access to people is very, very important. It made us feel safer that we could not be overrun. (Entrepreneur 14, Minc)

The access to someone on-site, someone who could answer all of their “stupid” questions, creates a feeling of safety. The discussions with the coaches were not only limited to the special fields of the coaches. Discussions on daily questions and new ideas were also very important. The possibility to discuss major decisions or minor details with a team of coaches that had seen “everything” was important for the interviewees.

What you have here…the help and the support…the advisors, the coaches. You can take your time and talk to them, get advice and be inspired. Like now when I am hiring I have had long talks with them about that. It has been very important to be able to discuss that and really hash it over. To hear someone say “I think you should hire” or “I don’t think you should”. That is very good. (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

You can really tell that they have met so many companies. Nothing is new to them. They have a lot of advice to give. “Have you thought about this?” the meetings are mostly about you talking about your own thoughts and then you come up with the answer yourself, but you just need someone to listen. (Entrepreneur 20, Minc)

The meetings with the coaches were, according to the interviewees, an opportunity to check with a third party about the viability of an idea, trusting that the coaches will tell them when they disagree. Another essential feature of the coaching was the mediation of contacts.

It is mostly about coaching, being a support, helping us and referring us to other contacts, getting us to move forward, and also stop us if something is wrong, if we are going in the wrong direction. That is also one of their roles. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

This readiness to answer any question, or to find the answer, is another benefit of the coaching.

The business advisors that are here that we have been in contact with and have had much help from, they are really prepared to answer any questions. For example, the other day, my partner and I were buying an oriental rug for our new office, for our new conference room in our new office that we are moving to in May. I
asked one of the business advisors, as a civilian person: “Do you know how you can tell if the rug is authentic?” He took the question very seriously and by sheer habit: “Well, let me see, how can I find out how a rug is authentic?” I had to smile because he reacted exactly in the same way as if I had asked him about a contract or something else that is typically part of his job. That attitude is very valuable here at Minc. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

The interviewees evidenced an informal, spontaneous and almost daily contact with the coaches. One of the interviewees had been assigned a coach when they entered the incubator and had since then developed a close relation with the coach.

Interviewer: Do you have much contact with the coaches?

Yes, a lot! You are assigned a contact that is yours. Here are a few of them and you can always catch them or book a meeting. Our contact often comes by and sees how things are going. I would say that we have almost daily contact with ours, and that is an amazing support to have. It is like having a knowledgeable boss to talk to when you have some questions. It feels safe and secure and you get separation anxiety when you move out like we are doing now. You become spoiled with everything being available here. There are all these people here in principle working for you that you can discuss everything with, from legal matters to ideas. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

Even though the interviewee had no regular meetings with the coaches, the contact was daily; therefore, he saw no need for scheduled meetings. In his case, the coach had become almost an employee in the company, although not formally a part of it. The other interviewees did not have the same daily professional contact with a coach, but most of them shared small talk by the coffee machine on a daily basis with the incubator management team.

The meetings with the coaches are consultative and optional. Each entrepreneur decides when to contact the coaches.

During the two years here [in the incubator], you are given free reign, and there is not that much control, actually. I think they exercise an indirect control, discrete control, just by popping into the office now and then asking, “How are you doing?” but you never feel like they are hovering. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)
This approach to coaching was presented as beneficial for their own motivation. More intense coaching was in some cases regarded as an intrusion in the company’s matters or a suggestion that they would not be driven enough or capable of running a business.

*No, I would not want that. We are grownups who run our own businesses. You do not want someone to hold your hand. When I want help, I ask for it.* (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

*I think we have a good dialogue with the coaches. We would perceive it as being held on a leash if someone came and told us what to do. We decide when we want to have contact with them, and that has worked very well so far.* (Entrepreneur 22, Minc)

*No, I don’t think so. It would be better if they stopped throwing coaches at us. It would be better if they helped us by strengthening our self-confidence instead. [...] Maybe it helps that we are four and are able to bandy ideas with each other. I don’t know. Based on my experience of coaching and mentoring, you should trust yourself more than others. We have gotten a lot of advice, a lot of elderly gentlemen who have told us how we should sell, and then, we have tried only to realize it was completely wrong. Maybe it is due to the fact that we are engineers and lacked self-confidence in the beginning and knew nothing about starting a business. We thought we better ask everyone about everything. That was probably not so smart; we probably knew better ourselves.* (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

However, the opposite point of view was also presented, suggesting a process with assigned coaches and scheduled meetings. The interviewees that proposed more intense coaching tended to do so for two different reasons. The entrepreneurs without prior experience of starting a business would benefit from this because they do not know what to ask.

*As an inexperienced business owner, you have so many questions; you do not know what to do or what possibilities you have. That is why I think it is important that the incubator require that you have a personal coach when you sit in the incubator. A personal coach who keeps track of the company and who can tell you about different possibilities, that it is possible to apply for financing or that you can take a loan. “You can do this or that”. This is necessary for an incubator to be able to survive. Otherwise, it will turn into a playground where people only sit and pay cheap rent. It is a requirement if the incubator is to run successfully that you have someone who can give advice and tell how things work in reality.*
The thing is that you have your own little company—it is so easy to shield yourself from the rest of the world. As in our case, we would have been able to develop, develop, develop, and not cared about selling or anything like that. That is why I think it is so important to talk to an external person for the entrepreneurs. (Entrepreneur 14, Minc)

The other point of view suggested that this would be beneficial because otherwise, entrepreneurs just act without reflecting about their decisions. The coaching at Minc was thus represented as an informal interaction with a consultative approach.

Afternoon Tea: The incubator also offers seminars (afternoon tea) monthly on different subjects. The topics discussed at the seminars range from pricing products to venture capital. The incubator invites accountants, lawyers, venture capitalists and successful entrepreneurs. The lecturers have talked about practicalities of doing business, such as value added tax, marketing and invoices. A venture capitalist was invited to describe their investment policies and how they decide when they invest. Another category of lecturer that has been invited is successful entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who tell their success story and about major transitions in their entrepreneurial processes: receiving venture capital or appointing a professional CEO. One of the interviewees noted that the topics all pointed in a certain direction:

There is a clear goal that the businesses should not be one-man firms. There is no doubt about what they want. The training, afternoon tea, is about how to choose a board of directors in a limited company. You should have a large turnover, grow…I suppose you can ignore it, but you are influenced in a certain direction. (Entrepreneur 16, Minc)

All of the incubator companies are invited to attend the two-hour lectures. The companies are encouraged to attend, but attendance is not compulsory. The entrepreneurs may also request topics for the seminars. All but one of my interlocutors had attended the seminars. According to the interviewees, the topics of the seminars are often relevant, but they rarely come at the right stage in their own process. One of the interviewees, who had attended many of the seminars in the last two years, suggested that:

The afternoon tea is focused on practicalities, it should be more about…I really should tell them this. It should be more about inspiration rather than how to do your accounting. They have themes and then they invite an accountant, a lawyer or a patent agency and then you can ask questions. The best lectures have been
when an entrepreneur who has succeeded with something because they have done things differently and done their own thing. I think that has been most inspirational. The practical seminars either come before or after you need them and then you find out what you need anyway. No, I think inspiration would be better and would suit more people. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

The entrepreneur argued that the seminars should be more about inspiration than practicalities. The practicalities they have to find out anyway as part of the entrepreneurial process. The difference for her is that in business, you only learn about what you have to know at a particular stage in the process. There is no time to learn anything that you do not necessarily need to know. The alternative cost for attending the meetings is thus calculated.

*Everyday Life at the Office:* The entrepreneurs move into offices at the incubator. The interviewees tended to describe the incubator office as a social and creative place. On the ground floor, there are meeting rooms and common areas and also the desks of the incubator management team. The incubator team members all have their desks on the ground floor in the open office space facing the coffee machine and the entrance door. The interviewees often take the chance to ask questions when passing by the incubator team’s desks on their way to get coffee. The newly started firms in this study had few or no employees. At the incubator, there are other tenants to have lunch with or talk to during coffee breaks. At the lunch table, they can also have informal discussions and obtain valuable information about venture capital or innovation loans. The interviewees put forth the benefits for a small firm to be part of a larger group. A group of companies that were moving out in 2009 were even considering renting an office together when they moved out of the incubator. These companies had developed such strong relation both personally and professionally that they searched for a new office that they could share. However, there was no landlord that was willing to rent an office to seven small businesses, and they had to spread over town.

The interviewees also tended to use the label “creative” about Minc as an incubator space. The creativity aspect of the incubator was touched upon in several different ways. It was important to be in an environment with other entrepreneurs that inspired and excited them.

*I like it because it is a creative environment. It feels like the house is bursting with energy. Things are happening, and you are stimulated by the others that are working hard. If we would have been alone, we would not have gotten that energy. (Entrepreneur 20, Minc)*
It was also central to be a part of a place that was considered as entrepreneurial and innovative in the community and to have the possibility to develop new products and services together with other companies in the incubator. They networked to create new products and services. One of the interviewees stated that there were “five other companies that helped each other, did business and brainstormed together” (Entrepreneur 18, Minc).

There are a lot of design firms here that work with design and layout and we buy a lot of services from them. They develop and design our websites. What else could there be? In one case, we have approached a customer together because we complement each other and can deliver a better service together. Otherwise it is about using each other as a sounding board and discussing ideas with those you have a good relation with. You check your ideas with them and not only the business developers. You get more comments on your ideas. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

Thus, the incubator is also presented as a place where the companies can do business. The interaction between the companies has resulted in new customers, suppliers and joint ventures. In addition, the interviewees mentioned creativity in connection with the composition of the companies and entrepreneurs in the incubator. The interviewees tended to describe Minc as a place with a great variety of companies and entrepreneurs. The companies in the incubator at the time of the interviews ranged from small design consultancy firms to firms developing high-tech products. The entrepreneurs were engineers, designers, marketers and managers. During the Design Year, the incubator created a Design Hub and gathered design firms on the third floor. Not all companies on the third floor are part of the Design Hub. Among the design firms are a number of knowledge-based firms that develop products and services. The fourth floor housed companies that were developing and selling high-technology products. They ranged from younger entrepreneurs who had just passed their exams to entrepreneurs with many years of experience from management in large corporations. This mix of different types of companies and competencies was described as beneficial for entrepreneurship. From this point of view, the trend toward more specialized incubators poses a problem.

To incubators, it is all about being inspiring and having a high ceiling. I think that is very important. To accept companies that are as different as possible in order to get as much variety as possible... I think that is very important and not to accept just a certain type of technology firms because it is practical for the incubator that they have the same needs. I do not think that is the best solution. Now, they have a biotechnology incubator in Lund. At Ideon Innovation, it
is mostly high technology. At Ugglanhuset in Malmö, they have poor small business owners; those they can’t have in incubators. They ought to mix more. A photographer who works for fun but is unable to charge enough may be much better at it if he could meet some real businessmen. The technology people, the engineers, could really benefit from meeting some professions other than their own. I think you have to see that with your own eyes. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

To understand the value of other competencies than their own, the entrepreneurs must interact with others. One of the interviewees, who developed and produced a technology-based product for the consumer market, had many business relations in-house. He and his co-founders chose Minc instead of an incubator that specialized in technology-based companies because they wanted to move into an environment with entrepreneurs with other competencies than their own.

We have several partnerships. A company on the second floor designs our products: an industrial designer. Another company has done our website, a third, some advertising material, and a fourth, some copyright. That has been the best thing for us to meet these kinds of people because we have never been in that world before. Technology is all we know, and everything else, we have to learn—PR, marketing, sales and design. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

What made the incubator more than an office for him was the possibility to learn about other worlds.

Exit

After two years in the incubator, there is an exit-ceremony for the companies that move out. The ceremony is a way for the incubator to market the companies and itself. The companies are no longer a part of the program and should now have established themselves in the market. The interviewees have not perceived any other explicit goals for the companies.

There are a lot of expressed wishes about what they want when you are screened: “Your company must have growth potential, you must have a certain level of creativity”, but I have never heard anything about what they expect us to have fulfilled when we exit. Not at all. They evaluate if you can come in and then you will develop the business on those premises and expand. Then they let us loose. It’s a bit like anarchy, but we have done well. If you compare us with when we moved in it is like a fairy tale. We are today two businesses and we moved in as one. We were two people when we moved in and
now we are 12. We work with one of the largest communication firms in Sweden, so now we have been asked to have a breakfast meeting when we will tell our story. But it has always been about us and our own drive. You cannot come here and sit on your bum and think that you will get help and have a business after two years. I don’t think anyone else thinks that either. I think those people disappear in the screening process. (Entrepreneur 10, Minc)

The exit is a spatial exit; the companies move out of the incubator office space. The exiting companies have the option to move into another part of the building, the workspace area, or rent their own office in the city. In the workspace area, they may still take part in the seminars organized by Minc and keep in contact with the incubator team. Of the interviewees, eight of them were preparing to exit the incubator. One of the companies had chosen to move to the workspace, whereas the companies in the former Design Hub were renting their own offices.

5.3 Chalmers Innovation in 2009

This chapter is about business incubation at Chalmers Innovation. First, the process is introduced with images of the incubator as a process and place as described by Chalmers Innovation. In the second part, the description of the incubation process is based on the depictions in the entrepreneurs’ narratives.

5.3.1 Chalmers Innovation as Depicted by the Incubator Management

This section will introduce Chalmers Innovation through a number of images of the history of Chalmers Innovation, the incubator, the application process, and the coaching. The Chalmers Innovation incubator was founded in 1999 and supports technology-based companies from universities and industrial spin-offs (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). The aim is to “shorten or add value to the start-up process for technology-based ideas” (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). Thus, Chalmers Innovation invests at the very early stages in unique business ideas and develops high growth companies. The ideas must be technology-based, and the team must commit to rapid growth. At the premises of the incubator, the companies are offered advice on business development by business coaches. They also offer the entrepreneurs access to a network of professional advisors and venture capitalists.

The History of Chalmers Innovation

The Chalmers Innovation foundation was founded in 1997 through a donation by the Sten A Olsson foundation for research and culture. The donation made it possible to develop “a center for innovational activities at Chalmers...
University of Technology” (Chalmers Innovation - History). The initial phase of the development centered on the acquisition and establishment of office space for the ventures. The funds were used to acquire and renovate the Holtermanska real-estate in 1997. In 1999, the incubator officially opened in the renovated building, which was renamed Stena Center. In 2000, a second center, Lindholmen Center, was started by Chalmers Innovation in the former harbor area. This center is committed to ideas within IT and telecom, whereas Stena Center houses other technologies. The incubator at Lindholmen was part of the efforts to develop the former harbor into a “hub for IT, telecom and media in Gothenburg with company establishments such as Ericsson, IBM and Semcon” (Chalmers Innovation - History). At this stage in its development, the business incubator “co-acted with the companies, by being advisors, and affected the development through giving inspiration and supplying our companies with a network of professional players whom were established in the innovation system” (Chalmers Innovation - History). In 2001, the pre-incubator was established, and the role of the incubator changed. The incubator no longer acted only as advisors.

From being just advisors and landlords, we went to becoming investors, which gave us opportunities to actively catalyze our companies’ future development. This has also enabled us to work more actively and engage ourselves in the companies. (Chalmers Innovation - History)

Chalmers Innovation acquired the funds to invest 300 000 SEK in the early stages of idea development. The next significant step was when the incubator became the investment partner of Innovationbron. This meant that companies within Chalmers Innovation gained access to another 1 MSEK in investment capital. Another important historic event listed on the website was an exit in 2006 when Systems OK was sold to Nasdaq-listed Sonic Solutions. In 2009, another major change in the incubator’s processes and work procedures was instigated; Chalmers Innovation launched “Objective Oriented Planning”.

In September 2009, Chalmers Innovation will go from, as earlier, having 3-5 years as the maximum incubation period to having Objective Oriented Planning for our incubatees. This will facilitate our planning, result in a more effective incubation period and can easily be integrated with tools, templates and recommendations to our incubator companies. (Chalmers Innovation - History)

In 2009, the incubator had been in business for ten years: “10 years of success” stated the website. According to the website, several positive developments supported this, and it highlighted three of them (Chalmers Innovation - About us). First, the incubator had developed more than 90 high-
tech, rapid-growth companies. Second, in 2003, the incubator had been awarded the prize “Best Science Based Incubator on Return on Public Investment” by the National Business Incubation Association”. According to the website, Chalmers Innovation was also proclaimed to be “one of Europe’s most prominent business incubators” by the European Investment Fund. This resulted in the Chalmers Innovation Seed Fund.

Pre-incubator, Incubator and Growth Generator

The development process at Chalmers Innovation is divided into three steps: pre-incubator, incubator and growth generator (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). Chalmers Innovation invests both in early ideas and high growth companies. On the website, the argument is made for that their investment is a guarantee for the value of their management: “Since we’re sharing the risk and being involved in the management for each company, we never give advice that we do not believe in”. In the pre-incubator step, a business development process is initiated, and Chalmers Innovation can invest up to 300 000 SEK. This is offered to “persons that have a promising business idea with great potential”. Over a six-month period, a business plan is prepared while evaluating the potential for the idea to be developed into a new rapid growth company. In the second step, the incubator, Chalmers Innovation may invest another 300 000 SEK. In this phase, the incubator develops the ideas into “robust rapid growth companies” (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). This is done in “collaboration with the founders of the new companies and other financiers” (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). Chalmers Innovation contributes “expert guidance in business development”. The incubator is offered to “companies that have completed a business plan and the initial verification of the technical and marketing requirements” (Chalmers Innovation - How it works). The objective of this phase is to establish the company in the market. The third step is the growth generator, which is offered to rapid growth companies that have already established themselves in the market. The objective of this phase is to either make these companies double their turnover or to establish themselves in new markets. The process at this incubator was developed in 1999. The manager describes the difference as follows:

> When we started, we said that you could come enter the incubator if you had a limited company. Our incubator consisted of a number of like-minded, offices, some education, some counseling. We had of course offices with services. To tell the truth, we were a qualified business hotel with some counseling and networking. (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

The first major change was that the incubator started to take 5% of the shares in the tenant companies in exchange for their services. This was and is still
uncommon in Sweden, but the other incubator in this interview study does not take this share. The incubator also has an investment fund and is able to invest in the companies. The involvement in the companies has increased and entailed a closer monitoring of the companies’ progress.

In the beginning, our involvement in the companies was rather limited. Today, we are very active, especially in the early phases. Every company gets a coach. Today, we have weekly meetings when we go through and monitor every company according to a rota system. All pre-incubation companies are monitored every week and the incubator companies every fourth week. We discuss especially important problems and solve them. We go in and are active in a lot of phases. Now we have a requirement that we should be owners and that we should have a board position in these companies during incubation. We are involved in forming the board and recruit members to the board. (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

The model is not based on entrepreneurial learning. If the inventors cannot manage the development of the new company themselves, they are teemed up with entrepreneurs.

A lot of those who come to us are per definition technical geeks, scientists and inventors who know a lot about technology. We are still pretty unique with this model. We say that we should have one innovator and one entrepreneur that we match together in a project together with a business coach from Chalmers Innovation. We avoid trying to make entrepreneurs out of innovators. Or we avoid making entrepreneurs out of scientists. Or if I express myself a bit carelessly, we avoid trying to make bad business men out of scientists. It has proven to be a successful model because then you have well-defined roles that provide good resilience. (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

The entrepreneurs are often students from the Chalmers School of Entrepreneurship. During their studies, they develop a technological invention into a new venture. The incubator recruits the team, from CEO to research assistants.

The incubator manager commented on the company’s dependency on the incubator accordingly:

I think there is such a risk [that they can be too dependent]. It is like raising kids. In the beginning, you have to do everything; you feed them and change diapers. We are very active in the early phases,
but as time goes on, our role become more passive. (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

The incubator is characterized by strong involvement of the incubator management. The focus is more on coaching than on the environment. The incubator manager stated that this model was appropriate for this particular context and not necessarily suited in another.

I don’t think one way is right and the other wrong. Why wouldn’t it be a good thing to aggregate businesses in an environment where they can benefit from each other. The basic concept is good, but you have to identify your role in the environment you live in. What is our role and how does that relate to the other actors in the local system? Is it good for the companies that we are involved in the board or not? Is it good that we are involved in the financing, or should we just say that: “No, you have to arrange your own”? (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

They had identified financing as the foremost problem for the ventures and therefore concentrated their efforts on assisting the ventures in finding financing. The incubator manager compared the role to business angels and venture capitalists in other regional innovation systems.

Application Process
Chalmers Innovation offers three different types of collaborations: pre-incubator, incubator and growth accelerator. Each of these collaborations is preceded by an evaluation process. Chalmers Innovation assesses the business idea and the company according to the following assessment criteria (Chalmers Innovation - How it works):

The business idea must: (1) be unique and high-tech, (2) have a high, global market potential, with potential to create a rapid growth company, (3) be open to financing from customers, or from the public or private sector, and (4) have, or be prepared to accept, entrepreneurial management.

Chalmers Innovation evaluates 120 ideas each year and commences collaborations and invests in 10 of them. According to the website, the initial contact is often a discussion over the phone with one of the business coaches that are experienced in determining whether a technological finding is suitable as a commercial project. The next step is a meeting with one of the business coaches after submitting an application form, which the applicants can
download from the website with further instructions\textsuperscript{5}. If the coach assesses that the idea lives up to the criteria outlined above, the innovator is asked to present the idea to the other seven coaches at Chalmers Innovation. On the website, any aspiring innovator may download a presentation template with issues that must be addressed and read further instructions for the presentation\textsuperscript{6} (Chalmers Innovation - Application process).

Collaboration with the Coaches

Once Chalmers Innovation has accepted the project “into its processes”, the project is assigned a coach (Chalmers Innovation - Collaboration with the Coaches). The coach is appointed from the staff of the incubator. The incubator employs seven coaches.

\textit{All coaches at Chalmers Innovation have several years of on-site experience in business development of ideas during start-up phases. The purpose of the coaching is to implement these experiences in close cooperation through weekly meetings and interaction.} (Chalmers Innovation - Collaboration with the Coaches)

Each coach is responsible for five companies. This is deemed by the incubator to be an appropriate number to allow the coaches to put as much energy and time into the projects as possible. The appointment of the coach is done to support the business development during the whole “project period” at Chalmers Innovation.

During the fall of 2009, a detailed description of the collaboration with the coaches was added to the website. It described the procedures with weekly meetings between the coach and project manager and coach-to-coach meetings. First, the innovator and the coach develop shared work procedures and clarify their expectations of each other. The innovator is asked to articulate her expectations of Chalmers Innovation and the coaching. The coach will then communicate her expectations of the innovator. It is noted that personal relations must function and that the relationship must be based on trust to be successful. Second, coach meetings are held weekly, both during the pre-incubation phase and in the beginning of the incubator phase. The role of the coach is to act as “a motivator and demand-maker”. It is noted that while all coaches have experience starting technologically based ventures and are willing to share this knowledge, they are not supposed to work in an operative capacity in the venture.

\textsuperscript{5} Idea description checklist
\textsuperscript{6} Checklist for presentation and Presentation for pre-incubator
The coach is not supposed to be in charge for the operational drive. The project manager is expected to be self sufficient, initiate initiatives and be unrestrained in asking questions to the coach. (Chalmers Innovation - Collaboration with the Coaches)

Hence, the project managers are expected to manage the projects but report weekly on their progress to the coach. During the process, there are scheduled compulsory meetings with the coach for the project manager and initially the inventor. The purpose of weekly meetings is as follows:

To keep up the tempo you will together with your coach schedule weekly meetings. The project manager must always attend these meetings. In those cases that the company has both a project manager and an innovator, the later will attend the initial weekly meetings together with the coach. (Chalmers Innovation - Collaboration with the Coaches)

The following expectations on the project manager were communicated on the website:

During the weekly meetings the project manager is expected to prepare questions or subjects to discuss with the coach participate actively compile a weekly report with objectives, how far the development has gone, possible problem areas and a plan of operations for the coming week carry out operations agreed on (Chalmers Innovation - Collaboration with the Coaches).

Chalmers Innovation thus expects project managers and innovators to be active and take initiative both in coaching and in enterprising. Other expectations are the documentation of the planning and implementation of the activities agreed upon at the weekly meetings. In the next section, these processes and procedures are described based on the narrations by the entrepreneurs.

5.3.2 The Incubator as Depicted by the Entrepreneurs

The description of the incubation process in this section is based on interviewees’ stories about their own processes. The reader is guided through their depictions of their initial contact with the incubator, entrance into the pre-incubator, meetings with the coach, everyday life at the office, and finally, their plans for moving out.

Initial Contact

The primary reason for the interviewees to contact Chalmers Innovation was the financing, i.e., the seed capital available. According to the interviewees,
there are few other choices to attract seed capital or venture capital in the region. Few of them had considered any other incubators. They mentioned a number of incubators in the region that they had considered: Framtidens företag, Brewhouse, Katapult and Sahlgrenska Science Park. Although the most frequent reason for choosing Chalmers Innovation was the available funds, the possibility of obtaining support in managing the start-up was frequently mentioned. One of the interviewees had had contact with another investor, but Chalmers Innovation was faster, and their criterion was to get started fast and at full speed. The interviewee had started businesses before, but personally, she thought it was a great opportunity to learn something new and obtain some support because her co-founders did not have any previous work experience or entrepreneurial experience. For the interviewees, the availability of coaches and the incubator’s experience of how to manage technology-based companies were mentioned as additional factors influencing the decision. The interviewees had contacted the incubator and had initial discussions with the coaches.

Pre-Incubator
After the initial discussion, the interviewees were invited to present their idea to the incubator team. The decision whether they would be accepted into the pre-incubator was made by the business coaches. This decision about accepting a venture had to be unanimous. For those interviewees whose ventures were accepted to the pre-incubator, this phase was all about developing the technology and researching the market. They were assigned a coach, who they had weekly meetings with, and started to prepare a business plan. Among the interviewees, there were also project managers who had been recruited by the incubator to develop the venture at this pre-incubation phase. One of the interviewees who had been recruited as a project manager described the thought behind the process and also touched upon the difficulties with developing someone’s idea.

They do that very often. The idea is that innovators are rarely any good at being entrepreneurs or project managers. They are good at technology. So they try to connect technological competence with someone that can run the business. Chalmers Innovation has a relatively high level of technology in the projects they invest in, and it is often connected to researchers or technicians that are exceptionally good in the field but not so socially competent. So they try to match this, and the marriage is not always successful. The better you are within your field, the cockier you are with your baby, and that creates some tricky situations. At the same time, there are a lot of founders who think that they would make a great CEO in a company just because they are the best in the world at their thing. I don’t know if it works. A good entrepreneur has an extremely good
understanding of the product and the customer as well as an extremely good competence for running a business and getting everything together, making everything work and selling the stuff. Those people rarely need an incubator. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

After the pre-incubation phase, the projects present their business plans to a committee of external experts. Those ventures that are approved by this committee may enter the incubator. A number of the interviewees had not entered the pre-incubator but had entered the incubator directly after negotiations. These ventures came from the Chalmers School of Entrepreneurship or Gothenburg Bio Science School of Entrepreneurship. These interviewees had already worked with their projects for a year during their undergraduate studies. Their ideas came from scientists and researchers at Chalmers School of Technology, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, or Volvo. The researchers came with their projects to the schools of entrepreneurship because they did not want to, or could not, develop the idea into a product themselves. As students, these interviewees worked on a business plan for the development of the venture. The analyses they did as part of their studies coincided with the requirements for entering the incubator. Therefore, these ventures were allowed to present their business plan to the committee without entering the pre-incubator.

The Incubator

The incubator in the interviewees’ descriptions consists of coaching meetings, the BAS-program and the everyday life at the two centers.

Coaching Meetings: In the incubator, the ventures were assigned a coach, and in the beginning, they had weekly meetings with the coach. The interviewees normally had the same coach in the pre-incubator and the incubator. According to the interviewees, the coaching meetings had several purposes: discussing the daily run of affairs, strategic planning and reports on progress. The managers used the meetings to discuss daily questions and ideas with the coach. One of the interviewees expressed the support she felt from the coach as she was running the business alone.

These coaching meetings are a lot about getting support with daily operations, to be able to vent and have a sounding board. It can be difficult at times since I run the business alone. I mean I wouldn’t call my chairman of the board to discuss certain things, so the coach is very helpful when I just want to bandy ideas. [I use the coach] to get some help when the scientists are unruly, and we discuss how to get them on board again. (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)
The discussions with the coach are an opportunity to go over their problems with someone outside the company and to get help with how to proceed. Interviewees without prior experience of starting a business expressed the importance of being able to check their decisions with the coach. However, they suggested that it is probably different for those with previous experience of running a business.

I think there are big differences between the companies here. Some of the people here in the incubator have run a lot of businesses before, but for me, it is my first journey. I think, but that is only a guess, that then you recurce more to the coach who has done the journey many times before, who knows the pitfalls, and you take every opportunity to use them. On the other hand, if you have managed projects or businesses before, then I don’t think you have the same need to discuss everything and get approval before you make important decisions. So I think how you view the relation with the coach depends on your previous experiences. (Entrepreneur 1, Chalmers Innovation)

One of the interviewees who had started several businesses before appreciated the coaching.

To me it has been invaluable to have a sounding board because I have never had one before. It has been great to really bandy everything, high and low. Everything from general whining to real strategic questions. So it has been great. (Entrepreneur 3, Chalmers Innovation)

The coaching meetings were not only about daily issues but also strategic planning. The interviewees mentioned this as one of the activities that the incubator initiated in the companies. The coach initiated the process of planning and setting goals for the venture.

Then the work got started, and we were assigned a coach. Yes, they have a formula that they follow so the coach started certain activities in the company that they normally do. Planning and goal setting processes, for example; they set goals. Since we did the new issue of shares, we set some goals for what we were going to do with the money and where we wanted to be when the money runs out. It is a pretty rigorous process to set up activities and goals for the issue of shares. So that was the kind of activities that we started. (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)
Those interviewees who had started companies before tended to describe the planning as important, but perhaps not prioritized, in the start-up phase. One of the interviewees was strongly encouraged to have “strategy days,” which she described as important and beneficial.

*The good thing was that you had to ask yourself questions that you don’t normally do. You know you are supposed to have strategy days according to the rules but you don’t do that when you have a million things to do. We were forced to do it or at least strongly encouraged to do it. It was part of their process that we were supposed to do an I-map where you look at your strategy, what we should do, how should we do it, break it down in intermediate goals, who should do it? That is really important, but it is really easy to not do it when you have gotten started and it is fun and you work and you just do. It was hard for us to say that we were going to sit down two days and analyze and develop a strategy. It feels like: “But I want to call that customer or I want to develop this”. It is difficult to take the time, so it was really good to follow that structure. (Entrepreneur 3, Chalmers Innovation)*

After this initial planning process initiated by the coach, the company, however, did not continue with these sessions. The importance of long-term planning, objectives and analyses is recognized by the interviewees as an important part of venturing for Chalmers Innovation.

The function of meetings was also described as a weekly report on progress. Because Chalmers Innovation is an investor in the companies, they perceived the meetings as a way for the incubator to control their progress.

*As a representative for the investors and the owners, she also has a responsibility to Chalmers Innovation to make sure that we are doing what we should so there is some kind of progress report every week, a status report of some kind. The coach always asks: “How are you doing? What has happened?” So she stays updated and makes sure we don’t mess up too much. (Entrepreneur 1, Chalmers Innovation)*

The meetings are structured differently depending on the coach, but for most of the interviewees, they were as follows: sales/market, technology and economy. The purpose was to structure and plan the work and to follow-up on the plan from the last week.

The interviewees indicated that their relation to the coach and the coaching situation was influenced by the fact that the coach is the representative of an
investor. For the interviewees, the coach was also often the representative of Chalmers Innovation on their board. The interviewees showed that they had thought about and discussed their relation to the coach. They had come to different decisions whether to be open or not in discussions with the coach. Those who had decided on being open, however, understood those who chose to not disclose everything.

From the beginning, the routine was that the coach and the board member were the same person. Now, they have started to separate the roles, and I think it has to do with their flexibility. They want to be able to match the right person with the right company. In our business, the coach and board member are two different persons. Chalmers Innovation demands to have a board position; it’s in the shareholder agreement that they should have a board position. They usually have that until you leave the incubator and often even longer. It is to get control over the business, and that you can understand. It is like wearing two hats: A coach should coach, and the board member should make demands. I don’t think it works in practice. In those situations, when I really have to discuss a sensitive question, I would never talk to my coach. He is far too mixed up in Chalmers Innovation. I would much rather talk to some of the others CEOs here that I trust; in spite of the fact that I have an unusual amount of trust for my coach, he is too close. He has to be loyal to his organization, and there is nothing wrong with that. It is an interesting situation. So for us, the roles are separated, but not all companies have it like that. I think they are trying to implement the model we have. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

As I have understood it, the board member should not be the same person as the coach. It could be that they want...the coaches to have different competence so it could be that they want to have a coach with different competence on the board or they choose to have the stick and the carrot in different places. I mean, it could be difficult; it could be a tricky situation if the person you work with all week and discuss everything with is also in the board room. That could be difficult. In that case, you might choose not to discuss certain things with your coach. I reasoned like that before we started working, and I was set on having a different coach as board member so I could talk to the coach about everything. However, I get along so well with my coach that I feel that the support in the board room outweighs the difficulty of sharing information that the coach then brings to the board room. So in my case, it works great with the same person as coach and board member. (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)
For the interviewees, there was tension between the coaching and controlling part of the relation.

Regarding how and why the relation with the incubator and the coach changes, most of the interviewees mentioned a progression in their relation with the incubator. Those in the beginning of their process expected that they would become independent of the coach when they had built a viable company.

*Slowly, but surely, they start to phase out the coach. As I have understood it, before you come to the pre-incubator and right after you arrive, you have meetings every week. As the venture progresses, the meetings are only every other week instead until finally the coach is not needed anymore because you have built a viable business that can manage on its own.* (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)

Those who had come further in their process noted that they became independent of the incubator after a year. Most of the interviewees that adhered to this group also considered this development as natural. Once the foundations of the companies are in place, the need for a coach lessens.

*In the beginning, they are very good to create formalities and structure that you really have to have in companies; otherwise, it would be the “Wild, Wild West”. If you have a lot of inexperienced people—and we were in the beginning—none of us, including our chairman of the board, had done this before. Our coach was very good a creating structure. “This is how you compose a board and this how you make a budget.” They help you with a lot of things like that. They have a program with basic education in everything from sales to teamwork, and that is very useful and good; but when you have done the basic education, and the company enters the next phase, and you have problems specific to the firm, then they rarely have anything to contribute. The reason for that is that in order to be able to help, you have to extremely involved in a business, and even though Chalmers Innovation tries to be very involved, and I have understood from friends...I have a lot of friends who are entrepreneurs and have been in other incubators, I can tell that Chalmers Innovation is exceptionally active, supportive and good. They are extremely good at supporting businesses in crisis, and that they should get credit for; but at the same time, they don’t have much to contribute when you come to the more specific phases. I don’t have the same problems as my neighboring company, even if some problems are the same, and when we need to talk about the*
really difficult stuff, then it requires that you really have worked with it to understand. So, I can say it like this: If I started a new business, I would not go to Chalmers Innovation with it because I feel like I have the knowledge they can contribute. I have that now. I don’t think they can contribute much more than money. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

One of the interviewees described the process as a transition from coach to advisor and member of the board. The coaching is intense in the beginning, and gradually the role changes. The coach changes to a consultant, and they contact you when they have a specific problem to discuss.

*His role has changed step by step. He has changed into an advisor; if you need help you ask. The role changes gradually from coach to advisor to board member.* (Entrepreneur 6, Chalmers Innovation)

The other group of interviewees did describe a shift, but in another sense. The relation changed because they learnt to know the coach, or that the character of the questions they discussed changed because the company developed.

The managers are coached by a team of coaches with different competencies: financing, management, marketing and technology. The interviewees had been assigned coaches with special competence in financing, HR-management, project management, technological development and marketing. The interviewees had used their assigned coach for general questions but had also, in some cases, had contact with the others. The background of the coaches is diverse:

*It varies. Some of them have run their own businesses and then worked with marketing and sales in large corporations and wanted to get back to the basics. We have two who have been involved in establishing the financial sector in the region of Västra Götaland with, for example, Almi and Innovationsbron. Primarily, they have experience from marketing and sales and financing in larger corporations.* (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)

One of the coaches had prior experience developing a technological idea from invention to product. This is experience that the interviewees stated that the incubator found essential for the coaches to have and therefore occasionally appoint a coach as project manager for a venture.

*They really want the coaches to have the practical experiences of running a start-up, so if there is an appropriate company who needs someone to manage it, they usually appoint one of the new coaches*
to run it for a time so that the coaches will have that experience too. (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)

I think that Chalmers Innovation during a period had the idea that everyone, since the coaches rarely had business, management or entrepreneurship experience themselves, would, for a time, run a company so that they would better understand what it is all about. I think that is a smart idea, but I don’t know to what extent that has been done. I know that one of the coaches has resigned and is now the CEO for one of the companies. The aim is that all of them on different occasions should be CEO for a company in order to get that experience. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

According to the interviewees, the coaches had different competencies, and their knowledge was complemented by this system with an understanding for starting and developing a company.

The BAS-program offers basic courses in the fundamentals in management: teamwork, sales and project management. Most of the interviewees had attended the courses. For those interviewees who had previous experience from starting and running a business, the topics were described as relevant, but the level did not correspond to their own level of knowledge in the field. One of the former students from the entrepreneurship schools also pointed to the overlap of the courses and their studies.

Everyday Life at Stena Center and Lindholmen: The ventures that are accepted to the pre-incubator or incubator move into the offices at Stena Center or Lindholmspiren 5. The interviewees were tenants from Stena Center or Lindholmspiren 5. The incubator companies pay rents adjusted to the conditions on the market and a service fee during their stay in the incubator.

There are two different centers. The concept is based on that when you come to the incubator, they want you to stay here or at Lindholmen for a period. It is to get access to the coach and the other companies. As I have understood it, they previously had a system where you didn’t have to physically stay at the incubator, but they didn’t think it fitted the concept for Chalmers Innovation. So now you have to stay for a period. The period is, however, not fixed, and the length depends on the company’s needs. If the company has to move, then it is of course possible, but it has to be discussed. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)
The interviewees had either signed a contract that they would move in and stay for a certain period or had been strongly encouraged to move in. One of the interviewees had had a discussion about moving in:

_It is an expressed desire but not in a contract. We had that discussion when we were coming here; they said: “We want you to stay here for a period.” I think it is good; otherwise, the risk is that...since I am alone I could have been working from my kitchen but then I would miss out on so much that is available here in the environment. You miss out on the opportunity to sit next to someone at lunch that has a smart idea or to network or to hear what someone else does. I think you miss a lot of things if you don’t stay in this kind of environment. It is a pretty important part._ *(Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)*

Even though the interviewees came to the incubator primarily for financing, they all evidenced the benefits of being in the incubator environment. The informal interaction with the other project managers, CEOs, employees and coaches were considered as important for the interviewees. Through the interactions in the incubator, you learn about the questions you didn’t even know you should ask.

_Since we are here in the incubator, a lot of things are added that are not formal, just by the fact that I am here with other companies in a similar situation. Instead of being three persons isolated in an office, we are three persons in a business incubator with other businesses that have about the same problems. We are a small part of a larger group. Here there are just six companies, so *(Lindholmspiren)* it is not as obvious as at Stena Center where there are 25 to 30 companies. There is a spirit of community in the corridors and that exchange you also have with the coaches. You meet in the corridors and chat a bit, get some new ideas and perspectives. Someone asks: “How did it go with that?” and that is not the formal but the informal. The informal is very important for the driving force in the companies too. I think it is much more important than you might think._ *(Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)*

The interviewees tended to define the incubator as a place where you could find neither customers nor business partners for joint ventures. None of the interviewees had any formal business transactions with the other ventures, but they mentioned that there were two companies that cooperated in a joint-venture. However, they evidenced the benefits of being close to other companies working with technological innovations.
There are always new problems, so there are always ups and downs. Sometimes when it feels really, really tough, it feels good to talk to the other business owners here and realize that it is the same for everyone. Everyone has these huge technical problems, but they will solve themselves. If you had been on your own, perhaps you would have thought...perhaps you would simply have given up. But those kinds of challenges are part of everyday life, and thus it is a huge advantage to be able to be here with similar businesses and see that they have the same kinds of problems. (Entrepreneur 1, Chalmers Innovation)

Having an office in the incubator provides the possibility to discuss problems with those who are either going through the same processes or have already gone through them. This interaction often takes place at the lunch table.

There is a lot of knowledge transfer between the companies when we try to help each other. Meeting each other at lunch and at other events makes you realize we have similar problems. Sometimes someone can give you a tip about a method, solution or manufacturer that is useful, and I can help someone else. It is like at larger companies; it is at lunch meetings and coffee breaks that you solve problems. (Entrepreneur 4, Chalmers Innovation)

At Stena Center, there is “the glass alley”, where many of the interviewees frequently have lunch with other tenants. At the other center at Lindholmspiren 5, the companies share a kitchen with three lunch tables. The incubator encourages networking among the tenants both directly through parties, VD-forum and outings, and indirectly through offices with common areas. The interviewees also emphasized the importance of being in an environment with “exceptionally driven people” and being a part of the strong brand of Chalmers Innovation. Being a company at Chalmers Innovation they noted as very beneficial because it gave credibility to the venture. Chalmers Innovation gives structure and stability to new ventures. One of the entrepreneurs who had worked at a company at Chalmers Innovation when the incubator was founded described a culture focused on structure, stability and the long-term but also on how the culture has developed and changed over the years as the incubator matured as an organization.

I have a friend that has been at Sting, which is a business incubator in Stockholm. I have been there a few times, and it is so much fun to go there because you can feel that there is such a focus on sales. It’s all about sales, sales, sales. Chalmers Innovation is about structure, stability and the long-term. It feels like Sting has another approach,
much more sales oriented. It of course has its advantages and disadvantages. They have more service companies there, and here there are more technology-based companies. So the approach is a bit different. It is there for a reason. Someone has created that spirit. Someone is the culture bearer there, and culture bearers are also incredibly important for the incubator too. I also think that it can change over time. I was here and worked for another business in 1999 or 2000, and I feel like it was a completely different atmosphere here then. It was younger then and perhaps more creative. Now it is much more formal, and the process is established. Chalmers Innovation was founded in 1999, so it was very young then and the structure wasn’t there yet. Culture bearers are a very important part of the incubator and the identity. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

Moving Out

The interviewees had heard that they were supposed to go through the incubator in two years but that it was not absolute. None of the interviewees had moved out of the incubator at the time of the interviews. They tended to view their exit from the incubator as when they would have positive cash flow or when they would need a bigger office.

_I suppose we will stay until we grow out of the office. I don’t know what the policy is. The company that was here before us grew to 18 employees and had to move out._ (Entrepreneur 6, Chalmers Innovation)

_I think there is a maximum limit of two years that you can stay in the incubator. That is the goal, but I don’t think they kick anyone out. It happens that companies stagnate and do not reach the next level. You are supposed to be here during a growth phase, when you are five-six people and then you should get more capital and move out to an office on the outside, becoming a company that is no longer in the incubator. There are examples of companies that have been here for six-seven years and don’t come any further, so they move out. So the goal is that you should be out in two years, but they don’t kick you out if you don’t succeed. If a company would fold if they had to leave, they prefer to help them. We will stay until we have a positive cash flow._ (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

At the time of the interviews, 80 companies had moved out of the incubator, and 70 were still in business. The incubator had completed one profitable exit at the time of the empirical study.
CHAPTER 6 ANALYSIS: ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES IN BUSINESS INCUBATION

This first analytical chapter will focus on how entrepreneurs and incubator management narrate the incubation process and which entrepreneurial processes these narrations can accommodate. Bakhtin used the chronotope to show that different stories allowed for varying degrees of creativity. His definition of creativity in his chronotopic analyses encompasses the becoming of man, human initiative, change and development. The chronotope was a way for Bakhtin to map changes in stories to reveal whether they allowed for development and transformation (Holquist, 2002). Therefore, the chronotope concept will be employed in this analysis to map the changes in the entrepreneurs, in the incubator management and in their relationship. Because the chronotopes only become apparent when compared to one another, the narratives of incubator participants will be contrasted to discuss different understandings of business incubation in general and of the relationship between entrepreneurship and management in particular.

6.1 Comparing Chronotopes

The aim of the chronotopic analysis of the narratives is to reveal how the relationship between entrepreneurship and management is understood by examining how the incubation process is narrated. The narratives that I analyze here are the stories told by entrepreneurs who have started a company in a business incubator. The narratives are my construction of their stories, specifically the stories they told during the course of an interview. These stories are retrospective representations of the entrepreneurial process. The analysis will inquire into how they narrate their entrepreneurial processes during their time in the business incubator.
6.1.1 Chronotopes and Genres

The individual narratives of the entrepreneurs and incubators are analyzed using the chronotopic framework for narrative analysis. In his essays, Bakhtin describes and analyzes different genres of narratives and their corresponding chronotopes by comparing their plots, expressions of time, views of the world and images of the hero. Following Bakhtin, the chronotopic analysis of the entrepreneurial narratives therefore answers the following questions:

- How is the plot organized?
- How is the incubator space depicted?
- How is the image of the entrepreneur constructed?
- How is time expressed in the image of becoming an entrepreneur and the depiction of the world?

Chronotopes have to be compared to one another to become visible, and therefore, the narratives of the incubator participants will be compared and contrasted to examine whether they produce and reproduce different meanings of the incubation process. Bakhtin argued that chronotopes “provide the basis for distinguishing generic types; they lie at the heart of specific variations” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 250-251). The present discussion primarily concerns whether there is an incubator genre of narratives and the possible variations in the representations included in the narratives. The question of interest is whether the two business incubators considered here involve managerial practices that give rise to a genre, or genres, of narratives.

6.1.2 Incubation Plots and Entrepreneurial Processes

From a Bakhtinian perspective, the plot determines the boundaries imposed on the plausible actions and characters in a story (Bakhtin, 1981). The plot is interrelated with the depiction of the world and the image of the individual. The traditional entrepreneurial story of a hero conquering the world and the resistance of a hostile environment shares many characteristics with the traditional adventure story analyzed by Bakhtin. The question is then how the plot is organized in the tales of business incubation. Examining the official stories told by the incubators and those of the entrepreneurs in detail reveals that there are numerous plots.

Interaction in Creative Space at Minc

The plot in the official story of business incubation processes at Minc concerns an entrepreneur who has a business idea and wishes to develop the venture in a creative environment while networking with other driven individuals. This emplotment is also present in the entrepreneurs’ narratives of their incubation processes at Minc. It is a plot that concerns starting and operating a business in an effort to be entrepreneurial and independent. The
The Process of Becoming an Entrepreneur

However, not all entrepreneurs at Minc told this tale. Another type of story that many of them told is a narrative of becoming entrepreneur. This story concerns how the inventors, or the individuals who created an idea, learn to operate a business. The plot is constructed around the events, actions and meetings that teach them to be entrepreneurs. The plot of this story is organized around the interaction between the entrepreneur and the world. This narration of the entrepreneurial process could be interpreted as version of the novel of education analyzed by Bakhtin, as the connected series of events concerns how the entrepreneurs learn to operate a business. In a novel of education, the entire plot concentrates on the hero’s education, human emergence and becoming. Many of the entrepreneurs who told this tale are engineers or designers with no previous experience in operating a business who then found a place that could teach them how. The entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation and Videum (pre-study) also told narratives in this genre.

Building Businesses at Chalmers Innovation

The official plot at Chalmers Innovation could be interpreted as building a high-tech and high-growth business and managing the process of commercializing an invention. This plot is common in the narratives from Chalmers, and the entrepreneurial process is often described as a journey. The story is largely constructed around the entrepreneurs’ journey from the first market analysis through technology testing to market introduction. During this journey, the entrepreneurs learn how to manage the project of commercializing technology. This plot revolves around the typical aspects of enterprising and emphasizes that everyone follows the same route toward the
goal of building this particular type of firm. This emplotment is present in many of the entrepreneurial narratives and comes in two versions. The first version overlaps with the official plot and concerns learning how to build a business. It was primarily told by students with different entrepreneurial educations in Gothenburg and describes the entrepreneurial process at the incubator as a continuation of their entrepreneurial education, whereby they learned valuable lessons about new venture development from the mentors, coaches and entrepreneurs at the incubator. Only entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation told this plot.

Creating a New Organization

The project managers who had previous business experience told a particular version of the story about building a business. The plot revolves around the necessary events to build a business and to manage a high-growth firm. Entrepreneurs with previous experience in management, business development and start-ups told this narrative. Although the plot revolves around building a business, it does not follow a single programmatic progression. This story about creating a new organization also shares commonalities with the story about organizing in a creative space told by entrepreneurs at Minc. This plot can be found not only in the narratives from Chalmers Innovation but also those from Minc and Jönköping Science Park (pre-study).

The comparison of the narratives thus yielded two official plots: interaction in creative space and building a business. The comparison also revealed a number of plots used by the entrepreneurs. In addition to the official plots, the entrepreneurs used other forms of emplotment such as becoming an entrepreneur and creating a new organization.

6.1.3 The Image of the Entrepreneur

One of Bakhtin’s chief concerns was the image of the hero and, particularly, the rules that defined what individuals may or may not do. Therefore, the question is how the entrepreneurs and managers constructed the entrepreneur in their narrations. Who or what has the initiative? Is the hero left unchanged or is she an individual in becoming? In chronotopic analysis, the plot and the possibilities available to the hero are interlinked and inseparable. The plot prescribes the limits of initiative and becoming in the story (Bakhtin, 1981).

Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurs, and Entrepreneurs?

The official image of entrepreneurs at Minc is that they are driven and creative individuals interacting in the incubator space. They create new organizations based on their own inventions and ideas. The narrative provided by the incubator manager assigns the initiative to the entrepreneurs rather than to the incubator. Thus, in the official narrative about business incubation, the
entrepreneur acts as an independent business owner and the expectation is that initiative comes from the entrepreneur. The image of the entrepreneur, which is interlinked with a plot that focuses on interaction in creative space, largely overlaps with the official chronotope. The image connected to the plot involving the creation of a new organization also portrays a ready-made entrepreneur whose identity remains unchanged during the incubation process. The main difference between these two narratives is that the second does not represent entrepreneurs as the target group for incubator support. The incubator has admitted them, but they do not perceive themselves as being the intended tenants.

Project Managers?
The image of the entrepreneur as interlinked with the official plot from Chalmers Innovation is different from that at Minc in a number of respects. At Chalmers Innovation, the plot assigns entrepreneurs the specific role of the project managers of a venture and regards them as the recipients of a knowledge transfer. From this perspective, the role of the incubator is to manage the start-up process and teach the project managers how to manage this process. This assumption regarding the entrepreneur also became evident in the entrepreneurs’ stories regarding managerial practices and, particularly, business coaching.

The entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation all narrated their processes and themselves in relation to the incubator chronotope of linear progression through the program. As noted above, the entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation primarily told a story about building a business and the development of their ventures. This story about learning how to build a business is the narrative in which the entrepreneurs’ image of the entrepreneur overlaps with the official image. The entrepreneurs have an entrepreneurial personality but lack previous experience in starting or running a business.

The other main genre of narratives from Chalmers Innovation, however, represents the entrepreneur differently. The image of the entrepreneur in these narratives is an experienced entrepreneur who wishes to learn more about starting and managing a high-growth firm. These represent themselves as not being the “normal” entrepreneur at Chalmers Innovation and indicate that the incubation process was not intended for them. They construct themselves as being as knowledgeable as the business coaches are and feel that they already have the knowledge that the incubator wants to transfer to them.

Becoming an Entrepreneur
The image of the entrepreneur in the story about becoming an entrepreneur is distinctly different from that in the other stories. The hero in this tale is someone who does not have any previous experience in starting or running a
business but wishes to develop and market her own products. In contrast to the other narrators, these individuals do not automatically refer to themselves as entrepreneurs. They represent themselves as individuals who want to do business but are not necessarily perceived as entrepreneurs by others or themselves. This doubt concerning the entrepreneurial identity may concern who they are and their own ability:

*We were a little frightened when we started to talk to the coach. Now he will come and tell us what we have done wrong. “Why have you done that? Why have you set the price so low? Why have you not invoiced?” But he wasn’t like that at all. He said “Yes, it is good that you have done it that way but you can also do it like this. This is another way of dealing with the problem”*. If you can meet a coach who works like that, then you can be less defensive about your company. (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

This particular type of narrative represents entrepreneurship as an attitude that may be learned and a body of knowledge that may be acquired. The entrepreneurs had no previous experience conducting business; a major part of narrative construction of heroes is the change and development that they undergo. The participants did not know anything initially, but they then learned how to do business. Thus, entrepreneurship concerns their becoming entrepreneurs and learning what they want to do. The entrepreneurs are not represented as ready-made with characters that are then merely tested and proven; they are portrayed as individuals who learn and develop. They express a strong will to do business, but they are initially unsure. They also perceive the doubts of investors, the incubator team and others. The assumption in this narrative is that engineers cannot be entrepreneurial because they are overly focused on product development. The female entrepreneurs also felt that they were judged according to a different standard and had to doubly prove themselves. The relationship with the Other in this story is thus not always dialogic. In conclusion, the image of the entrepreneur, which is interrelated with the plot about becoming an entrepreneur, is an identity that changes in response to events and initiative that are not always under the entrepreneur’s control. The entrepreneurs construct themselves as increasingly in control as they become entrepreneurs.

The second part of the analysis concerned the image of the entrepreneur in the narratives, the image of the entrepreneur as constructed by the teller of the story. The official plots advanced by the incubators established certain boundaries for the entrepreneurs. The images of the entrepreneurs in their own narratives are more varied and display a wide range of identities. The entrepreneurs construct themselves in a number of different ways in the stories they tell. Notably, not all of them even identify themselves as natural
entrepreneurs. A number of the entrepreneurs did not regard themselves as initially being particularly entrepreneurial, but they describe how they then developed into confident business men/women. Some tales represent entrepreneurship as something that can be learnt and taught; for example, a project manager learning how to commercialize a technical invention or an idea is merely the beginning of the journey. In other tales, the project manager and the CEOs considered themselves entrepreneurs by virtue of their personalities. In these tales, entrepreneurs are born and entrepreneurship is hard work and is fundamentally a matter of having many ideas that can be turned into businesses. This view is present in several of the narratives, which emphasize the aspect of turning ideas into reality.

Essential to the Bakhtinian conception of creativity are the questions of whether, in given representations, the hero is ready-made or becomes a hero and has initiative in the world (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). The representations described above include a variety of conceptualizations of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. The representation that affords the least room for becoming is that of the born entrepreneur. However, this representation is also linked to the understanding that there is a considerable role for human initiative. The story that characterizes the entrepreneur as someone who learns a trade has a strong sense of human emergence but perhaps less focus on initiative. The representations of the entrepreneur as one fighting for his/her business against the opposition of the world have a strong focus on emergence and initiative. In conclusion, the various images of the hero included in these representations allow for varying degrees of becoming and initiative.

6.1.4 The Depictions of the Incubator Space

The next aspect of the narratives to be analyzed is the depiction of space, in this case the incubator space. In a chronotopic analysis, space is the depiction of the world. In the present narrative analysis, the investigation will be restricted to the space managed by the incubator, thus largely excluding contacts with customers and business partners and interactions within the incubator companies because the main focus of the analysis is the relationship between managerial practices and entrepreneurial processes in the incubator space. The analysis will focus on the various descriptions of incubator management included in the narratives. Of particular importance for this analysis is whether the incubator is a mere background for the entrepreneurs or whether it actively shapes events.

A Creative Environment

In the official documents and interviews, the incubator at Minc is described as a creative environment. In the official chronotope, the relationship between humans and their context is characterized by networking. The plot regarding interaction in creative space involves starting a business in an entrepreneurial
space and is associated with a similar understanding of the incubator space. The entrepreneurs choose to start their company at the incubator because they desire to be a part of a creative place that involves innovative individuals. The entrepreneurs generally note that they chose the incubator because it was a social place that was supposed to be good for entrepreneurs and that the rent was inexpensive. An entrepreneur describes how he chose Minc over the other alternative in the region, Ideon.

_Ideon looked like Chalmers Innovation did at the time I started a company there in 1990s; long corridors with closed doors. It was not what I was looking for. I wanted a social and creative place since I was alone in the beginning. The companies at Ideon are very innovative; they might be curing cancer behind those closed doors, but they are certainly not running around in the corridors._ (Entrepreneur 17, Minc)

The view of the incubator in this narrative is that social interaction with other entrepreneurs takes precedence over coaching. The entrepreneurs use the coaches as a sounding board and a source of second opinions.

_You are assigned a contact that is yours. Here are a few of them and you can always catch them or book a meeting. Our contact often comes by and sees how things are going. I would say that we have almost daily contact with ours, and that is an amazing support to have. It is like having a knowledgeable boss to talk to when you have some questions. It feels safe and secure and you get separation anxiety when you move out like we are doing now. You become spoiled with everything being available here. There are all these people here in principle working for you that you can discuss everything with, from legal matters to ideas._ (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

Moreover, social interaction with the other entrepreneurs is very important. The possibility to have lunch and coffee with others is important for these small companies (of one to three individuals). They are treated as co-workers with whom one can have discussions. Such interaction helps to remedy the loneliness of being a CEO. They appreciate the ability to have social relations and network with the other entrepreneurs. Essential in this type of narrative is that the interaction with other entrepreneurs is also innovative and results in new ideas, collaborations and products. This is the primary factor that differentiates this depiction of the incubator space from the depiction involving the plot about creating a new organization.
The initiative is always with the entrepreneur in this narrative. The progress of the firm is based on the entrepreneur’s hard work and networking. The incubator is an important backdrop for their efforts and does not pose any problems for them. They also emphasize that they are in charge and the incubator team plays a supportive role.

I think we have a good dialogue with the coaches. We would perceive it as being on a leash if someone came and told us what to do. We decide when we want to have contact with them, and that has worked very well so far. (Entrepreneur 22, Minc)

The entrepreneurs depict the role of the incubator management team as supporting the entrepreneurs by providing counsel at the entrepreneurs’ discretion. The coaching and support services are offered to support the development of the business. This depiction of the incubator space overlaps with the official chronotope offered by Minc.

In the narratives, the plot describing inventing and organizing in a creative space is also associated with a very rare type of relationship to the space, an endogenous relationship between human emergence and the world. The entrepreneur changes alongside the incubator by changing the incubator space. This relation to the space is much more purposeful than the other understandings of this relationship observed in the narratives and accords substantially more agency to the entrepreneur relative to the incubator space. A company’s attempt to bring a sales and marketing perspective to the Minc incubator is an example of this. Another example whereby the entrepreneur and his or her company change the space and vice versa is the networking in the Design Hub at Minc. The Design Hub has developed into a network of companies that collaborate due to the initiative of a single entrepreneur. This did not happen automatically, and many of the entrepreneurs from Minc testify credit this entrepreneur.

The Coach and Me

The plot and the image of the entrepreneur in the narratives concerning learning how to build a business are interrelated with an understanding of the incubator that primarily focuses on the entrepreneur’s relationship with the coach, who is the other main character in this narrative. The companies are developed in close cooperation with the coach. It feels safe to have a coach who knows the company and is on the board. The entrepreneurs place great trust in the incubator team and its ability to coach them. The coaching at Chalmers Innovation is considered very good.

These coaching meetings are a lot about getting support with daily operations, to be able to vent and have a sounding board. It can be
difficult at times since I run the business alone. I mean I wouldn’t call my chairman of the board to discuss certain things, so the coach is very helpful when I just want to bandy ideas. [I use the coach] to get some help when the scientists are unruly, and we discuss how to get them on board again. (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)

These entrepreneurs described very close relationships with their coaches. The coaches help them to structure their entrepreneurial efforts. The weekly meetings with the coach provide structure and order. However, over time, the entrepreneurs no longer need coaching. After a year, there is nothing more that the coaches can offer. It is very much the story of a child growing up.

Being located in the business incubator is also beneficial because the entrepreneurs can receive moral support from other entrepreneurs starting businesses in the same field.

*There are always new problems, so there are always ups and downs. Sometimes when it feels really, really tough, it feels good to talk to the other business owners here and realize that it is the same for everyone. Everyone has these huge technical problems, but they will solve themselves. If you had been on your own, perhaps you would have thought...perhaps you would simply have given up. But those kinds of challenges are part of everyday life, and thus it is a huge advantage to be able to be here with similar businesses and see that they have the same kinds of problems. (Entrepreneur 1, Chalmers Innovation)*

Interaction with other entrepreneurs is important because they experience similar processes and are aware of the difficulties involved. The entrepreneurs share valuable advice with one another. This and other social aspects of the place are important. While the entrepreneurs do not do any business with one another, they can give advice and discuss problems.

In the story related above, the incubator space is viewed as a place that offers good coaching and highly appreciated seminars; however, these ventures have no alternative option. They chose among different incubators, or other alternatives, but because of the nature of their businesses, they believed that Chalmers International was the only appropriate choice. The entrepreneurs note that they had no real choice but to move in because they received financing from the incubator. These entrepreneurs would not choose the incubator again if they did not receive financing from it.
Not for Me?
The plot concerning the creation of a new organization is associated with an understanding that entrepreneurs are not the target group for the incubator, which entails a particular view of the incubator space. In these narratives, there is a reoccurring belief that the incubator may not truly be the place for these entrepreneurs. They desire more advanced business development from the coaches and a more business-minded attitude. The coaching is portrayed as overly general or inadequate or is not portrayed in these narratives. These experienced entrepreneurs want to continue to learn about entrepreneurship and business development, but the incubators do not afford them the opportunity to do so. They clearly perceive the benefits of business incubators but desire more advanced business development.

Me and the others who are a bit older, we sometimes get the feeling that the incubator is not really intended for us. There are many here from the entrepreneurship school, or they are from a research program, or they are researchers. Me and another CEO here, we have run businesses, we have worked in marketing and business development. We sometimes get the feeling that...We feel a bit frustrated with the fact that we do not want to go to seminars about what a new issue of shares means. We want to take it up a notch...but on the other hand, maybe it was not intended for us and we ended up here anyway, or perhaps we just didn’t understand what it was about. Maybe that’s why there is a certain disappointment after a while because we also want to learn new things beyond the basics. This is because we have done that, we have taught those basic courses. But we are not experts, and we don’t know everything all the time. I think the incubator system is incredibly good and very valuable, it has been for our company and for me personally, but there are things they could have done differently to make me completely satisfied. They do not make it explicit, but everything is designed for a certain type [of entrepreneur]. I am not dissatisfied, and I don’t regret us coming here. [...] The context and the brand are fantastic, but on a personal level, I don’t belong here. (Entrepreneur 3, Chalmers Innovation)

However, the entrepreneurs also emphasize that social interaction with other entrepreneurs is very important for them. The entrepreneurs from Minc and Jönköping Science Park (pre-study) who tell this story have very little interaction with the incubator management team but appreciate the social interaction with other entrepreneurs in the incubator. In these narratives, the incubator space is primarily described in two ways: either as mere background for entrepreneurial activity or as less significant than it could have been. In the
first category of narratives, the entrepreneurial activity could have taken place anywhere and the incubator is barely mentioned. Notably, in many of the narratives in which the incubator space is mere background, the entrepreneurs also note that the incubator could have been more meaningful for them. However, the entrepreneurs did not attempt to change the incubator.

Becoming an Entrepreneur

A particular depiction of the incubator space is associated with the depictions of becoming an entrepreneur. In the narratives about becoming an entrepreneur, space is described not only as a number of obstacles and ordeals that have to be overcome but also as important meetings that help to further the entrepreneurs’ efforts. Their new experiences during the incubation process also change their relationship with the incubator space, other entrepreneurs and the business coaches/consultants. Networking with other entrepreneurs and contact with the coaches are represented as useful but also complicated. Coaching is portrayed as necessary and beneficial for the companies, despite their experiences of coaching being mixed.

Maybe it helps that there are four of us and we are able to bandy ideas with each other. I don’t know. Based on my experience of coaching and mentoring, I believe that you should trust yourself more than others. We have gotten a lot of advice, a lot of elderly gentlemen that have told us how we should sell [our products], and then we tried their approach only to realize it was completely wrong. Maybe this is due to the fact that we are engineers and lacked self-confidence in the beginning and knew nothing about starting a business. We thought we better ask everyone about everything. That was probably not so smart; we probably knew better ourselves. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

This reflects a genre of narratives that include a distinctively different relationship with coaching and consultation. The incubator is a space where the entrepreneur is tested and proven by the incubator management and the other entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs feel judged differently and struggle to be able to control their businesses. Their uncertainty regarding how to interact with the coach and to approach networking creates a relationship with the incubator space that is initially complicated, but this relationship changes when they become more certain of their entrepreneurial efforts. This is a typical process for entrepreneurs telling this particular narrative. The incubator world has significance for the entrepreneur and is not mere background.

Mere Background or an Active Space?

Reviewing the narratives offered in the interviews reveals a number of different perceptions of the incubator space. The type of depiction depends on
the entrepreneur and on the incubator, but the entrepreneur’s interactions with the coach and other entrepreneurs often play a major role. The coach/consultant is significant as either someone who should have certain knowledge concerning starting a business or someone outside the company who is available to discuss ideas. Although, for some of the entrepreneurs, the importance of the coaches diminishes over time they remain an important part of the entrepreneurs’ narratives. The entrepreneurs generally describe the incubator space as a social place where they do not have to be alone despite being solo entrepreneurs. The characteristics of interactions among entrepreneurs are represented somewhat differently in the narratives from Chalmers Innovation and those from Minc. Some entrepreneurs, primarily from Chalmers Innovation, represent the incubator as a place where they receive moral support and sound advice from others operating the same type of business. The entrepreneurs from Minc, by contrast, report that they receive benefits and inspiration from the presence of many different types of companies in the same place. Another depiction, offered only by entrepreneurs from Minc, is that of the incubator as a place where they can do business with other companies located in the incubator.

The abovementioned aspects of the incubator have varying degrees of influence on entrepreneurial processes. The importance of the incubator space ranges from being highly significant to negligible to the entrepreneurs. The incubator space is depicted as playing a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial processes because it is a supportive and beneficial environment. One group of narratives regards the incubator not only as highly significant and beneficial for entrepreneurship but also as a challenging space replete with obstacles to overcome. In this depiction, the space actively shapes the entrepreneurial process. In other narratives, the incubator has little or no role in entrepreneurial processes, and while it was potentially more significant in the past, it is now mostly mere background. These three views are present in narratives from both Chalmers Innovation and Minc. A last and very rare view is found in the narratives from Minc, portraying an entrepreneur and an incubator actively shaping each other.

6.1.5 The Expressions of Time in Business Incubation

The expression of time is the next category to be analyzed. As outlined in the Bakhtinian framework above, time is important in becoming because it helps us to track changes in the hero and in the world. From a Bakhtinian perspective, time not only encompasses temporal categories but is also valorized. Bakhtin argued that, to permit a process of becoming, stories must be grounded in the present rather than in a distant past or an imagined future.
Chalmers Innovation and the narratives of the entrepreneurs who were hosted there represent the incubation process as a linear progression through discrete phases. The emplotment revolves around a standardized program for the rapid development of high-technology firms. Another temporal aspect of the business incubation process at Chalmers Innovation is the phasing out of the incubator’s involvement in the projects. During the program, the incubator is more intensely involved at the beginning and then is gradually involved less as a given firm approaches graduation from the incubator. If chronological time is nearly non-existent in the official narrative offered Minc, it is central to that of Chalmers Innovation. There is a clear chronological order in the progression through the program and in the development of the entrepreneur’s relationship with the incubator team.

The entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation primarily narrate their entrepreneurial process through two different temporalities. The plot about learning how to build a business has a strong linearity that describes how the business is built and how the entrepreneur learns how to manage the process. The entrepreneurial process is a step-by-step process of building a company. It is a journey towards an imagined future involving the commercialization of a technological product and graduation from the program. During the program, the entrepreneur develops by learning how to manage the process and by becoming independent of the incubator. The turning point in the story is when the project manager and, subsequently, the venture become independent of the incubator.

_Slowly, but surely, they start to phase out the coach. As I have understood it, before you come to the pre-incubator and right after you arrive, you have meetings every week. As the venture progresses, the meetings are only every other week instead until finally the coach is not needed anymore because you have built a viable business that can manage on its own._ (Entrepreneur 7, Chalmers Innovation)

The entrepreneurs describe the learning process is as a continuation of their university education. They also portray it is as natural that after six months or one year they will have grown out of the incubator. At that point they have acquired the knowledge they need to be independent. The incubator no longer has anything to teach them. The entrepreneurs also regard this as the natural course of things and the way it should be. Interaction with the coach should be more intense at the beginning and then be phased out over time. When telling the story about creating a new organization, entrepreneurs from Chalmers
Innovation use the same build metaphor for the process, but do not experience the same “growing up” process.

Temporary Space and Cyclical processes
The expression of time in Minc’s official narrative about the incubation process is less focused on development, although it emphasizes the development of the individual venture. The incubation process represents a temporary space in the entrepreneurial process that emphasizes interaction with other entrepreneurs, the incubator team and specialists. In contrast to the incubation process at Chalmers Innovation, this interaction is not structured chronologically. The plot about interaction in a creative space is less focused on chronological development than in the other incubator. Time is not chronological or directed toward an imagined future; rather it is cyclical and grounded in the present, which could be compared to Bakhtin’s category of cyclical everyday time (Bakhtin, 1981). New ideas and partnerships are generated continuously in the incubator space. An entrepreneur’s enterprise is organized in this space and new ideas are generated as a result of being in this particular space. In these narratives, neither the beginning nor the end of the incubation process is an event of particular importance. The entrepreneurial activity continues without major changes before or after the entrepreneur’s time in the incubator. The company has a distinct timeline from that of the incubation program. The changes in this story focus on the enterprise and those in the condition of the entrepreneur. The changes experienced by the entrepreneur do not primarily concern the identity of the person but are rather changes in life conditions. These persons consider themselves entrepreneurs and are happy to be able to live out their dream of running their own businesses. The creative process in this story, as the name indicates, has a much stronger emphasis on space than on time.

Becoming an Entrepreneur
Time in the story about becoming an entrepreneur concerns the change that the entrepreneur undergoes throughout the experiences, both positive and negative, when starting a business. Both the entrepreneur and the company develop, and the end result is based on the lessons learned throughout the journey.

*Now we have come pretty far from when we met the business coach for the first time; then, we were very inexperienced and did not know, we did not know what we wanted to do. Now we are in a position where we know exactly what we know; we just want some guidance about the best way to go about it in this situation.*

*(Entrepreneur 14, Minc)*
The story about how to become entrepreneur depicts an entrepreneurial process in which the entrepreneur develops alongside the business. The change in the entrepreneur concerns how the interviewees perceive themselves or are perceived by others. Although the entrepreneurs occasionally confront or meet opposition from the environment, this is not a traditional hero or adventure story that leaves the hero unchanged and merely confirms her preexisting characteristics. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this story allows for creativity because there is potential for development and change both for the hero and the world.

To conclude, the narratives include a number of different expressions of time regarding the incubation process. The main difference in the official chronotopes is whether the incubation phase is constructed as the total amount of time required for the development of new ventures or as a temporary creative phase intended to encourage combinations of ideas, competences, individuals and capital. Regarding the official chronotopes, Minc’s chronotope privileges space and meetings, while Chalmers’ favors venture development and speed.

In the entrepreneurs’ narratives of their own experiences, time is expressed in several different ways. Entrepreneurship is step-by-step process directed toward an imagined future or a cyclical process without any specified beginning or end. Most changes in the narratives concern the development of the ventures, but in some narratives, time is also expressed through representations of the hero and the world, in this case, the entrepreneur and the incubator. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the stories in which both the entrepreneur and incubator jointly undergo changes are those that allow for real becoming, but these are very rare in this study.

6.2 Incubator Chronotope(s) and Entrepreneurial Processes

The comparison reveals a number of different understandings of the incubation process. The chronotopes differ in their conceptualization of the incubation process, the image of the entrepreneur and the role of the incubator management team.

6.2.1 Two Official Chronotopes: Interactional Space and Specialized Development

The interpretation of the narratives using the Bakhtinian framework reveals two official chronotopes: the specialized program at Chalmers Innovation and the interactional space at Minc. These chronotopes are called official not only because they are those advanced by the incubators themselves but also
because the entrepreneurs consider them to be the official truths. The chronotope at Chalmers Innovation can be interpreted as specialized development because the focus in this case is the development of a particular type of businesses according to a special program. The chronotope, namely, interactional space, that guides understandings at Minc is rather different and focuses on the creation of space for interaction. These official chronotopes give meaning to the incubation process and the managerial interventions in the incubator space.

A chronotopic analysis of the narratives of interviewees from Minc reveals that they understand incubation as a process based on creative meetings. The incubation process represents a temporary space for intensified entrepreneurship. The image of the entrepreneur in this story is a business owner who is developing her invention/idea and creating a new organization. According to this perspective, being an entrepreneur means to be creative and take initiative. The role of incubator management is to support and facilitate this process, which is evident from managerial practice.

The understandings of entrepreneurship and the role of incubator management at Chalmers Innovation are different. The analysis of the managerial practices here reveals that incubation is primarily understood as progression through a standardized program based on managerial control and supervision. The role of the entrepreneurs is to build a business based on an invention and to learn the process of commercializing technology from the incubator management team.

6.2.2 Many Entrepreneurial Chronotopes
The analysis of the chronotopes in the individual narratives reveals a number of different understandings of the relationship between entrepreneurial processes and incubator management, which can be interpreted as different genres of narratives. The analysis of the narratives told by the entrepreneurs reveals substantial variation in the understanding of business incubation and the role of managerial interventions in the entrepreneurial processes. The incubation process is thus narrated very differently and carries different meanings for the entrepreneurs. An analysis of the thirty narratives on entrepreneurship in business incubators indicates that there are four genres of narratives with attendant chronotopes.

Inventing and Organizing in Creative Space
The first genre of narratives and its attendant chronotope treats the incubation process as interaction in a creative space. These entrepreneurs choose to start their companies in the incubator because they want to be part of a creative environment with entrepreneurial individuals. In these narratives, the role of incubator management is to support the entrepreneurial process by serving as a
sounding board for the entrepreneurs’ ideas. The view of the incubator is that social interaction and networking with other entrepreneurs takes precedence over interaction with the incubator’s management team. In this chronotope, entrepreneurship is a process of interacting and innovating with others. The image of the entrepreneur in this genre is an individual with an entrepreneurial personality and previous experience in business and management. The initiative always lies with the entrepreneur in these narratives, and the entrepreneurs never doubt their ability to succeed or whether they are entrepreneurs. This genre of narratives is exclusive to Minc and overlaps with the official chronotope.

The Process of Becoming an Entrepreneur

The second genre, and its attendant chronotope, treats incubation as the process of becoming an entrepreneur. The plot is constructed around the events, actions and individuals who teach the participants to become entrepreneurs. In these narratives, entrepreneurs are regarded as engineers or designers who lack previous experience in starting a business. The incubator is viewed as a place where they can learn how to develop their ideas into a business. Becoming an entrepreneur is partly a difficult journey for them, and their interactions with the incubator team and other entrepreneurs is both useful and problematic. These entrepreneurs also have a long-term interest in the business, as they plan to run their companies for the foreseeable future. This genre is told by entrepreneurs from Minc, Chalmers Innovation and Videum (pre-study).

Learning How to Build a Business

Learning how to build a business is the third genre, and its chronotope ascribes meaning to the business incubation process that emphasizes learning and building metaphors. This chronotope conceptualizes entrepreneurship as the experience of commercializing innovations and managing the process. The plot is constructed around the entrepreneur’s journey from the first market analysis, through technology testing, and finally, to its market introduction. Entrepreneurship is about “building” the company. The idea, or the invention, is simply a building block in the beginning of the process. The image of the entrepreneur associated with this chronotope is a person with an entrepreneurial personality who learns how to manage this process. This genre is employed exclusively by entrepreneurs from Chalmers Innovation.

Creating a New Organization

The last genre regards business incubation as the creation of a new organization. In this genre, entrepreneurship is the process of creating the organization necessary to commercialize an invention. The invention is often the result of another person’s research. The entrepreneurs in these narratives are represented as persons who differ from the “normal” entrepreneur in an
incubator, and these narratives include the perception that the incubation program and processes are not intended for them. The role of the incubator in these narratives is to guide these individuals in the creation of a firm, but the narratives represent the support that entrepreneurs receive as being too basic for these more experienced individuals, who desire more advanced business development. However, they see the potential of business incubation and argue that the concept could be improved to suit even those with prior experience. In these narratives social interaction with the other entrepreneurs is portrayed as being very important. This genre is told by entrepreneurs from Minc, Chalmers Innovation and Jönköping Science Park (pre-study).

6.2.3 An Incubator Genre?
The chronotopic analysis of the entrepreneurial narratives yielded two official incubator chronotopes and four entrepreneurial chronotopes. Bakhtin notes that there are numerous chronotopes available in a culture at any given time. Another important aspect of chronotopes is that they can have different relations (Bakhtin, 1981). For this analysis, the question is whether an incubator’s official chronotope is able to dominate the narratives and concerns the relationships between the official and the entrepreneurial chronotopes.

The analysis indicates that the official chronotopes creates certain genres in the narratives obtained from the incubators, but it is not possible to exclude other understandings. There are chronotopes that are only present in one of the incubators, but there are also chronotopes that are present in all four incubators. The conclusion from this analysis is that there is no single incubator genre, but several incubator genres. The official genre, and its attendant chronotope, competes with a number of different ways of seeing and understanding business incubation. The relationship among the chronotopes is characterized by the entrepreneurial chronotopes often addressing the official understanding of business incubation in the narratives.

6.3 Summary and Conclusions: Understandings of Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubation
The analysis offers some conclusions regarding the relationship between management and entrepreneurship. First, the official chronotopes are distinctively different and, to a certain extent, create the various genres of narratives. However, the official chronotopes compete with a number of different understandings of entrepreneurial processes and incubator management. The entrepreneurial narratives display a range of different characterizations of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is described as doing things differently, having new ideas, managing a project,
running one’s own business, or commercializing innovations. They also differ with respect to whether the narrator constructs herself as an entrepreneur.

The image of the entrepreneur offered in the narratives was generally interlinked with the depiction of the incubator space. The incubator’s management, the coaches and the other entrepreneurs either have complementary skills or are able to teach the participants how to become entrepreneurs or to build a business. Those who strongly define themselves as entrepreneurs are less uncertain in their interactions with the coaches and make use of the coaches’ complementary knowledge. Those who are less certain of their entrepreneurial ability represent the coaching as more fragile and problematic. “What does it mean to be an entrepreneur?” “What is the domain of the entrepreneur and what is the domain of the coach?” Incubators are intended to support entrepreneurial processes, but a closer examination of the depictions of entrepreneurs in this study reveals a wide range of persons, backgrounds, experiences and identities. The incubators intend to target specific types of firms and industries, and these are expected to have special needs that the incubator can satisfy. The results of this analysis suggest that the entrepreneurs’ ways of seeing and understanding business incubation should be considered when designing incubation processes.
CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS: INCUBATOR MANAGEMENT AND CREATIVITY

This second analytical chapter will proceed with answering the following research question: What are the possibilities for organizational creativity in business incubation? The relationship between management and entrepreneurship will be further investigated using a Bakhtinian theory of creativity. The different understandings of management in the studied incubators are compared and contrasted using the Bakhtinian concepts of dialogue, polyphony and carnival. The focus in this analysis is stories about specific managerial practices rather than narratives about the entire incubation process.

7.1 Exploring Stories about Incubator Management using Bakhtinian Concepts

Bakhtin argued that the chronotopes could be found in the narration of events, people and actions; thus, incubator chronotopes will be investigated through an interpretation of the meaning of the managerial interventions in stories about managerial practices. For the purposes of this analysis, I have chosen two management practices used in both incubators: coaching and clustering. The interpretation will start with a chronotopic description of the managerial practices and then continue with the concepts of dialogue, polyphony and carnival.

7.1.1 An Analysis of Incubator Chronotopes and Creativity

The analysis of chronotopes and their implications for the management of entrepreneurial becoming is based on Bakhtinian concepts. Incubator management is interpreted in terms of which model of creativity shapes these managerial interventions and how these interventions are understood by entrepreneurs. The aim of the interpretation is to discuss what type of process is possible and how people and actions are understood in these incubators. The
space for entrepreneurship will thus be interpreted using the Bakhtinian concepts of analyzing becoming.

According to Bakhtin, some stories are more creative than others. He searched for stories that allowed for genuine becoming. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the question is whether the incubation process allows for creativity, becoming and initiative by being polyphonic, dialogic and carnivalesque. The next step in this analysis is thus to investigate further the creative potential of business incubation processes. What characterizes the creative processes in these different stories, and what are the conditions for creativity in these stories? This part of the analysis will thus focus on the differing possibilities for creativity in the stories from a Bakhtinian perspective. How may these chronotopics be interpreted from a creativity perspective?

As outlined in the analytical framework, creative dialogue requires outsideness, active disagreement/agreement, and a dialogic worldview. Thus, creative dialogue will be examined along the following three themes:

- Do the incubators create positions of outsideness? How is the Other represented?
- How do the entrepreneurs and the incubator agree about the development of ventures? Is there a possibility for dialogic agreement in the incubators?
- Are the worldviews monologic or dialogic in the incubators? Do the incubators recognize the new or only the familiar?

The second concept, polyphony, is related to the possibilities for different voices to interact in dialogue. Polyphony therefore requires independent characters, unfinalized dialogues and the provocation of voices to meet.

- Is there a multitude of distinct voices in the incubator space?
- Do the entrepreneurs and the incubators engage in unfinalized dialogue?
- Are the different voices and ideas provoked to meet?

Finally, the last part of the narrative framework is the concept of carnival. How should carnival be analyzed? The first factors that hinder the carnival are hierarchies and coercion. Therefore, the first theme is about how organizational hierarchies are depicted in the narratives. The second theme is about the emphasis on established truths, or the lack thereof, in the incubators. The third factor that disables a carnivalesque incubator space is a high degree of formalization when the incubation becomes empty and does not enable any true transformation.

- How are hierarchies depicted in the narratives?
The inquiry continues through a comparison of differences and similarities of the narratives in two different business incubators. The incubator chronotopes will be interpreted from a creative perspective using the concepts of dialogue, polyphony and carnival.

7.2 Incubator Management: Consultation at Minc

This first part describes and analyzes how the managerial practice of consultation is narrated and understood by the entrepreneurs at Minc.

7.2.1 Business Consultation, Not Coaching

Business consultation is a managerial practice used at Minc to support entrepreneurs in the management of their businesses. In this part, the meaning of this practice will be interpreted. The representations of consultation in the narratives from Minc show a number of common characteristics but also individual differences. These communalities and variations will be further explored below.

In general, the entrepreneurs narrate the consultation at Minc as a part of everyday business life. The consulting sessions are part of everyday life, not planned or structured but on-demand from the entrepreneurs. The plots of the consultation stories are in general devoid of any drama, conflict or adventure. The following interaction with a coach regarding a contract with a retailer is typical of these stories.

*We discuss a lot of contracts with them. You need so many contracts of all kinds, everything from shareholder agreements to retail agreement. Those kinds of questions. Then, there are the ideas you have. ”We would like to try entering this market. What do you think? Would you do it like this? Should we market ourselves like this?”. Bandying a lot of everyday questions and ideas that you have. It is mostly about coaching, being a support, helping us and referring us to other contacts, getting us to move forward, and also stop us if something is wrong, if we are going in the wrong direction. That is also one of their roles. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)*

*Interviewer: How do they do that?*
Then, they say, “You are heading in the wrong direction. We think you haven’t thought this through.” (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

Interviewer: Have you had that kind of discussion with them?

Yes, absolutely. It happens time and again. It is a big advantage. A lot of entrepreneurs start on their own; either you’re on your own or you’re a small team. Then, you are so caught up in what you are doing that you think everything you are doing is perfect. “We are right and they are wrong”. And then you need someone who gives you a kick and tells you, “You’re actually wrong, and I think you should do like this instead”, or, “I think it would be better if you tried this instead”. So we had these discussions, quite recently actually, when we had to reconsider. (Entrepreneur 18, Minc)

The image of the business consultants in the narratives is in general as a sounding board, and some can be asked questions. Based on the entrepreneurial narratives from Minc, coaches are regarded either as people who should have certain knowledge about starting a business or as people outside the company with whom ideas can be discussed. In the narratives from Minc, the sounding board function dominates the stories.

The view is that the sessions are informal, spontaneous and at the coffee machine. However, informal interaction, management-by-walking-around, can be interpreted as an attempt by the incubator management team to build closer relations with entrepreneurs.

During the two years here [in the incubator], you are given free reign, and there is not that much control, actually. I think they exercise an indirect control, discrete control, just by popping into the office now and then asking, “How are you doing?” but you never feel like they are hovering. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

In general, there is no sense that development or change is occurring in the relationships in the narratives. The majority of the Minc narratives describe the relationship in the same way as the retailer tale above. There is, however, another important category where the relationship develops as the entrepreneur is strengthened in his role as a firm owner. There is, however, no development or change in the role or actions of the incubator.

7.2.2 “I am here if you need me”

This section investigates the potential for dialogue in business incubation between entrepreneurship and the managerial Other. To interpret whether
consultation at Minc is dialogic, I will inquire into the outsideness, dialogic agreement and dialogic view of ideas present in the stories of this managerial practice.

First, outsideness is important for creativity in the relationship between the entrepreneur and the managerial other. The advantage of the consultation approach is the outsideness of the consultant in the relation to the entrepreneur. To reveal the potential of the entrepreneur’s ideas, the consultant must speak from a position of outsideness. The construction of a consultative approach facilitates the non-merging of the ideas because the consultant is not part of the company in any function. The consultant is expected not to teach the business owners entrepreneurship but to complement them with other competences.

What you have here…the help and the support…the advisors, the coaches. You can take your time and talk to them, get advice and be inspired. Like now, when I am hiring, I have had long talks with them about that. It has been very important to be able to discuss that and really hash it over. To hear someone say, “I think you should hire” or “I don’t think you should”. That is very good. (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

You can really tell that they have met so many companies. Nothing is new to them. They have a lot of advice to give. “Have you thought about this?” The meetings are mostly about you talking about your own thoughts; and then, you come up with the answer yourself, but you just need someone to listen. We have talked to him (one of the business coaches) once. It was a very short meeting when we finally found the direction for one of our new products. We just bandied, “Are we on the wrong track, or is this right?” (Entrepreneur 20, Minc)

Second, dialogic agreement is essential for a creative dialogue between two parties. Dialogic agreement depends on the possibilities for both parties to actively agree or disagree in the exchange. I would argue that the consultative approach at Minc makes possible genuine interaction between equal consciousness, as proposed by Bakhtin. The entrepreneur can actively disagree or agree with the advice given by the consultant because there is no formal hierarchical relationship between the business advisors and the entrepreneur. The manager emphasizes in her description of the consultation that the entrepreneur must be in charge and is always responsible for her company.
Business coaches? Yes, I believe we might be responsible for that epidemic, but we are trying to move away from that concept. It is a very difficult role. Coach means bus, but who should drive the bus? Or you can think of coaches as in sport coaches, but this is not training; this is for real. We do not train them for something. This is already for real. So I have more and more used the concept of business development, and we have a consultative method.

(Incubator Manager, Minc)

The stories told by the entrepreneurs show that the entrepreneurs have a strong tendency to consider the advice given and evaluate it carefully, but they do not necessarily feel obliged to follow it. However, there is a category of stories that differs from the others: These stories are told by business founders who are less confident of their entrepreneurial skills and in their role as entrepreneurs. These stories are characterized by a lower tendency to actively disagree in the beginning because of insecurity and uncertainty.

We were a little frightened when we started to talk to the coach. Now he will come and tell us what we have done wrong. “Why have you done that? Why have you set the price so low? Why have you not invoiced?” But he wasn’t like that at all. He said, “Yes, it is good that you have done it like that, but you can also do like this. This is another way of dealing with the problem”. If you can meet a coach who works like that, then you can be less defensive about your company.

(Entrepreneur 14, Minc)

In these stories, the relation between the entrepreneur and the business consultant is not on equal terms in the beginning, and this hinders the dialogue. They either feel questioned as entrepreneurs by the Other or question themselves. The analysis of the stories thus shows that there is the potential for dialogic agreement. The consultant and the entrepreneur can disagree, but the potential is lower when the entrepreneurs perceive that the incubator as able to define the meaning of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

Third, a consultation requires a dialogic worldview of ideas to be creative and recognize the new. A dialogic worldview of ideas requires that ideas during consultations be preserved and that the consultant and the entrepreneur not only see herself in the Other. The narratives from Minc indicate that there is a focus to teach entrepreneurs traditional business practices and a focus on growth. One company’s decision to have two chiefs rather than one CEO was not appreciated, nor were some other companies’ choices. Do the consultants recognize the novel and tolerate the newness?

Interviewer: Were you asked to appoint a new CEO?
Just as a matter of routine. They are used to engineers who are not CEO material, an entrepreneur who can run a business. “You have to appoint a CEO”, they said to us. To us, me and my partner, it felt really weird that one of us would be boss over the other. So we said, “No, we already have to chiefs”. Thank goodness that there is no law that can make us. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

In the stories, the consultants represent the familiar, the established and the well-known. They are expected to explain how things are normally done, but they are not supposed to be entrepreneurial or creative. Their advice centers on normal business practices regarding growth, governance and product development. The consultants are not necessarily expected to recognize or suggest a novel approach, but the entrepreneurs voice a hope that they will tolerate the unconventional and support the deviant at times.

Therefore, is the consultation dialogic at Minc? I argue that the managerial practice of consultation is dialogic because there is a position of outsideness in the design, a possibility for entrepreneurs to actively disagree and a tolerance for the novel. However, recognition of the new is less obvious and the aspect that the entrepreneurs least expect from consultation.

7.2.3 Polyphony in Consultation
The next issue is whether the consultation session is a polyphonic space. As outlined in the analytical framework, polyphonic space requires that the entrepreneurs and consultants, as along with different ideas, be encouraged to meet. The business consultants and the entrepreneurs must also be allowed to be independent subjects and be on equal terms for the consultation to be creative. A basic condition for polyphony is that the different voices—the entrepreneurs and the consultants—are provoked to meet. Consultation sessions are not mandatory, and entrepreneurs may choose whether to engage with the consultants. The image of the consultation in the stories is that the presence of the incubator management team in the office space facilitates regular and informal meetings.

The second condition for polyphony is that equal and independent voices be engaged in the consultation. The entrepreneur and the consultant must not finalize each other; i.e., they must not reduce each other to stereotypes. The images of the consultation sessions show signs of both independent subjects and stereotyping. In particular, women, engineers and inexperienced business owners share that they are reduced to specific traits, which hinders the dialogue. These narrators represent themselves as finalized by the consultants. However, the stories also show an occasional finalization of the business consultants.
The third and final condition for polyphony is unfinalized dialogue. The entrepreneurs’ narrations show a range of interactions. At times, they are by no means unfinalized, and at times, they are. The consultation described in the genre *Inventing and organizing in creative space* told by entrepreneurs from Minc is as close to an unfinalized dialogue as they come. The narratives about becoming entrepreneurs, on the contrary, describe a consultancy full of finalizations that restart and move again. At times, this type of consultancy turns into a monologue, but the entrepreneurs are prepared to start the dialogue again. Hence, consultation at Minc may be interpreted as dialogic, but there is a tendency revealed in the narratives for participants to finalize each other in uncertain and ambiguous situations, which should be noted by the incubator managers.

### 7.2.4 Carnival and Consultation

There are three factors that I will use to interpret the carnival potential in the managerial practices. Carnival is precluded by an emphasis on hierarchy, established truths and formalization. According to Bakhtin, hierarchy and coercive power preclude carnival and true transformation and thereby the creation of new combinations. The representations of the consultation are in general non-hierarchical, and the business consultants are described as a support structure in organizational terms.

> You get some kind of coaching, too. They require some kind of regular meetings, but that is not very often. I think it is once every half year or something like that. I think it is mainly because they want to check that we don’t go bankrupt. You also get coaching according to need. It is not like you have to; if we need anything, we ask for it, and if they can’t answer, they refer you to their contacts. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

The suggestion that they would need a manager to supervise their business is controversial for the entrepreneurs, who emphasize that they are driven people who do not need a coach to push or encourage them.

*Interviewer: Would you have wanted mandatory meetings with a coach?*

> No, I would not want that. We are grownups who run our own businesses. You do not want someone to hold your hand. When I want help, I ask for it. (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

> I think we have a good dialogue with the coaches. We would perceive it as being held on a leash if someone came and told us
what to do. We decide when we want to have contact with them, and that has worked very well so far. (Entrepreneur 22, Minc)

No, I don’t think so. It would be better if they stopped throwing coaches at us. It would be better if they helped us by strengthening our self-confidence instead. [...] Maybe it helps that we are four and are able to bandy ideas with each other. I don’t know. Based on my experience of coaching and mentoring, you should trust yourself more than others. We have gotten a lot of advice, a lot of elderly gentlemen who have told us how we should sell, and then, we have tried only to realize it was completely wrong. Maybe it is due to the fact that we are engineers and lacked self-confidence in the beginning and knew nothing about starting a business. We thought we better ask everyone about everything. That was probably not so smart; we probably knew better ourselves. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

The entrepreneurs’ stories emphasize that they are in control of their business, although they admit that the entrepreneurial process sometimes requires managerial control and formalized processes.

A strong emphasis on established truths, traditions and the status quo is also a hindrance for the creation of new combinations in the consultation situation. In the consultation stories, the incubator staff represents experience and know-how, as shown in many quotations above. In most of the stories, this is appreciated and expected by the entrepreneurs, as illustrated by the following quote:

As an inexperienced business owner, you have so many questions; you do not know what to do or what possibilities you have. That is why I think it is important that the incubator require that you have a personal coach when you sit in the incubator. A personal coach who keeps track of the company and who can tell you about different possibilities, that it is possible to apply for financing or that you can take a loan. “You can do this or that”. This is necessary for an incubator to be able to survive. Otherwise, it will turn into a playground where people only sit and pay cheap rent. It is a requirement if the incubator is to run successfully that you have someone who can give advice and tell how things work in reality. The thing is that you have your own little company—it is so easy to shield yourself from the rest of the world. As in our case, we would have been able to develop, develop, develop, and not cared about selling or anything like that. That is why I think it is so important to talk to an external person for the entrepreneurs. (Entrepreneur 14, Minc)
In a few cases, the entrepreneurs question the validity of doing things the expected way.

The incubator management’s ambition to refuse a formalization of the consultation could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid empty form and enable true transformation. The move from obligatory meetings to informal meetings on a daily basis has the potential to prevent the consultations from turning into an empty form and a predetermined dance.

*I do not believe in obligation, and therefore, I rather want to develop the entrepreneur’s own ability to take responsibility for their own business. We do not take an ownership share in the companies. That is a difference. Some incubators work like that. We have tried with scheduled coaching, but again, obligation. I think it is important to show that you are interested in closer contact, but then, you have to be able to offer something. Some of the companies come here every week.* (Incubator Manager, Minc)

Could this relation be considered carnivalesque? Incubators are rarely associated with a carnival and playfulness, but my interpretation of the stories about consultation is that there is a potential for a carnivalesque worldview because of the lack of hierarchy and formalization. The emphasis on established truths is present and expected by the entrepreneurs, but it should be carefully considered by management not to hinder new combinations.

**7.3 Incubator Management: Business Coaching at Chalmers Innovation**

Business coaching is the managerial practice that has evolved at Chalmers Innovation. This part of the analysis will interpret the meaning of the practice and the ideas behind the design.

**7.3.1 From Consultant to Coach**

The development at Chalmers Innovation is the reversal to that of Minc: The role of the incubator team has developed from advisor/consultant to a coach. The entrepreneurs’ interpretations of the coaching process and the management’s ideas behind the design of the practice are explored below. The majority of the entrepreneurs are familiar only with coaching, whereas a few also have experienced the previous version of the incubator’s management.
The plot in the coaching narratives is centered primarily on how the coach helps to structure the business in the initial phase of the incubation process and how the entrepreneurs gradually become independent. The incubation process is described as a standardized process in which all companies follow the same sequence through the pre-incubator and later in the incubator.

Chalmers Innovation is described as a specialist in high-tech start-ups by both entrepreneurs and the incubator manager. As described in the empirical overview, the incubator’s aspiration is to transfer the incubator team’s knowledge from supporting start-ups over several years to the project managers. The incubator team thus promises that it will guide the venture based on their previous experience of coaching businesses. The entrepreneurs expect the business coaches to provide specialized knowledge designed to cater to the needs of high-technology ventures. The coaching system at Chalmers Innovation is organized differently from that of Minc; each company is assigned a coach, and the coaching sessions are mandatory at the beginning.

The coaching narratives from Chalmers Innovation have a strong temporal aspect. In the beginning, the coaching focuses on structuring and ordering the ventures with weekly meetings. The metaphor of rearing children and the image of “growing up” are used both by entrepreneurs and the incubator manager to describe the incubation process. The incubator manager commented on the company’s dependency on the incubator accordingly:

*I think there is such a risk [that they can be too dependent]. It is like raising kids. In the beginning, you have to do everything; you feed them and change diapers. We are very active in the early phases, but as time goes on, our role become more passive.* (Incubator Manager, Chalmers Innovation)

This emphasis of time over space is also present in the official story of the pre-incubator and incubator. The ambition of Chalmers Innovation, according to both the website and interviews, is to develop the ventures faster and make them grow. The description of the incubation process is focused on the evolution of the ventures and how they follow the incubator program, which consists of steps in a particular order and at a certain pace. The organizing principle behind the process is the financing of the venture and its anticipated financial needs during the start-up process.

7.3.2 Growing up

A characteristic of the coaching descriptions from Chalmers Innovation is the image of “growing up”, which is not present in the stories from Minc. What
does this image mean from a creativity perspective? To reveal the creative
potential in each other, the construction of coaching must create positions of
outsideness. In the first stage of the incubation process, the ideal is that the
coach and the entrepreneurs merge, and the entrepreneur should learn what the
coach knows about the start-up process. Once this merging has taken place,
the coach should take a step back, and the parties should once again become
independent. According to Bakhtin’s reasoning, the first phase is not creative
because it is only about the immersion of the project manager in the
incubator’s culture. The transfer of knowledge is focused on the merging of
two cultures or, rather, the absorbing of one culture by the researcher (or in
this case the project manager). The next phase has more creative potential;
there is a larger scope for dialogue between
cultures/understandings/knowledge. The entrepreneur can at this stage
interpret and creatively understand the incubator’s culture/knowledge from her
perspective. The potential in the incubator’s knowledge is revealed only if the
entrepreneur remains in a position of outsideness and retains in her own
culture. The business coaches are represented in the narratives as either
knowledgeable specialists in the new venture development or sounding
boards. The dominating image is that they are supposed to have certain
knowledge about starting new businesses, which the entrepreneurs want to
learn. From a Bakhtinian perspective these two images have different
consequences for creativity. The sounding board is more creative because it
allows the possibility for a genuine interaction between equal parties.

The possibility for the entrepreneurs to actively evaluate the coaching content
and process is vital for creativity. However, the construction of the program
with the incubator as the owner of course renders the dialogic agreement more
difficult because of the hierarchy. The consequences of this power relation
will be discussed below, but the imagery of children being reared also has
consequences for the possibilities of dialogic agreement. Bakhtin did not
discuss the parent-child relationship, but he discussed a similar relationship,
teacher-student, in terms of creativity (Bakhtin, 1984). He considered the
pedagogical relationship between the teacher and student as less creative
because it is based on the idea that the teacher knows the truth and tries to
transfer it to the student. Currently, we do not necessarily share his view of
pedagogy, but the important aspect here is the idea of monologic truth
transferred from an authority.

There is a difference in active agreement in the coaching stories between
entrepreneurs who describe themselves as experienced and previous students
of entrepreneurship schools. More experienced entrepreneurs actively evaluate
the incubator management and disagree with some of the practices. The
students, on the contrary, do not evaluate or show any signs of active
agreement or disagreement. A possible interpretation is that they still have not
redefined the previous pedagogical relationship they had during their studies. The incubator program becomes an extension of their education, and the roles do not change until the end of the incubation process, when they have grown up. From a creativity perspective, the relationship between the coach and the entrepreneurs would be better if the student issued a more active evaluation.

7.3.3 Structure and Order
From a polyphonic perspective, the structure and content of coaching is of interest. The process is portrayed as intense coaching in the beginning, which decreases over time. The content of the coaching is represented as related primarily to the organizational structure of the venture and the basics of doing business. Creativity requires dialogue and thus requires meetings. The construction of the coaching process with appointed coaches for each venture requires meetings and thereby meets the fundamental conditions for polyphony. However, the design of coaching sessions with increasingly longer intervals is interpreted differently by the entrepreneurs. Some entrepreneurs interpret it as a natural process, whereas others would have preferred another principle for the interaction. The second category would have preferred a continuous dialogue instead; they do not consider themselves in need of intensive course on how to start a business but nonetheless want to continue to learn more.

This leads us to the next question concerning polyphony in the coaching process, which is the possibility for what Bakhtin would call unfinalized dialogue, i.e., a continuous dialogue. The image that the entrepreneur “grows up” and no longer needs a coach indicates that the coaching process does not enable unfinalized dialogue. The structure of the coaching is based not on unfinalizability but on a standardized dialogue in both process and content. From a managerial point of view, it is more efficient and rational to simplify the interaction by standardizing the program and finalizing the dialogue. The project managers are introduced to investors, coaches and specialists in a planned sequence. The coaching process is based on a developmental metaphor with growing children who need to learn the basics before they can operate on their own.

I can say that we grew out of the incubator in six to eighteen months, depending on how you see it. I don’t think the incubator can contribute much to our company anymore. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

Interviewer: Can you describe in what way you have grown out of the incubator?
In the beginning, they are very good to create formalities and structure that you really have to have in companies; otherwise, it would be the “Wild, Wild West”. If you have a lot of inexperienced people—and we were in the beginning—none of us, including our chairman of the board, had done this before. Our coach was very good at creating structure. “This is how you compose a board and this how you make a budget.” They help you with a lot of things like that. They have a program with basic education in everything from sales to teamwork, and that is very useful and good; but when you have done the basic education, and the company enters the next phase, and you have problems specific to the firm, then they rarely have anything to contribute. The reason for that is that in order to be able to help, you have to be extremely involved in a business, and even though Chalmers Innovation tries to be very involved, and I have understood from friends...I have a lot of friends who are entrepreneurs and have been in other incubators, I can tell that Chalmers Innovation is exceptionally active, supportive and good. They are extremely good at supporting businesses in crisis, and that they should get credit for; but at the same time, they don’t have much to contribute when you come to the more specific phases. I don’t have the same problems as my neighboring company, even if some problems are the same, and when we need to talk about the really difficult stuff, then it requires that you really have worked with it to understand. So, I can say it like this: If I started a new business, I would not go to Chalmers Innovation with it because I feel like I have the knowledge they can contribute. I have that now. I don’t think they can contribute much more than money.

(Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

Standardization is built on the idea that you must finalize not only interaction but also participants. The stories about coaching portray the incubator activities as tailored to a specific type of entrepreneur who has to learn the basics of new venture development. For those who already have this knowledge, the coaching process has less to offer than they would have wanted or expected. I would argue that the metaphor of children growing up, developmental approach and the standardized process are not necessarily beneficial in this context. The knowledge of the coaches is portrayed as too general, inadequate or not industry/company specific enough after six months even by those with little experience from the beginning. This image is exclusive for Chalmers Innovation and is without parallel in the narratives from the other incubators. Thus, is this a problem? Are the companies not supposed to be independent of the incubator, as noted by one of the entrepreneurs? Yes and no. If you use a developmental metaphor as Chalmers does, then the child indeed should grow up and out of the incubator. This is
based on the assumption that there is certain knowledge to be acquired and that they become fully educated and then graduate. However, it is not given that the entrepreneurs have to grow out of anything or that they should be considered children when they come to the incubator. It is the companies—and not necessarily the knowledge and experience of the entrepreneurs—that are in the early stages of development. In conclusion, standardization does not provide entrepreneurial learning that caters to the needs of entrepreneurs who have a certain level of knowledge.

7.3.4 Coaching and Control

The next question is, then, how much potential is there for innovation in business coaching? New combinations, the creation of unexpected new connections and the breaking down of established truths were the ultimate outcomes of Bakhtin’s carnival (Bakhtin, 1984b), a definition of innovation in the same spirit as Schumpeter’s creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934/1983). The possibilities for innovation depend, according to Bakhtinian philosophy, on a lack of hierarchy and coercion, and the hierarchical aspect of coaching is addressed in a number of ways in the stories told. To begin with, there is an emphasis in the description of coaching in the incubator that it is the knowledge from the incubator team that should be transferred to the project manager. It is emphasized that the business coaches know how to manage startups, and the role of the project manager is to acquire the knowledge that the incubator has gained over the years. Second, the project manager is expected to manage the projects and, during weekly meetings, report to the business coach, who will discuss the project with others on the incubator management team. The language and symbols of the description are, of course, related to classic organization theory and management. The incubator is the owner and a strategic apex managing a portfolio of investments and projects. This organizational structure naturally has consequences for the relationship between entrepreneurs, here renamed project managers, and the incubator. The power and control part of the relationship is highlighted in the stories told about the construction with the coach as a board member and owner.

*From the beginning, the routine was that the coach and the board member were the same person. Now, they have started to separate the roles, and I think it has to do with their flexibility. They want to be able to match the right person with the right company. In our business, the coach and board member are two different persons. Chalmers Innovation demands to have a board position; it’s in the shareholder agreement that they should have a board position. They usually have that until you leave the incubator and often even longer. It is to get control over the business, and that you can*
understand. It is like wearing two hats: A coach should coach, and the board member should make demands. I don’t think it works in practice. In those situations, when I really have to discuss a sensitive question, I would never talk to my coach. He is far too mixed up in Chalmers Innovation. I would much rather talk to some of the others CEOs here that I trust; in spite of the fact that I have an unusual amount of trust for my coach, he is too close. He has to be loyal to his organization, and there is nothing wrong with that. It is an interesting situation. So for us, the roles are separated, but not all companies have it like that. I think they are trying to implement the model we have. (Entrepreneur 2, Chalmers Innovation)

The coach has no formal position in the company; however, often, the same person is Chalmers Innovation’s representative on the firm’s board of directors. Lastly, the view of coaching sessions as the rearing of children has the disadvantage that it structures the relationship as two different voices with very different power. This symbolism reinforces the hierarchical aspect of the incubation process. Adopting a parental role toward the companies represents the entrepreneurs as dependent on the incubator and its knowledge.

The last condition that influences the possibilities for true transformation is the degree of the formalization of the coaching. When the carnival becomes an official party and takes an empty form, rather than a second life for the participants, the possibilities for change and development are limited. Instead of providing a space for becoming, the carnival reinforces established structures, truths and hierarchies. The obvious risk from this perspective, with assigned coaches and mandatory meetings, is empty monologue and lifeless interaction. The stories about coaching do not portray meetings that are only an empty form; rather, they cease when the entrepreneur no longer considers them relevant, as described above.

7.4 Incubator Management: Clustering at Minc

The next managerial practice to be investigated through a narrative interpretation is the custom to place the entrepreneurs in an office adjacent to other entrepreneurs. Both incubators in the main study gather their entrepreneurs in a building, and moving into the office is a requirement for the entrepreneurs.

7.4.1 Creating Creative Environment at Anckargripsgatan
Entrepreneurs who are accepted to Minc’s incubator program are welcomed to a yellow brick office building on Anckargripsgatan. The entrepreneurs’ stories regarding the office space at Minc reveal that they chose Minc because it is a
creative place or that it is a space where they interact with entrepreneurial people. Their descriptions fit the official story of Minc as being a creative environment with a dynamic and lively culture, as described in the empirical overview. The entrepreneur depicted in the stories by the incubator manager and the entrepreneurs is a social person who interacts with her fellow tenants and through this networking builds a prosperous company. The hero of these stories interacts with a multitude of different entrepreneurs. However, the heterogeneity of the entrepreneurs is described as somewhat decreasing over time. The entrepreneurs voice the fear that the diversity of Minc will become the homogeneity of others and that the incubator will follow others. Small consultancies that do not focus on growth and world domination are viewed as less valuable. Finally, the view of the incubator as space is central to most of the stories told. In only a few exceptions is the space absent entirely or abstract; i.e., the story could have happened anywhere. The ideas of networking and creativity permeate most descriptions of space. Creativity in these stories is understood as the new ideas that emerge primarily from the interaction between the entrepreneurs. The creative process is based on meetings in the incubator space. There is no change in relation to the incubator management and the entrepreneurs over time; rather, change occurs in the exchange between the entrepreneurs, who get to know each other better.

7.4.2 Meeting Place for Entrepreneurs

Thus, how can the oft-mentioned creativity in the incubator space be understood from a Bakhtinian perspective? Polyphony as a theory of creativity is based on the idea of unfinalized dialogue, the importance of differences and unfinalized independent subjects interacting. From a polyphonic perspective, this incubator space follows in the footsteps of Dostoevsky in the attempt to create situations that will provoke dialogue. The incubator office is represented as a social and creative place. The narratives visualize a number of possibilities for interactions between people in the office space, resulting in moral support, business ideas and joint ventures.

This idea of creativity is present in the stories about the incubator space. The entrepreneurs connect creativity to the composition of the companies and entrepreneurs, and the office space is described as a place with a great variety of firms and people. As mentioned in the empirical overview, the companies at the time of the interviews ranged from small design consultancies to firms developing high-tech products. The entrepreneurs were, for example, engineers, designers, marketers and managers. They were newly graduated young professionals but also people with many years of work experience. In their stories, this mix of different types of companies and competencies were represented as beneficial for entrepreneurship.
To incubators, it is all about being inspiring and having a high ceiling. I think that is very important. To accept companies that are as different as possible in order to get as much variety as possible... I think that is very important and not to accept just a certain type of technology firms because it is practical for the incubator that they have the same needs. I do not think that is the best solution. Now, they have a biotechnology incubator in Lund. At Ideon Innovation, it is mostly high technology. At Ugglanhuset in Malmö, they have poor small business owners; those they can’t have in incubators. They ought to mix more. A photographer who works for fun but is unable to charge enough may be much better at it if he could meet some real businessmen. The technology people, the engineers, could really benefit from meeting some professions other than their own. I think you have to see that with your own eyes. (Entrepreneur 13, Minc)

Hence, to understand the value of competencies other than their own, the entrepreneurs must interact with others.

An important aspect of office space from a dialogical perspective is that it creates a possibility for outsideness that is vital for dialogues. Due to a relatively general selection policy of companies, the office is filled with a mix of different types of companies, industries and entrepreneurs. This type of non-specialized space, which does not focus on a particular type of business or industry, has a larger potential for creativity because we need to be different to creatively understand each other and realize the potential in the Other (Bakhtin, 1986). In the stories about office space, entrepreneurs’ selection of an incubator is often based on the idea that there will be other competencies there to complement their own. This entrepreneur chose between Minc and an incubator that specialized in technology-based companies.

We have several partnerships. A company on the second floor designs our products: an industrial designer. Another company has done our website, a third, some advertising material, and a fourth, some copyright. That has been the best thing for us to meet these kinds of people because we have never been in that world before. Technology is all we know, and everything else, we have to learn—PR, marketing, sales and design. (Entrepreneur 12, Minc)

What makes the incubator more than an office space for this entrepreneur is the possibility to learn about other worlds. He consciously chose Minc for its diversity of entrepreneurs and companies, whereas for most other narrators, this environment was a pleasant surprise once they moved in.
From a Bakhtinian point of view, the co-location at Minc would be classified as a polyphonic space because different ideas are provoked to meet; the entrepreneurs do recognize their differences as positive, and they do not search only for what they have in common. They can use their outsideness to ask the right questions and reveal potential in each other’s ideas that would have not been possible otherwise. The differences between the entrepreneurs also leave room for a dialogic worldview and the notion that truth is relative. This aspect is very important for creativity because the idea of one absolute truth destroys the possibility for any development.

7.4.3 New Combinations and Networking

The creation of new combinations requires a place characterized by a certain sense of playfulness. Coercion, authoritarian words and formalization render this creation impossible. In the stories, the space is described as creative, and this creativity was understood in a number of ways. There is the image of the incubator as an environment with other entrepreneurs for inspiration.

*I like it because it is a creative environment. It feels like the house is bursting with energy. Things are happening, and you are stimulated by the others that are working hard. If we would have been alone, we would not have gotten that energy.* (Entrepreneur 20, Minc)

The outcome of this creative space is described as inspirational but also as resulting in new products, customers, suppliers and joint ventures. The networking here is thus creating new products and services. Brainstorming together with other tenants rather than business coaches also provides a space free from any hierarchy. The importance of networking is an established truth in this incubator space and encouraged by the incubator staff. There are certain ideological strains that permeate the incubator space, such as networking and growth, but the incubator is not perceived as dominant enough in the interaction to be able to impose its will.

The practice to gather the ventures in a building may be interpreted as a formalization of networking. The lesson learned from Bakhtin’s discussion of a carnival is that it does not necessarily lead to true transformation, and it sometimes becomes an empty form. Consequently, placing entrepreneurs in an open office space does not mean that they will network or co-create innovations. The stories about the office at Anckargripgsatan show that the entrepreneurs are well aware of the expectations to network but also that the interaction actually transforms entrepreneurs and business to a certain extent. However, this does not come automatically and requires active work on the behalf of the entrepreneurs, as illustrated by the following quote:
Interviewer: What did you expect when you came here?

What we have now, interesting companies, fun discussions about design and form. It is like that here, and that is what I expected and hoped for. However, it is of course what you make of it. You have to make it happen. Instead of going to lunch on your own, you have to ask people: “You wanna have lunch?” Next time, they will ask me, and all of a sudden, everybody is having lunch together. I have understood that those who were here before our batch didn’t have the community that we have. They kept to themselves. I hope that the next batch will do what we have done. (Entrepreneur 11, Minc)

In conclusion, the office space at Minc is a meeting place for entrepreneurs and may be interpreted as a dialogic, polyphonic and carnival space, i.e., a creative space, from a Bakhtinian point of view. The creativity represented by the entrepreneurs is to a large extent a polyphonic model based on interactions between independent subjects. The multitude of different experiences and businesses also provides the possibilities for creative understanding.

7.5 Incubator Management: Co-location at Chalmers Innovation

The next managerial practice to be analyzed is the practice of physical co-location at Chalmers Innovation.

7.5.1 Offering Office Premises at Stena Center and Lindholmspiren

Chalmers Innovation also gathers its companies in two office buildings at Stena Center and Lindholmspiren. The meaning of this practice has changed over the years for incubator management, as outlined in the empirical overview. The ambition today is to be viewed less as a “glorified landlord” and more as a serious investor in early-stage ventures. The meaning for the tenants will be interpreted in this section. First, the entrepreneurial process that seems to be envisioned by the entrepreneurs and the incubator management is a linear process of financing a particular type of business. The emplotment primarily revolves around investments and financiers. Second, the image of the incubator space in the stories is a place where high-tech ventures gather and specializes in technological innovations. It is a place where entrepreneurs can get moral support from other entrepreneurs who have gone through a similar process of building a business.

7.5.2 Specializing in Technology

According to the official story, the incubator specializes in high-tech firms. It should be noted, however, that this space may not be as specialized as it may
seem at first glance. Technology firms, at the time of the main study, referred to any firm developing medical equipment or firms developing software for search engines. The office at Lindholmen gathered only ICT firms, whereas the original office at Stena Center housed the remaining types of businesses and industries. However, what does it mean for the incubator space that the focus on technological innovation creates homogenous groups of firms and competencies? The first aspect of this managerial practice that will be explored is the similarity of entrepreneurs and businesses.

From a Bakhtinian point of view, this similarity does not encourage creativity for a number of reasons. First, and foremost, his idea of creativity was based on the assumption that the most important condition for creative understanding is a position of outsideness. The potential in the Other can be revealed only if we understand each other but do not merge culturally. Entrepreneurs should therefore aim to understand but not imitate each other. Merging and the total immersion in the same culture is not creative. If entrepreneurs are too alike from the beginning, there is no possibility for any outside position. The incubator space at Chalmers Innovation leaves very little room for positions of outsideness. This interaction does not yield new ideas or create new business opportunities because the ventures and entrepreneurs are too similar. They find neither customers nor business partners in this space. From a dialogical perspective, this is expected because of a lack of different voices. Creative understanding will not occur if the entrepreneurs are too similar. This similarity limits the dialogue to moral support and good advice. The entrepreneurs go through the same process, and by being similar, they can mirror each other and acknowledge each other.

7.5.3 Carnival Space?

The stories about Stena Center do not specifically comment on any hierarchy or coercion in the incubator space. There is, for example, no perceived pressure to network, as seen in the stories about Minc. The networking is, however, limited to having lunch together and exchanging stories about their own experiences of building their businesses. In this aspect, the incubator space provides only an empty form of networking, which does not necessarily transform the entrepreneurs or their businesses. It could also be argued that this monologue reinforces the idea behind the incubation, i.e., that it is the relationship between the incubator management team and the entrepreneur that is important, not the networking within the incubator. This perspective could reinforce the rank and hierarchy in the incubation process and emphasize that it is the established truth of the incubator that should be prioritized.
7.6 Exploring Incubator Chronotopes and Creativity

This section will explore the possibilities for creativity in the official incubator chronotopes by summarizing the previous Bakhtinian analysis of managerial practices and relate the Bakhtinian discussion of their potential for creativity to research entrepreneurship in other organizational contexts.

7.6.1 Interactional Space at Minc

The official chronotope that gives meaning to the managerial practices at Minc can be interpreted as *Interactional Space*, which also indicates how creativity is understood. The incubation process at Minc is characterized by creative meetings and aimed at producing interaction. It is not structured, but it provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs, the incubator team and external specialists. This interaction is the focal point in the narratives at Minc. This is apparent in the analysis of the practice of clustering when Minc’s tenants stress the benefits and inspiration from many different types of companies being in the same place.

There are several aspects of the incubation at Minc that indicate that it can be interpreted as a polyphonic model of creativity. The interactional space is all about facilitating meetings of people and ideas, which is the fundamental condition for dialogue. The entrepreneurial narratives from Minc all touch upon the idea of networking, and they are all aware of the expectations of the incubator to actively contribute to the environment. This interaction at Minc produces new firms, new collaborations, new ideas, changed perspectives and a sense of being part of a creative environment. Organizing entrepreneurship in this case thus refers to organizing space for interaction. This would be in line with the research on managing creativity that has noted the importance of seeing creativity not as the sum of individual ideas but as a product of interaction (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Florida & Goodnight, 2005). Successful businesses manage to harness the creativity of all its stakeholders, not only the employees directly involved in research and development. This research has also noted that encouraging and enabling collaboration is essential to fostering a creative culture and enhancing innovation (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

Furthermore, the incubator accepts a relatively wide range of companies. A space with different voices is a condition for creativity, according to this theory of polyphony, because it may provoke different ideas to meet and create new combinations. In the narratives from Minc, there are many examples of the perceived benefits of interacting with the Other and how this exchange also provides important insights into how things can be done. The interaction in the incubator space produces the insight that there are many ways of doing things. Opening up organizations and teams to different perspectives has been important for creativity because innovation often
requires a multidisciplinary approach to succeed (Amabile, 1998; Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

Lastly, the entrepreneurs do not represent themselves as hierarchically subordinate to the incubator team. The shift from coaching to consultation is also an important symbol for the equality of the parties. At Minc, the role of the incubator management team is to support the entrepreneur with counsel at their discretion, as shown in the narratives about consultation. Management-by-walking-around is used by the incubator team, but the initiative for consultations has to come from the entrepreneur, and the decisions are always hers. The role of the incubator team is mostly focused on creating space for interaction to facilitate the process of organizational creation. Polyphony requires equals in dialogue, and for this process to be creative, the participating voices have to be independent subjects. The output from this is, as mentioned before, emergent innovation in the incubator space: new collaborations, new ideas, inspiration, and changed perspectives. The entrepreneurs also actively try to change and influence the incubator milieu and program. From the perspective of organizational entrepreneurship, the incubator’s shift from a managerial position to a support function has several important implications. Creating an egalitarian culture has been important for creativity because hierarchies in other organizational contexts hinder the necessary communication for innovations by silencing people and by dividing the organizations in management and subordinates (Florida & Goodnight, 2005). It has therefore been suggested that managers assume another role as a facilitator rather than the traditional role of a manager (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Florida & Goodnight, 2005; O’Donnell & Devin, 2012), a role focused less on control and more on encouragement, energizing, supporting and asking the right questions.

7.6.2 Specialized Development at Chalmers Innovation

The Bakhtinian analysis of the managerial practices at Chalmers Innovation showed an incubation process based on another chronotope and another model of creativity. The Bakhtinian analysis showed that the managerial practices at Chalmers innovation were characterized by a standardized program based on knowledge transfer, specialized space and managerial control. The model shares many traits with the classic model of creativity. Relating this model of creativity to the research on organizational entrepreneurship shows that it also shares many traits of innovation management or managerial entrepreneurship.

The role for the incubator management team at Chalmers Innovation is a mix of investor, manager and business coach. As an investor, the incubator has a place on the board of directors of each venture and monitors each project’s progress weekly at the meetings of the resident business coaches. Each venture is also assigned a business coach. Each project is managed by the
business coach along with an assigned project manager or the CEO of the company. These practices are built on the assumption of managerial control of the progress of the ventures.

Managerial control of the incubation process has a number of advantages to the incubator in the coordination of activities. The drawback of this control from a Bakhtinian perspective is that hierarchies are not conducive to innovation (Bakhtin, 1984b). The analysis of the business coaching shows how the creative space of coaching is hampered by the perceived control function of coaches. As mentioned, the research on entrepreneurship and managing creativity has shown the same patterns in other organizational contexts (Amabile, 1998; Florida & Goodnight, 2005; Hjorth, 2005; Pinchot, 1985). Hjorth (2012) has argued that the focus should be moved from managerial control because entrepreneurship in organizations does not depend on it. Managerial control contributes to creative processes but is not central in affirming the new. Management is more focused on the past and the return on previous investments.

The emphasis on established truths is also not conducive to innovation, according to the Bakhtinian framework (Bakhtin, 1984b). The purpose of the incubation process is to transfer the knowledge about the start-up process of high growth firms and the commercialization of technology from the incubator team to the entrepreneur. The incubator management teaches the managers of the ventures how to be professional and proper. The incubator model gives the start-ups legitimacy by modeling them in a shape that is recognizable to the incubator management and other investors. The output of this process is technology-based firms that are managed professionally. There is a clear student-teacher relationship in the narratives with a body of knowledge that should be transferred. The idea of transferring the knowledge accumulated by the incubator to the entrepreneurs is thus not conducive to creativity due to the emphasis on the prevailing truth. Creativity requires, according to Bakhtin, a perspective of truth as relative and a possibility for the participants to actively evaluate the proposed actions. There is a tendency in the case of incubator management to emphasize one truth that is not actively evaluated by the project managers.

The incubation process at Chalmers Innovation revolves around a standardized and specialized program for the rapid development of high-technological firms. At Chalmers Innovation, every venture follows the same structured incubation process with regular coaching meetings, evaluations, board meetings, education seminars and presentations for investors. A standardization of the process finalizes the dialogue and reduces the number of voices and ideas influencing the process. This type of formalization of the process has the disadvantage of also hampering the possibilities for creative
space in the incubator. From Bakhtin’s point of view, the incubator program becomes a process that the project managers do not fully engage with because it is not their process but one offered to them by the formal authorities (Bakhtin, 1984b). The idea of reducing uncertainties in the process is common to the management of industrial production (Austin & Devin, 2003; Hoskin, 2004). The disadvantage from a creativity perspective is that radical innovation requires an openness and tolerance for uncertainties (Austin & Devin, 2004; Hjorth, 2012).

The standardization of the program finalizes not only the process and outcome but also the participants. The program is based on the idea that the incubation can be adapted to a particular type of process, and the result is a specialized space. Entrepreneurs, managers, scientists and coaches must be finalized to create a more efficient process. A rapid development of the new ventures requires a process that reduces the distractions and influences. The standardization increases the coordination and control of the process from a managerial perspective, but it is less conducive to creativity. This specialized space does not create new combinations, new ideas or new organizations. From a polyphonic perspective, the voices are not different enough to create any creative understanding. Potential in ideas requires a position of outsideness (Bakhtin, 1984b), and this space merges voices. This specialization emphasizes the idea of the familiar and primarily encourages participants to recognize themselves in other entrepreneurs. Research on managing creativity has, however, shown that although it is convenient to assemble homogenous groups, these groups rarely perform well from a creativity perspective (Amabile, 1998). Homogenous teams have fewer conflicts and reach decisions faster but only because they do not consider many radically different scenarios that are important with respect to innovation.

7.6.3 In Search of Dialogue I

An important point to make is that a dialogic space at Minc does not equal dialogic entrepreneurial processes. At both incubators another genre of narratives is told: The Process of Becoming Entrepreneur, which has another chronotope than the official and other possibilities for creativity. The creative process in the story of becoming entrepreneur is characterized by dialogue, or rather the trials and tribulations of creating dialogic relations. Dialogue requires that both parties are recognized by the other as an equal conversation partner with equal responsibilities and rights (Bakhtin, 1986). The becoming is taking place in a hierarchized world where the entrepreneurs oppose or question the established truths about entrepreneurship. An important part of the process is to how become an equal part in the dialogue and how to have the confidence to not accept anyone else’s truth. From a Bakhtinian point of view this questioning and perspective of truth as relative was very important
for creativity (Bakhtin, 1984b). The idea of an absolute truth silences the necessary dialogue. The creative potential is primarily affected by the hierarchical relationships that hamper the dialogue at times. The uncertainty about being an entrepreneur or not also affects the dialogue. Fear always hampers the possibility to see the other as subject. These are thus entrepreneurs in search of dialogue regardless of managerial practices. This search for dialogue also aligns with other studies on incubators that show the difficulty of creating dialogic relationships in incubators and argue that incubating does not fulfil its dialogic potential (Thalsgård Henriques, 2015; Hjorth; 2013).

7.6.4 In Search of Dialogue II

Another category of entrepreneurs in search of dialogue in both incubators are those telling narratives in the genre, *Creating a new organization*. The dialogue, which these entrepreneurs have with the incubators, has the potential to be creative both for the incubators and the entrepreneurs because of the necessary outsideness, dialogic world view and active agreement for dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986). They have an outside position with regards to the incubation process because of their previous experiences of entrepreneurship. They try to understand the incubation process, but do not merge with the culture at the incubator. This could help the incubator to reveal the potential in the processes, but it is not done at the moment.

Few voices are provoked to meet in this story. The dialogue is finalized with regards to the incubator because either the entrepreneurs do not receive what they expected or never asks because they assume the incubator will not be able to help. The entrepreneurs experience themselves as finalized by the incubator and not the intended target group. These experienced entrepreneurs want to continue to learn about entrepreneurship and business development, but the incubators do not really provide that opportunity according to this analysis. Are incubators solely for those without previous experience? How could the managerial practices be designed in order for the incubator, these entrepreneurs and others to be able to benefit from this experience? Clearly these entrepreneurs can see the benefits from being in the incubator, but would like a more advanced business education than the incubators provide today.

From a carnival perspective, this story is describing an official festivity rather than a carnival time, but with the potential for a different incubation. In these stories the entrepreneurs recognize the hierarchies, but do not show any fear of or submission to them. They question the program, but do not attempt to change it. They work around the system and do not attempt to change the relationships or the program. There is no real space in these stories for questioning the enterprising; those issues are discussed with families and other entrepreneurs instead of the incubator management.
7.7 Summary and Conclusions: Incubator Management and Organizational Creativity

The analysis of the stories about management practices from a Bakhtinian perspective shows that the official chronotopes provide different understandings of incubator management and possibilities for creativity.

The analysis shows that the incubator management is understood differently in the two incubators. The comparison showed that the incubators give different meanings to the incubation process and thereby managerial practices. The coaching, consultation, co-location and clustering embody abstract ideas about business incubation, entrepreneurial processes and incubator management. The chronotopic analysis of the stories yielded differences in the conceptualization of the incubation process and the role of the incubator management team. Through the analysis of the managerial practices, it becomes clear that the conceptualizations of the incubation process are different in the incubators. The main difference between these conceptualizations is whether the incubation process is understood as creative meetings or a specialized and standardized program, as a temporary space for interaction or a progression through a program. The main difference of the roles assumed by the incubator teams is the focus on facilitation or managerial control. The incubators have primarily chosen to go in two different directions regarding the level of control they exercise in each venture. These understandings of the incubation process and the role of incubator management also provide different possibilities for creativity.

To sum up, the incubation process at Chalmers Innovation represents a model of creativity characterized by standardization, knowledge transfer, specialization and managerial control. This incubator model has many traits in common with the classic model of creativity discussed by Bakhtin and contemporary models of innovation management. From a creativity perspective, this model has a number of disadvantages, which become apparent when the model is compared with Minc’s model. From a creativity perspective, Chalmers Innovation has less potential for innovation because of hierarchical relations, an emphasis on established truths about enterprising and a more formalized process. The specialization also hinders creativity because the people and the ideas interacting in space are too similar. However, regardless of managerial practices the same phenomenon of standardization, control and specialization are present in the narratives hindering the creative process. Hence, introducing managerial practices common to classic industrial management allows more control but less organizational creativity.
CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION: BAKHTINIAN INCUBATION

This section will revolve around the last research question and discuss what incubation processes could be possible in the incubator context. The argumentation for Bakhtinian incubation and a future generation of business incubators will be supported by the Bakhtinian model of creativity, research on entrepreneurship in different organizational contexts and the results from the previous analyses of entrepreneurial processes and managerial practices.

8.1 A Bakhtinian Theory of Creativity

The first step is to summarize the characteristics of Bakhtin’s theory of creativity, as outlined in the chapter on Analytical Strategy. His discussion of creativity is related to both the characteristics of the creative process and the necessary contextual conditions for processual progress to be possible. Bakhtin wrote extensively about the conditions that made becoming and creativity possible. According to Bakhtin, the creative process is characterized by dialogue, polyphony and carnival.

Primordial to the Bakhtinian model of creativity is dialogue. Creativity depends on dialogue; new ideas are created not by the individual mind but through the interaction with other minds (Bakhtin, 1984a). All ideas take shape, develop and give birth to new ideas only when the ideas enter into dialogue with the ideas of others. Creativity is contingent on a space that is conducive to interaction but also where all ideas are treated equally. In a monologic worldview, there is only one truth that is the ultimate word, and all other ideas are regarded as invalid. Monologue does not require or even expect an answer. Another important aspect of dialogue is that it requires the ideas of others (Bakhtin, 1984a). Dialogue requires that the participants in the dialogue retain their own position, perspective and culture. Only if they retain a position of outsideness are they able to see the potential in each other’s ideas.
The last condition for dialogue is that the change and development is decided through dialogue. Each party in the dialogue must be able to actively agree or disagree to any changes made. Accepting truths without any evaluation turns the interaction into a monologue.

Polyphony is Bakhtin’s main theory of creativity, and it is based on the idea of provoking distinct voices to meet to create new combinations and outcomes that cannot be foreseen (Bakhtin, 1984a). Polyphony refers to unfinalized dialogue and subjects. People who are engaged in a dialogue cannot objectify each other. A genuine dialogic relationship between the ideas voiced requires ongoing dialogue, which means there cannot be any final word. Each contributor must expect and wait for an answer.

According to Bakhtin, as a popular practice and as a symbol, carnival honors the inventive creation of new combinations and a way of seeing the world from another perspective (Bakhtin, 1984b). It is a perspective based on play, freedom and equal rights and provides a temporary space for a second alternative life. Carnival requires a suspension of hierarchies, a view of truth as dialogic and full engagement by participants. As a creative space, carnival is thus threatened by an emphasis on hierarchies and on established truths, which turns the interaction into empty form and monologue.

8.2 Incubating Businesses à la Bakhtin

Bakhtinian incubation would thus be based on three principles—dialogue, polyphony and carnival—to be creative. This definition would have a number of implications for incubation policies and practices and the leadership of the incubator. How, then, would these Bakhtinian ideals be applied to business incubation? The proposal is that Bakhtinian incubation is conceptualized as an unfinalized dialogue where different voices are provoked to meet and decisions about development are made by dialogic agreement.

8.2.1 Unfinalized Prosaic Dialogue

Bakhtinian incubation would be characterized by unfinalized everyday dialogue. The incubation process is thus dialogical and is the product of the dialogue between all stakeholders in the process. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this is important because dialogue is the basis for all development. Nothing can happen without dialogue, and therefore, it must be at the center of the process. Creativity is always ongoing and rooted in the actions of people using resources provided by the past. The incubation dialogue thus gives both constraints and possibilities for the future; this is a perspective on creativity named prosaics by Morson and Emerson (1990). The process would be conceptualized as unfinalized; i.e., it would be not only
ongoing but also open-ended. The innovations emerge as a result of the incubation dialogue. Bakhtin’s theory of creativity is in opposition to both to the ideas of creativity as divine inspiration or as the fulfillment of specific goals because they make human imagination and initiative redundant. According to him, the fundamental aspect of all creative processes is the open-endedness of each event. Ideas develop not as a part of a planned process towards a goal but as a dialogue. Every idea can develop in an endless number of ways in each moment. This makes the process hard to predict and introduces uncertainty as a necessary part of the process. Reconceiving the entrepreneurial process as collaborative, emergent and open to uncertainty has also been suggested by research on organizational creativity (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Austin & Devin, 2003; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012).

Leadership and incubation practices must thus support an unfinalized dialogue, which is an interactional and emergent process. These practices must nurture dialogue and allow for unfinalizability in the process. Nurturing dialogue in the incubation process would require practices and leadership that affirm the new rather than emphasizing established truths. The managerial contribution to the process is as a conversation partner in the dialogue rather than as a supervisor of the process. Bakhtin argued that hierarchies kill dialogue, and therefore, the incubation process must be organized in a different way. From this perspective, the current idea of increased managerial control of ventures in business incubation is problematic. The main results from this study regarding hierarchies and control are from the interpretation of business coaching. The analysis of the entrepreneurial narratives shows that as soon as the business coaching is interpreted as a supervision of the process, the dialogue is hampered. The two incubators in this study have two approaches to coaching and control. Minc retains a more traditional role as support to the ventures, whereas Chalmers Innovation has moved from a support to a supervision structure. These two roles have different implications for the relationship between the entrepreneur and the incubator, as outlined in the analysis of this managerial practice. The combination of supervisor and coach creates entrepreneurial resistance that the support structure does not.

Bakhtinian incubation must be based on dialogue; therefore, managerial monologue would be the worst possible leadership. Leadership has to provide room for the response and reaction of the other person and consider the answer carefully before responding. If not, the dialogue is an empty form that only mimics interaction and collaboration. True dialogue changes both parties and will leave no one unchanged. The leadership at Chalmers Innovation could be interpreted as pushing forward and then stepping back to create movement. During the first intense start-up phase, the incubator team pushes forward and then steps back so that the project manager can take over the leadership of the process. However, the action does not create any dialogue that changes the
parties, and the incubation practice is part of an incubation monologue that does not expect an answer from the project managers. The incubator remains unaffected by the movement. On the contrary, Minc creates weaker ripple effects, choosing not to push forward as much as stepping back in the process. The incubator does not assume shared leadership during the process, and it steps back to encourage the entrepreneurs to assume responsibility from day one. The process of answering and waiting for a response before continuing the interaction has many characteristics that have been shown to be important for collective creativity in organizational contexts other than business incubation. Organizational creativity requires that the leadership have the power to affect but also the power to be affected (Hjorth & Holt, 2013). Thus, the leadership must have movement back and forth to create a dialogical process. The movement forward has to spark creativity by asking the right questions (Florida & Goodnight, 2005), direct energy (O'Donnell & Devin, 2012) and support by showing passion and interest (Amabile, 1998). However, stepping back is as important as pushing forward (Hjorth & Holt, 2013; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012; Soila-Wadman, 2003; Steyaert, 2012). This research on leadership in organizational creativity describes the significance of taking a step back to create movement and process. This creates a shared responsibility and leadership of the process, aiming at creating a harmonious whole of many visions rather than a single vision by a supreme leader (O'Donnell & Devin, 2012; Soila-Wadman, 2003).

Unfinalizability and creative necessity also have consequences for leadership and practice. The idea of standardizing the process is contrary to this Bakhtinian assumption of unfinalizability as central to the creative process. Unfinalized dialogue means that the development of businesses becomes an open process with no preconceived goal. However, open-endedness means not that anything is possible but that there is no past that exhaustively determines the future. Creativity from this perspective is an everyday business of using the resources the past provided in response and in contribution to local problems and opportunities, producing the potential for the future (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The innovations that emerge in incubation process are thus a result of past interactions and are formed by earlier answers, statements, responses and questions. In each innovation, there will be the traces of the past, and change is the slow accumulation of small decisions in everyday life. However, dialogue can always change the process and produce unforeseen outcomes. The emergence is thus marked by past decisions and local circumstances but also open-endedness. Managing this open-ended process means that neither the entrepreneur nor the incubator can predict exactly where the business will end up. The same argument for emergent and open-ended process can be found in research on innovation and collaborative arts (Austin & Devin, 2003). Austin and Devin argue that that reliable innovation requires an emergent process open to uncertainty by design (Austin & Devin,
Working with this type of emergent process requires that the management work without a pre-conceived strategy but recognize it as it emerges and intervene when appropriate. The management also has to design a process that is open to many sources of uncertainty because development comes from “moves and countermoves triggered by uncertain events, not from intensive planning and execution of the plan” (Austin & Devin, 2004, p. 53). Innovation depends on uncertainty, i.e., the unexpected action of another player that triggers unpredictable events.

To conclude, Bakhtinian incubation cannot be standardized because the incubator must engage in a dialogue with each venture. This means that uncertainty has to be part of the process, but it is also necessary for the unexpected to be able to happen. Dialogue will, however, help the incubator understand the emergence of each venture. Incubation leadership in general and business coaching in particular based on unfinalized dialogue must thus be focused on keeping the dialogue going. Each coaching session would only be a continuation of the ongoing dialogue. The coaches must refrain from stating monologic truths about how the organization should be created and be prepared to reconsider their own truths during the process. Each contribution to the dialogue must be considered carefully with empathy to avoid hampering the dialogue. The role of the coach is not to supervise the process but to create movement by a dialogical process of directing energy and taking a step back.

8.2.2 Polyphonic Space

Bakhtinian incubation would require a process that creates polyphonic space for different perspectives to meet to perpetuate dialogue. It is significant to open up the incubator to different entrepreneurs and firms because heterogeneity is an important factor in the creative process. The advantage of a polyphonic space from a Bakhtinian perspective is that it creates the necessary position of outsideness so that entrepreneurs can reveal the potential in each other’s ideas to create something more than the sum of their individual ideas. Research on creativity in organizations has also shown the importance of diversity and different perspectives for innovations (Amabile, 1998; Amabile & Khaire, 2008). It has been shown to be significant to design mutually supportive teams with a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds for ideas to “combine and combust in exciting and useful ways” (Amabile, 1998, p. 6). Although homogenous teams are easier to manage because they finish faster and with less friction, they do little to enhance expertise or creative thinking. Innovation is more likely to happen when people of different disciplines, backgrounds and areas of expertise share their thinking and knowledge (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

The creation of polyphonic spaces has several implications for incubation practices. The role of the managers in this polyphonic space is to organize
space for different voices. The original incubator idea of networking among the tenants has the potential for polyphony, but the recent ideology of high technology and specialization is incommensurable with the theory. Specialization in technology incubators is the major trend in the business incubation industry in Sweden and abroad (CSES, 2002; Stevenson & Lundström, 2001). Incubators that previously accepted any type of business are now encouraged to focus on high-tech business. The specialization trend has also led to a wide range of incubators that focus on bio science, design, gaming, services and most recently social entrepreneurship. The dominating view in incubator research is that specialized incubators are preferable to diversified ones because of key advantages such as better services and consultancy adapted to the clients’ needs (Schwartz & Hornych, 2008). A common assumption is also that the specialization strategy enhances the effectiveness of the internal networking in the incubator, which is not supported by empirical results (Schwartz & Hornych, 2010). Creativity from a Bakhtinian perspective is, however, not helped by limiting the range of voices by isolating innovation processes. This study shows that an incubator with a more general acceptance policy is more creative than a specialized incubator. The polyphonic space at Minc creates new ideas, new collaborations and changed perspectives. This type of incubator also caters to the needs of those who already have the knowledge of starting and managing companies and those who are in search of a creative community but not explicitly in need of learning the start-up process. Vanderstraeten and Matthyssens (2012) also encourage us not to automatically choose a specialization strategy and argue that a generalist approach can be as effective, depending on the tenants’ expectations and perceptions of the incubator’s services.

This study shows that a creative use of the incubator requires a different type of selection policy than the current trend proposes. The practice must move beyond the traditional general policy, where the potential of each project is evaluated separately. This transition would require another way of working with the portfolio of companies that are accepted to the incubator. The companies have to be chosen to create a creative whole and not focus on the parts. The practice today that is considered the best practice is the careful selection of companies with the best potential (Aerts, Matthyssens, & Vandenbempt, 2007; CSES, 2002). Each company is evaluated based on its future potential for growth and the possibility to obtain a patent. This practice would have to change into creating a creative crowd of people and choosing companies that can contribute to the incubation dialogue. The aim would be to create a mutually supportive group with different perspectives and backgrounds, as suggested by Amabile (1998). A Bakhtinian incubation would thus mobilize the knowledge and creativity of all entrepreneurs accepted to the program. This is an important aspect of the companies accepted to Minc, even though they are not technology-based and lack growth potential. Their
contribution to creativity should not be underestimated; they add important expertise and creative thinking skills to group. Their inclusion creates the necessary position of outsideness so that the entrepreneurs can creatively interpret each other’s ideas. The managerial contribution to the process would be not to supervise the process but to put together a team of entrepreneurs that can make the incubation process creative (Austin & Devin, 2003).

The presence of different voices is the starting point, but it is also necessary that the voices engage in dialogue as full subjects. Both Bakhtin’s theory and research on organizational creativity have shown that creativity in groups requires diversity but also supportiveness (Amabile, 1998; O’Donnell & Devin, 2012). Bakhtin argued for the importance of not finalizing each other because finalization is not conducive to dialogue. Recognizing each other as full subjects requires sympathy for and respect for each other. Fear and hostility make us finalize each other, rendering dialogue impossible. Amabile (1998) argues that a necessary feature for teams to become creative is that every member recognizes the unique knowledge and perspective of the other members but is also prepared to support them during difficulties. Hence, creating creative groups also requires a selection process that considers not only expertise, creative thinking skills and motivation but also attitudes towards collaboration (Amabile, 1998). Polyphony requires an incubation culture that fosters collaboration and a respect for different perspectives and knowledge.

Finally, the incubation practices must also provoke meetings to perpetuate unfinalized dialogue because physical co-location does not automatically lead to networking and collaboration. The idea of polyphony can also extend beyond the incubator office by creating networks to open up the organization to different perspectives. This has been shown to be important in other organizational contexts to extend collaboration beyond the organization through open-source innovation and networking to enhance creativity (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

8.2.3 Creative Space
According to this model, creative space is also necessary for innovation. The incubator is a carnivalesque space that focuses on becoming and on creating a second life, a space where anything is possible and everything can be questioned. Bakhtin argued that this space is fragile and can easily turn into an empty form, as the historical carnivals did. Hierarchies and authoritarian words kill the carnival and the dialogue. Research on entrepreneurship in organizational contexts has argued for the importance of these creative spaces for innovation (Chia & King, 1998; Hjorth, 2005). A vital ingredient of organizational creativity and innovation is the slack, ambiguity and foolishness that exist underneath the rational strategies of corporations (Chia
Intrapreneurship has always existed in this openness and flux in the dark afterhours, away from the prying eyes of managers. Organizational entrepreneurship is about these heterotopias, spaces for play and the joyful production of creativity (Hjorth, 2005; Steyaert, 2012). These creative spaces are important because the ideas are likely to come not from the management but from all ranks of the organization and be the product of interaction (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Burgelman, 1983; Florida & Goodnight, 2005).

Thus, how could incubators facilitate and nurture these creative spaces? An important aspect of the carnival is the creation of a temporary space where everything can be questioned. Reconceiving is an important part of an iterative process towards an emerging outcome because it leads to the evolution of a project (O'Donnell & Devin, 2012). This means that an idea is repeatedly reconceived based on the material from the last round of discussions and new material brought by the members of the team. O’Donnell and Devin note that this step can appear frightening because it involves reconsidering the project as it was the first time by combining past experience with new ideas. The creative space must thus allow the freedom to use past experiences differently and trigger the imagination of what could become.

According to Bakhtin, hierarchies and the emphasis on the status quo hamper creativity and the possibilities for reconceiving. The same argumentation about hierarchies and managerial practices is found in research on entrepreneurship in other organizational contexts (Amabile, 1998; Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Florida & Goodnight, 2005; Hjorth, 2005, 2012; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012; Steyaert, 2012). Organizational creativity requires a leader who is prepared to take a step back and create space for whatever new and different that is to come instead of holding on to hierarchical positions (Steyaert, 2012). Steyaert argues that stepping back is necessary for initiating a process that discloses new imageries, languages and emotions to think about and enact organizational worlds differently. The entrepreneurial practice of creative space would hence require some rethinking of professional incubation management. The recent suggestions about more managerial control have to be reconsidered in another type of entrepreneurial leadership. The earliest attempts at using incubators in firms primarily aimed to move the ventures outside the traditional hierarchy and even physically move them out of the office to create a more entrepreneurial environment. By once again introducing more direct control, evaluation and hierarchy, this move brings back the problem of managerial control and entrepreneurial freedom. Introducing hierarchy and formal authority in business incubation would hinder creative space by hampering active disagreement and reinforcing established truths. From this perspective, the incubation process at Minc has greater potential for creative space than the incubation management at Chalmers. Although the entrepreneurs at Chalmers Innovation sometimes
question the process, there are no stories about trying to change the incubation, and there are very few imaginings of an alternative process. At Minc, the entrepreneurs describe themselves as more active in the process and as contributing to the creativity of the space. There is space for reconceiving their ideas but also for the incubation.

Creating creative space in business coaching would thus require a deliberate effort by the managers and coaches not only to tell how things should be done but also to be prepared to reconceive own experiences and knowledge. The coaching must become a space where everything is possible and anything can be reconsidered.

8.2.4 Dialogic Agreement

This brings us to the final aspect of Bakhtinian incubation: finalization. Incubation has a goal of creating new organizations, so at some point there has to be some finalizing of the process. How do you finalize anything in this process characterized by unfinalized dialogue without managerial control? The answer is dialogic agreement. According to Bakhtin, the main way of agreeing on change is dialogue. This idea of dialogic truth without any coercion and based on voluntary consensus seems frightening and rather unreliable. This issue of managing emerging processes is not new to research on entrepreneurship and creativity in other organizational contexts. Managing processes where the goal is not set from the beginning but, rather, is invented during the process requires approaches other than rational management (Austin & Devin, 2003; O'Donnell & Devin, 2012). O'Donnell and Devin (2012) have showed that decision-making in these creative processes is based on collectively working through many possible ideas and integrating them into a coherent whole. The process will end when the participants in the process agree that further development would not improve the product/services (O'Donnell & Devin, 2012). The lessons learned from the discussions of carnival and becoming are that any deadlines or goals set for the process must be real and not just an empty form. The results from this study show that that the deadlines of the incubation processes are interpreted as arbitrary by entrepreneurs without any connection to their individual process. The incubator managers represent the general two-year standard that is based on practice in the industry; this standard is important so that the ventures do not stay too long in the incubators.

Therefore, the finalization of the incubation process must be a shared agreement between the incubator and the entrepreneurs. The end of the process will end when both parties agree that the process does not add more to the new organization or to the incubator. A fixed exit after two years is a formalization of the process of incubating businesses and is an empty form.
with no actual connection to the incubation process. Deadlines must in the true sense of the word be a matter of life and death.

8.2.5 Output: New Combinations and True Transformation

The potential of the model is true transformation and new combinations, becoming and innovation, “like it or not” as O’Donnell and Devin so pointedly put it. The benefit from the Bakhtinian incubation would be an organizational context that nurtures and supports creativity and innovation. The classical model of business incubators focuses on the creation of viable businesses and returns in the form of economic development, technology diversification, job creation and profits (Smilor & Gill, 1986). This creativity perspective on business incubation would focus on another set of returns, or additional outputs, such as creativity, innovation, diversity and entrepreneurial firms. A widened conceptualization of the possible returns from the incubators would be important both for the firms and society at large. If we take the idea of innovation as important for economic growth seriously, then the incubators should arguably innovate and create preparedness for innovation. I argue that the most important additional outputs from the incubator are new combinations and preparedness for innovation in the teams leaving the incubator.

In the classic model of incubation, the input in the process is new technology. This study shows that new ideas and combinations are not necessarily an input; they could also be an output of the process. The return from Chalmers Innovation is technology-based firms managed professionally and the commercialization of technology, but the incubator space does not create any new combinations. The output from Minc, however, is described by the entrepreneurs as new ideas, joint projects, inspiration and changed perspectives and new firms in wider range of industries.

The second return is preparedness for innovation in the businesses leaving the incubator. Traditionally, the incubator is expected to add a managerial element to the start-ups and thereby create viable businesses. This organizational creativity perspective would add the idea that the incubator is a preparation for continued innovation and not only management in the teams leaving the incubator. Austin and Devin (2004) argue that the socio-economic context has changed, and the new Knowledge Economy will require a different approach to business and processes than the industrial management with standardized processes and economies of scale demanded. They argue that competitive advantage will be based on reliably doing things differently from others rather than doing similar things repeatedly. The contribution of the incubator would thus go beyond the experience of starting a business. Johansson and Berglund (2008) argue that entrepreneurship policies are often too focused on enterprises rather than on enterprising, counting start-ups rather than starting
entrepreneurial processes. An expanding ambition for incubators would be to generate not only viable firms but also entrepreneurial firms, firms that are able to innovate and creatively do things differently from others. Departing from the assumption that firms must innovate or die, Amabile (1998) argues that managers often have an overly narrow view of what creativity in organizations is. It is an activity confined to R&D and sometimes feared as something uncontrollably irrational that disturbs efficient processes. There is a tendency in the incubation model to view creativity as a something that happened before the incubation and that the mission would be to structure the entrepreneurial chaos into a professional firm. The inventors are replaced by a processional manager, and managerial imperatives such as productivity, efficiency and economic rationality take over. The creative phase is assumed to be over. The potential of the incubator could thus also be a transformative space that creates new combinations in addition to innovative teams.

8.3 Summary and Conclusions: Bakhtinian Incubation

To conclude, the contribution of this model of incubation is the conceptualization of business incubation as the process of unfinalized dialogue, where different voices are provoked to meet and decisions are made through dialogic agreement. Entrepreneurship is defined as a dialogical, polyphonic and carnivalesque process. Creativity is assumed to be a constant feature of entrepreneurship, not a distinct idea phase in the beginning of the entrepreneurial process.

The model emphasizes business incubation as a product of interaction and collaboration, namely in this case unfinalized dialogue. The principal focus of the Bakhtinian model is how to keep the dialogue going since all creativity depends on it. The practices and leadership must thus support entrepreneurship as a dialogic process characterized by interaction and open-endedness. This presumes incubation practices based on shared leadership of the process and incubators that allow themselves to be affected by the dialogue.

Polyphony is primordial for the organizing of creative processes in the Bakhtinian model. The idea of heterogeneity and its link to creativity is not new to the discussion of innovation in organizations. The Bakhtinian framework helps highlight the necessary conditions for a diversity of perspectives to be creative through the concepts of position of outsideness, dialogic worldview and unfinalized subjects. Incubation practices must provoke meetings of different voices and ideas in order to keep the dialogue going because co-location does not necessarily create networking.
The element of playfulness is another important part of any Bakhtinian creativity and therefore another vital aspect of Bakhtinian incubation is the construction of creative space, a temporary space where any past experience, previous decision and earlier ideas can be questioned. Ideally the space will make entrepreneurs not only question their ideas but also the incubation. The carnival as a second life is there to show us what we could become and what new combinations could be possible. The importance of playfulness and of making room for *homo ludens* as a part of innovation and entrepreneurship has been put forth by those who argue for a social view of entrepreneurship rather than an economic. The Bakhtinian model advocates a second life in coaching and in incubation outside the normal world order and contributes with more arguments for the importance of these spaces as well as a number of conditions that hinders the creation of them.

The concept of dialogic agreement is an additional way of addressing leadership in the creative process, a way of reaching an agreement without an authority, or a manager. It is based on the idea that truth is dialogic, i.e. it develops through the dialogue and is not pre-established by any authority. This issue of the role of the manager or leader is often addressed in research on corporate entrepreneurship, organizational entrepreneurship and managing creativity. Central for these discussions are two aspects: economic rationality and the managerial control of creative processes. There is more or less optimism about the possibilities for entrepreneurship in a managerial context and for combing demands for control, efficiency and productivity with those for creativity and innovation. The Bakhtinian framework reminds us yet again of all the things that kill creativity: hierarchy, coercion, established truths and formalization. This places the model on the critical side of the continuum by questioning the authorities’ or the management’s ability to organize entrepreneurial space.

The output in traditional models of incubation is viable businesses and the incubators are expected to add the managerial element by professionalizing the management of the ventures during the incubation. The output from the Bakhtinian perspective would also be new combinations created in the incubator space and preparedness for continuing innovation after graduation.
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS:
ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES,
INCUBATOR MANAGEMENT AND
BAKHTINIAN INCUBATION

The purpose of this thesis is to inquire into the relation between entrepreneurial processes and managerial practices in business incubation to further our understanding of entrepreneurship in the organizational context. The main results and conclusions from this study on the entrepreneurial process in business incubation, the different understandings of business incubation practices and the implications of Bakhtinian incubation are outlined in this chapter.

9.1 Summary of Results

In previous analytical chapters business incubation has been analyzed using Bakhtinian concepts. The results from these analyses will now be discussed in relation to previous research on entrepreneurship, management and business incubators presented in the conceptual framework. How can these results be understood in relation to previous research? The empirical results of this study include a number of performative definitions of business incubation by entrepreneurs and incubators. The narrative analysis generated a number of entrepreneurial stories of business incubation with different conceptualizations of entrepreneurship, the role of incubator management and the incubation process. The business incubators compared in this study also interpret the idea of business incubation differently, and this has generated different views of their role in the incubation process. These results add to our understanding of how incubation is understood by the entrepreneurs and managers involved in the everyday practice of business incubation. The results address the need for
more research into meaning-making on a micro level in business incubation (Mian, 1997).

9.1.1 Entrepreneurial Processes in Business Incubation

This thesis set out to inquire into the potential for entrepreneurship in business incubation, i.e., the process of incubating. The first step towards concluding my inquiry is to summarize the main results from the analysis of entrepreneurial narratives related to how the entrepreneurs narrated the incubation process and to discuss these results in comparison with previous research. This research has focused on entrepreneurial processes in business incubation, and the narrative analysis identified a number of genres of narratives on entrepreneurial processes that are common to the incubators in the study. The main result from the analysis was a number of incubator tales that differ with respect to the image of the entrepreneur, the conceptualization of the entrepreneurial process and the view of the incubator. Bakhtin’s chronotope concept was used to analyze the narratives and to construct four genres: The process of becoming an entrepreneur, Inventing and organizing in creative space, Learning how to build a business and Creating a new organization.

The main difference between the narratives is their conceptualization of entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial processes are portrayed in a number of different ways. The descriptions range from classic coming of age stories to classic causation approaches to realize a specific effect (Cf. Sarasvathy, 2001). An important conclusion from this analysis of the entrepreneurial processes is the range of different interpretations that exist within a group of entrepreneurs that are offered standardized incubator programs. The diversity of interpretations among researchers and practitioners is known (Gartner, 1990) but is less recognized in business incubation. Differences are commonly interpreted as industry related and have generated a trend of specialized incubators (Schwartz & Hornych, 2008, 2010; Vanderstraeten & Matthyssens, 2012). The stories are full of classic images of entrepreneurs who are born driven and enterprising but also include images of those struggling with negotiating a new identity. Another important conclusion from this analysis is that the image of the entrepreneur is interlinked with the descriptions of the relation to the incubator. Those secure in their entrepreneurial identity view the incubator and the coach as a complement to their knowledge, experience and personality. They do not expect the incubator to teach them what it means to be entrepreneurial but as a craft with certain skills and know-how. For those less sure about their own entrepreneurial capabilities and skills, the relation becomes more complicated, but it is a relation that develops over time. The practical implication of this is recognition that coaching businesses is more of a dialogue with a particular entrepreneur rather than an understanding of a particular industry or process. Additionally, recognition from the coach is
perceived differently depending on the entrepreneur’s assumption about their role in venture development. Considering the complexity of this dialogue and the increased interest for coaching, this area merits further investigation. Further research on coaching in business incubation could inquire into the different types of coaching and mentoring available to entrepreneurs. An alternative approach would be to follow a dialogue between a coach and entrepreneur over time to analyze how the chronotopes change and influence each other through the interaction.

9.1.2 Incubator Management and Creativity

The study set out to inquire into the relationship between entrepreneurship and management in business incubation and to add to our understanding of this particular relationship. The main result from the analysis of the incubator management from a creative process view was that the incubators in the study favored slightly different approaches to business incubation and that these models, from a creativity perspective, have different implications and potential for entrepreneurship. These different understandings of incubator management are interpreted into two chronotopes: Specialized development and Interactional space. The chronotope at Chalmers Innovation has been interpreted as specialized development because its focus is to develop a particular type of business according to a special program. This chronotope guides the understanding of the incubation process as a standardized program with the role of the incubator management as supervisor of the process in charge of transferring the knowledge to the project managers. The Interactional space chronotope gives another meaning to the managerial practices because it is based on the creation of space for interaction. The role of the incubator team is to facilitate and support the entrepreneurs as they develop their ideas and inventions while interacting and influencing each other. These two chronotopes thus shape the understanding of entrepreneurship and its relation to incubation practices. The Specialized development chronotope is based on a model of incubation characterized by standardization, specialization and managerial control of the incubation process. This incubator model has many traits in common with the classic model of creativity discussed by Bakhtin and the contemporary models of innovation management (Drucker, 1985). The Interactional space chronotope gives rise to another model of incubation focusing on creating space for the interaction of different perspectives and facilitating the incubation processes for entrepreneurs.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, Minc’s model has a greater chance of innovation because of fewer hierarchical positions, less emphasis on established truths and less formalization. The Interactional space chronotope also has a larger potential for creativity because there is the possibility for dialogue and a diversity of people and ideas are allowed to interact in this
space. The outcome of the incubation management is professionally managed technology-based firms, whereas the outcome from Minc is a diversity of new firms, new collaborations and new ideas. The managerial approach favored by one of the incubators has consequences recognized by previous research in corporate entrepreneurship, organizational entrepreneurship and creativity management (Amabile, 1996; Carrier, 1996; Hjorth, 2005) when introducing more control and standardization. Another conclusion from this study is that the incubators from a Bakhtinian perspective allow for entrepreneurial processes with more or less potential for creativity. *Inventing and organizing in creative space*, which is unique for Minc, has the most potential for creativity from this perspective because the process is dialogic, polyphonic and carnivalesque. The process is based on dialogue with others, a diversity of conversation partners, in a non-hierarchical space. The story favored at Chalmers Innovation *Learning how to build a business* has the least potential because of hierarchies, a monologic world view and no positions of outsideness. The other two stories have the potential to be more creative than they are today. In the story *Creating a new organization*, it is mainly the entrepreneurs’ position of outsideness that is not taken advantage of by the incubator. The potential of dialogue in the process of becoming an entrepreneur is primarily hampered by hierarchies and norms in the incubators. The empirical results from this study show the importance of not only considering what the entrepreneurs should be offered but also how the incubation process should be structured.

The result from this study also provides deeper knowledge about the relationship between these approaches and entrepreneurial processes. The official chronotope at Chalmers Innovation is interpreted as *Specialized development*, and the favored entrepreneurial process is the type-story *Learning how to build a business*. However, the stories *Creating a new business* and *Becoming an entrepreneur* are equally present. At Minc, the official chronotope is *Interactional space*, and the type-story unique to this incubator is *Inventing and organizing in creative space*. This study shows that a particular model of incubation favors a particular entrepreneurial process and denies/excludes others, but it cannot completely dominate. Business incubation, regardless of the model of incubation, contains a larger variety of entrepreneurial processes than previously recognized in incubator studies. There are numerous understandings of entrepreneurial processes present within the incubator system, and the incubators cannot prescribe the meaning of entrepreneurship and incubator management, as shown by the narrative analysis. The entrepreneurs relate to the official chronotope in different ways depending on how they make sense of their own role in the system. The official chronotopes generate a number of responses: approval, apathy or resistance, depending on the entrepreneur’s interpretation of the situation. This study has identified that there are entrepreneurs in the system that perceive
themselves as experienced and see further potential in the incubator idea, which is not realized. A future line of inquiry could be to analyze what these suggestions would mean for business incubation and how the dialogue between these entrepreneurs and the incubators could be further developed to shift incubating more toward entrepreneuring than managing.

On a micro-level, this study contributes empirically to our understanding of two key managerial practices in business incubation: coaching and physical co-location. Prior research has focused on the common or best practices for business incubators (Caiazza, 2014; Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). The addition of this study is the meaning-making involved in the design and use of these practices. Previous research has identified physical co-location as a key feature of business incubation. This study adds to our knowledge about this particular practice: how it can be designed in practice and the consequence of different designs from a creativity perspective (for example, industry specialization of business incubators). Previous research has also suggested more involved coaching by the incubator management team as beneficial to the entrepreneurial processes (Rice, 1992; Smilor & Gill, 1986). This study contributes to our understanding of how increased involvement can be applied in practice and how it is understood from the entrepreneur’s perspective. The results of this study show that the same managerial practice planned and programmed by the incubator management holds different meaning to the individual entrepreneurs based on the individual chronotope of the entrepreneur. Increased involvement is neither automatically appreciated, as the proponents suggest, nor perceived as control, as the critiques imply. The practical implication of this realization is that “best practice” is a situational and temporary phenomenon. This study has been limited to investigating chronotopes on the level of the individual entrepreneur, the incubator and the entrepreneurs as a collective at two incubators. The study has adopted a bottom-up approach when inquiring into the assumptions guiding business incubation on the incubator level. Of interest for new studies would be more of a top-down approach inquiring into the assumptions and discourses on an incubator system level, in particular, the possible changes in connection with Vinnova’s financing of a number of incubators already existing in different regional innovation systems. In this study, the consequences of this investment and the requirements attached to the financing were only touched upon by the incubator managers and entrepreneurs, but these topics merit further investigation. Another suggestion would be to discursively study the ideas of “best practices” that are spread through the system by local, national and international agencies.
9.2 Contributions, Limitations and Implications

All research has limitations, and there are always aspects that could be further investigated. This section will outline the contributions and the possible implications of this study and will address the limitations of the investigation and suggestions for continued research.

9.2.1 Another Paradigm

The narrative approach contributes different ontological and epistemological perspectives to the functionalist studies common to incubator and entrepreneurship research. This answers the call for new approaches in entrepreneurship studies to understand the phenomenon in alternative ways (Bjerke, 2005; Gartner, 2007; Grant & Perren, 2002; Steyaert, 2007). By adopting an interpretive paradigm, the study contributes a focus on meaning-making and how the understanding of business incubation is socially constructed in this particular context. The study provides insight into the everyday life of entrepreneurs and incubator managers because the narrative approach produces a highly contextualized empirical material. The narrative approach is used as a way to capture the complexities of entrepreneurial processes and how the entrepreneurs make sense of the process in their narrations based on the assumption that the only way to access lived experience is through these stories. The study thus adds to the growing body of research applying a narrative approach to entrepreneurship and business (cf. Ericson, 2010).

9.2.2 A Novel Reading, but not the Final Word

This study also contributes a novel reading of business incubation. Bakhtin argued that the contribution of the outsider, in this case the researcher, is to reveal the potential of a phenomenon that the insiders are not aware of. The first step is to understand the insider culture, but the real contribution of the outsider is a creative understanding of the text, which supplements it while respecting its integrity. To understand the insiders’ view of the incubation culture, narrative interviewing, a type of interviewing influenced by ethnographic practices, was used. A limitation of this study is the partial use of the ethnographic approach in the sense that it was limited to ethnographic interviews. The access to the research settings allowed for interviews with entrepreneurs and incubator managers in a more restricted way than classic ethnography. The study could also have been more dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense because I did not go back and discuss the interpretations with all entrepreneurs. However, the interpretations were continuously discussed during the interviews and were developed in dialogue with many entrepreneurs. The implications of this are that there is still room for more ethnographic studies of incubators and entrepreneurship using a classic
ethnographic method and a more interactive method to develop the interpretation in dialogue with the entrepreneurs.

The Bakhtinian concepts (chronotope, dialogue, polyphony and carnival) were applied to the texts to argue for new interpretations of the material. These interpretations are the contributions of my research: an attempt to show other aspects of business incubation perhaps unknown to the members of the incubator world. The process has been dialogic in the sense that the Bakhtinian framework was chosen and developed alongside interviews. The empirical material has not been confirmed or validated, but it has had an important role in the analysis. This analysis would not have been the same without the empirical material. I used my outsideness to find meaning in the stories about business incubation that were not previously found. A Bakhtinian methodology based on dialogism also means that this is not the final word on business incubation because there is no such thing. This Bakhtinian interpretation of entrepreneurial processes should be considered as part of the scientific dialogue on business incubation and a response to previous research.

All cultural artifacts, such as narratives, are, according to Bakhtin, also open unities, which means that they have “immense semantic possibilities” that remain hidden, unrecognized and unutilized (Bakhtin, 1986). New semantic depths can always be added through analysis. Another outsider would also ask other questions than I have; therefore, other unrealized aspects of business incubation could be recognized. This analysis has aimed to disclose the entrepreneurial and creative aspects of business incubation. The implication of this is that there are numerous semantic possibilities left to disclose in business incubation and entrepreneurial processes in our culture.

9.2.3 Polyphonic Reading and Writing

The Bakhtinian framework also meant a narrative approach in search of a multitude of voices. Not a story or the story, but stories of business incubation. The narrative approach has, in this case, shown how the entrepreneurs understand the process and also the range of interpretations among the entrepreneurs at the time of the interviews. This polyphonic approach to the narratives is an effort to note multiple understandings and alternative possibilities. The tendency to create a unified narrative out of the many voices and stories in the field has been criticized both in organization studies (Boje, 2001) and entrepreneurship research (O'Connor, 2007). All stories that contradict this narrative are perceived as noise and are therefore excluded from the homogenous narrative created by the researcher (Boje, 2001). These types of narrated cases are often treated as if they are facts and not interpretations of events (O'Connor, 2007). Although I argue in this study that some stories are more common than others, I have made an effort to note that there are numerous variations to the incubation tale within and between
incubators. A limitation of the study in this aspect is that the writing could have been more polyphonic and showcased more of the ambiguity in the texts. However, polyphony is difficult to achieve both in literature (Bakhtin, 1984a) and scientific texts (Kohler Riessman, 2008). The implication of this is that there is room for the development of the text in a more polyphonic direction in future research.

9.2.4 A New Analytical Framework
The theoretical contribution of this study is a Bakhtinian theoretical framework that offers a new perspective on business incubation and the management of entrepreneurial processes. The study shows how Bakhtinian concepts can be adapted and made useful as an analytical framework for studying the relationship between entrepreneurship and management in business incubation. Entrepreneurship is understood as a creative process characterized by dialogue, polyphony and carnival. This perspective has implications for how we see and understand business incubation as a phenomenon. The Bakhtinian theory of creativity problematizes the assumptions underlying the managerial practices applied in business incubation, such as business coaching and specialization strategies. The concepts problematize the best practices in incubator management by discussing their effect for a dialogic, polyphonic and carnivalesque process. Using dialogue as an analytical concept to inquire into business coaching discloses the complexities of the managerial practice by discussing the conditions for the process to be creative. The favored specialization strategy also appears in a different light having certain drawbacks from a creativity perspective by limiting the number of perspectives and possibilities for interaction in the incubator space.

The Bakhtinian framework provides a new theoretical way of addressing the relationship between entrepreneurial processes and managerial interventions from an organizational creativity perspective. This framework places this research within entrepreneurship studies that apply a creative process view and consider the organizational conditions for these processes (cf. Hjorth, 2012). This study investigates the organizational conditions for creativity in the particular context of business incubation, but the Bakhtinian framework provides a number of concepts to inquire into the relationship between management and entrepreneurship that could be potentially useful for investigating the conditions for entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity in other organizational contexts. Because business incubation shares many characteristics and concerns with intrapreneurship due to the same idea of entrepreneurial processes in a place provided and regulated by management practices, the framework could be useful for future research on intrapreneurial processes. The framework is particularly suitable to investigate innovation through collaborative work, collective creativity in organizations or group
processes and creativity due to the focus on social interaction as a basis for creativity. The understanding of entrepreneurship as a dialogical, polyphonic and carnivalesque process could also be applied to research on entrepreneurial processes to investigate how ideas and organizations are created in dialogue with others.

9.2.5 Practical Implications of Bakhtinian Incubation

The practical implication of the theoretical contribution and empirical results is a suggestion that business incubation could be organized differently with an alternative model of incubation based on the Bakhtinian principles of creativity. Business incubation is conceptualized as the process of unfinalized dialogue, where different voices are provoked to meet and decisions are made through dialogic agreement. Compared to other models of incubation, Bakhtinian incubation applies a creative process view. Traditional system models of incubation have a structural approach to incubation and specify what should be offered by businesses but not how the actual process should be organized (CSES, 2002; Smilor & Gill, 1986). This model thus answers the call for a processual approach to business incubation (Aernoudt, 2004; Hackett & Dilts, 2004). Previous models of incubation have been criticized for lacking a link to entrepreneurship research (Chan & Lau, 2005; Mian, 1997). This model draws upon previous research about entrepreneurial processes and the management of entrepreneurship and creativity in other organizational contexts as well as the results from this study in an attempt to discuss how creative processes could be supported.

The Bakhtinian ideals of dialogue, polyphony and carnival were arguably not intended for business incubation. However, I argue that business incubators could benefit from using them to consider how their practices affect the processes they are intended to support. As a model of organizational entrepreneurship, Bakhtinian incubation adds a focus on creativity as an integral part of the entrepreneurial process and not as a discrete phase at the beginning. The previous discussion shows that incubation could support this type of creative process. In an effort to discuss what the abstract ideal could mean in practice, I have discussed a number of possible incubation practices, such as unfinalized dialogue, polyphonic space, creative space and dialogic agreement. The practical implication of this study is that incubator practices based on another set of assumptions are not always compatible with the requirements of control, efficiency and standardization normally associated with management. For incubator management, this has a number of implications. First, it would require engagement in the entrepreneurial process as a dialogue partner on equal terms and not as a supervisor of the process. Second, there is an assumption that the incubator learns as much from the entrepreneurs as they teach them. The dialogue activates the potentials in both the incubation and entrepreneurial processes. Finally, the admission policy
should focus on constructing a creative interacting whole of complementary entrepreneurs and businesses in the incubator space. This marks the end of my exploration of business incubation. Thank you for reading.
REFERENCES


Amezcua, A. S., Grimes, M. G., Bradley, S. W., & Wiklund, J. (2013). Organizational sponsorship and founding environments: A contingency view on the survival of


APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

This is the interview guide that was used in the interviews with the entrepreneurs from the business incubators. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and the interview guide was translated into English for this report.

The Company’s Development
- Could you describe your company and your background?
- Could you describe how your company have developed from the moment you got the idea to start a business?
- Could you describe the events that you think have been critical to your enterprising and the development of your company?
- Could you describe who are involved in your company?
- How do you picture the future of your company?
- What do you consider as critical for the company in the future?
- Could you draw the development of the company?

The Business Incubator
- Could you describe the incubator? How would you describe the incubator to an outsider like me? If you would describe it to a customer, what would you say then?
- Could you describe what has happened from your first contact with the incubator until now? How did you come in contact with the incubator? What were your expectations? What happened then? When do you think you will leave the incubator?
- You can stay in the incubator for approx. two years, what happens during that time? What does the process look like? Where are you in the process? Could you describe the most important milestones during the process?
- Did you consider starting at business outside the incubator? What is the difference with starting a business here and somewhere else? Who starts a business in an incubator?
- How would you describe your relationship with the incubator? Could you describe what kind of impact the incubator has had on your company?
Could you describe who you have been in contact with here at the incubator and describe your relationship to them?

In research this is called a business incubator. What do you call it? What is it called by the entrepreneurs here?

There are a lot of organizations supporting entrepreneurship. What is the difference between the business incubator and other types of organizations? How would you define an incubator?

The Business Coaches
- What do the business coaches do here?
- Where can you find the business coaches in the office?
- Could you tell me about the first meeting with the coach?
- Could you describe a typical meeting? What do you normally talk about? Where do you meet? How often do you meet? Who initiate the contact? Is there an agenda for the meetings? Are there different kinds of meetings?
- Could you describe your latest meeting? Was it spontaneous or planned? What did you hope would happen? What happened after the meeting? What did you think of the meeting?
- What do you think you will discuss at the next meeting with the coach? What do you hope will have happen? What do you think will happen?
- How would you describe your relationship to the business coaches? Could you describe an event that can elucidate the relationship?
- Are there any questions that you rather discuss with someone else than the coach? In that case, who do you talk to? Could you describe a situation when that happened?
- Do you have any particular experience from these coaching meetings that you want to tell me about?

The Other Entrepreneurs
- Do you have any contact with the other entrepreneurs here? Could tell me about the companies you have contact with and your relationship to them?
- How would you describe the relationships between the entrepreneurs here in the incubator? Could you give examples of different types of relationships?
- Could you give an example of a typical contact?
- Could you describe your latest contact with a company here?
- In research about incubators you are called entrepreneurs, tenants or incubatees. What do you call yourself? What do you call yourselves here?
- Is there any difference between the contacts you have with companies here and companies outside the incubator?