Introduction

This book will discuss entrepreneurship along four themes:

1. Time, timing, space and place
2. Behaviour and action
3. Explaining and understanding
4. Phenomenology.

Using the terms ‘time’, ‘timing’, ‘space’ and ‘place’ as special analytical categories may sound futile to some. After all, everything takes time, is a matter of timing, is located in space and takes place? However, we do not intend to play with words. We are rather interested, as researchers, to discuss what it means, beyond what is taken for granted, to look at the world through some specific concepts. There are several such examples in science. For instance, all human beings have a language. But what does it mean to have a language? This has been discussed in many intellectual camps, for instance, in philosophy, history and philology. In a similar fashion, we all have a culture. But what does it mean to have a culture? An entire scientific field, social anthropology, is devoted to answer this question.

As in the case of language and culture, just because we take time, timing, space and place for granted, we normally deem them not worthy of separate treatment. And because we say that we cannot choose in these matters, we believe that we do not have to think about such facticity to start with (Casey, 1993). However, when we think a bit longer about such concepts, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask. In fact, time and timing, as well as space and place, can be very complicated concepts, which is all the more confusing because, at first glance, they appear so obvious and common-sense. To look at the world as time, timing, space and/or place is to use dimensions to characterize the world into a special fashion and, like using any criterion, a special way to talk about and to understand the world. According to Cresswell (2004, p. 27), for instance, ‘by taking space and place seriously, we can provide another tool to demystify and understand the forces that affect and manipulate our everyday life.’

Specifically looking at the world as a world of places we see different things:
Looking at the world as a set of places in some way separate from each other is both an act of defining what exists (ontology) and a particular way of seeing and knowing the world (epistemology and metaphysics). Theory is a way of looking at the world and making sense of the confusion of the senses. Different theories of place lead different writers to look at different aspects of the world. In other words, place is not simply something to be observed, researched and written about but simply part of the way we see, research and write. (Cresswell, 2004, p. 15)

So, one fundamental ambition of this book is to look at entrepreneurship through the conceptual quartet of time, timing, space and place. More about this conceptual quartet in general and an introduction to its relevance to entrepreneurship will come later in the next chapter.

One conceptual pair that has been used for characterizing human beings and the way we look at human beings is behaviour and action. We will suggest that the concepts in this pair have a much stricter meaning in science than in everyday language. In science, in fact, these concepts stand for two different orientations in modelling and/or interpreting human activities. Entrepreneurship is normally associated with action more than with behaviour.

Another, somewhat related, but more fundamental duality as far as research orientation is concerned is that of explaining and understanding. Both orientations exist in entrepreneurship research and we will present examples of both. A general trend, however, is that attempts at understanding entrepreneurship seem to gain in pace in researching this phenomenon.

Several different philosophical and theories of science exist today. We stand for one of them, that is, phenomenology. Phenomenology aims at ascertaining the subjective nature of ‘lived experience’, by exploring the subjective meanings, explanations and understanding that individuals attribute to their experiences. We will see that this is highly relevant to entrepreneurial actions.

A more thorough discussion of the second, third and fourth themes will be presented in Chapter Two. A discussion of what could be seen as the most fundamental theme of the four (contained even in its title), that is, the theme of time, timing, space and place, will come already in the next chapter. We will see, however, that all four themes are reflected in entrepreneurship and related economic action, make a difference and, if taken seriously, force us to choose as researchers.

THE AMBITION WITH THIS BOOK AND ITS OUTLINE

This book offers a phenomenological investigation of the importance of time, timing, space and place in studies of contemporary entrepreneuring
and related business activities. To understand entrepreneurship phenomenologically is a somewhat ignored field of entrepreneurship studies (Cope, 2005; Berglund, 2007). This book is (thus) an enterprise that, although predominantly theoretical in character, is geared to the understanding of the concepts of time, timing, space and place that form the subject matter of the empirical phenomenon of entrepreneurship. In other words, the book is concerned with how the factors of time, timing, space and place are integrated (or disintegrated) in entrepreneurial contexts. It deals with epistemological matters of entrepreneurial studies. Since the main focus of this book is on the understanding of time, timing, space and place in entrepreneurial processes, some questions of human action and its phenomenological characterization (as well as research aiming at providing explanations versus research aiming at providing understanding) will be provided in Chapter Two. The purpose of this book is not to engage solely in theory and philosophy. However, if the complexity of time, timing, space and place are to be understood, account must be taken of its more intrinsic character before we can proceed with the elucidation of entrepreneurial action. This will be done in Chapter One.

Three possibilities can be drawn from incorporating the conceptual quartet of time, timing, space and place into the entrepreneurial discourse more extensively and more consistently than it has been up to now:

1. Having the possibility to use a lot of theories, models and interpretations from ‘neighbouring’ subjects when researching entrepreneurship, subjects which have been discussing their research areas through this quartet of concepts (or part of it) for quite some time, for instance, history, political studies, human geography, architecture, urban studies and regional economics
2. Truly being able to live up to the vision that entrepreneurship belongs to the whole society, not only to its economy
3. By using such a broad approach, the entrepreneurial paradigm can be unshackled from ‘hangover biases’ such as that entrepreneurship primarily has to do with economic growth, that the subject is a predominantly male gender issue, that it is associated with a hero focus, and that it does not have to consider culture and mundane activities in everyday life.

Entrepreneuring can be seen as intimately related to subjective time, or as a matter of timing. However, different factors have a different bearing on entrepreneurship if they are treated as either ‘space factors’ or as ‘place factors’. Some space factors that can influence entrepreneurship include:
Entrepreneurial imagination

- Degree of organization
- Separate departments for business development being started in existing companies
- Market growth
- Possibilities to act freely and/or transgress borders of various kinds.

Some place factors that can influence entrepreneurship include:

- Local role models
- Leadership
- Existing networks
- Possibilities to access locations where things can take place.

Based on the four themes presented at the beginning of this chapter, the rest of the book will discuss various entrepreneurship and related business matters:

- Chapter One will provide a discussion of our basic conceptual quartet, that is, time, timing, space and place
- Chapter Two will provide an overview of the development of the academic topic of entrepreneurship and discuss important topics such as behaviour and action, explaining and understanding, and phenomenology
- Chapter Three will look at entrepreneurship in all its varieties in our modern society
- Chapter Four will study, in more detail, one interesting type of entrepreneurship today, social entrepreneurship
- Chapter Five will explain the relationship of social entrepreneurship to local government
- Chapter Six will relate entrepreneurship to regional development
- Chapter Seven relates entrepreneurial action to various aspects of environmental concerns
- Chapter Eight discusses ICT-networking in the context of entrepreneurship.

We look at Chapters One to Three as the foundation of the book and Chapters Four to Eight more as applications.

- Chapter Nine provides a short summary of the book and its conclusions.