Learning Together, Leading Change

Understanding Collective Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organisations

Morteza Eslahchi
Learning Together, Leading Change
Understanding Collective Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organisations

Morteza Eslahchi

Abstract
This dissertation aims to generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing a collective learning-centred perspective, I want to explore the following key areas: a) the learning conditions and organising processes entailed in becoming a social entrepreneur and creating a social entrepreneurial organisation, b) the importance of collective learning for organisational adaptation and change in tackling exogenous factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and c) the role of leadership in creating conditions conducive to collective learning processes in social entrepreneurial organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grounded in empirical studies, this research reimagines leadership as an empowering, collaborative practice that is intricately woven with collective learning dynamics. The study also scrutinises the adaptive and evolutionary nature of organising processes, emphasising their centrality for collective learning. Furthermore, it highlights the efficacy of a collective learning-centred approach in driving meaningful organisational change, contrasting this with top-down strategies. Since most of the data was gathered during the global upheaval caused by COVID-19, this research presents a unique opportunity to examine collective learning as a resilience-building tool in turbulent times. This study fills a gap in existing literature by focusing on the Swedish context, and offers insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in social entrepreneurship. Ultimately, the research underscores the potential of collective learning to equip social entrepreneurial organisations for sustainable innovation and resilience, particularly in challenging societal conditions.

Keywords: collective learning, social entrepreneurial organisations, social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, social innovation, communities of practice, Sweden, COVID-19 pandemic.

Stockholm 2023
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-221643
ISBN 978-91-8014-511-4

Department of Education
Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
LEARNING TOGETHER, LEADING CHANGE

Morteza Eslahchi
Learning Together, Leading Change
Understanding Collective Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organisations

Morteza Eslahchi
Woman, Life, Freedom

With profound respect, I dedicate this dissertation to the brave women, men, and the spirited youth of Iran who have made the ultimate sacrifice in their noble pursuit of freedom, justice, and fundamental human rights. May their stories reverberate through history, serving as a reminder that freedom is not an entitlement, but a precious jewel worth fighting for, even against formidable odds. I extend special dedication to Jina Mahsa Amini, whose tragic murder sparked the emergence of a new generation of freedom fighters in Iran!
Acknowledgement

This work is profoundly devoted to my cherished wife and daughter, Somayeh and Hanna. The light of your love and the touch of your kindness have been my sustenance, empowering me to complete this remarkable journey. You are the heartbeat in my chest—life without you is unimaginable.

A special tribute belongs to my parents, who, since the days of my early childhood, meticulously nurtured my educational growth. Your sacrifices echo in my heart, reminding me of the debt I owe you, a debt that only love can repay. It is because of your enlightening upbringing that I discovered an enduring love for books and reading.

A huge thank you to my dear supervisors, Ali Osman, Malgorzata Malec Rawinski, and Jon Ohlsson, who supported me through the process and demonstrated unwavering patience, even when my drafts resembled cryptic crossword puzzles more than scholarly work. They not only supported me through the process but also endured my journey of transforming from an eager, enthusiastic PhD student into a coffee-dependent, citation-obsessed academic.

My profound gratitude to Carina Carlhed Ydhag and Matilda Wiklund, who served as directors of PhD studies during my tenure. I sincerely appreciate your support, whether it was by offering insightful advice or patiently addressing a myriad of questions I had.

I would like to extend my special thanks to Camilla Thunborg, Karin Berglund, Ulf Olsson, Pär Larsson, and Marianne Terås who played the crucial roles of readers in my reading seminars. While your comments and critiques initially induced a fair amount of perspiration and a racing heartbeat, they ultimately provided invaluable insights and ideas that significantly enhanced my dissertation.

My deep sense of appreciation also goes to Maria Gustavsson, who graciously agreed to serve as my opponent. Furthermore, my heartfelt thanks to the members of the evaluation committee: Gunilla Avby, Jessica Lindberg, Ola Lindberg, and Annika Engström.

A special note of gratitude goes out to the journal editors and the anonymous peer reviewers who meticulously evaluated and critiqued my articles. While their feedback initially seemed harsh, it unquestionably led to significant improvements in my work. I appreciate their rigorous standards
and the pivotal role they have played in refining my articles, leading to the polished pieces of scholarly work they are today.

My warm gratitude extends to the members of the Organisational Pedagogic and Adult Learning research groups, who diligently reviewed the early drafts of my articles and provided insightful feedback. Through this experience, I have learned how to critically evaluate texts, provide constructive feedback, and, importantly, develop resilience in accepting and learning from rigorous critiques.

Special thanks to the fellow PhD students from whom I had the pleasure of learning over these years. You all fostered a sense of community that was invaluable, ensuring that I never felt alone in this journey. The insightful talks and discussions we shared have left an indelible mark on me, and the joy that accompanied these intellectual exchanges will always be fondly remembered.


I must also express my appreciation to Jonathan Feldman and Alireza Majlesi, whose encouragement and motivation were crucial in my decision to pursue a career in academia and undertake a PhD. Your faith in my potential sparked my commitment to this path.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to all of the administration staff at IPD, whose behind-the-scenes hard work ensures that everything runs smoothly. A special thank you goes out to Christina Edelbring, Eva Olsson, Emma West, Erika Södersten, and Marie Hurtig.

I want to express my profound gratitude to each individual who generously consented to partake in my research. Your participation was pivotal and without it, this dissertation simply would not have been possible.

As can be discerned from this extensive list of acknowledgements, my journey through the writing of this dissertation was not a solitary one. That being said, it is important to note that while this collective endeavour has deeply enriched my dissertation, any shortcomings that may exist within the work are my responsibility. As is the nature of any human endeavour, imperfections may inevitably surface. I wholeheartedly own these, as they stand testament to my learning process and the scope for further growth and refinement.

As I write these lines, I am astonished to find myself on the other side of this academic marathon, still standing, still breathing, and surprisingly, still capable of coherent thought! So, here’s a high-five to the hero of this research journey—me!
List of Articles


---

1 Morteza Eslahchi took on the responsibility for data collection and analysis, as well as the drafting of the initial manuscript. Subsequently, the article was developed and rewritten together with the co-author.
## Contents

Acknowledgement........................................................................................................... ii

List of Articles.............................................................................................................. iv

List of Figures................................................................................................................ 1

List of Tables.................................................................................................................. 2

1. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 3
   1.1 What Is This Dissertation About? ...................................................................... 3
   1.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic .................................................................................... 4
   1.3 Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurial Organisation, Social Entrepreneur ...................... 6
   1.4 The Disposition of the Dissertation........................................................................ 9

2. The Context: Social Entrepreneurship in Sweden.............................................. 12
   2.1 Introduction......................................................................................................... 12
   2.2 The Evolution of Social Entrepreneurial Policy in Sweden................................. 13
   2.3 Social Entrepreneurship and Neoliberal Agenda............................................... 17
   2.4 Chapter Summary.............................................................................................. 20

3. Literature Review ................................................................................................... 21
   3.1 Introduction......................................................................................................... 21
   3.2 Learning & Social Entrepreneur......................................................................... 22
   3.3 Learning & Social Entrepreneurship................................................................... 25
   3.4 Learning & Social Entrepreneurial Organisation............................................... 27
   3.5 Chapter Summary.............................................................................................. 28

4. Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................... 29
   4.1 Introduction......................................................................................................... 29
   4.2 Situated Learning............................................................................................... 31
   4.3 Collective Learning............................................................................................. 33
   4.4 The Interplay of Theories .................................................................................. 35
      4.4.1 Conditions.................................................................................................... 36
      4.4.2 Processes..................................................................................................... 37
      4.4.3 Outcomes.................................................................................................... 39
   4.5 Chapter Summary.............................................................................................. 39

5. Methodology ............................................................................................................ 41
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Methodological Point of Departure</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Organisational Ethnography</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 Data Collection Processes</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2 Coding and Analysing Procedures</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 The Reflexive Researcher</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Summary of the Articles</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Article I: Becoming a social entrepreneur: Individual and collective learning in communities of practice</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Article II: Adapting to the COVID-19 world: a case study of collective learning in a social entrepreneurial organisation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Article III: Leadership and collective learning: a case study of a social entrepreneurial organisation in Sweden</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Meta-analysis</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1 Leadership</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2 Organising</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.3 Change</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Discussion</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Research Implications</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Practical Implications</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svensk Sammanfattning</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: Consent Letter- Observations</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II: Consent Letter- Interviews</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III: Interview Guide- Founders</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix IV: Interview Guide- Employees</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1 The process of becoming a social entrepreneur ......................... 55

Figure 2 The relationship between leadership and collective learning conditions and processes ................................................................. 58

Figure 3 The collective learning-centred perspective of leadership, organising and change ........................................................................ 67
List of Tables

Table 1 Aims and RQs of the articles ............................................................. 4
Table 2 The extent of data ............................................................................ 45
1. Introduction

1.1 What Is This Dissertation About?

From my adolescence, I have been engaged in civil society and social movements, even progressing to a professional role in a social entrepreneurial organisation. My near two-decade-long engagement has allowed me to witness the dynamic, flexible, and multifaceted character of these organisations in various roles, ranging from volunteering and membership to chairmanship, board membership, project management, and regional management. This continued involvement also exposed me to the vulnerabilities of social entrepreneurial organisations to exogenous factors. Such observations propelled my interest in conducting further research in this domain.

However, my interest does not lie solely in social entrepreneurial organisations. An equal fascination of mine is ‘learning’, which I consider a lifelong journey. Inspired by the mantra ‘I learn; therefore, I exist,’ I have navigated my educational path to align with this perspective, acquiring a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy, dual Master’s degrees in Political Science and International Relations, and now a PhD in Education.

While I acknowledge the importance of learning within educational institutions, I confess that my most insightful learning experiences have sprung from interactions with others in various social contexts throughout my life. These experiences have played a significant role in shaping me as an individual and have honed my research interests.

Consequently, this dissertation manifests a synthesis of my passion for social entrepreneurial organisations and my commitment to understanding collective learning in this dynamic and flexible context. It encompasses questions about the relation between collective learning, leadership, organising, and change.

In this dissertation, therefore, I aim to generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be specific, through three articles, I want to explore the following key areas: a) the learning conditions and organising processes entailed in becoming a social entrepreneur and creating a social entrepreneurial organisation, b) the importance of collective learning for organisational adaptation and change in tackling exogenous factors such as the COVID-19
pandemic, and c) the role of leadership in creating conditions conducive to collective learning processes in social entrepreneurial organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As illustrated in Table 1, each article has its distinct aims and research questions. However, as it will be discussed in the meta-analysis, when combined, they provide a comprehensive understanding of how a collective learning-centred perspective enhances our grasp of leadership, organising, and change in social entrepreneurial organisations.

Table 1 Aims and RQs of the articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article I: Becoming a social entrepreneur: Individual and collective learning in communities of practice</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>RQs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To analyse and understand the process of learning to become a social entrepreneur in relation to the process of creating a social entrepreneurial organisation.</td>
<td>How does one learn to become a social entrepreneur?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article II: Adapting to the COVID-19 world: a case study of collective learning in a social entrepreneurial organisation</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>RQs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To investigate how a social entrepreneurial organisation adapted its practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>RQ1. What are the changes in collective learning conditions that the organisation has to face during the pandemic? RQ2. What are the outcomes of collective learning in the organisation during the pandemic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article III: Leadership and Collective Learning: a case study of a social entrepreneurial organisation in Sweden</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>RQs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To scrutinise the role of leadership in crafting conditions conducive to collective learning amid crisis scenarios focusing on a small social entrepreneurial organisation.</td>
<td>How can leadership within small social entrepreneurial organisations foster conditions conducive to collective learning during times of crisis?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on organisations necessitating adaptation to the new reality. Exogenous challenges come in varied forms, from societal structural changes, technological advancements, and social disruptions, to wars, climate change, and pandemics such as the COVID-19. For survival, organisations need to navigate these hurdles,
whether caused by a single exogenous factor or a confluence of several (Kamaludin et al., 2021; Nicholls, 2008; Nyssens, 2006).

In today’s rapidly evolving world, organisations require sustained, consistent, and intrinsic learning to stay aligned with external demands. The crucial role of collective learning is increasingly recognised as an imperative for organisational development and competitiveness especially in times of crisis (AlMaian & Bu Qammaz, 2023; Dixon, 2017; Dixon, 1999).

This is particularly applicable to smaller social entrepreneurial organisations, where financial constraints often render costly training programs unaffordable (Lyons & Kickul, 2013). Having conditions conducive for collective learning facilitates organisations’ adaptability, evolution, and resilience in the face of uncertain and challenging circumstances, making it particularly vital during crises. When leaders and team members encounter unfamiliar and poorly understood problems, collective learning can become a key strategy for mitigating the impact of exogenous factors. Thus, fostering an environment conducive to collective learning can be paramount for organisational survival and success in today’s complex landscape (de Groot et al., 2022; Shirado, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented scenario for organisations globally, disrupting conventional organisational collectivity by enforcing a transition to remote work. Traditional face-to-face interactions and in-person collaboration quickly became a memory of the past for many which required organisations to find alternative ways for interaction and reorganising their activities and operations (Dobrowolski, 2020; Green et al., 2020; Maher et al., 2020).

Since I started my data collection through interviews and observations prior to the pandemic, the advent of COVID-19 and the subsequent implementation of social distancing and remote working have had a significant impact on my research (I will elaborate on these effects in Chapter Five). However, despite the challenges, the pandemic presented a unique opportunity for me, as a researcher, to closely examine collective learning within a small social entrepreneurial organisation as its members navigated through tense and unconventional situations. The pandemic necessitated rapid organisational adaptation, and investigating these responses is vital for understanding resilience mechanisms in adverse circumstances. Additionally, while research in social entrepreneurship has significantly advanced in recent years, there remains a potential to explore the collective learning dimension within social entrepreneurial organisations, especially in relation to exogenous factors such as the global COVID-19 pandemic.
1.3 Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurial Organisation, Social Entrepreneur

In order to avoid conceptual ambiguity, it is essential to distinguish between the terms ‘social entrepreneurship’, ‘social entrepreneur’, and ‘social entrepreneurial organisation’.

Social entrepreneurship refers to the process of conceiving or discovering an innovative solution to a social problem, while a social entrepreneurial organisation is an entity that utilises social entrepreneurship as its core mechanism for achieving its social mission (Mair & Martí, 2006). Grasping these distinctions is key to fostering clear understanding of social entrepreneurship and mitigating potential confusion (Jain, 2009; Khare & Joshi, 2018).

Thus, in discussing social entrepreneurship, the focus lies ‘outside’ on what these organisations accomplish to alleviate social challenges. Conversely, in discussing a social entrepreneurial organisation, the focus shifts ‘inside’ on what actions these organisations undertake internally to develop programs and projects that solve social problems. In this study my focus is on the internal activities of this specific organisational form. I am particularly interested in perceiving social entrepreneurial organisations as learning spaces in this study.

Throughout history, initiatives targeting social issues and challenges have been referred to by different terms. These include ‘civil society’, ‘non-profit sector’, ‘non-governmental organisations (NGOs)’, and ‘local communities’, all of which boast a long-established history. However, more recent terminologies such as ‘social enterprise’, ‘social innovation’, and ‘social entrepreneurship’ have gained considerable momentum in the past two decades (Barinaga, 2013; Chell, 2007).

Scholars have stressed the role of ‘social entrepreneurs’ as individuals who catalyse action and originate activities innovatively (Chell, 2008). The prominence of social entrepreneurs lies in the fact that they initiate the idea and actualise it within an organisational framework (Bornstein, 2004; Light, 2009; Thompson, 2002). While there are no specific prerequisites mentioned in the literature for a successful social entrepreneur, an inherent desire to improve societal conditions serves as the primary motivation behind such initiatives. It is, however, expected that people involved in social entrepreneurial organisations learn progressively to build sustainable organisations. This perspective suggests that social entrepreneurship emerges from social interaction, rendering it a collective activity (Lanteri, 2015; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009).

Despite the significant expansion of the academic field of social entrepreneurship over the past two decades, its conceptual boundaries remain vague (Ranville & Barros, 2021). This can be attributed to the
multidisciplinary nature of social entrepreneurship and the lack of a universally accepted definition (Cardella et al., 2021; Chell, 2007; Short et al., 2009). Alegre et al. (2017) scrutinised over 300 publications on social entrepreneurship and discerned 140 distinct definitions. Thus, social entrepreneurship can be perceived as an interdisciplinary research area embracing a wide array of social activities (Hota et al., 2019; Saebi et al., 2018).

In this study, I define social entrepreneurial organisations as non-profit organisations that apply innovative practices to solve sophisticated and complex social problems (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Eslahchi & Osman, 2021; Lees et al., 2000; Luke & Chu, 2013). This perspective implies that a social entrepreneurial organisation requires three fundamental pillars: 1. The organisation must be non-profit, 2. It should aim to resolve societal problems, and 3. It must be innovative.

Numerous scholars seek to attain consensus on using the term social entrepreneurship in reference to non-profit activities (for a review see Peredo & McLean, 2006). For example, Austin and others (2006) distinguish between social and commercial entrepreneurship by asserting that social entrepreneurial organisations are non-commercial and non-profit, prioritising social value creation over personal wealth accumulation. Furthermore, a previous review of literature on social entrepreneurship also indicates that the term traditionally mostly referred to non-profit activities (Taylor et al., 2000).

While financial gain serves as the principal motivation for entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurial activities are initiated due to a concern for societal well-being. Therefore, while the performance of conventional entrepreneurship is gauged by return on capital and profit-making, the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship is measured by the societal value they create (Zulkefly et al., 2021). It can be inferred that entrepreneurship originates with the identification of a profit opportunity, whereas social entrepreneurship begins with the recognition of a societal problem (Chell, 2000).

Additionally, social entrepreneurial organisations are often perceived as a unique hybrid of commercial and non-profit sectors, amalgamating elements from both worlds. As non-profit entities, they aspire to create social impact and enhance the lives of individuals or communities, as opposed to generating profits for shareholders or owners. Nevertheless, they also adopt business models and apply principles of entrepreneurship to their operations, which allows them to achieve their social goals more efficiently and sustainably (Beckmann, 2012). In this respect, social entrepreneurial organisations combine two contrasting logics: the institutional logic of the commercial world and a social vision of civil society. These two logics can potentially contradict each other. Therefore, in this context, Berglund and Schwartz (2013) aptly characterised social entrepreneurial organisations as anomalies.

2 In Sweden these organisations are registered as “ideella föreningar”.

7
Due to their unique characteristics, social entrepreneurial organisations can be deemed a specific form of civil society. They differ from traditional civil society organisations by placing a heightened emphasis on innovation, risk-taking, and scaling their impact. Social entrepreneurial organisations often utilise partnerships and collaborations to attain their social goals, which may include cooperation with other non-profit organisations, private companies, and government agencies (Bruder, 2021).

Despite their potential for impact, social entrepreneurial organisations may encounter a spectrum of challenges in their pursuit to resolve social issues. For instance, they may grapple with securing funding or other resources, or face impediments in scaling their operations and impact. Additionally, given their operation at the intersection of multiple sectors, social entrepreneurial organisations may confront conflicting expectations or pressures from different stakeholders (Berglund & Wigren, 2012; Chell, 2000; Seelos & Mair, 2005; Zulkefly et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, social entrepreneurial organisations continue to play a vital role in tackling pressing social issues, and their impact is increasingly recognised and supported by various stakeholders. Governments, private sector organisations, and philanthropic foundations are all beginning to acknowledge the value of social entrepreneurship and are taking steps to support and invest in these innovative entities. As social entrepreneurial organisations continue to evolve and expand their impact, they bear the potential to propel meaningful social change and construct a more equitable and sustainable future (Bailey et al., 2018).

The emphasis on societal problems in social entrepreneurship literature is closely linked to the social situatedness of practices in various social, cultural, and community contexts (Fletcher, 2006). Therefore, social entrepreneurial organisations need to have the capability to recognise social issues, position themselves, and develop innovative solutions that convert these challenges into opportunities for their communities (Betta et al., 2008; Zhang & Swanson, 2014).

Consequently, social entrepreneurship in different parts of the world is characterised by the contextual dimensions of their respective societies, and it is vital to acknowledge that what works in Sweden may not necessarily work in other parts of the world (Thorgren & Omorede, 2018). Despite their diverse orientations, social entrepreneurial organisations share the common objective of challenging the status quo and traditional thinking about how to approach social problems. They strive to unveil new paths and argue that alternate solutions are feasible (Mair & Seelos, 2021; Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Research on social entrepreneurship emphasises the necessity for innovative approaches (Mueller et al., 2011). Social problems are complex and long-term, and traditional actors such as governments, large NGOs, and businesses often struggle to find adequate solutions (Graikioti et al., 2020). Social entrepreneurial organisations, with their innovative approaches, are
thus deemed better equipped to operate in the intricate modern world (Adro & Fernandes, 2021; Ran & Weller, 2021). However, what sets social entrepreneurial organisations apart is not solely their innovative ideas, but also their continuous process of exploration, learning, creation, and recombination of resources in new ways (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009; Cardella et al., 2021). Successful social entrepreneurial organisations often accomplish their success by viewing problems from a fresh perspective and identifying simple yet innovative solutions (Ran & Weller, 2021).

The inherent flexibility of social entrepreneurship fosters the creation of innovative solutions to address social predicaments. By amalgamating diverse perspectives and approaches, social entrepreneurship can instigate sustainable societal changes. Despite the absence of a unified definition, social entrepreneurship continues to play a significant role in resolving social issues and effecting positive social impact. Innovation is an ongoing process, and what may have been deemed innovative a few years ago may no longer be so today. Therefore, social entrepreneurial organisations necessitate leaders and organisational conditions and processes that facilitate learning (Dover & Lawrence, 2012; Mano, 2010).

The pronounced emphasis on innovativeness in the realm of social entrepreneurship makes these organisations particularly fascinating subjects for studying collective learning, since innovation inherently requires the capacity to learn.

1.4 The Disposition of the Dissertation

In this introductory chapter, I have provided an overview of the dissertation and stated its aim. I also mentioned the pandemic’s impact on organisations as an exogenous factor, providing a contextual understanding of the contemporary challenges that organisations face. Moreover, I have highlighted the specific context of this study—the world of social entrepreneurial organisations, with their unique blend of innovation, adaptability, and social focus.

This introduction sets the foundation for the subsequent chapters, each of which will further explore different facets of this complex and engaging topic as detailed below:

**Chapter 2**: In this chapter, I delve into the situation of social entrepreneurship in Sweden, which is essential for understanding the context in which the study was conducted. To provide a comprehensive understanding, I analyse governmental documents and other reports that shed light on the evolution of policy regarding social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden. Through this analysis, I explore the ideological roots of social entrepreneurship and argue that how its development can be understood in relation to the expansion of the neoliberal
agenda. By providing this contextual background, I aim to offer a better understanding of the factors that shape the practice of social entrepreneurship in Sweden.

**Chapter 3:** By reviewing the existing literature on learning in social entrepreneurship, this chapter aims to identify key concepts and themes that are relevant to the study. In addition to examining the scholarship on learning in social entrepreneurial organisations, chapter three of this dissertation will also explore the various theoretical perspectives and frameworks that have been applied to this topic.

Overall, the literature review chapter serves as an essential foundation for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, as it provides a critical evaluation of the existing scholarship on learning in social entrepreneurial organisations and identifies the gaps in the literature that this study aims to address.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter, I begin by defining the theoretical paradigms utilised in this study (situated learning, and collective learning) and subsequently explore how they complement one another. By providing an overview of the theoretical framework, the reader may gain a clearer insight into the significance of the findings presented in the subsequent chapters.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter delivers a thorough presentation of the research methodology implemented in this study. It ventures into the specifics of the research approach, encompassing its epistemological underpinnings. The chapter also offers an exploration of the organisational ethnography approach, supplemented with an elucidation of the coding and analysis procedures. It subsequently addresses the ethical considerations of the study, detailing the precautions taken to maintain both ethical and professional rigor. The chapter concludes with a discussion on reflexivity, underscoring its integral role and significance in the research process.

**Chapter 6:** This chapter is dedicated to providing a summary of the three empirical articles included in this dissertation. By summarising the articles, readers can better understand the research questions, methods, results, and conclusions of each study.

**Chapter 7:** In this chapter, I provide a meta-analysis, aiming to contribute further to existing scholarship by introducing a collective learning-centred perspective of leadership, organising, and change within social entrepreneurial organisations. This meta-analysis holds implications that are both theoretical and practical in nature. By conducting a meta-analysis, this chapter seeks to offer a holistic perspective that goes beyond the individual findings of each article, highlighting the key themes and trends emerging from the data.

**Chapter 8:** In this chapter, the insights and findings from the research are distilled into three key areas: research implications, practical implications, and suggestions for future research. The objective is to translate the detailed understanding of collective learning within social entrepreneurial
organisations into meaningful theoretical contributions, actionable guidelines for practitioners, and a blueprint for future scholarly exploration.
2. The Context: Social Entrepreneurship in Sweden

2.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, as clarified in the introduction, I aim to generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. To develop a thorough understanding, it is crucial to scrutinise the current circumstances for social entrepreneurship in the country. In this chapter, I’ll initially illuminate the progression of policies related to social entrepreneurship in recent years, subsequently arguing how these developments, from a critical point of view, can be considered in relation to the rise of neoliberalism in Sweden.

The organisations analysed in this study are actively involved in social integration initiatives for refugees and immigrants. Historically, governmental agencies have been at the forefront of this field (Castles, 1995; Cullen, 2017), offering services such as adult education, community learning (study associations), and public employment services. However, the past two decades has seen a significant shift, with the private sector and, more recently, social entrepreneurial organisations assuming an increasingly vital role in delivering integration activities.

This growth was particularly noticeable in the wake of the Arab Spring when Sweden welcomed over 160,000 asylum seekers in 2015 alone (Migrationsverket, 2019). Consequently, the integration of refugees and immigrants surfaced as a paramount concern for both the Swedish government and society at large. Concurrently, the traditional institutions and organisations revealed their limited capacity in offering adequate integration activities and programs for the growing number of immigrants and refugees. This gave rise to social entrepreneurial organisations, among other entities, being encouraged to devise integration activities customised for various immigrant and refugee groups (Björk et al., 2014; Gawell, 2014; Henriksen et al., 2018).

This emergent opportunity can be contextualised against the backdrop of the explosive growth of social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden over the past decade. This sector has emerged as a transformative force, with the potential to restructure the nation’s welfare system. Social entrepreneurial organisations have been acknowledged for their significant societal
contributions through innovative, imaginative, and community-driven initiatives. Their reach extends to areas and issues that traditional state and private sector efforts may overlook (Lundqvist & Williams Middleton, 2010). This shift in focus has spurred a diversification of integration initiatives, with social entrepreneurial organisations utilising their unique strengths, including innovation, adaptability, and robust community ties. Such attributes empower them to develop tailored solutions that address the distinct needs and challenges encountered by immigrants and refugees in their integration journey into Swedish society.

As underscored in the preceding chapter, social entrepreneurship is deeply intertwined with social and contextual factors, necessitating an understanding of the unique circumstances within which social entrepreneurial organisations operate. To gain a deeper insight into the context of this dissertation, it is essential to elucidate the policy evolution in Sweden. This includes scrutinising the legislative landscape, the role of governmental support, and the impact of external factors, such as international trends and regional dynamics, on policy development.

By probing into the historical and contemporary context of policy evolution, this chapter will offer insights into the factors that have shaped the conditions for social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden. Furthermore, it will shed light on the challenges and opportunities encountered by social entrepreneurial organisations in this environment, enabling a more nuanced comprehension of their potential for growth and impact within the Swedish context.

2.2 The Evolution of Social Entrepreneurial Policy in Sweden

A research agenda published in 2014, supported by the Swedish Innovation Agency (VINNOVA), assessed the state of social innovation in Sweden (Björk et al., 2014). The agenda highlighted that social entrepreneurial organisations have the capacity to tackle pressing challenges such as migration, unemployment, sustainable development, and demographic shifts identified by the EU. However, it concluded that despite this potential, Sweden could not be regarded as a frontrunner in social innovation, both in terms of practical implementation and research.

The authors of the agenda contended that this was largely due to the absence of a comprehensive Swedish national strategy aimed at enhancing knowledge and promoting practices of social innovation and entrepreneurship (Björk et al., 2014, p. 14). This lack of strategic direction has limited the ability of social entrepreneurial organisations to fully realise their potential, as well as the ability of researchers to study and analyse their impact.

In light of these findings, the research agenda called for a more coherent and coordinated approach to social innovation policy in Sweden. This would...
involve the development of a national strategy that encompasses the promotion of social entrepreneurship, the creation of an enabling environment for social innovation, and the establishment of mechanisms to support the growth and impact of social entrepreneurial organisations. Additionally, it recommended fostering a research culture that encourages the study of social innovation and entrepreneurship, with a focus on understanding the factors that contribute to their success and the challenges they face. By adopting such an approach, Sweden could potentially become a leader in social innovation, leveraging the strengths of its social entrepreneurial organisations to address complex societal challenges and improve overall wellbeing. Furthermore, a more robust and comprehensive policy framework would enable these organisations to scale their impact and contribute more effectively to the country’s broader social and economic goals (Björk et al., 2014).

In the same year, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) published a report analysing the collaboration between the state and civil society in the area of immigrant and refugee integration (Riksrevisionen, 2014). The report sought to determine if the state had been successful in eliminating barriers and fostering conditions that enabled civil society’s participation in state-led efforts aimed at the reception, establishment, and integration of new arrivals into the labour market and Swedish society in general. The conclusion of the report largely echoed the findings of VINNOVA’s research agenda.

The report found that, despite various efforts, the aspiration to involve civil society in the state’s integration work had not led to the anticipated progress within the actual operations of governmental agencies. The report noted that while some measures had been implemented to improve conditions for civil society to be more active in integration efforts, there remained a need for additional actions to create a diverse range of activities in the integration field that both the government and the Swedish parliament desired for a more effective establishment and integration process. Factors contributing to the situation included, among others, the challenging nature of regulations for procurement and external cooperation between publicly funded agencies and external actors, as well as shifts in the government’s funding policy priorities (Riksrevisionen, 2014).

The report stresses the importance of fostering a more collaborative approach between the state, private sector, civil society, and social entrepreneurial organisations in the field of immigrant and refugee integration. By addressing the regulatory and funding challenges, the government can create an environment in which diverse actors can work together more effectively, leveraging their unique strengths and resources to facilitate a more efficient and holistic integration process.

Additionally, the report highlights the need for the Swedish government to revisit its funding policies and priorities to ensure that they are aligned with the goals of promoting social innovation and entrepreneurship. By doing so,
it can provide social entrepreneurial organisations with the necessary support and resources to scale their impact and contribute more effectively to the country’s broader social and economic objectives, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and well-integrated society.

Recognising the importance of social entrepreneurial organisations in creating a sustainable society, in 2018 the Social Democratic-led government published a strategy for social entrepreneurship and social innovation (Regeringskansliet, 2018). The strategy acknowledged that to achieve the UN’s Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, social entrepreneurial organisations should play a major role in addressing societal challenges such as integration, health, education, environment, unemployment, and equality. Consequently, the strategy aimed to strengthen the development of social enterprises so that they can better participate in solving societal challenges and ensure the public sector acknowledges and leverages social entrepreneurship and social enterprises as valuable actors in developing a sustainable society (Regeringskansliet, 2018).

To achieve this aim, the strategy identified five areas that required further development:

- **Need and demand**: This broad area focuses on efforts to develop partnership and business opportunities for social enterprises, while promoting the knowledge and ability of public actors to purchase services from, partner with, or collaborate with social enterprises.
- **Strengthen business and advisory skills**: This area aims to promote the development of social enterprises, strengthen and enhance their business acumen, and increase the knowledge of business promoters regarding social innovation and social entrepreneurship.
- **Funding**: This area aims to increase capacity for private and public investment in social enterprises, rather than primarily creating separate targeted support.
- **Clarify and measure effects**: This area aims to create strengthened competence regarding impact and result measurement connected to social enterprises and their contribution to innovation. It also seeks to lay the foundation for a market of actors who can offer impact and result measurement services for both individual social enterprises and public actors.
- **Develop knowledge and meeting places**: This area aims to make social entrepreneurship visible, increase the national spreading of knowledge, support knowledge development, and provide opportunities for practitioners and potential practitioners in social innovation and social entrepreneurship to meet and strengthen their skills (Regeringskansliet, 2018, p. 6).

The strategy recognised that implementing its goals would require significant effort, including both financial aid and policy development. To that
end, in the 2018 budget bill, the government announced an additional 50 million SEK per year during 2018-2020 to provide social entrepreneurial organisations with better opportunities to contribute innovative solutions for a more sustainable and inclusive society.

Furthermore, the government assigned the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) to carry out investments aimed at supporting the development of social entrepreneurship, as part of the implementation of the government’s strategy. The agency’s mission was to contribute to the strategy’s overall goal of strengthening the development of social enterprises, enabling them to better participate in solving societal challenges and contributing to the public sector by recognising and utilizing social entrepreneurial organisations and social enterprises as valuable actors in the development of a sustainable society (Regeringskansliet, 2018).

In 2021, the Agency published a report evaluating the actions carried out between 2018 and 2020 to create better conditions for social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden. The report concluded that the efforts had resulted in a significant increase in awareness among social entrepreneurial organisations, public, and private actors. Furthermore, the report identified a broadened market and positive development of the strategy’s other priority areas (Tillväxtverket, 2021).

The report’s findings suggest that the government’s commitment to supporting social entrepreneurship in Sweden is having a positive impact. It highlights the effectiveness of the strategy and the importance of investing in social entrepreneurship to address societal challenges and create a more sustainable and inclusive society. It also highlights the critical role of the public and private sectors in promoting the growth of social enterprises and the need for continued efforts to strengthen the development of social entrepreneurship in Sweden (Tillväxtverket, 2021).

The report stated that most regions in Sweden included social entrepreneurship in their regional policy documents. Through the assignment, both niche and traditional business promoters gained a better understanding of how to provide support to social enterprises. The efforts aimed at social enterprises resulted in positive outcomes, including the strengthening of their business acumen and increasing knowledge about impact measurement in both regions and social enterprises.

However, the report acknowledged that the area where it had been most challenging to achieve results was financing. Funding opportunities were evaluated as limited, and small-scale social entrepreneurial organisations operating locally and in early phases of development were believed to face significant challenges in securing funding. The report revealed that although there are funding opportunities available for social enterprises in Sweden, but they do not always succeed due to a knowledge gap about the potential of social entrepreneurial organisations on the part of the financiers, or a lack of awareness about the possibilities on the part of social enterprises.
(Tillväxtverket, 2021). Therefore, the report highlights the need for more extensive and sustained efforts to promote funding opportunities and increase awareness among both financiers and social entrepreneurs about the potential of social entrepreneurship in creating a more sustainable and inclusive society.

In a literature review on social innovations in civil society organisations in Sweden, Lindberg (2021) also identified funding as an area that needs further development. To improve all parts and at all levels of civil society’s innovation processes, she recommended broader project funding and establishing a national investment fund.

Although Tillväxtverket’s report claimed an increase in knowledge in the area of social innovation in Sweden, Lindberg (2021) argues that a research fund for interdisciplinary knowledge development within social innovation is crucial to lift social innovation among civil society organisations and other social actors. She believes that such a research fund could play a crucial role in addressing the areas that require further development, such as financing and collaboration between different actors in the innovation process.

A recently published EU-funded report by Forum for Social Innovation (Tengqvist et al., 2022) shares a similar view as Lindberg (2021) regarding the situation of social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden. The report acknowledges that Sweden has good preconditions for social entrepreneurship, and the government’s strategy for these kinds of enterprises has provided a solid foundation.

However, the report suggests that social entrepreneurial organisations cannot improve society independently of other actors and that there is a need for an ecosystem that involves governmental agencies, the private sector, and academia to facilitate social entrepreneurship. The report especially emphasises the need for Swedish academia to be more involved in the ecosystem to provide the required knowledge for social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurial organisations (Tengqvist et al., 2022).

2.3 Social Entrepreneurship and Neoliberal Agenda

As elucidated in the preceding section, recent years have seen an escalating interest in social entrepreneurship within Sweden. This prompts the question what led to this growth in attention about social entrepreneurship in Sweden?

Critical scholars contend that the global emergence of social entrepreneurship in the early 21st century dates back to the late 1990s which was marked by a considerable outsourcing of various state functions to private, profit-driven entities. According to critical scholarship as neoliberalism struggled to ensure the welfare of all citizens (Roper & Cheney, 2005), social entrepreneurship was increasingly promoted as a form of addressing social issues within the neoliberal framework of civil society (Tar, 2014).
This development was primarily driven by the realisation that the neoliberal approach, which emphasised deregulation, privatisation, and a reduction in government spending, had led to a widening gap in social and economic inequality. As a result, social entrepreneurs had to step in to fill the gap left by the state’s retrenchment from various social sectors, combining innovative solutions with the pursuit of social impact and sustainable development (Olsson, 2023; Tar, 2014).

In this regard, Fougère et al. (2017) present an argument that, within the context of Europe, the EU’s social innovation policy reinforces neoliberal hegemony by (re)legitimising its principles and practices. By promoting social innovation as a means to address societal challenges, the European Union may perpetuate the dominance of neoliberal ideologies, which prioritise market-driven solutions and private sector involvement in social matters.

This (re)legitimisation occurs as social innovation policies encourage the development of market-based solutions and private-public partnerships to tackle social issues. Consequently, these policies contribute to the erosion of traditional welfare state structures, as they shift the responsibility for addressing social problems from the public sector to a more decentralised network of actors, including private enterprises, non-profit organisations, and citizens (Fougère et al., 2017).

Therefore, critical scholars argue that, social entrepreneurship was promoted and encouraged as a response to the limitations of neoliberalism and its inability to address the pressing social and environmental challenges of the time. By leveraging the efficiency and innovation of private enterprises, social entrepreneurs aimed to create sustainable and scalable solutions to social problems, while also challenging the traditional boundaries between the public, private, and non-profit sectors (Abildgaard & Jørgensen, 2021; Olsson, 2023).

Lauri (2021) contends that the discourse on social innovation and social entrepreneurs from the Swedish government has a considerable influence on the possibilities and limitations of social change, as it exhibits a preference for private market solutions. This discourse positions social innovation as a central component in the state’s neoliberal transition. Lauri’s (2021) analysis further demonstrates that the Swedish government’s discourse suggests that the public sector might lack essential qualities, thereby transferring the responsibility for social change to private companies and non-profit organisations. As a result, social change is framed within an economic context, linking social transformation to the implementation of business solutions.

This discourse is rooted in the neoliberal ideology that societies can achieve economic growth and prosperity by adhering to free market principles, where so-called ‘rational individuals’ are free to make their own choices and decisions (Dean, 2014). This perspective places considerable emphasis on individual responsibility, asserting that people should be adaptable and
capable of navigating their way through various social challenges (Joseph, 2013).

The neoliberal framework encourages competition, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial spirit, fostering an environment where individuals are expected to seize opportunities and innovate to overcome obstacles. This approach often downplays the role of the state and public institutions in providing support and resources to citizens, instead promoting the idea that individuals should rely on their own abilities and the private sector to address societal issues (Cook et al., 2003; Dean, 2014).

Critics argue that this focus on individual responsibility can intensify social inequalities and marginalise vulnerable populations, as not everyone has equal access to resources, opportunities, or support systems. Additionally, the neoliberal emphasis on market-driven solutions can lead to the commodification of social issues, potentially neglecting the need for systemic change or collective action in addressing deep-rooted societal problems (Olsson, 2023). Emphasising the role of individuals and promoting social entrepreneurship as a means to address challenges caused by the neoliberal agenda is believed to be based on false premises since such an approach cannot adequately address the welfare needs that arise from the expansion of the neoliberal system (Cook et al., 2003).

Thus, critical scholars argue that social entrepreneurship is associated with a vision of ethical capitalism (Chell et al., 2016; Dacin et al., 2011), which aims to rebuild the welfare system by fostering collaboration among the public sector, non-profit organisations, and businesses (Cook et al., 2003; Nyssens, 2006). Moreover, critics contend that the glorification of social entrepreneurship serves as a smokescreen, masking the reality of increasing budget austerity and the decline of social support provided by public institutions (Olsson, 2023).

As a result, critical scholars approach the subject of social entrepreneurship with caution, expressing scepticism towards the optimistic perspective that is pervasive in policy, practices, and mainstream social entrepreneurship research. They are dedicated to challenging the unquestioned assumptions and underlying beliefs on which this research is based (Olsson, 2023; Verduijn et al., 2014). These scholars argue that it is essential to scrutinise the dominant narrative of social entrepreneurship to expose potential flaws, biases, or oversimplifications. By doing so, they aim to foster a more nuanced and realistic understanding of social entrepreneurship, its benefits, and its limitations (Abildgaard & Jørgensen, 2021; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004).

Furthermore, critical scholars call for a more inclusive and diverse perspective on social entrepreneurship, recognising the contributions of underrepresented groups, such as women, minorities, and individuals from low-income backgrounds. They argue that focusing solely on the positive aspects of social entrepreneurship without acknowledging its potential drawbacks can result in misguided policies, preserve existing inequalities, and
hinder the development of sustainable and equitable social entrepreneurial ecosystems (Olsson, 2023).

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrated that over the past decade, there has been growing awareness regarding the importance of social entrepreneurial organisations in achieving a sustainable society in Sweden. The Swedish government has taken a particular interest in this area by developing a national strategy and tasking various government agencies with its implementation and evaluation. As a result, social entrepreneurial organisations have had increased opportunities to engage with numerous social issues. However, two main challenges persist.

The first challenge lies in the limited funding available, which prevents social entrepreneurial organisations from realising their full potential. The second challenge is the ongoing need for more research on social entrepreneurship in Sweden.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I discussed how the development of social entrepreneurship policy in Sweden can be comprehended in the context of the expansion of neoliberalism in the European Union and Sweden. While a comprehensive analysis and critique of the neoliberal order — and social entrepreneurship, for that matter — falls beyond the scope of this dissertation, I attempted to illustrate that alongside the growth of mainstream social entrepreneurship research, a critical perspective has emerged that raises pertinent and valuable questions about this field.

This critical perspective helps to shed light on potential limitations and unintended consequences of social entrepreneurship, including its relationship with neoliberal policies and the potential for reinforcing existing power structures or perpetuating inequalities. By engaging with these critical viewpoints, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers can develop a more holistic understanding of social entrepreneurship, its benefits, and its drawbacks, ultimately contributing to more effective and equitable policies and practices in the field.

Moreover, recognising the importance of this critical perspective in social entrepreneurship research allows for a more nuanced and balanced debate, ensuring that both the positive aspects and potential challenges associated with social entrepreneurship are adequately addressed.
3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will review research literature concerning learning in relation to the three concepts of social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurial organisations, as I distinguished between them in the first chapter. I will also discuss the theoretical perspectives utilised in these studies. This research review offers a background that helps us better understand the analysis of the empirical data.

For the article selection, I have employed two distinct search protocols. One focused on gathering articles about ‘learning’ in relation to the three concepts of social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurial organisations, while the other aimed to gather articles on the subject in general pertaining to ‘Sweden’.

I decided to search for ‘learning’ instead of ‘collective learning’, which is the focus of this study, because collective learning and social entrepreneurship are both niche, and their combination didn’t result in much study. As a result, I used the Scopus database and used ‘soci*’ to capture different variations like social, societal, and socially. Similarly, the term ‘entrepreneur*’ was included to encompass variations such as entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial. I also included ‘learning’ as a keyword in the first search protocol. I searched for phrases that appeared in the title, abstract, or keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY). To ensure that ‘learning’ was the main focus of the collected articles, I searched only for studies that had a variation of ‘learning’ in their titles. Furthermore, I used ‘PRE/0’ to combine different terms like social entrepreneurship, non-profit organisations, etc. I limited my search to articles published in peer-reviewed English journals, with no time frame set. However, I also used an alternative search protocol to locate articles about social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurial organisations, and social entrepreneurs in the Swedish context by replacing ‘learning’ with ‘Sweden’.

The two searches collectively yielded a total of 134 articles. Following an initial screening, 67 articles were excluded. The articles were excluded from the review because some examined economic entrepreneurship, and some focused on technical fields such as IT and finance, which are irrelevant to the focus of the dissertation. Finally, some of the articles were excluded because although they contained the term ‘learning’ in their titles and examined non-
profit social entrepreneurial organisations, their focus was on ‘lessons learned’ from specific cases rather than on ‘learning’ as a concept.

The field of social entrepreneurial research has been witnessing steady growth since the 1990s, with a significant surge in published articles post-2010 (García-Jurado et al., 2021). However, there exists a geographical imbalance with a large majority, 88%, of the publications originating from developed nations. Within Europe, the leading contributors are from the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, whereas Sweden’s contributions are limited (Bonnedahl et al., 2022; Cardella et al., 2021; Lindberg, 2021; Tengqvist et al., 2022). Furthermore, business and management disciplines overwhelmingly dominate social entrepreneurial research (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

I would like to stress that the dominance of business and management disciplines limits the diversity of perspectives in the field of social entrepreneurial research. Analysing a sample of 152 articles on social entrepreneurship, Short et al. (2009) found that a mere 5% of the articles were published in the field of education and learning. Howorth et al. (2012) and Yitshaki & Kropp (2011) similarly observed that although there is a rise in the trend of social entrepreneurial organisations, there is a scarcity of studies examining learning in social entrepreneurship. Since these reviews are over a decade old and did not focus specifically on learning, they underscore the need for reassessing the current research landscape in this area.

3.2 Learning & Social Entrepreneur

Many of the reviewed articles studied learning in relation to social entrepreneurs, primarily focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for individuals to embark on social entrepreneurial endeavours. Notably, a majority of these articles were published after 2010, indicating a rising interest in understanding how academic courses and training programmes can effectively equip individuals to assume the role of social entrepreneurs and adequately address societal needs.

The review indicated that many of the articles that concentrate on learning for individuals as potential social entrepreneurs used experiential learning and its related theoretical frameworks, such as service-learning, work-based learning, and problem-based learning, for analysing how university courses and training programs can best prepare individuals by teaching them the necessary skills to become social entrepreneurs.

This arises from the recognition that formal education and training programmes are crucial in spurring individuals to engage in social entrepreneurship. However, the review brought to light a common theme across the articles, which is that traditional classroom-based learning may not sufficiently prepare individuals. This is because social entrepreneurial
learning is a continuous process, one that persistently creates and modifies knowledge in response to new experiences (Gidley et al., 2010; Sezen-Gultekin & Gur-Erdogan, 2016).

Therefore, as many of the reviewed articles suggest, experiential learning, encompassing various methods such as service learning and work-based learning, can play a pivotal role in creating the next generation of social entrepreneurs. For instance, several studies, including those by Awaysheh and Bonfiglio (2017), Chang et al. (2014), and Siqueira et al. (2015), stress the importance of incorporating practical experiences into courses to develop students’ wisdom, leadership, and interpersonal skills, which are often overlooked in traditional curricula. This approach suggests that courses and training programmes should involve collaborations with stakeholders, fieldwork, case studies, and hands-on projects, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations and fostering partnerships between universities, students, and communities. The aforementioned studies concluded that all these methods promoted collaboration between students and external organisations, facilitating experiential learning.

Similarly, the results of other studies, such as those by Alden Rivers et al. (2015), Capella-Peris et al. (2022), Tuzlukova & Heckadon (2020), Baden & Parkes (2013), Kickul et al. (2010), Huq & Gilbert (2013), and Pizarro & Graybeal (2022), provided evidence of the positive effect of various experiential learning methods, such as internships, simulations, and real-world projects, on developing individuals’ critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. These studies concluded that these approaches help individuals learn how to learn, not just what to learn, and acquire critical learning methods necessary for their careers.

What these studies suggest can be related to the notion of a boundary-less classroom (Kickul et al., 2010), which transcends traditional classroom settings, allowing individuals to engage directly with real-world social issues and fostering deeper connections to the communities they serve. Collaborative learning environments are also essential in the development of individuals, as West and Hannafin (2011) demonstrate. Individuals who actively participate in a community of innovation show improved design abilities, a greater appreciation for collaboration, and a more iterative and reflective approach to their work, which is vital for successful design practice.

Service-learning, a specific form of experiential learning, was explicitly analysed in several studies. Service-learning can be defined as a “form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5).

Thomsen et al. (2021) sought to provide a deeper understanding of how different methods create learning opportunities for students. They studied three groups of students who studied social entrepreneurship using different
methods: action research (working with), service-learning (working for), and a traditional course. Their analysis showed that action research and service-learning methods better prepared individuals, as they partnered with external organisations outside the classroom. These methods proved beneficial, as participants gained knowledge and experience about social complexities that would be impossible to acquire in the classroom. The researchers suggested that these experiences, along with class discussions and self-reflection, enabled students to mature more quickly later in life (Thomsen et al., 2021).

Service-learning, however, necessitates a well-designed course with defined objectives. A study by Litzky et al. (2010) showcased this approach's effectiveness in teaching leadership in social entrepreneurship courses, emphasising its role in developing interpersonal and consulting skills. Moreover, the impact of service-learning on students' communication and interpersonal competencies was confirmed in a study focusing on community-based internships (Halberstadt et al., 2019). Maravé-Vivas et al. (2021) found that the effectiveness of service-learning wasn’t significantly influenced by socio-demographic factors, underscoring its inclusivity. Thus, this approach seems suitable for teaching social entrepreneurship to a diverse student body.

Although the aforementioned studies indicate that various forms of experiential learning provide a solid foundation for students to learn social entrepreneurship and better prepare for their careers, Yann Ching Chang et al. (2014) raised a concern, pointing out the complexity and resource-intensive nature of these approaches, which may pose challenges for universities in designing and implementing such courses and programs, arguing that not all universities are able to design and offer such courses.

Besides learning in academic settings, another trend in the learning of individuals was how they learn in incubators and training programs. In one study, for instance, Bucci & Marks (2022) investigated how social entrepreneurial learning occurs in an incubator in South Africa. It revealed that incubators served as a learning context for social entrepreneurs. Incubators provided not only workspaces, resources, and sometimes funding, but also a network for social entrepreneurs, which included in-person coaching, lectures, online modules, and sessions with industry experts. However, while incubators created a learning context, the content was not tailored to the specific learning needs of social entrepreneurs. In several cases, they were pressured to prioritise business motives over focusing on their social missions (Bucci & Marks, 2022).

Howorth et al. (2012) studied two development programs for social entrepreneurs, emphasising the importance of learner identity and psychological safety for nurturing a learning community. Both programs, one focused on integrated learning and the other on capacity-building, hinged on situated learning theory, offering various practical learning opportunities. Their analysis revealed the essential role of peer-to-peer learning for social entrepreneurs, recommending that program designs prioritise learning identity
articulation and foster collaborative communities for shared knowledge creation (Howorth et al., 2012).

To summarise this section, it can be stated that the central theme of these studies is the potential transformation of individuals into social entrepreneurs and the role that academic institutions and training programs can play in facilitating this transition. The consensus among these studies is that traditional educational approaches and training programs prove insufficient for this task. Consequently, they recommend that university courses and training programs can provide opportunities for individuals to gain practical experience in real-world.

3.3 Learning & Social Entrepreneurship

In my review, a plethora of studies emphasise the critical role of learning in the domain of social entrepreneurship. These studies identify social innovation as the cornerstone of social entrepreneurship, not simply as an effective means for change, but as a transformative force. This force addresses the pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges of our time through innovative and unique solutions (Bouchard, 2012; Bruin & Ferrante, 2011; Dawson & Daniel, 2010; Phillips et al., 2015).

Acting as a catalyst for change, social innovation encompasses more than mere alteration; it enhances knowledge exchange, encourages lifelong learning, and fortifies the growth and evolution of social entrepreneurship (Young, 2011). In this context, learning is portrayed as more than a fundamental aspect of social innovation; it serves as the bedrock, aiding in the collection, distribution, and practical application of knowledge to forge meaningful social transformation. Its importance is paramount in not only identifying and pinpointing significant social dilemmas but also in conceptualising innovative ideas and implementing sustainable solutions. Thus, learning amplifies social innovation’s potency, bolstering our ability to navigate complex problems and pioneer novel strategies (Mulgan et al., 2007).

Svensson & Gallo (2018), in a study on the impact of prior experiences and knowledge in the development of social innovation processes, suggested that social entrepreneurship does not occur in isolation. In this regard, Svensson & Bengtsson (2010) also demonstrated that recipients of social care can innovate new social services due to their first-hand knowledge and experience. Similarly, Kraff & Jernsand (2021) studied a small-scale social entrepreneurial initiative working with community-based tourism activities in suburban Sweden, with the objective of integrating newly arrived refugees into the job market. Their analysis revealed that the initiative’s hybrid character placed participants at the helm of the innovation process, ensuring their knowledge, experiences, and opinions were considered in activity design. The involvement of the local community is particularly critical in
small communities such as rural or suburban areas. For instance, Friedrichs & Wahlberg’s (2016) study suggests that social embeddedness and geographical proximity are key to lending credibility to social entrepreneurial initiatives because inhabitants of small communities are more inclined to rely on collective actions to solve social challenges. These studies propose that social entrepreneurship flourishes when target groups and participants are involved in idea generation and program development. The impact of local contexts on the conditions, capacities, and practices of establishing and developing social entrepreneurial initiatives was also studied by Hermelin & Rusten (2018) through a comparative case study of two initiatives for social integration in two small towns in Sweden and Norway. The study’s results indicate that dynamic continuous discussions were crucial for members to leverage each other’s knowledge to generate new ideas. Furthermore, the importance or significance of experience is evident in the study by Cope (2011) pointing out that by reflecting on failures and learning from missteps strategies can be fine-tuned to boost the effectiveness of social innovation initiatives.

Participant involvement also benefits the individuals themselves. Lindström (2016) studied how concepts of citizenship and entrepreneurship could amplify participants’ personal development. The results showed that young people who participated in these centres’ activities were given opportunities to influence issues concerning them. In this manner, they were considered co-creators of the activities and provided space for their learning and personal development. This opportunity for participation in decision-making and conducting activities enhanced their sense of citizenship and entrepreneurial identity. One of the studies reviewed investigated the role of networks as learning spaces for social innovation (Adams & Hess, 2010). They noted that networks can create a collaborative environment where diverse stakeholders can exchange knowledge, ideas, and resources to generate innovative ideas for social entrepreneurship. These networks serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, fostering the development of innovative solutions to social challenges (Adams & Hess, 2010).

This section showed that according to several studies learning serves as a foundation for social entrepreneurship, enabling knowledge acquisition and application to create transformative social changes. The role of learning extends to the identification of pressing social issues, generation of innovative ideas, and execution of sustainable solutions. This process benefits from past experiences and failure, leading to the refinement of strategies and enhancing social innovation initiatives’ effectiveness. Furthermore, the involvement of participants and target groups in social entrepreneurial organisations is highlighted, pointing to their essential role in shaping social innovation processes.
3.4 Learning & Social Entrepreneurial Organisation

In my survey of the existing literature within the field, I’ve observed that the literature often neglects to focus on the relation between learning and internal dynamics of social entrepreneurial organisations, particularly in terms of how they develop their communication and operations. Despite this general oversight, a select group of articles in my review does emphasise learning within organisational contexts.

Starting with the everyday settings of urban community gardens, Bendt et al. (2013) presented an argument on the process of learning. They asserted that it occurs in a non-abstract manner, through practice. This perspective resonates with Hersleth et al. (2022) who, while examining local food sectors, emphasised the importance of the social dimensions of learning, shifting the spotlight away from individual experiences.

However, Chalofsky (2019) advised that this learning process and perspective need to adopt a balanced approach between the social and business aspects, blending the informal and incidental learning methods highlighted by Hersleth et al. (2022) and Bendt et al. (2013). In tandem with these observations, Khan & Bashir (2020) and Faminow et al. (2009) explored the critical role that learning plays in organisational change and development.

By studying a multi-actor collaboration in Central America, Faminow et al. (2009) shed light on the value of both formal and informal learning measures. They echoed Hersleth et al.’s (2022) views on the power of collective knowledge sharing while reinforcing the importance of continuous organisational learning cycles highlighted by Bendt et al (2013). Similarly, Navarro-Valverde et al.’s (2022) analysis of rural social entrepreneurial organisations also aligned with these ideas, with their emphasis on the co-evolutionary process of learning. Their approach accentuated the blending of external knowledge with local assets—a theme resonating with Faminow et al.’s (2009) views on the recombination of diverse knowledge sets.

Finally, Dalborg & von Friedrichs (2020) addressed an often overlooked but crucial aspect of the learning landscape in social entrepreneurial organisations—the role of advisors. Their work underlined the need for these individuals to possess a profound understanding of social entrepreneurship to effectively guide these organisations, drawing upon the insights generated by all the preceding studies.

In summary, the literature presents social entrepreneurial organisations as complex entities intertwined with learning. Different organisations may navigate this landscape through various means, often employing a combination of reflection, technology, cross-sector collaboration, mentorship, inclusivity, continuous evaluation, and a culture that might encourage experimentation and learning from failure.
3.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review highlighted the increasing interest in how academic programmes can prepare individuals to become social entrepreneurs. According to the reviewed articles, forms of experiential learning, such as service-learning, work-based learning, and problem-based learning, are considered essential for developing skills. These approaches offer practical experiences and collaborations that connect theoretical knowledge with real-world scenarios. As shown, there is a growing emphasis on ‘training’ social entrepreneurs, which reflects the need to equip them with the skills to overcome challenges in the field. This observation can be seen in the context of the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the relationship between the rise of social entrepreneurship and the global expansion of neoliberalism, where there is a focus on the role of individuals in addressing social problems.

While there have been a handful of studies focusing on learning within social entrepreneurial organisations, particularly on internal organisational processes, the subject as a whole largely remains an open frontier.

Given the shortage of existing research in this domain, the need for a more comprehensive and in-depth investigation is clear and urgent. There is a particular need to understand how social entrepreneurial organisations can adapt to stressful exogenous conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, something that has not yet been thoroughly explored. My research aims to fill this gap, providing a more nuanced understanding of the collective learning landscape within these organisations.
4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I aim to generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations in Sweden, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the literature review, I explored studies that examined the concept of ‘learning’ in the realms of social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurial organisations and social entrepreneur. What emerged from this review was an apparent theoretical trend: although the social aspect of learning was present within the literature, the dominant theoretical framework was not aimed at groups or teams. Instead, it centred around various forms of experiential learning, primarily focusing on individuals. This focus on individuals rather than collective entities highlights a potential gap in our understanding, shedding light on the need for further research into the collective learning dynamics that shape social entrepreneurial organisations.

Within the scope of this research, I concentrate on the social dimension of learning, suggesting that collective learning originates from the exchanges between individuals and their respective social contexts which encapsulate human interactions. As such, the characteristics of these interactions significantly affect learning conditions, thereby shaping both the learning processes and the learning outcomes (Nilsson et al., 2018).

In accordance with the insights presented in the preceding chapter, the study of learning within the sphere of social entrepreneurial organisations is subsumed under a variety of theoretical frameworks. This diversity underscores the inherent complexity of collective learning as a phenomenon for study.

Striving to provide a comprehensive perspective on learning, Knud Illeris (2002, 2003) advances the idea that learning is an intricate construct, interweaving three distinct yet interconnected dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and social. This multifaceted approach to learning incorporates both direct and mediated interactions between an individual and their physical and social environments, paired with an internal psychological journey of comprehension and acquisition. Illeris emphasises that the phenomenon of learning is not confined merely to personal development; it also bears the imprint of societal influences. He asserts that societal conditions permeate learning processes and outcomes, imbuing learning with a distinct character shaped by broader societal parameters (Illeris, 2002, p. 227).
Interpreting Illeris’ (2002, 2003) proposition, it becomes clear that learning is a complicated combination of two intertwined processes. The first one pertains to the acquisition of knowledge, drawing upon emotional and cognitive dimensions. The second process hinges on interaction, incorporating the social dimension. This implies that the process of knowledge acquisition, as well as the generation of new knowledge, is fundamentally embedded within interactions with a broader social context.

Indeed, the complexity of learning encompasses the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. Each of these plays a vital role in the learning process, intertwining to shape the overall learning. However, when attempting to examine learning as a research topic, it becomes exceedingly challenging to simultaneously delve into all these three dimensions with equal depth and precision. This difficulty arises due to the diverse and specialised nature of these dimensions. Each one represents a unique realm of study that has its own set of theories, models, and methodologies. Achieving this level of multidisciplinary mastery is quite challenging and rare, as it necessitates extensive knowledge and training in several different academic fields. Thus, researchers often focus more on one dimension that aligns with their expertise, while taking the other dimensions into account to the extent feasible. This pragmatic approach allows for deep, focused research while acknowledging the multifaceted nature of learning.

Consequently, my study is chiefly oriented towards investigating the social dimension of learning as they manifest in social entrepreneurial organisations. To achieve this, I harness the power of two research traditions that place an emphasis on the social aspect of learning—‘situated learning’ and ‘collective learning’, using each theory to enhance the insights gleaned from the other. The theory of situated learning serves as the foundational theoretical structure, enhancing our understanding of broader social practices. Meanwhile, the theory of collective learning offers valuable insights into how interactions and communication operate within these social practices.

Originated by Lave & Wenger (1991), the theory of situated learning postulates that learning essentially unfolds as a social process, taking place through participation in communities of practice (CoP). Applying this theoretical framework to the subject matter of this study provides a framework to comprehend how the structure of a practice, combined with opportunities for participation, can steer the trajectories of people’s learning journeys. Complementing this approach, collective learning highlights the development of collective knowledge and shared understanding that arise from interactions between individuals. This perspective perceives learning as a collective endeavour where knowledge creation is not solely an individual activity but is also a product of social interactions. This view underpins the idea that knowledge is formed and shaped through people’s relationships and interactions with others and their environment (Dixon, 1999; Döös & Wilhelmson, 2011; Senge, 1994).
The analysis of participation through the lens of situated learning inherently calls for a scrutiny of interaction, as both individual actions and social practices are shaped within this context. The emphasis is, thus, placed on the contextual elements that influence social interactions. The theory of collective learning, on the other hand, tends to focus on interactions moulded by individuals’ diverse experiences. Crucially, the quality of these interactions could act as a catalyst for various forms of collective learning, which may, in turn, lead to a range of participation modes (Dixon, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Therefore, in the context of my research, these two theories do not represent opposing viewpoints. Instead, they converge to suggest that collective learning is an ongoing, contextually, and situated influenced social process, shaped by interactions within a specific social context. By intertwining these theories, I will achieve a more all-encompassing comprehension of the social mechanisms that undergird collective learning within social entrepreneurial organisations.

In the upcoming sections, I will firstly undertake an exploration of these theories, conveying a textbook-like presentation of them. This will familiarise the reader with my understanding of these theories. Following this, I will probe into their similarities and differences, and emphasise the distinct perspectives each contributes. This effort is intended to illustrate how these theories collaboratively augment my research, thereby offering a more intricate and comprehensive perspective of collective learning within social entrepreneurial organisations.

4.2 Situated Learning

Lave & Wenger’s (1991) ground-breaking theory of situated learning has been implemented extensively as a framework for assessing learning in the context of organisations. Their influential book marked a paradigm shift in learning theories, transitioning from a cognitive-centric approach to a more socially-grounded one (Fuller et al., 2005). They contested the conventional models of learning transfer, emphasising that a clear distinction between knowledge and social practices obstructs a comprehensive understanding of learning.

The cornerstone of their theory is the concept of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. This process describes how novices in a community initiate their learning journey by undertaking simple tasks and engaging in peripheral activities, all under the guidance and support of seasoned members, also referred to as ‘old-timers’ (Lave, 2019; Lave & Wenger, 1991). As these newcomers accumulate experience and broaden their knowledge, they incrementally transition from the outskirts to a more integral position within
the community, eventually achieving the status of full-fledged members (Wenger, 1998).

The existence of CoPs is inherent to the daily life. Wherever there is interaction among individuals within the sphere of shared interests, CoPs can be discerned (Wenger, 2018). Importantly, these communities are not confined to formally organised groups or institutions; informal gatherings like book clubs or friends in a workplace engaging in similar tasks can also constitute a CoP. A CoP can either emerge organically around shared interests, or it can be consciously formed with well-defined goals in mind (Wenger, 2000, 2010). It is crucial to understand, however, that while some level of organising is inherent to CoPs, they do not necessarily need to be formal groups or teams. This distinction accentuates the difference between the act of organising as a process and an organisation as an entity (Malm & Thunborg, 2018).

Participation is a vital component of CoPs. Members contribute to the vitality of the community through active involvement and mutual engagement, which transcends mere physical presence. This participation demands a reciprocal recognition of other members through dynamic interaction and negotiation. While it does not necessarily denote equality of status or mutual respect among members, it signifies that each member’s contribution is acknowledged, regardless of their individual roles within the community (Clancey, 1995).

People’s understanding of the world is shaped by their active involvement in social practices, enabling them to derive meaning from their experiences. Hence, participation serves as the bridge between the subjective and the objective, between ourselves and the external world. This process of connecting is accomplished through what Wenger (1998) terms the ‘negotiation of meaning’.

Furthermore, participation harbours an inherent dualism, giving rise to two simultaneous processes: the forming of identity and the refinement of practice. Although these processes might appear detached, they engage in a dynamic interplay, reciprocally influencing each other. Practice, essentially doing, is profoundly shaped and given meaning by its broader socio-historical context, positioning all practice as fundamentally social in nature (Handley et al., 2006; Wenger, 1998). Consequently, learning operates as a framework for social structuring, as practices are birthed and honed from participant learning experiences. Viewing practice from this perspective posits that knowledge and action aren’t disparate, but rather, intertwined components of a singular process, with knowledge arising from the bedrock of social practice (Reckwitz, 2002). Therefore, from this perspective, learning is perceived as a transformative journey towards social maturation (Farnsworth et al., 2016).

Acknowledging that people’s identities are shaped and matured through participation in practices necessitates acceptance of the fact that identity formation is an enduring, evolving journey of personal growth (Wenger, 1998,
It is crucial to recognise that situated learning is a sociological, rather than psychological theory of learning, in which “identity is specifically theorized in the context of dynamic modes of participation in a practice” (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 145).

### 4.3 Collective Learning

In the preceding section, I expanded upon the fundamental tenets of the situated learning theory, which posits that learning is a product of people’s participation in practices through social interaction. However, an essential question that arises is: what exactly transpires during social interactions? To understand this intricate mechanism, collective learning theory is helpful, as it concentrates on the modalities of communication and elucidates what types of social interactions can promote learning in groups/teams and what types inhibit it.

Within this dissertation, I frame collective learning as a constellation of communicative processes that bolster the sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences. This enhancement leads to a shared understanding, which, in turn, fosters a collective capacity for taking action (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2011). In this vein, dialogues, discussions, and various forms of interactions among team members are instrumental to these collective learning processes (Dixon, 1999; Senge, 1994). Hence, these communicative processes play a critical role in transforming tacit individual knowledge into explicit knowledge that becomes accessible to all team members within a collective milieu (Popova-Nowak & Cseh, 2015).

Building upon David Kolb’s experiential learning theory (1984, 2015), Nancy Dixon (1999) has proposed a theoretical framework for learning in organisations, laying particular emphasis on collective learning. Her theory clarifies that organisations do not learn in a vacuum, but rather, learning is a process that begins with individuals. Nevertheless, for learning to permeate an organisation, individual learning alone is not adequate. This conversion is actualised through collective learning in teams. Consequently, Dixon’s theory provides a nuanced exploration of the dynamic interplay between the individual and the collective within an organisation’s operations and evolution.

In her theory, Dixon (1999) emphasises that organisational learning is not merely an aggregation of the knowledge possessed by group members but is instead the collective harnessing of learning potential. She differentiates between ‘learning’ as a noun, referring to the acquisition of knowledge, and ‘learning’ as a verb, denoting an ongoing process. Dixon’s theoretical framework aligns with the latter interpretation of ‘learning’ (Dixon, 1999).

This interpretation of learning informs Dixon’s learning cycle, which comprises four stages: widespread generation of information, integration of
new or local information into the organisational context, collective interpretation of information, and possessing the authority to act responsibly based on the interpreted meaning (Dixon, 1999, p. 63). This model suggests a close intertwining of learning and working, with learning emerging from reflective practices concerning one’s work and experiences. In a similar manner Ohlsson (2013, 2021) proposes a model for collective learning in teams where he explains that how the private and the public spheres in a team integrate to one another via collective reflection. His model is divided into three key phases or dimensions. The initial phase revolves around individual actions, where each team member generates implicit knowledge and understanding of their tasks based on their distinct actions within a specific context. The second phase pertains to storytelling, where team members share their personal experiences. The degree of shared experiences often depends on the openness of the organisational culture, which determines individuals’ willingness to disclose their personal narratives. In the final phase, the team engages in reflection. Having shared personal experiences, they collectively discuss and contemplate the potential outcomes. This shared reflection stage is fundamental to the learning process, fostering dialogue, questioning of differing viewpoints, and emphasising the need for an open and supportive culture. Once a consensus is achieved on how to tackle tasks, a shared intention is formed, supported by common values and work perspectives. This leads to improved preparedness, ensuring each team member understands the appropriate course of action in given scenarios (Ohlsson, 2013, 2021).

Ohlsson’s (2021) classification of private and collective spheres echoes Dixon’s (1999) division of meaning structures into private, accessible, and collective categories, each holding a distinct function in the learning trajectory. According to Dixon (1999), private meaning is derived from individual reflections on work, readings, conversations with colleagues, and more. This continuous reflection process facilitates the ongoing construction and reconstruction of individuals’ cognitive maps, thus accumulating knowledge, expertise, and understanding. However, to benefit the organisation, these private meanings must be made accessible to others. Accessible meaning arises from the shared and discussed knowledge among individuals, giving rise to a collective meaning, shared knowledge, norms, and assumptions that are used for collective action.

Further, Dixon (1999) contends that collective learning should occur in metaphorical ‘hallways’; processes that facilitate the creation of collective meaning. These ‘hallways’ should promote dialogue and discussion, encourage equality, and welcome differing perspectives and disagreements. Collective learning does not materialise from unanimous agreement, but from the collective reflection and illumination of diverse viewpoints and insights (Dixon, 1998, 1999).
4.4 The Interplay of Theories

In the previous two sections, I have offered a review of both the situated learning theory and the collective learning theory. This was essential to ensure the reader understands my perspective and interpretation when I reference these theories. However, in this section, my aim is to discuss the similarities and differences between these two theoretical frameworks. With this I aim to demonstrate how these theories can synergistically facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of collective learning inherent in the social practices of social entrepreneurial organisations.

Both research traditions have several similarities since they concentrate on the social dimension of learning. Firstly, situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) argues that we learn through participation in communities of practice which is in line with Dixon’s (1998, 1999, 2000) and Ohlsson’s (2013, 2021) argument that learning and working (concrete action in Ohlsson’s term) are intertwined. Furthermore, the concepts of ‘negotiation of meaning’ and ‘collective meaning structures’ are also similar concepts where both contend that people share their ideas, beliefs and understanding with others in order to achieve a common ground for action. Another similarity is how ‘communities of practice’, and Dixon’s (1998) ‘hallways of learning’ are framed. Both theories maintain that these two are not physical spaces and are also not necessarily bounded to teams or a specific group that one works with. These can be seen as broad and abstract possibilities where people can freely participate and share their knowledge and experiences.

Despite similarities between the two theories, they also present differences. In my perspective, however, these differences do not establish an unbridgeable dichotomy but rather indicate the unique facets of each theory. A common critique aimed at Communities of Practice (CoP) is its tendency to concentrate on the progression from being a novice to becoming a full community member, a journey achieved mainly through the learning of existing knowledge in the community which overlooks the developmental aspect of learning which fosters new knowledge (Cairns, 2011; Edwards, 2005). Acknowledging this critique suggests that incorporating collective learning could substantially complement the situated learning theory. Collective learning emphasises how team members apply their implicit knowledge, thereby promoting a more vibrant and interactive form of team learning. This theory goes beyond focusing on individual learning, instead it appreciates the shared knowledge reservoir, enhancing the adaptability and innovation capabilities of the entire team in collectively learning something new.

The two theories also interpret the concept of learning somewhat differently, which can be traced back to a more profound divergence between them. From the perspective of situated learning theory, learning transpires through participation in practices, independent of our intent. Both Dixon (1999) and Ohlsson (2013) agree with this viewpoint, arguing that individual
learning can occur as long as opportunities for creating meaning structures exist. However, they venture beyond this and assert that for collective learning to take place, a degree of awareness is needed, particularly from leadership.

In order to delve deeper into these theories, I will extend the discussion by creating a categorisation that encompasses conditions, processes, and outcomes of collective learning. Subsequent sections will explore these dimensions based on both situated learning and collective learning. However, it is important to note that these abstract and analytical categorisations are more nuanced in reality. A condition in one specific situation may evolve into a process, and an outcome in another context could become the condition for new collective learning processes.

4.4.1 Conditions

When I utilise both situated learning theory and collective learning theory in a complemented way, it enables me to argue that the relational, interactional, and situational structures play a critical role in shaping the learning conditions (Hager & Johnsson, 2012). These conditions could be understood as opportunities to access the practice from the perspective of situated learning theory, or as routines, structures, and modes of communication and interaction suggested by the collective learning theory. Given the shared premise of both theories that learning evolves through interactions with others and is subject to the specific conditions of the situation, it can be assumed that within an organisational context, learning takes place within the confines of everyday work routines (Gustavsson, 2007; Nilsson et al., 2018). This perspective draws attention to the fact that social, contextual, and organisational settings can act as both catalysts and inhibitors to learning.

Organisational conditions can be divided into two main domains. The first domain relates to the nature of the work itself—what tasks are involved, how the work is structured, and the nature of the operational processes. The second domain involves the people we interact with during our work, specifically how we communicate and collaborate with them (Nilsson et al., 2018). This second category can be further nuanced into two sub-groups: colleagues and managers/leaders. The role of managers/leaders in creating and maintaining conducive learning conditions has been affirmed by numerous theories and scholars (Dixon, 1998; Senge, 1994 among others). While situated learning theory does not explicitly discuss leadership, collective learning theory emphasises the vital influence leaders and managers have in promoting a conducive environment for collective learning. In this context, leadership, per se, does not directly equate to a learning condition. Instead, it functions as an enabler, shaping the learning environment and significantly influencing the conditions under which learning can take place within organisations (Dixon, 1999; Senge, 2004).
Moreover, leadership can act as a catalyst for promoting a culture of continuous learning. It does so by encouraging open dialogue, fostering a safe environment for sharing knowledge, and acknowledging the value of both collective and individual learning. By doing so, leadership can create an atmosphere where collective learning is embedded into the daily fabric of the organisation, thereby turning teams into learning entities that constantly adapt, grow, and innovate (Tourish, 2014). In this expanded view, the complementary application of situated learning and collective learning provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of collective learning within organisations.

Hence, changes in various organisational factors, such as communication modes, structures, designs, norms, and other elements influencing how people work, can either obstruct or foster collective learning. It is crucial for leaders to recognise that these factors are not merely administrative elements but serve as conditions for collective learning. If properly managed, they can stimulate knowledge exchange, promote shared understanding, and boost innovation, thereby cultivating a more learning-friendly environment. Furthermore, these adjustments can impact the dynamics of the team and the organisation, thereby influencing the evolution of collective knowledge and driving organisational growth (Dixon, 1998, 1999, 2000).

4.4.2 Processes

In situated learning theory, as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991), the learning journey is essentially a process. It begins with legitimate peripheral participation, which allows newcomers to start their involvement by engaging in simple tasks that, while low-risk, still contribute value to the community. This phase enables novices to familiarise themselves with the community’s practices without bearing the full burden of responsibility or complexity. Over time, through continuous observation and learning from the more experienced members or ‘old-timers,’ these newcomers gradually take on more sophisticated and critical tasks. Their knowledge and skill grow concurrently with their increasing participation, leading them to eventually become full participants in the community of practice. The learning process here is embedded in the lived experiences and actual practice within the community, reinforcing the idea that learning is inherently a social process (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Collective learning theory, on the other hand, highlights the importance of both participation and effective communication at the group level (Abbariki et al., 2017; Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2019). Within a group or team, knowledge is constructed, shared, and interpreted through continuous interaction. This dynamic process is not just about transmission of information, but also about making sense (Weick, 1988) of that information within the organisation’s existing knowledge framework (Haas, 1991). This
sense-making often happens through different modes of communication, such as discussions, dialogues, or other collaborative activities. These processes allow members of the team to pool together their individual knowledge and experiences, create shared understandings, and co-construct new knowledge that aids in achieving organisational goals.

Delving deeper into both the situated learning and collective learning, one can see ‘organising processes’ as collective learning process. Since organising processes invite both individuals and groups into a multifaceted process, encompassing the precise structuring of activities, the careful orchestration of resources, and the development of strategic plans. This involves recognising the unique abilities, experiences, and roles of each team member and pairing them effectively with suitable tasks. Furthermore, the act of organising entails the effective management of resources. This task not only requires an understanding of resource availability but also the development of skills to maximise their use. Knowledge and collective learning become key tools here, transforming resource management into an opportunity for learning (Cooren et al., 2011).

An inherent part of organising is the implementation of a feedback loop through dialogue and discussion to assess progress continually as it was emphasised by collective learning theory. It involves measuring successes and understanding failures, creating a space for learning and adaptation. By leveraging these opportunities, the process and strategy are continually refined, promoting a culture of continuous improvement. The feedback loop therefore illustrates that learning extends beyond mere knowledge acquisition; it is about using that knowledge to drive positive change (Czarniawska, 2005, 2008; Puranam et al., 2014).

In essence, organising is a dynamic, cyclical process involving planning, executing, evaluating, and adapting. This cycle embodies the spirit of continuous learning and improvement and positions organising as a critical element for learning within organisations. It underscores that learning is not a standalone activity but an integrated, systemic process leading to organisational adaptation and change. Moreover, organising expands the boundaries of learning to include shared experiences and collaborative problem-solving lead to co-creation of knowledge and mutual growth. This extension underlines the pivotal role of social interaction and collaboration in learning, transforming organisations into learning entities that grow, adapt, and evolve collectively (Czarniawska, 2005).

Ultimately, organising represents a confluence of individual and collective learning. It embodies a complex process, a learning journey, that continually shapes and reshapes the organisational landscape. It is through this persistent evolution that organisations not only survive but also thrive in an ever-changing environment.
4.4.3 Outcomes

Lave’s (1993, p. 8) observation, “that learning occurs is not problematic. What is learned is always complexly problematic”, adeptly captures the essence of situated learning theory’s perspective on learning outcomes. While it considers the occurrence of learning as a given, determining the actual content and implications of what is learned presents a more challenging, intricate, and multifaceted issue. Collective learning theory adopts a comparatively relaxed viewpoint regarding learning outcomes, suggesting that they are not particularly daunting to identify. Dixon (1999) clarifies that collective learning within teams and organisations invariably sparks a ‘change’ in the organisational fabric as a broad learning outcome. This change can manifest in myriad ways—it may be a broadening of collective knowledge, a surge in collective actions, or it could even trigger deeper transformations in the organisational structures and culture.

Situated learning theory echoes the idea of change as a possible outcome of learning but from a subtly different perspective. Lave (1993) describes this as an ongoing journey of “participating in changing ways in a changing world” (1993, p. 5). A pivotal facet of learning outcomes here is the change of the learner’s identity. As they delve deeper into a community of practice, learners progressively (re)construct and refine their identities within this shared social construct. This dynamic evolution denotes a shift in their comprehension, perspective, and potentially their roles within the community, providing tangible evidence that learning has taken place.

At the same time, participation within the community of practice gradually initiates a parallel change within the practice itself. However, situated learning theory emphasises that this change is a protracted, continuous process that unfolds over a long time, distinguishing it from the abrupt adaptation and changes in organisational structure that collective learning theory often addresses.

Understanding this distinction can shed light on how learning can result in change within an organisation. While collective learning theory tends to concentrate on immediate and tangible changes, situated learning pivots more towards a slower, subtler evolution in the organisational practices. This may not translate immediately into noticeable organisational changes but can trigger significant long-term impacts on the practice and the community.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Both situated learning theory and collective learning theory offer insightful and sturdy analytical frameworks to delve into and understand social dimension of learning within social entrepreneurial organisations. Despite their unique theoretical origins, these theories are not antagonistic. Instead, they provide diverse lenses to view the same phenomenon, each illuminating
distinct facets of collective learning. Consequently, a nuanced analytical approach can amalgamate the strengths of both theories to render a holistic comprehension of learning.

This intricate structure of collective learning underpinned by the combined theoretical prowess of situated learning and collective learning, granted me the opportunity to dive deep into the multifaceted world of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding that augmented my ability to investigate collective learning in these dynamic environments.

In chapter six, I will summarise the essence of the articles embodying this study. However, it is worth highlighting here the theoretical structure underpinning each article. Article I of this dissertation leans heavily on the situated learning theory, whereas Articles II and III gravitate more towards the collective learning theory, although they do acknowledge the significant role of practice and participation highlighted by situated learning theory.

In this chapter, I have devised a categorisation that encompasses the conditions, processes, and outcomes integral to collective learning. Within this framework, leadership is categorised under conditions, organising falls under processes, and change is considered an outcome. I fully recognise that such abstract and static categorisations may yield analytical ambiguities, given that real-world scenarios are far more complex. Nevertheless, I will revisit this subject in chapter seven during the meta-analysis. At that point, I will elaborate on how my empirical findings inform a collective learning-centred perspective for understanding the relationship between leadership, organising, and change. Contrary to this static categorisation, I will argue that these elements are part of a cyclical process in which they constantly shape and reshape one another. As a result, a condition can evolve into a process, or even become an outcome.
5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I first explain my methodological point of departure for this dissertation, then delve into the specifics of my research approach—organisational ethnography. I also outline my use of a case study design to enrich my ethnographic work, and address the ethical considerations throughout. Emphasising the importance of maintaining ethical integrity in scholarship, I further discuss reflexivity, or how self-reflection on my actions and values could impact the research. This chapter provides a guide to the reader through my scholarly journey.

5.2 Methodological Point of Departure

In this dissertation, I adopt an epistemological stance that asserts knowledge is a social construct (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and is contingent upon both time and context; in other words, it has both temporal and spatial dimensions. To put it simply it signifies that understanding of a phenomenon is influenced by interactions amongst individuals, situated within their specific social and historical contexts (Wenneberg, 2010). The collective understanding of the world is an outcome of continuous and entrenched social interactions. Hence, the way people perceive, form, and construct their social reality is inextricably linked to their active participation in social processes (Brinkkjae & Hoyen, 2020).

This approach is sceptical towards taken-for-granted knowledge, questioning the assumption that people’s perceptions of the world reflect its true essence. It highlights that the interpretations of the world are intrinsically tied to social action. They are not merely abstract concepts but significantly impact people’s behaviour and actions within the world. Individuals actively shape their own reality, informed by what they perceive as ‘real’ based on their unique social experiences. This emphasises the role individuals and groups play in constructing their perceived social reality (Burr, 2015).

Intersubjectivity is a fundamental aspect in social interaction, communication, and collaboration. It refers to the shared understandings and meanings derived from individuals’ common experiences and social interactions, thus providing a collective framework that shapes our social
lives. The shared meanings and understandings, which are integral components of our interpersonal interactions, stem from the concept of intersubjectivity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The interface between the subjective, personal world and the objective external world is contingent upon the intersubjective realities that people maintain in their specific contexts and times. In essence, the subjective perceptions of reality are intertwined with shared, intersubjective interpretations that are constantly upheld within the specific social context.

Nevertheless, this shared understanding can have its drawbacks, as intersubjectivity can also perpetuate shared biases or misconceptions within a group or community. This highlights the complex, dual role of intersubjectivity—while it forms the basis for mutual understanding and social cohesion, it can also be a catalyst for shared ignorance or prejudice (Schuetz, 1945).

Another significant yet lesser-examined factor is the role of power dynamics in the social construction of knowledge. Power structures within societies (or in the context of this study, within social entrepreneurial organisations) can significantly influence what is accepted as ‘knowledge’. The power relations determine whose voices get amplified and whose get silenced. Consequently, knowledge construction is not a neutral process, but is often politically, socially, and culturally charged and contested. This aspect adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of social reality, necessitating an examination of the ways in which power dynamics can shape the perceptions and understandings of the world (Alvesson, 1985; Alvesson & Willmott, 2012).

5.3 Organisational Ethnography

In this dissertation, my research approach is organisational ethnography, a specific form of ethnographic research. There are several approaches within ethnography. As Clifford (1983) identifies the main three paradigms are: positivism, interpretivism, and dialogic. I position myself within the dialogic paradigm as one can understand from the discussion in the previous section. According to Clifford (1983), a dialogic ethnographer contends that the pure objectivity, as claimed by positivists, is unattainable. However, they also argue against the belief held by interpretivists, that research is entirely subjective. Dialogic ethnographers instead argue for the intersubjective nature of social facts. Unlike positivist ethnographers who aim to ‘present’ social reality as is, dialogic ethnographers’ endeavour to construct and ‘represent’ an intersubjective knowledge about it (Clifford, 1983). Consequently, ethnographic research can be considered objective due to its intersubjective nature, not because it reflects reality as positivist scholars suggest (Lützhöft et al., 2010).
From the perspective of dialogic ethnography, then, ethnographer goes beyond factual accounts by striving to construct knowledge around the meanings attached to those facts. These meanings are socially constructed as they arise from interactions between individuals within a specific social context (Down, 2006). The voices of ethnographers can be considered as proxies for the subjects they study, given that the construction of ethnographic work stems from an intersubjective dialogue and negotiation between participants, and also between the researcher and the participants (Roth et al., 1989; Ybema et al., 2009).

In this dissertation, I utilise an organisational ethnography approach, a specific use of ethnography designed to explore and understand organisations. Adopting the techniques of traditional ethnography, an organisational ethnographer immerses themselves within the modern organisational environment. This level of intimate immersion into the daily operations of an organisation is instrumental in unveiling the intricate cultural and social dynamics, routine practices, and distinct characteristics that underpin its operational foundations (Watson, 2012).

A significant element of organisational ethnography lies in its potential to extract and interpret meaning from an array of phenomena, as perceived and experienced by the members of the organisation (Lee Green et al., 2012). In essence, the task of the organisational ethnographer goes beyond the purview of mere observation and documentation. It involves a deeper level of engagement in which experiences are transformed into meaningful narratives, serving to illuminate the organisational environment and its nuanced complexities (Emerson et al., 2011; Mahadevan, 2012).

Within this sphere of research, organisational ethnographers adopt a dialogic approach in their interpretation of findings. Instead of simply observing and recording, they probe deeper into the inherent meanings of these observations. They strive to understand how these meanings are embedded within, and reflective of, the organisation’s culture (Brewer, 2000; Miller & Brewer, 2003).

Therefore, through the lens of organisational ethnography, this dissertation endeavours not only to uncover the observable facets of the organisation but also to delve into its unobservable aspects, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the organisation’s culture, dynamics, and processes. The ultimate goal is to shed light on the intricate socio-cultural phenomena that shape, and are shaped by, the organisation’s activities and the interactions among its members. This approach, thus, provides a profound, holistic, and nuanced perspective of the organisation in question.

5.3.1 Data Collection Processes

To identify the organisations to study, I departed from the definition of social entrepreneurial organisations outlined in the first chapter and
approached several organisations which five of them accepted to participate in the study. First, I interviewed the founders of these five organisations (six individuals). The initial interviews were also intended to build trust between founders of the organisations and me - the researcher. After that, initially three organisations agreed to allow me to delve deeper into studying them. There was a year-long break between that agreement and the planned start date of the second phase of my study, set for January 2020. In the interim, two of the organisations decided to merge, resulting in a new organisation’s birth. The founders of the previous organisations stepped back from active operations in the new organisation, and a new CEO was appointed.

Upon meeting the new CEO in January 2020 and explaining my research, he expressed interest. However, he requested a few months to settle into his new role in a transitioning organisation. Despite my best efforts to persuade him of the research potential inherent in this transition period, I felt obliged to respect his request. Regrettably, the onset of the pandemic a few months later heightened his reluctance to accommodate to participate in the research project.

Consequently, I proceeded with a single case ethnographic study of one organisation called ‘Sweden for Everyone’ (a pseudonym referred as SFE in the text). However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden just two months into my fieldwork meant that the organisation had to pivot to distance working. From March 2020 onwards, my observations were predominantly conducted virtually. I participated in their virtual meetings, except for a single social gathering in early summer 2020 when members of the organisation met outdoors.

Thus, the data collected was primarily composed of observation of the virtual meetings and interviews. I observed SFE’s online meetings and conducted interviews with participants using various online communication platforms. Therefore, it is important to point out that that with organisations increasingly adopting digital technologies, organisational ethnographers can extend their work into the digital domain. This might involve analysing communication on digital platforms (which I did to a great extent especially in the second article). This form of digital or virtual ethnography is an emerging field that can offer valuable insights into the evolving nature of work and organisations in the digital era (Murthy, 2008).

The interview data was collected using semi-structured interviews technique. In addition, I collected a variety of documents such as SFE’s structure, policy, operations workflow, and internal surveys relating to working conditions etc.
The data collection was organised in three phases:

Table 2 The extent of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Interviews were conducted with the founders of five social entrepreneurial organisations (six interviews in total).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2018 - January 2019</td>
<td>I observed SFE and interviewed its staff. In total, 13 interviews were conducted. The CEO was interviewed four times, and other members once in June. Additionally, I conducted 37 observations (amounting to 43.5 hours). Except for January and February 2020, when physical observations were possible, all subsequent observations were performed digitally due to the organisation’s shift to remote work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Fourteen virtual meetings were observed and notes were taken (cumulatively spanning 17 hours).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January to June 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May and June 2021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cornerstone of my first article was the data gathered in the first phase. The second article took shape using the data collected during the second phase. This phase of data collection expanded upon the insights gathered during the initial phase, adding depth and breadth to the existing body of knowledge. The contents of this article, therefore, reflect a more refined understanding of the subject matter, based on an expanded dataset.

Finally, the third article is based on a combination of data from all three phases, representing a comprehensive overview of the entire research process. It is important to note, however, that from the first phase, only the interviews conducted with the SFE’s co-founders were incorporated in the third article. These interviews provided an invaluable perspective, contributing unique insights which significantly enhanced the overall depth and richness of the research.

5.3.2 Coding and Analysing Procedures

Like other qualitative researchers, organisational ethnographers can utilise, deductive, inductive, or abductive approach. The deductive approach employs a pre-existing theoretical framework as a guiding compass throughout the research process. The inductive approach lets the data gathered steer the course of the research (Gibbs, 2007). Both methodologies have their respective advantages; however, in the analysis of the empirical data I used
the abductive approach, which espouses a cyclical mode of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Johnstone, 2007).

Adopting an abductive framework allowed me to discern patterns that manifested in the participants’ everyday lives within their social contexts and across various events. As a result, the coding procedure needed to exhibit dynamism, adapting to the emerging patterns and themes (Niiniluoto, 1999; Saetre & Van De Ven, 2021). To accommodate this need, I implemented a thematic approach. This approach first identifies overarching trends or themes in the data, subsequently classifying related notes within those themes. It then endeavoured to draw connections between notes and construct meanings (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014).

This coding system also streamlined the data analysis process, highlighting synergies with pre-existing theoretical frameworks. Therefore, each theme could potentially serve as a foundation for a distinct analytical topic. The analysis mentioned above materialised from two distinct stages of transformation. Firstly, I comprehended my fieldwork through a thematic coding lens, which I subsequently transformed into a structured narrative (Mahadevan, 2012; Saldana, 2015).

To streamline the data analysis process, I used NVivo—a qualitative data analysis software—which greatly assisted me in the organisation and structuring of my data. One of the primary advantages of using NVivo is its ability to handle large volumes of data, providing me with a systematic and efficient approach to data management. Furthermore, NVivo supports the coding and categorisation of data, allowing for in-depth analysis of themes and patterns. In each of my articles, I detailed the coding and analysis processes employed for the respective pieces. Here, I aim to discuss broader aspects of this matter, illuminating the inherent complexities of ethnographic research.

Inherently, fieldwork encompasses a multitude of simultaneous events and phenomena, each of varying importance and relevance. As such, it is unrealistic and impractical to afford equal analytical significance to every aspect. This echoes Emerson et al.’s (2011) contention that ethnography inherently involves selection, necessitating decisions regarding what to emphasise and what to omit. This evokes an imperative question: what factors underpin the determination of what to include in the analysis and what to discard?

5.4 Ethical Considerations

In my research, I have placed the utmost emphasis on practicing rigorous research ethics, with the recognition that responsible research serves as the cornerstone of any scholarly pursuit. This emphasis is not just about complying with regulatory requirements but also about maintaining the
integrity of the scientific process and respecting the dignity and rights of all research participants.

In order to ensure compliance with recognised ethical standards, I adhered to the Swedish Research Council’s Instructions (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017), the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017), and Stockholm University’s guidelines for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). These guidelines not only provided the foundational framework for ethical considerations in my research but also helped me in establishing protocols for managing data securely and appropriately.

The protection of the participants’ privacy was paramount in my research process. This was achieved by securely storing all recorded audio files and field-notes in the Stockholm University database and employing measures to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, I consciously refrained from collecting any sensitive personal information given that these matters were outside the scope of my research. This includes, but is not limited to, details concerning race, ethnicity, political views, religion, trade union membership, health status, sexual orientation, personal sex life, genetic data, biometric data, and criminal convictions. This was irrespective of the low risk associated with the nature of my research, reinforcing my commitment to maintaining participant confidentiality at all times.

Each participant was provided with comprehensive information about the project and then signed a consent letter indicating their voluntary participation. This measure ensured that the research was carried out transparently and in alignment with ethical guidelines.

Throughout the research process, I made a methodological decision, based on consultation with SFE’s CEO, not to record observations. The rationale behind this decision was to prevent inadvertent data collection about individuals not directly involved in the research who had not provided their informed consent. Therefore, while all the interviews were audio-recorded, I only took written notes without any audio or video recording during observations.

The trust and rapport established with participants also played a crucial role in conducting ethical research. This relationship was built on mutual respect, transparency, and assurance of confidentiality, which facilitated an environment conducive for open and honest participation.

Moreover, the consideration of research ethics extended beyond the treatment of participants and data. It also encompassed other aspects such as honesty in reporting findings, ensuring the originality of work to avoid plagiarism, providing due acknowledgment to previous works through proper citation, and being transparent about any potential conflicts of interest.

Ultimately, the ethical guidelines, principles, and practices I adhered to in my dissertation served to uphold the dignity and rights of the participants, ensured the credibility and validity of my research, and contributed to the broader scientific community by maintaining the integrity and trustworthiness
of academic research. The entire process reiterated the critical role of ethics in research, which extends far beyond mere compliance with rules and regulations, and forms an integral part of the research design, implementation, analysis, and publication phases.

5.5 The Reflexive Researcher

In an ethnographic study, the researcher’s role is pivotal. Consequently, my analysis and understanding of the data were profoundly influenced by my interactions, experiences, and perspectives in relation to the participants and the organisation. Recognising the potential impact of this influence, I made reflexivity (Ackerly & True, 2008) a foundational element of my research process. This entailed a rigorous and consistent self-evaluation, critically assessing how my biases, assumptions, and personal experiences might be shaping the research outcomes.

As a result, reflexivity became the foundational concept upon which this dissertation was built. This approach necessitates a critical introspection of one’s assumptions and biases, bringing to light how personal backgrounds and perspectives can shape perceptions and interpretations of social reality. This perspective emphasises that one’s understanding of the world is shaped by their unique experiences and perspectives, rather than being an absolute truth (Clifford, 1986). Embracing reflexivity enabled me to constantly question and reassess my assumptions, thereby fostering the evolution and growth of my understanding of the social reality within the field I studied.

However, adopting reflexivity in ethnographic research is not without challenges. It calls for a high level of self-awareness and honesty, as well as the complicated task of determining the extent to which researcher bias may have influenced the study’s outcomes. Balancing the necessary reflexivity and avoiding unproductive self-absorption can also be a complex task. Nevertheless, despite these intricacies, reflexivity stands as an essential component in conducting rigorous, ethical, and credible ethnographic research.

In regard to reflexivity, there are some matters that I would like to mention here:

1. During the pilot study in 2019 my interactions with SFE took various forms, such as attending some after-work events, participating in some of the organisation’s weekly Friday lunches, and involving in one development workshop. This allowed me to remain connected with the organisation’s pulse, keeping abreast of its internal dynamics and ongoing activities.

The principal motive behind maintaining this connection was threefold. First, I wished to deepen my understanding of the organisation’s operational and cultural nuances. Engaging with SFE in diverse contexts and activities
allowed me to observe the organisation’s dynamics in action, thus supplementing my theoretical understanding with practical insights.

Second, I sought to familiarise myself with the organisation’s members. Regular interactions in various settings enabled me to forge relationships with different individuals, promoting a better understanding of their roles, perspectives, and contributions to the organisation. These relationships later facilitated smoother communication and cooperation during the official data collection stages.

Finally, I aimed to build rapport and trust with the members and the organisation as a whole. Being a regular presence at their activities, I hoped to become a recognised and trusted figure, which would encourage open and honest communication during the subsequent phases of research. Which later proved to be beneficial since when I started my official data-gathering in 2020 they already knew me well.

In hindsight, however, I acknowledge a limitation in my strategy during this time. I failed to maintain similar levels of engagement with the other two organisations that were originally part of my research scope. This lapse, I now recognise, might have prevented me from anticipating the imminent merger between those two organisations. Had I maintained an active presence within those organisations, I could have been alert to early signs of this merger and potentially arranged for inclusion in the newly formed organisation for my study. Alas, my other academic obligations at the time led me to prioritise my coursework and writing of my first article, leading to the erroneous assumption that regular contact with SFE alone would be sufficient for the broader scope of my research. This decision, I now understand, may have limited the breadth and diversity of my study, as I ended up examining only one organisation instead of three.

2. Drawing from the work of Goffman (2016), it is posited that participant observations serve as an essential method for ethnographers to fully immerse themselves within the unique circumstances and experiences of a specific group. This process often involves the researcher becoming a part of the social milieu they are studying, enabling them to gain first-hand insights and deeper understanding of the group’s behaviours, attitudes, and dynamics.

However, during a pilot participant observation I conducted in 2019, I found that this method, was not entirely suitable for the specific context of my research because as previously noted in the first chapter, prior to embarking on my PhD journey, I had spent several years working in the same field as my research participants. Consequently, this familiarity with the field posed an unexpected challenge in my participant observation efforts during the pilot study.

Rather than facilitating my research, my previous professional experience in the field actually resulted in an over-immersion on my part in the participant role. This excessive engagement led me to a point where I was investing more
energy into participating in the group dynamics than observing them. I found myself more focused on my actions and reactions within the group setting, thereby neglecting my primary duty as an ethnographer to maintain an analytical observer perspective.

This realisation prompted me to revaluate my methodological approach for my fieldwork. In an attempt to remedy the imbalance between the participant and observer roles I experienced during the pilot study, I transitioned towards a passive observational approach. This adjusted stance involved an emphasis on strict observation, listening, and note-taking, without getting engaged in the active participation or dialogue during observations.

This shift allowed me to maintain a healthy distance from the group dynamics, preventing an undue influence of my personal actions or reactions on my observations and analysis. It also ensured that my professional background in the field did not overpower my researcher role, thus fostering a more balanced perspective that better served the research objectives.

3. In the process of conducting my research, I inevitably encountered instances of ambiguity—moments when the observed behaviours, interactions, or statements seemed unclear or subject to various interpretations. Recognising that my understanding could be influenced by my own biases or preconceptions, I sought to address these ambiguities directly, rather than relying solely on my own inferences or assumptions.

To this end, I supplemented my passive observations with additional data collection methods, such as formal interviews and informal conversations. By doing so, I was able to engage directly with the research participants, asking questions to clarify my observations and deepen my understanding of their perspectives and experiences. This direct interaction offered invaluable insights, often revealing nuances or subtleties that may have been overlooked in the observational data alone.

These additional data sources became an essential tool for understanding the gap between the intended meaning and the actual expressed interactions within the research setting (Borneman & Hammoudi, 2009). The process of supplementing observational data with formal interviews and informal conversations allowed me to cross-verify the information collected, providing a more nuanced view of the field and mitigating the risk of misinterpretation. The conversations offered opportunities for participants to explain their actions or clarify their statements in their own words, shedding light on the complexities and subtleties of their social interactions. This collaborative process of clarification and verification was not only valuable for ensuring the accuracy and validity of my findings, but it also contributed to a more participatory, dynamic, and reflexive research process.

4. To enhance the authenticity and credibility of my analysis, I implemented a strategy known as member-checking. This method involves returning to the research participants with the initial findings, interpretations,
and conclusions drawn from the data. The participants were then given an opportunity to review and respond to these findings, allowing them to confirm, clarify, or challenge the researcher’s interpretations.

Member checking served multiple purposes. On one hand, it offered a means to validate the accuracy of my interpretations, ensuring that my understanding aligned with the participants’ own perceptions and experiences. On the other hand, it opened up space for the participants to provide additional insights, perspectives, or context that may not have been captured in the initial data collection, thereby enriching and refining the analysis. I also extended the practice of member checking to include a review of my draft articles prior to their submission to the academic journals.

I am deeply grateful for the willingness of the participants to engage in this process. Their valuable time, effort, and insights were helpful in enhancing the validity and credibility of my research. Their feedback was not only beneficial for refining my drafts, but it also allowed me to stay connected with their perspectives and further develop my reflexivity throughout the research process.

This experience underlined the importance of maintaining a dialogic relationship with research participants, reminding me of the profound ways in which their involvement can contribute to the overall quality and integrity of the collected empirical data.

5. The process of writing a compilation-based PhD dissertation is characterised by substantial time pressure. This constraint meant that the luxury of postponing the drafting of my articles until the completion of data collection was not an option for me. To ensure that my project progressed within the set timeline, it was incumbent upon me to establish a system where data analysis and writing happened in tandem with each successive phase of data gathering. Thus, the time-pressured environment of compiling a PhD dissertation required a strategic and systematic approach to data gathering and analysis, resulting in a set of distinct but interconnected articles reflecting the progress and evolution of my research.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have posited that the knowledge and understanding of the world are influenced by social, historical, political, and cultural contexts. This standpoint challenges the traditional view that individual perceptions merely mirror the world’s essence. Instead, it emphasises the social construction of knowledge, highlighting the concept of ‘intersubjectivity’—a shared understanding that arises from common experiences.

I also described that this study employs an organisational case study design with an ethnographic lens. The research design, data collection methods, and
analysis techniques used were outlined, highlighting the use of an abductive approach to identify emerging patterns across various social settings.

In addition, I detailed the ethical considerations upheld throughout this research. Respect for privacy and secure data handling were paramount, following guidelines from the Swedish Research Council, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, and Stockholm University's GDPR policies.

Lastly, the role of reflexivity in the research process was thoroughly explained. Reflexivity involves a continual self-assessment and critical reflection on the part of the researcher, aiming to identify and account for biases, assumptions, and influences that may affect the study’s outcomes. This practice enhances the overall validity and reliability of the research by allowing for a more nuanced and honest interpretation of the data.
6. Summary of the Articles

This dissertation consists of three empirical articles. In this chapter, I will offer a brief summary of each study.

6.1 Article I: Becoming a social entrepreneur: Individual and collective learning in communities of practice

The quest to become a social entrepreneur is an intriguing one. This article (Eslahchi & Osman, 2021) delves into this intriguing journey by conducting interviews with the founders of five social entrepreneurial organisations, involving six individuals in total.

This article aimed to analyse and understand the process of learning to become a social entrepreneur in relation to the process of creating a social entrepreneurial organisation.

In this article, I began by exploring how these individuals (founders) developed their innovative approach, examining this through the lens of situated learning theory. The findings illuminate the essential role that the founders’ prior access and participation in integration activities played. This involvement was pivotal in generating unique, creative ideas for social entrepreneurial initiatives. Additionally, the network of individuals and organisations cultivated during this time was influential in facilitating the attainment of necessary skills and nurturing the growth of their social entrepreneurial organisations. Notably, all interviewees had lived abroad, granting them invaluable insights into the difficulties foreigners encounter, thereby enhancing their empathy and understanding of being an outsider in a new society.

Becoming a social entrepreneur is a journey involving a complex interplay of individual and collective learning processes both deeply rooted in specific societal and organisational contexts. This learning goes beyond pure cognition and is heavily integrated within the framework of situated learning. Hence, the active engagement and participation of social entrepreneurs in various communities of practice becomes crucial, providing them with valuable opportunities to immerse themselves and learn.

By participating actively in these communities of practice, social entrepreneurs gained profound insights into established integration practices.
in Sweden. This knowledge empowered them to envision and generate innovative ideas to further improve and advance these practices.

The journey to becoming a social entrepreneur is thus an ongoing, dynamic process closely linked to continuous engagement within communities of practice. Particularly in the early stages of establishing social entrepreneurial initiatives, the more social entrepreneurs learn, adapt, and grow, the higher the chances of organisational development and success. Therefore, the reciprocal relationship between learning to become a social entrepreneur and organisational development growth acts as a catalyst for the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship as illustrated in figure 1.

The outcome of their journey in becoming social entrepreneurs were also organisations distinguished by their innovative strategies and unwavering commitment to resolving urgent social issues. These organisations particularly emphasise the critical area of social integration, distinguishing themselves through their unique two-way approach. This approach refutes the conventional view that integration involves merely preparing immigrants for the job market through language courses, social orientation, and training programs.

Acknowledging the significant societal changes in Sweden over the past two decades, these organisations champion a more inclusive approach to integration. They argue that social integration should involve everyone actively, thereby offering opportunities for both newcomers and established members of society to interact on equal footing and learn from each other, thereby cultivating a collaborative environment.
6.2 Article II: Adapting to the COVID-19 world: a case study of collective learning in a social entrepreneurial organisation

This article (Eslahchi, 2023a) adopts a single-case study of SFE (one of the organisations whose founders were interviewed in the first phase of data-gathering), using the theoretical framework of collective learning to scrutinise the collective learning conditions and processes leading to adaptive strategies employed by the organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the significant impact the pandemic had on social entrepreneurial organisations, it necessitated a paradigm shift in their modus operandi to withstand and navigate the uncertainties spawned by the crisis.

According to the study’s findings, the conditions for collective learning within the organisation changed. This change was largely driven by a reconfiguration of the organisation’s structural design and teamwork patterns during the pandemic, thus creating a more conducive environment for knowledge sharing and experience exchange. The power of collective learning was manifest in the organisation’s ability to adapt by developing innovative virtual projects during these difficult times.
A notable outcome of this collective learning process was a renewed, shared understanding of the organisation’s vision among team members. This suggests that the disruption brought about by the pandemic served as a catalyst for a more profound alignment of collective perspectives with the broader organisational goals. In essence, the conditions fostering collective learning within this organisation were reshaped as its members adjusted their methods of communication and interaction in response to the pandemic-induced challenges.

In the context of SFE, the pandemic proved to be a catalyst rather than a hindrance. That thanks to a clear, transparent opportunity for full participation in practices that was extended to all members during the pandemic, which allowed for the planning and development of new projects irrespective of one’s position within the organisation. This inclusive approach not only fostered a sense of unity (team-ness) and shared purpose but also stimulated collective learning, thereby fostering the organisation’s adaptability and resilience.

The findings from this study emphasise the potential of unique social mechanisms within organisations to either stimulate or impede learning. The determining factor seems to hinge on whether there are ample opportunities for, or barriers to, participation in practices that either foster or hinder collective learning. This knowledge can be beneficial for social entrepreneurial organisations and similar entities in planning and managing their adaptation strategies, especially in times of unprecedented crises like a pandemic.

6.3 Article III: Leadership and collective learning: a case study of a social entrepreneurial organisation in Sweden

This article (Eslahchi, 2023b) is a continuation of the second article analysing how leadership in practice can facilitate collective learning. Building upon the findings of the study, it is important to recognise that the new perspective of leadership in practice is a transformative approach. It diverges from the traditional, individualistic focus on a leader’s competencies and characteristics, towards a more integrated, social, and holistic perspective. Here, leadership becomes a relational process that happens in daily interactions and activities, thus enriching the collective understanding and shared experience within an organisation.

Changes in leadership can significantly impact the degree of trust within an organisation. Trust serves as the bedrock for collective learning, and its fluctuation can either enhance or hinder this procedure. A climate of trust within an organisation fosters the development of diverse routines and mechanisms. This enables personnel to engage in a wide range of activities integral to the organisation’s operations.
This evolution in thinking also stresses the value of inclusivity in leadership. In a leadership in practice that promotes collective learning, leaders are not isolated decision-makers exerting authority from above. Instead, they are part of the social fabric of the organisation, actively engaging with team members and encouraging open dialogue and collaboration. Such a leadership not only democratises the decision-making process but also fosters a sense of ownership among team members, enhancing their motivation and commitment to the organisation’s goals.

In addition, the emphasis on collective learning necessitates creating opportunities for teams to collaboratively tackle tasks and problems. This approach of leadership in practice promotes a culture of knowledge sharing, reflective thinking, and mutual learning, enabling the organisation to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

This is particularly critical in times of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which require an agile and adaptive response from organisations. A leadership in practice that facilitates collective learning can equip organisations with the necessary tools to tackle unforeseen challenges, ensuring their survival and growth. For small social entrepreneurial organisations that inherently bear more vulnerabilities, the capacity for collective learning can be a lifeline, enabling them to adjust to external shifts and internal changes effectively.

Moreover, this study highlights the need to view individuals as social capital, emphasising their potential for contributing to organisational learning and growth. From this perspective, leadership has the responsibility of creating a conducive environment for collective learning, fostering a space for teams to evolve into social learning systems.

In summary, the concept of leadership in practice and the emphasis on collective learning provide a new perspective on organisational leadership. By fostering an inclusive, learning-focused culture, organisations can adapt more effectively to crises and changes, and flourish in a rapidly evolving business landscape. The research findings, encapsulated in Figure 2, offer valuable insights into this approach to leadership and collective learning. The figure shows that changes in leadership can significantly affect trust within an organisation, which is crucial for collective learning. A high-trust environment allows for effective routines and broad team participation, thereby enabling the achievement of shared goals. This also challenges traditional command-and-control managerial approaches. The findings underscore that trust-based leadership enhances team cohesion, productivity, and engagement (Eslahchi, 2023b).
6.4 Chapter Summary

The three articles, taken together, generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This investigation started with examining individual and collective learning of six individuals in their journey from sparking innovative ideas to establishing social entrepreneurial organisation. It then proceeded to concentrate on collective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole picture provides an understanding of collective learning in the social entrepreneurial context.

The first article illuminates the journey of individuals into social entrepreneurs. It underlines the fundamental role of individual and collective learning in sparking ideas that serve as the genesis of these organisations. The critical aspect of this learning process is understanding how these nascent social entrepreneurs develop their creative potential to generate value for society, resulting in the creation of social entrepreneurial organisations.

The next two articles shift the lens to an established organisation (SFE) grappling with the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19...
pandemic. They delve into the importance of collective learning for organisational change and how leadership affect collective learning during a global crisis. The examination of this period highlights the importance of collective learning for adaptability, resilience, and creativity to navigate through crisis created by exogenous factors. It casts light on how established organisations can reorganise their ways of working, recalibrate their strategies, realign their goals, by creating sufficient conditions that foster collective learning to weather the storm.
7. Meta-analysis

The primary aim of this meta-analysis is, with the help of empirical data presented in the articles, to generate an understanding of collective learning in social entrepreneurial organisations.

Moreover, this analysis attempts not only to serve as an academic contribution but also to provide insights for practitioners actively navigating the realm of social entrepreneurship. Therefore, I want to integrate scholarly research with real-world application to enrich the dialogue between theory and practice.


In the theory chapter, I consciously constructed a categorisation framework that breaks down collective learning into conditions, processes, and outcomes. There, I identified leadership as a condition that facilitates learning, organising as the process through which collective learning occurs, and change as the consequential outcome. The actual landscape, however, is far more multifaceted than these categories suggest. Contrary to initial appearances, my argument here is that these categories of leadership, organising, and change are not static or immutable when examined through a collective learning-centric perspective.

A condition such as leadership could evolve into a dynamic process, especially since this dissertation emphasises leadership in practice (Raelin et al., 2018). What might begin as a mere precondition can evolve into an ongoing activity that actively moulds the collective learning landscape. Similarly, an outcome like change can transmute into a condition, thereby paving the way for new iterations of collective learning. This cyclical dynamic attests to the fluid and interconnected nature of conditions, processes, and outcomes in the context of collective learning.

Within this categorical structure, organising was positioned as a process through which collective learning occurs. However, organising is not merely a backdrop to collective learning; it is intrinsically a part of the collective learning process itself. Collective learning often yields insights that subsequently inform and improve the very methods by which resources and actions are coordinated. This results in a reinforcing cycle: effective
organising leads to improved collective learning, which in turn contributes to even more effective organising.

Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between organising processes (Czarniawska, 2005, 2008) and collective learning processes. Although they are closely related, they are not identical, as framed in the theory chapter. Organising should be seen as a dynamic and complex process that both enables operations and serves as both a catalyst and a beneficiary of collective learning. They are interdependent yet distinct activities that together enhance an organisation’s vitality and adaptability. In what follows, I aspire to examine these complexities, underscoring that conditions, processes, and outcomes are far from isolated. They are interrelated, evolving components that constantly shape and reshape one another in the intricate web of collective learning.

Based on the empirical data, in this meta-analysis, I argue that collective learning within social entrepreneurial organisations is shaped by a range of exogenous factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To adapt and change in response to these external factors, collective learning processes are essential. Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the conditions that facilitate collective learning. The changes that occur within the organisation subsequently give rise to new conditions.

Leadership, organising, and change are themes that are either explicitly or implicitly addressed across the articles. Article I focuses on the journey of becoming a social entrepreneur, particularly in relation to the processes of forming and establishing a social entrepreneurial organisation. From a meta-analytical perspective, this article can be viewed as an exploration of collective learning through organising, and change. Article II investigates how a social entrepreneurial organisation adapted its practices in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This piece delves into the interplay between collective learning, change, and organising when SFE faces a new condition that could potentially threaten its existence. Consequently, article III focuses closely on leadership and investigates how it can create suitable conditions for collective learning processes.

In what follows I offer a meta-analysis of the empirical results of the article in a form of a collective learning-centred perspective of leadership, organising and change.

7.1.1 Leadership

In my empirical work leadership is conceptualised as a dynamic compound, with the potential to either amplify or diminish collective learning, depending on the extent and quality of participatory opportunities it orchestrates (Eslahchi, 2023b). The significance of leadership becomes even more salient when examined through its ability to shape modes of dialogue, discussion, engagement, and collaboration within teams. These elements are cornerstones
of collective learning, especially when viewed within the theoretical framework that underpins this dissertation.

In this context, it is crucial to highlight that the onset of the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges, making ‘business as usual’ an impossibility. Therefore, SFE was forced to adapt. Recognising the gravity of the situation, the CEO decided to approach the challenge as a collective issue that affected everyone within the organisation. With a unified ‘we are all in the same boat’ mentality, the CEO assured employees that no one would be let go. This leadership decision cultivated a new condition conducive to collective learning. Here, the significance of trust-based leadership in practice was paramount. As explored in Article III, even before the pandemic, there was a high level of trust in the organisation due to the CEO’s leadership in practice (Eslahchi, 2023b).

Therefore, rather than simply a tactical manoeuvre, the conscious choice by the leadership to include team members in strategic planning proved to be a prudent decision. It enhanced the trust in the organisation and provided an open platform for individual experiences, skills, and insights to converge. This proactive environment served not just as a breeding ground for creativity but also as a catalyst for risk-taking and constructive dialogue. The collective learning thus achieved led to a richer, shared understanding of the challenges at hand.

Within the framework of SFE, leadership had a tangible impact on collective learning during the pandemic. Team members were not merely parts in a machine; they were highly valued contributors. This ethos, centred on appreciating expertise and fostering transparent dialogue, gave rise to breakthrough solutions to adapt to the next situation during the pandemic. Rather than confining decision-making to the CEO alone, the organisation extended leadership opportunities to everyone. By embracing a more inclusive approach to decision-making and teamwork, the organisation cultivated an environment that encouraged learning, experimentation, and collaboration.

In other words, the operational paradigm of the SFE was fundamentally changed during the pandemic in which leadership in practice took centre stage in facilitating this transformative journey. Rather than rigidly adhering to previous ways of working, leadership initiatives set the stage for necessary dual adaptations. Firstly, they spearheaded the transition to remote work, laying down effective norms for virtual communication and interaction. Secondly, recognising SFE’s projects inherent reliance on physical interactions of their participants, leadership was instrumental in amplifying the urgency to innovate new operations. Their vision and direction ensured that the response went beyond a series of isolated adjustments (Eslahchi, 2023a). Guided by leadership in practice, team members engaged in collective brainstorming, which culminated in the co-creation of new projects. The leadership’s focus on innovative communication and goal re-imagination
galvanised a more cohesive team. This evolved practice of leadership did more than simply maintain continuity; it nurtured an environment where collective learning became integral to both organisational practice and the work team’s ethos.

The subject of leadership within business and management studies has undergone extensive academic scrutiny (Bryant, 2003; Lakshman, 2005; McNamara, 2010; Zárraga & Bonache, 2003). However, the prevalent viewpoint treats collective learning in teams as an auxiliary benefit rather than as a primary component of a leader’s responsibility (Cannatelli et al., 2017; von Krogh et al., 2012).

My study serves as a call to shift this prevailing narrative. The study suggests a research paradigm about leadership that does not just implicitly concern collective learning. Instead, it actively concentrates on leadership as a factor that can create conditions that nurture collective learning in teams, especially within the nuanced world of social entrepreneurial organisations.

The conventional leadership scholarship, though robust, appear misaligned in such dynamic setups. In alignment with Praszkier & Nowak’s (2011) insights, research on social entrepreneurship emphasises the concept of participative leadership—a style that encourages innovative thinking and innovation. However, as my empirical results have shown, the efficacy of leadership in these dynamic organisations can be further amplified when viewed as a practice that seamlessly harmonises with collective learning dynamics (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018).

A practice-based leadership approach (Raelin, 2016; Raelin et al., 2018) can potentially expand the understanding of collective learning since it emphasises on (re)organising social processes between leaders and team members, thereby shifting the perspective from ‘leadership in organisation’ to ‘leadership of organisation’ (Hunt, 1999). The latter prioritises relational processes over the exertion of managerial power via commands and controls (Crevani et al., 2010; Crevani, 2018; J. A. Wilson & Cunliffe, 2021). From a collective learning-centred vantage point, the principal task for leaders can be understood to foster learning conditions, consequently building collective competency towards achieving team-level goals (Oreg & Berson, 2019).

The inherent value of leadership in practice is rooted in its ability to contextualise leadership actions within the specific situations and environments where leaders operate (Wenger et al., 2002). This aspect is noteworthy, as prior leadership studies have often overlooked the impact of situational context on leadership performance (McMurray et al., 2010). Contextual factors, including societal, cultural, sectoral, and organisational environments, are crucial as they can influence interpretations of ‘ideal leadership’ (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018).

Moreover, perceiving leadership as a practice encompasses a combined focus that interlinks ‘leadership for learning’ with ‘learning to lead’. This association between the two concepts signifies that through their active
engagement and interactions within their organisational context, leaders not only shape learning conditions for teams and team members but also enhance their managerial and leadership capabilities (Myers, 2004). Therefore, leadership is not a static, preordained, or immutable component within an organisation. Instead, it represents a dynamic process, continuously evolving and maturing within a learning environment alongside other team members.

7.1.2 Organising

Exploring the role of leadership serves as the bedrock for organising, laying the groundwork for collective learning and a shared understanding of routines and policies (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). As explained above through the lens of practice-based leadership both leaders and team members act as co-organisers (Sari et al., 2021). In social entrepreneurial organisations, the adept organising of skills and resources equips leaders with the resilience essential for innovation and crisis management, a fact highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eslahchi, 2023a).

However, as shown in article I, the journey of a social entrepreneur is intricately linked with the creation of their organisation. This task involves organising resources, structures, and routines. The journey, enriched by interactions with refugees, immigrants, volunteers, and active participation in related organisations, underscores the value of practical organising processes over mere theoretical knowledge. Being part of a network, especially in the non-profit sector, provides substantial support and advice, emphasising the benefits of community immersion (Eslahchi & Osman, 2021).

In the study presented, organising within social entrepreneurial organisations emerges not as a static or one-off activity, but rather as a dynamic and continuous process. This process appears to benefit from a system of inclusive communication and interaction mechanisms. This is particularly crucial for fostering collective learning (Lau et al., 2019; Nellen et al., 2020; Rasche & Scherer, 2014; Schippers et al., 2020; J. M. Wilson et al., 2007). The concept of organising in this context should be perceived as a practice, very much aligned with the practical orientation of leadership discussed above. By adopting this approach, one can shift focus from merely structural or hierarchical aspects to the actual tasks and activities that are being accomplished (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Whittington, 2003).

In the case of SFE, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful catalyst for organisational change. Adaptation under these challenging circumstances manifested as a collective learning journey that led to the emergence of new organisational routines and norms by constant reorganising processes. These new routines are not arbitrary or spontaneously generated; they are the outcome of a series of collective actions, reflective practices, and learning activities undertaken by both leaders and team members (Eslahchi, 2023a).
In this evolving landscape, organising takes on a dynamic character, rendering previous routines obsolete or inadequate. It paves the way for new ways of functioning that are better suited to the organisation’s current challenges and opportunities. Consequently, organising within an organisation adopt a cyclical nature. This cycle starts with the acquisition of new insights and knowledge through collective learning. These learnings then inform and reshape organisational routines, making them more effective or suited to new challenges. Once updated, these new routines not only improve current operational efficiency but also become the grounding framework for future cycles of collective action and learning.

In such an evolving landscape, the role of organising is multi-faceted. Depending on the context, it can serve variously as a condition, a process, or even an outcome within the broader paradigm of collective learning. As a condition, organising sets the stage for collective learning by providing the structures and systems within which learning occurs. As a process, it acts as the mechanism through which collective action and learning are coordinated, channelled, and actualised. Finally, as an outcome, effective organising can emerge from successful collective learning episodes, where insights gained lead to improvements in how actions and resources are coordinated.

This multi-dimensional view of organising underscores its fluid and context-sensitive nature. It highlights that organising is not a one-size-fits-all activity but rather a dynamic element that evolves in concert with the collective learning journey of an organisation.

Traditional theories often struggle to understand modern organising processes (Puranam et al., 2014). However, I argue that the continuous organising processes result in the evolution of organisational structures and routines. Effective communication, interaction, and knowledge sharing are essential to collective learning and organising. In essence, communicative practices form the backbone of an organisation (Putnam & Nicotera, 2008) actively shaping its realities.

7.1.3 Change

Research on organisational change often underscores the challenges and obstacles that such initiatives face, making the success of these endeavours a formidable task (Elving, 2005). Against this backdrop, my research provides a fresh approach to understanding organisational change by introducing a collective learning-centred perspective. In this conceptual framework, leadership, organising, and change are not isolated elements; instead, they are grounded in collective learning and engage in a continuous, cyclical relationship, mutually shaping and enhancing each other.

In my published article (Eslahchi, 2023a), I used the term ‘adaptation’, but here I am referring to ‘change’. Therefore, it is crucial to be mindful of the distinction and interconnectedness between organisational adaptation and
change. While closely related, these terms serve distinct roles in organisational studies. Organisational change refers to a broad, often long-term transformation that affects multiple facets of an organisation (Cameron & Green, 2019). Conversely, organisational adaptation is generally a more focused, short- to medium-term response to exogenous factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic in case of this study, often executed to ensure immediate survival or resilience (Nelson, 1982; Teece, 2007). While change aims to establish a new organisational steady-state, adaptation seeks flexibility within the existing organisational structure (Weick & Quinn, 1999). So, while both are integral to an organisation’s long-term viability but differ in immediacy, scope, and impact (Mintzberg & Westley, 1992).

In this regard, an insight drawn from my findings concerns the dynamics of adaptation and change reception within organisations. Historically, top-down change mandates have often met with inertia or resistance. However, endorsing a collective learning environment can usher in a more organic, bottom-up change paradigm. By democratising the adaptation and change processes, organisations can potentially empower their team members, leading to shared ownership of adaptation and change initiatives. This collective learning-centred and bottom-up approach, as evident in my research (Eslahchi, 2023a, 2023b), enhances adaptive capabilities and fosters collaborative problem-solving, particularly during the challenges posed by the pandemic. Moving away from traditional hierarchies, where change directives predominantly emanate from managers (Elving, 2005), a more inclusive model can spark genuine enthusiasm for change at grassroots levels, thereby enhancing receptivity and minimising resistance.

In my study, I demonstrated how collective learning can be understood as the catalyst for a dynamic evolutionary process within organisations. This enables teams to transition from traditional paradigms to frameworks that are better aligned with their context. This shift is powered by relentless organising processes that induce change, ranging from operational protocols to deep-seated organisational values (Berkhout et al., 2006). This broad view reveals that change is not merely a simple decision; rather, it arises from ongoing leadership and organising grounded in collective learning. Viewing change in this manner highlights the importance of collective learning, emphasising that organisations are not static entities (Clegg et al., 2005); instead, they are continually adapting and discovering new ways to operate.

In the collective learning-centred perspective, leadership, organising, and change are not merely standalone factors; they are intrinsically interwoven and grounded in the broader fabric of collective learning. These elements participate in a perpetual, cyclical relationship, where each aspect not only influences but also enhances the others in a mutually reinforcing manner.

For example, effective leadership can set the tone for how organising is carried out, fostering an environment conducive to collective learning. This collective learning, in turn, generates new insights that can inform and refine
leadership approaches, leading to more adaptive and resilient systems of organising. These evolved methods of organising can then facilitate changes that reflect the cumulative wisdom and skills acquired through collective learning.

Likewise, change itself, often considered an outcome, can circle back to become a condition that necessitates new forms of leadership and organising. For instance, an organisational change can require leaders to adopt new management styles or strategies that are more aligned with the collective insights gained. These nuanced styles and strategies further catalyse an enriched environment for collective learning.

In essence, leadership, organising, and change are dynamically interconnected, each acting as a condition, a process, and an outcome in this cycle as illustrated in figure 3. They perpetually shape and reshape one another, contributing to a landscape that is not only complex but also adaptive and evolutionary, in line with the principles of collective learning.

![Figure 3 The collective learning-centred perspective of leadership, organising and change](image)

7.2 Chapter Summary

Grounded in empirical studies, the collective learning-centred perspective offers insights into how small-scale social entrepreneurial organisations can possibly become resilient organisations, capable of navigating unprecedented challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. In this framework, leadership is reimagined from a traditional top-down approach to one that values empowerment, collaboration, and shared decision-making. This form of
leadership in practice actively shapes the organisational environment, fostering a culture where collective learning is not just encouraged but becomes a transformative force, as witnessed in the case of SFE during the pandemic. Leadership, in this context, becomes more than just a positional role; it is a practice interwoven with collective learning dynamics.

This study further scrutinises the nuances of organising processes, spotlighting the importance of participation, effective communication, and interactive dynamics for collective learning. Here, organising is not merely directive; it is foundational, facilitating mutual understanding and aligning routines and policies. The real-world interactions of organisations with diverse stakeholders exemplify the superiority of practical organising processes over mere theoretical constructs. The ongoing, adaptive nature of organising, especially evident in responses to the pandemic, underscores the evolutionary trajectory of organisations rooted in collective learning.

The influence of collective learning on organisational change is also highlighted in this study. Whether these changes are subtle shifts in thinking or overarching transformations in structures and routines, they originate from a collective learning-centred core. Contrary to the prevailing understanding of the inefficacy of organisational change efforts, my research spotlights the efficacy of a collective learning-centred perspective in ushering in holistic change. The transition from a top-down to a collaborative, bottom-up change strategy is emphasised, underlining the importance of shared ownership. This perspective, illustrated by SFE’s journey, underscores the intertwining of collective learning with organisational change, particularly during turbulent times.

In this collective learning-centred perspective, leadership, organising, and change exist in a dynamic, cyclical relationship that mutually reinforces each element. Effective leadership shapes organising, which in turn create an environment suitable for collective learning. This learning feeds back into more nuanced leadership and adaptive organising methods, which can then catalyse meaningful change. Such change often circles back, setting new conditions for leadership and organising, thus perpetuating the cycle. Overall, these elements are interconnected, evolving together in a complex yet adaptive system aligned with the principles of collective learning.
8. Discussion

Each study contributes a distinct perspective, enriching the understanding of the subject at hand. As we navigated through my research, it is crucial to recognise its wider implications—not just for the academic community, but also for real-world organisations grappling with the challenges and opportunities discussed. This chapter endeavours to elucidate the key research implications unearthed from my study, offering practical takeaways that organisations can harness, and suggesting potential avenues for future researchers to explore.

8.1 Research Implications

In terms of the founders’ learning journeys studied in the first article, there is a notable contrast to the prevailing theme identified in the literature review, which suggests a growing interest in formally training university students to become social entrepreneurs. The founders interviewed for this study embarked on a more organic learning process, acquiring knowledge and developing their ideas through participation in voluntary activities. While my findings partially confirm existing literature that suggests social entrepreneurial learning should occur outside traditional classroom settings, my first article’s findings indicate that this learning does not necessarily need to take place within the structured framework of university education or formal training programs. This approach opens the door for examining social entrepreneurial learning through a more socially and contextually oriented lens.

In review of scholarly works in relation to learning and social entrepreneurial organisations, I have noticed a notable gap: there’s a lack of emphasis on the interplay between learning processes and the internal mechanisms of social entrepreneurial organizations, especially concerning the evolution of their communication and operational strategies. To fill this gap, my research employs an analytical approach, utilising a dual lens informed by both situated learning theory and collective learning theory. This synergistic framework allows me to scrutinise the social contexts within which organisations are embedded. These contexts, both internal and external to organisations, not only shape but are also shaped by collective learning processes.
Central to this theoretical approach is the exploration of teams as ‘communities of practice’. Far from viewing teams as mere arenas for participation, my study casts them as foundational pillars of collective learning. Teams can thus be perceived as spaces where specific modes of practice converge, serving as catalysts for collective learning, particularly within social entrepreneurial settings.

However, collective learning theory highlights the adaptive qualities inherent in such learning. For example, in the face of unanticipated challenges such as a pandemic, the transition of SFE to virtual platforms serves as evidence of the innate resilience and adaptability that collective learning can confer upon an organisation. My findings underscore this point, emphasising the transformative potential of collective learning in fostering a shared understanding and fortifying team cohesion.

Moreover, as my research traverses the landscape of organisational change, the theoretical interplay between situated learning theory and collective learning theory becomes increasingly evident. While numerous change initiatives are laden with challenges, the study posits that leadership in practice deeply rooted in a collective learning paradigm have the potential to usher in enduring adaptation and change. In this context, organisational change is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather is intricately interwoven with the social settings that foster collective learning, indicating a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Furthermore, while reactions to external events may manifest as either adaptation or broader organisational change, my research discerns the nuances between them. It illustrates that adaptation often emerges in response to immediate crises, whereas more comprehensive changes are instigated by a variety of triggers. This distinction, largely informed by data collected during crises, offers insights into the importance of collective learning in shaping mechanisms of change, extending beyond the immediate context.

In addition, my research challenges conventional leadership and change management models, which frequently encounter resistance. A shift towards collective learning, as demonstrated by the study, provides a more effective approach for understanding and examining change within social entrepreneurial organisations, echoing grassroots sentiments. Here, the focus is not merely on top-down directives but on incorporating insights from the team, thereby enhancing organisational adaptability.

Lastly, acknowledging the dynamic nature of organisations, my research underscores the inseparable link between collective learning, leadership, organising, and change, influencing a range of factors—from abstract concepts to the tangible realm of organisational practices.
8.2 Practical Implications

My research suggests that social entrepreneurial organisations could benefit from engaging more deeply in daily communicative and interactive practices. However, engagement alone may not suffice; it could be valuable to also conduct introspective evaluations to ensure these practices are inclusive. The overarching message is clear: for organisations keen on staying relevant, crafting a culture that facilitate knowledge sharing, promotes transparent communication, and values meaningful participation is non-negotiable. Such a culture does not just respond to change; it anticipates it, fostering a fertile ground for innovation and sustained learning.

It unveils that crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, spotlights the urgency for leaders to recalibrate their compass, placing collective learning at the helm. This demands a leadership paradigm evolution, one that is intrinsically intertwined with collective learning, viewing it not as an ancillary function but as a core leadership responsibility.

Specific implications can be derived from my research:

**Evolutionary Growth**: For potential social entrepreneurs, understanding that establishing a social entrepreneurial organisation is not an instantaneous event, but rather a continuous learning process is crucial. This process begins as a basic concept, evolves through voluntary actions, and matures into a well-established organisation. Social entrepreneurs should remain patient and adaptive to the changes, allowing their ideas to develop organically over time.

**Utilising Collective Learning**: organisations thrive when they foster an environment of collective learning. For practitioners in social entrepreneurship, it is essential to recognise the value of teamwork and shared experiences. Embracing collective learning can significantly bolster adaptability, resilience, and innovation, especially in challenging times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Inclusive Approach to Change**: Traditional top-down models of organisational change often face resistance. For a smoother transition, practitioners should adopt a bottom-up approach, incorporating insights and feedback from all team members. This approach not only promotes a more harmonious transition but often leads to more effective and efficient solutions, tapping into the collective intelligence of the team.

**Delineating Change from Adaptation**: While both are essential, understanding the difference between broad organisational change and specific crisis-driven adaptations is crucial. Practitioners should be prepared to handle both, recognizing the broader implications of changes and the immediate needs that arise during crises.

**Promote Dynamic Thinking**: Social entrepreneurial organisations are fluid and constantly evolving. Understanding and accepting this dynamism is key for practitioners. Instead of being rooted in static practices, the focus
should be on promoting an organisational culture that encourages change, innovation, and continuous learning.

**Incorporate Feedback Loops:** To ensure that the collective learning-centred approach remains at the forefront, incorporate regular feedback mechanisms. This allows for real-time adjustments, ensuring that the organisation remains agile and responsive to both internal and external shifts.

8.3 Suggestions for Future Research

No single study can claim to provide answers to every question or address all facets of a topic. The inherent complexity of most research subjects often leaves certain areas only partially explored, necessitating further inquiry. Future research plays a pivotal role in bridging these gaps, ensuring that understanding of a subject remains dynamic and evolves over time. In line with my research, there are several issues and areas that future scholars might consider exploring, offering fresh insights and perspectives on the topic at hand.

**Role of Technology in Collective Learning:**
Examine the influence of emerging technologies on collective learning processes. Given the rapid technological advancements, how do digital tools facilitate or hinder the collective learning process in social entrepreneurial organisations?

**Comparative Analysis of Change Management Approaches:**
Conduct comparative studies on top-down vs. bottom-up change management approaches within social entrepreneurial organisations. This could offer insights into their effectiveness, adaptability, and impact on team morale.

**Long-term Implications of Crisis-driven Adaptations:**
Analyse the long-term impacts of specific crisis-driven adaptations, such as those prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Do these short-term adaptations lead to lasting changes in organisational structures or practices? If so, how?

**Organisational Culture and Adaptability:**
Investigate the interplay between organisational culture and adaptability in social entrepreneurial contexts. Does a particular type of organisational culture facilitate quicker adaptation, and if so, how can such a culture be cultivated?

**Global Perspectives on Social Entrepreneurial Organisations:**
Comparative studies on how social entrepreneurial organisations in different regions or cultural contexts approach and benefit from collective learning could offer valuable insights for a more globally integrated model.

**Feedback Mechanisms and Continuous Evolution:**
Research the effectiveness of different feedback mechanisms in promoting organisational agility and adaptability. Identifying best practices could be instrumental for organisations looking to remain at the forefront of social impact.

In conclusion, while the landscape of social entrepreneurship has seen significant research, the emphasis on collective learning as a central theme opens up numerous avenues for deeper exploration. Future research in these suggested areas can provide a more comprehensive understanding, aiding both academics and practitioners in harnessing the transformative power of learning in social entrepreneurial organisations.
9. Concluding Remarks

This study was predominantly undertaken amidst the global disturbance instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that profoundly altered the modus operandi of many organisations. This unique and challenging context presented an invaluable opportunity to probe into and construct a collective learning-centred perspective to understand and analyse leadership, organising, and change in social entrepreneurial organisations.

This research endeavour aims to fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge. A review of the literature indicates a shortage of research focusing on collective learning within social entrepreneurial organisations, both generally and specifically in the Swedish context. Through this study, I aim to draw attention to this under-explored domain, promoting further dialogue and research into the collective learning dimension within Swedish social entrepreneurial organisations.

The findings of this research have potential utility for a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from fellow researchers to practitioners active within social entrepreneurial organisations, and policymakers shaping the operational landscape of these entities. These insights can guide the formulation of more effective strategies, interventions, and policies aimed at fostering learning within these organisations. As a result, the transformative potential of social entrepreneurial organisations could be maximised, enabling it to more effectively address societal challenges.

In conclusion, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of the role that collective learning might play in helping social entrepreneurial organisations adapt to and mitigate changes that could have negative impacts. It offers some insights that could be useful for further academic research, guide organisational practices, and potentially inform policy decisions. By adding to the existing knowledge in this field, the hope is to better equip social entrepreneurial organisations for sustainable innovation, thereby increasing their resilience in challenging times.
Svensk Sammanfattning


Cairns, L. (2011). Learning in the workplace: Communities of practice and beyond. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. N. O’Connor (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of workplace learning* (pp. 73–85). SAGE.


(Eds.), Research Methods and Methodologies in Education. SAGE Publications Ltd.


87


https://doi.org/10.1080/0958519032000114282
https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2014.880503
https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-09-2020-0497
Appendix I: Consent Letter- Observations

This consent letter was signed by the CEO of the organization 'Sweden for Everyone' (a pseudonym) before starting the observations.

Medverkan i studien Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organizations


Medverkan i studien är frivillig och du (ni) kan när som helst avbryta medverkan genom att säga till. Du (ni) behöver inte ange någon förklaring.

Observerationer och intervjuer kommer att spelas in. Om ni inte tillåter inspeling av mötena, kommer jag att bara lyssna och anteckna.

Allt material kommer sedan transkriberas. Inga obehöriga kommer att ha tillgång till materialet, som kommer att förvaras inläst i universitetets lokaler/databas. Det är enbart Jag i projektet som har tillgång till samlade data.

Studiens resultat kommer att spridas genom publikationer i internationella tidskrifter och presentationer i konferenser. Du/ni garanteras anonyemitet i spridningen av resultaten.

Allt material kommer hanteras enligt GDPR.
Forskare: Morteza Eslahchi, doktorand  
Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik, Stockholms universitet  
morteza.eslahchi@edu.su.se,  
Handledare: Ali Osman, docent  
Ali Osman, ali.osman@edu.su.se,  

Forskningshuvudman: Stockholms universitet  
Jon Ohlsson, prefekt  
Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik, Stockholms universitet  
106 91 Stockholm  

Svarsblankett  

Jag har läst igenom informationen om studien "Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organizations" och fått tillfälle att ställa frågor om studien. Jag samtycker att forskaren får genomföra observationer på vår organisation och intervjuar individer i organisationen med villkor att de godkänner detta och skriver under individuella samtyckesblanketter.  
□Ja □Nej  

Deltagarens underskrift:  
.........................................................................................................................  

Forskarens underskrift  
.........................................................................................................................  

**Morteza Eslahchi**  
Doktorand, Stockholm universitet
Appendix II: Consent Letter- Interviews

This consent letter was signed by all individual participants in the study who were interviewed.

Medverkan i studien Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organizations

Jag heter Morteza Eslahchi och är doktorand vid Stockholms universitet och forskar om lärandeprocesser som genereras i socialt entreprenörskap inom integrationsområdet i Sverige.

Projektet startade september 2018 och beräknas att avslutas december 2022.

I samband med studien behöver jag att intervjua dig. Medverkan i studien är frivillig och du kan när som helst avbryta medverkan genom att säga till. Du behöver inte ange någon förklaring.

Intervjun kommer att spelas in. Allt material kommer sedan transkriberas. Inga obehöriga kommer att ha tillgång till materialet, som kommer att förvaras inläst i universitetets lokaler/databas.

Studiens resultat kommer att spridas genom publikationer i internationella tidskrifter och presentationer i konferenser. Du garanteras anonymitet i spridningen av resultaten.

Allt material kommer hanteras enligt GDPR.

Forskare: Morteza Eslahchi, doktorand
Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik, Stockholms universitet
morteza.eslahchi@edu.su.se,
Handledare: Ali Osman, docent
Ali Osman, ali.osman@edu.su.se,
Samtycke till att delta i forskningsprojektet Learning in Social Entrepreneurial Organizations

Jag har läst och förstått den information om studien som anges.
☐ Jag samtycker till att delta i studien
☐ Jag samtycker till att mina personuppgifter behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs i dokumentet

Namn och datum

Underskrift
This guide was used to interview the founders during the first phase of data gathering. Since it was a semi-structured interview guide, follow-up questions were also asked based on the interviewees' responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Information to get from the question/ follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about yourself!</td>
<td>-Education background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Voluntary experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Work experiences before starting the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you get the idea to create this organization?</td>
<td>-Did they were involved in the field before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Was it a wow moment or a long process to make the decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about the process of creating the organization. How did it go?</td>
<td>-What was their knowledge about the process of creating an organization before they started an organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What difficulties did they face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-did they have anyone to get help from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What sources did they use to get information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What did they learn in the process (ask for concrete examples if they don’t mention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-How did they get their first cooperation partner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is now X years after you started the organization. How do you see the</td>
<td>-What sources did they use during the development phase?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development of the organization?</td>
<td>-Did they have contacts with similar organizations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-what difficulties did they face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did they learn in the process (ask for concrete examples if they don’t mention)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What skills did you have that helped you during the process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What skills did you have that hindered you during the process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of your skills developed most during the process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me something that you learned during these years!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At what level was your knowledge about integration when you started and what level is your knowledge now? What were your sources to get information from about integration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you go back to when you decided to start the organization what mistakes would you avoid to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you go back to when you decided to start the organization would you do it again?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advise do you have for people who want to start an organization and work with integration questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV: Interview Guide- Employees

This guide was used to interview the employees of ‘Sweden for Everyone’ during the second phase of data gathering. Since it was a semi-structured interview guide, follow-up questions were also asked based on the interviewees' responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frågor</th>
<th>Information att få från frågan/ följdfrågor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Idag ska vi pratade om din tid på SFE. Kan du börja med att berätta lite för mig om dig | - vad har du för utbildning?  
- arbetslivserfarenheter innan du började jobba här? |
| Vad gör du på SFE?                                                     | hade du några andra roller innan?                                                                          |
| Vad tycker du om grupparbetet i organisationen?                       | - jobbar mycket i grupp eller mer individ arbete?  
- vem jobbar du med mest nu?  
- om du behöver hjälp med nåt vem vänder du dig till?  
- vem eller vilka tycker du att har mest koll på vad som händer i organisationen och verksamheten? |
| Vad tycker du om organisationens ledarskap?                           | Fråga till dem som upplevde ledarskapet både under VD och grundarna:  
- I början leddes SFE av grundarna och i mars 2018 började X jobba som VD. Om du ska jämföra de två ledarskapen, vad tycker du är den största skillnaden?  
- Kan du ge några exempel?  
Följdfrågor till alla:  
- känner du att du blir hörd? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ni har nyligen börjat en diskussion om innovation. Varför tycker du att ni har diskussionen just nu?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frågor om Pandemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frågor om nya projekten under pandemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- tycker du att du som person är involverad i beslutsfattandet i organisationen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- generellt i organisationen, tycker du att teamet är involverad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- har du frihet i det som du gör?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hur känns det nu med pandemin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hur känns det att jobba hemifrån?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- vems ide var de?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hur utvecklade ni idéerna?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hur aktiv du är i dem två nya projekten?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- tycker du att ni kommer fortsätta med de två nya projekten även efter pandemin?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>