



# *University of* **HUDDERSFIELD**

## **University of Huddersfield Repository**

McElwee, Gerard, Smith, Rob and Somerville, Peter

Conceptualising Animation in Rural Communities: The Village SOS Case

### **Original Citation**

McElwee, Gerard, Smith, Rob and Somerville, Peter (2017) Conceptualising Animation in Rural Communities: The Village SOS Case. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. ISSN 0898-5626

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/33824/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

# Conceptualising animation in rural communities: the Village SOS case

Gerard McElwee<sup>a</sup>, Rob Smith<sup>b</sup> and Peter Somerville<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Huddersfield Business School, Huddersfield University, Huddersfield, UK; <sup>b</sup>Business School, University of West of Scotland, Paisley, UK; <sup>c</sup>School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK

## ABSTRACT

This paper introduces and discusses the concept of animatorship in relation to rural enterprise and development. At its simplest level, animatorship is the art of animating others to achieve their objectives. We develop and apply this concept to understanding community development and community enterprise, with a specific emphasis on rural communities. We present a descriptive, conceptual study of a new concept i.e. animation in the context of entrepreneurship. The fieldwork for this paper took the form of structured face-to-face interviews with community development workers in November-January 2015/2016. These workers actively stimulate, motivate and inspire others and orchestrate situations and people to bring about change through others, not merely doing things for them. They build environments and relationships in which people grow, directing and focusing energies to develop and empower people's emotional and social lives and relationships through patient, open listening and group conversation.

## ARTICLE HISTORY


Received 10 October 2016  
Accepted 1 November 2017

## KEYWORDS

Animation; animatorship;  
rural development; depleted  
communities; villages

## Introduction

When considering the related issues of rural enterprise, and rural development, it is common for researchers to focus primarily on the 'heroic-entrepreneur' as the key socio-economic driver (Ogbor 2000; Watson 2013; Williams and Nadin 2013). Seldom is consideration given to the everyday, often 'entrepreneurial actions' of other social actors, active in depleted rural communities in a wider social context (Watson 2013); or other forms of community entrepreneurship and enterprise (Johannisson 1990; Somerville and McElwee 2011) or other types of collective entrepreneurial actions. Entrepreneurs are important in rural communities but are not the only active participants in rural development. In referring to 'community enterprise' we go beyond the individualistic definition of Somerville and McElwee (2011) relating to a single or group of community enterprises to encompass enterprise as a 'collective' effort by individuals in communities to develop enterprise in its widest sense. It is also common to talk of 'community entrepreneurship' without identifying the roles played by the individuals themselves. This aperçus was the primary motivation for this study.

**CONTACT** Gerard McElwee  [g.mcelwee@hud.ac.uk](mailto:g.mcelwee@hud.ac.uk)

© 2017 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

We introduce and discuss the concept of animatorship (Annibal, Liddle, and McElwee 2013; Smith 2013) as practiced in a rural development context through the medium of entrepreneurship.<sup>1</sup> At its simplest level, this involves the animation of others to achieve their objectives, and those who exercise animatorship are called animators. The main aim is to demonstrate the potential of animatorship and practices of animation for catalysing rural and community entrepreneurship, that is, provoking (Berglund, Gaddefors, and Lindgren 2016) others to be entrepreneurial and sponsoring, channelling or promoting their entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a socially situated and influenced practice (McKeever, Anderson, and Jack 2014), strongly influenced by context (Korsgaard, Ferguson, and Gaddefors 2015b). Moreover, entrepreneurship has moral legitimacy (Kibler and Kautonen 2016). We conceptualize animatorship as a distinct process which operates by inspiring others to take entrepreneurial initiatives and action.

In this conceptual study, we present a new phenomenon/concept, namely 'animation' in the context of entrepreneurship, making a strong contribution to understanding how entrepreneurial activities create rural development, particularly in terms of understanding how this form of entrepreneurship is enabled by actors who are not necessarily themselves entrepreneurs, but are nevertheless important. Intuitively, it appeared necessary to distinguish animation from entrepreneurship in order to identify the role that animation can play in entrepreneurial processes, and because both animatorship as practice and animators as persons are relevant to our concerns. In this paper, we concentrate on the person perspective but acknowledge that practice is embedded in and integrated in the empirical results.

This study works at a dual level of being a descriptive multiple case study and a conceptual study (with conceptualizing being equated with theorizing). It establishes animation as a distinct and interesting phenomenon which allows us to highlight and explain an entrepreneurial activity not fully explained by the concepts of entrepreneurship and community entrepreneurship. The concept of animatorship therefore adds to the debate on community entrepreneurship and mentorship and how collectively these add to our understanding of community development. The context of the study is framed on the basis of empirical data gathered whilst engaged in research into the validity of the Village SOS Project, a UK-wide project that supports and helps rural community projects survive and thrive by providing specialist help akin to that provided by business advisors. The examples of animatorship emerged from this project, enable us to articulate and develop the concept of animatorship, whilst also contributing to the orchestration of a policy programme.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we introduce and analyse the concept of animatorship, and explain why this concept helps to increase understanding of community entrepreneurship and community development. Second, we review literature relating to animatorship and particularly to its effects on depleted communities. Third, adding context, we comment on animatorship in relation to the Village SOS [VSOS] scheme. Fourth, we explain our methodological approach and its limitations before presenting and discussing our results arising from illustrative cases of animatorship. We offer conclusions and recommendations for future practice and research.

## Reviewing the concept of animatorship

Animatorship is the art of animation: an act, process, or result of imparting life, interest, spirit, motion, or activity. Here, we define animation and differentiate it from related concepts.

Animation is the quality, or condition, of being alive, active, spirited, or vigorous (Smith 2013). Smith, in a study of rural animators in Scotland, (Budge, Irvine, and Smith 2008) noticed how they organised things and engaged people in them via processes of self-realisation, self-actualisation, belongingness, by providing stimulus, inspiration and emotional and physical support. Animation is related to the activities of informal educators, community workers and others (Smith 2009), most notably in developing countries (Mascarenhas 1991). Animation involves working intimately with people and groups to help them participate in and manage their communities (Smith 2013) as well as facilitating, moderating or motivating, making things happen by inspiring a quickening of action (Boud and Miller 1997). Animation involves orchestrating situations and people to bring about change through others' actions, for example, by building environments and relationships in which people grow, direct and focus energies. Animators develop and empower people's emotional and social lives and relationships through patient, open, listening and group conversation. The process involves animators and communities setting boundaries (to prevent confusion, chaos and wastage of community resources) and working together to remove impediments to change (Palmer 1998). The act of animation comprises qualities that encompass both personal and institutional change. Directly, it involves educating, stimulating and encouraging other people to be (more) active in their communities. Indirectly, it involves building, orchestrating and managing networks, relationships, situations and environments towards the same end. Consequently, animation can be understood as enabling, facilitating and stimulating the creation of value by others – individuals, groups and communities. Animatorship, as the art and practice of animation, is therefore a catalyst for creating value.

The concept is useful because current understandings of community and economic development do not distinguish clearly between the processes of that development (e.g. the activities of a variety of endogenous and exogenous entrepreneurs, governments, philanthropists, and voluntary organisations) and the practices that underlie and drive those processes and the practices of the animators. This is important because animatorship is not yet so socially situated in the public consciousness perhaps because either it may have been taken for granted, having been there all along but never recognized or voiced; or it is an emerging practice, which is still not part of the discourse.

### ***Animatorship as different from entrepreneurship***

Entrepreneurship has long been understood as involving *brokerage* (acting as a trusted intermediary) between spheres of influence to recombine resources (Barth 1963). Following Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig (2015a, 10) it can be argued that entrepreneurship is also a form of *bricolage*: 'the recombination of resources to create value' (see Alvarez and Busenitz 2001). In contrast, animatorship is not directly about the creation of value but about the facilitation, stimulation, orchestration, etc., of others to create value. An animator may well also be an entrepreneur, but the difference between the two is that entrepreneurship creates value directly while animatorship produces value only indirectly, through the medium of others, who act as entrepreneurs.

In the literature, however, animation and enterprise are often confused or conflated. Johannisson and Nilsson (1989), for example, use the term 'community entrepreneurs' to describe people who act as catalysts, helping others to pursue opportunities and create new ventures; insofar as they are not creating value themselves: however, for us these are

animators. Lindgren and Packendorff (2006, 230) describe community entrepreneurship as 'an eternal balancing act between deviation and belonging', where the entrepreneur is simultaneously inside and outside the community, following its rules but also breaking them, working with the community but also reconstructing it, changing themselves at the same time. Their discussion inspired us to further explore how entrepreneurial processes can be understood from the perspective of support as community entrepreneurship can involve animatorship as well. Identifying animatorship as a distinct concept therefore provides much-needed analytical clarity to research findings on entrepreneurship, particularly community entrepreneurship. In this sense, animatorial identity can shape the behaviour of entrepreneurs (Alsos, Clausen, and Hytti 2016).

Community is important here, as reflected in the concept of animatorship. See also Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig (2015a), who distinguish two types of entrepreneurship: 'activities that engage with their spatial location as a space for profit' (Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015a, 11) and activities that engage with the social life of the place to make it more valuable and meaningful for the local community (Korsgaard, Müller, and Tanvig 2015a, 17). The former clearly is entrepreneurship, and may indeed count as community entrepreneurship if it is oriented towards benefiting the community (Somerville and McElwee 2011), but it does not look like animatorship because it is about directly adding value (profit). The latter is a form of community entrepreneurship or enterprise, which could also involve animatorship but not necessarily. Again, therefore, the introduction of a concept of animatorship adds analytical clarity, by distinguishing between (community) activity that may give rise to entrepreneurship and what might be called entrepreneurship proper, which produces tangible benefits (in this case, for a community).

Further examples from the literature help clarify the nature of animatorship and its distinctness from (community) entrepreneurship. Berglund and Johansson's (2007) study of entrepreneurship in a region of decline and the Diversity in Entrepreneurship (DiE) project which was launched to help the region become more entrepreneurial and inclusive is of relevance. The logic of the study suggests that, although entrepreneurial initiatives are ever-present, the dominant enterprise discourse can suppress both the equality discourse the ability for particular groups in society to view themselves as entrepreneurs through a process of 'conscientization'. The latter is a type of learning focused on perceiving and exposing contradictions and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality (see Freire 1970). The theory emphasizes the potential in every individual to unleash entrepreneurial initiative among those who do not view them themselves as entrepreneurs. This may also be true of animators. Berglund, Gaddefors, and Lindgren (2016) provide a detailed example of a community gardening project in a depleted Swedish community. They show the importance of the processes (by which animatorship is positioned), as (1) bringing change yet following (and refining) tradition; (2) being an outsider who brings new ideas in some respects while affirming the familiar in others; (3) having vision while building an efficient organisation; animating some sections of the community while frustrating others; living in the present while prefiguring the future: 'when people were provoked, fascinated or inspired or in some way "touched", they changed position, which opened the possibility of appreciating what was already "there"; and (4) the tradition and the people' (Berglund, Gaddefors, and Lindgren 2016, 92). Then: once a place is re-appreciated, entrepreneurship follows in new ways that break with tradition but simultaneously build on the particular place, being re-embedded in place. In this case, animatorship comes first, as a re-appreciation of place,

and entrepreneurship follows as a process or set of processes of re-embedding in place. Transformation of place occurs through a combination of more or less continuous animation and collective action. As in previous examples, recognition of the role played by animatorship adds analytical clarity to our understanding of community development.

The next example takes up this point about the role of animatorship and place. McKeever, Jack, and Anderson (2015, 51) describe a kind of entrepreneurship that 'recreates, renews and reifies the identity of place'. This is an example of community entrepreneurship insofar as value appears to have been added to the community (as vocational employment achieved through apprenticeship), with enterprises and assets managed by community representatives. However, it is not an example of animatorship, because the latter tends to work *against* reification. The community in this case remains a 'black box' and does not appear to have been transformed. In the absence of animation, such communities are destined to remain inward-looking and undeveloped.<sup>2</sup> Once again, the concepts of animation and animatorship add analytical clarity and help to explain the limitations of community development in these two localities. Community entrepreneurs need to be embedded in the community but at least some of them also need to be well connected to sources of assistance beyond the community if they are to add lasting value to the community (Somerville and McElwee 2011).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, animators may need to be embedded in the community in order to animate community members effectively, while at least some of them may need to be well connected to outside support to achieve effective orchestration of community activities in networks that cut across community boundaries.

### ***Animatorship and community***

The concept of animatorship therefore appears to have traction as a set of processes or skills that are associated with community entrepreneurship but analytically distinct from it, and this distinction may be helpful in explaining how community development occurs. Animation seems possible only within and through community, because it signifies the spirit behind the mobilisation of collective community action. The main quality that animators have is community-spiritedness, and this is what drives them to do what they do. Community itself can be understood as 'being-in-common' (Agamben 2009) and, more specifically, as common attachments combined with common recognition of those attachments (Somerville 2016, 4). Far from tying people down, such attachments are integral to meaningful, long-term relationships. What animates these attachments is community spirit, which is perhaps best understood as the force that activates the set of practices that constitute community (Somerville 2016, 6). In short, community spirit animates a community. Without the relevant attachments (e.g. to place, project and one another), there can be no community, and without spirit, or animation, there can be no attachments. Spirituality therefore lies at the heart of animation processes; in this post-secular age, however, it does not have to be bound to or by religion, albeit in village settings often animators and community learning and development personnel may operate in or on church premises or in church halls. Many village community activists are networked and thus embedded via the church, being church elders or members.

Here the context is important because it shapes what becomes entrepreneurial; according to Gaddefors and Anderson (2017), context can determine what type of entrepreneurship

emerges. However, it is not the context in general that is important, but what is specifically going on in that context, as entrepreneurship connects to and thus creates a raft of changes.

This section has defined animation in a general sense and has described what animators do, e.g. facilitating, moderating, etc. However, there is need for a more focused and precise definition in relation to community development. It may be helpful here both to recap and to discuss the main concepts before moving on to discuss depleted communities and the role of animatorship in such communities.

In addition, animation implies a form of activism and activation and indeed animation can be thought of as a form of phronesis relating to the practical everyday side of community engagement (Flyvbjerg 2002; MacIntyre 1985).

### ***Animatorship and community activism***

The equation of animation with activation points to the relevance of other literatures for understanding this concept. For example, literature on community organising (DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge 2010; Somerville 2016, 49–54) suggests clear parallels with animatorship in its emphasis on mobilising people and communities to act for themselves to bring about change. However, whereas community organising works directly to build strong, grassroots organisations, animatorship operates by inspiring others to do so.<sup>4</sup> Engler and Engler (2016) distinguish between this traditional ‘structure-based’ organising and what they call ‘momentum-driven’ campaigning, which involves animating large numbers of people. Here again, in many very different contexts, a distinction is made between the organising itself and the spirit that animates a wider and deeper level of movement participation.

In a study of Stoke-on-Trent, England, Jupp (2012) demonstrated activism as a form of animation. Activists are motivated by a perceived sense of injustice, have a shared set of experiences, develop a collective identity, care for themselves and one another, and understand the collective action of their group as an extension of existing sociability practices (or an expanded ethics of care) across the striated spaces (Watt 2016) of capitalism (Jupp 2012, 3034–3040), mediating in community conflicts, negotiating or ‘battling’ with officialdom, demonstrating tenacity and perseverance, leading to ‘critical friendships’ with officials and community workers (Gilroy and Booth 1999), and connecting to other groups and projects. Such activism is neither about resistance nor about becoming co-opted to governmental projects. It is better understood as animatorship because it is about community benefit in a wider sense, based on a vision of what the community could be. This clearly resonates with Johnstone and Lionais (2004).

What appears to distinguish animators from entrepreneurs is that, while entrepreneurs create value, animators help others create value but do not necessarily do so themselves. The distinction may be difficult to make in real life as value can be created in many ways and on many levels. However, it is similar to the distinction between private entrepreneurs and institutional entrepreneurs in that the former create value and make a profit for themselves, while the latter create structural change, from which others may benefit.

We now turn to consider depleted communities and animatorship in such communities because it is in such communities that one encounters particularly rich examples of animation and animatorship.



## ***Depleted communities***

Our concern is particularly with so-called 'depleted communities' and with the role that animatorship can play in re-energizing those communities. Depleted communities are 'areas where the strength of capitalistic relationships has been diminished' as 'communities where the economy is in decline and the resources of the area, according to profit-seeking capital, are 'used up'; and as 'areas that have lost much of their economic rationale as space, while [as communities] retaining strong attachments and social relations of space' (Johnstone and Lionais 2004, 217–219). Johnstone and Lionais recognize that, although severely depleted, these communities are not entirely lost, because they retain community spirit, which can potentially animate their restoration.

Depletion results mainly from the uneven development of capitalism (Harvey 1985; Smith 1990; Terluin 2003), whereby the restless search for profit results in 'leading' and 'lagging' regions, which change according to the dictates of labour and commodity markets. Effects of depletion include depopulation (especially due to out-migration of young people – see Jones 1992; Stockdale 2006), loss of essential services (schools, shops, etc.), dilapidated environment and reduced sense of security (Buffel et al. 2014, 803; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418). Although place attachments continue, they may be weakened by experience of such depletion effects. Weakened place attachment is also associated with high turnover of residents (Blokland 2003; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 412, 420, 421; Sampson 1988), but much appears to depend on who is moving in or out and why, on how residents perceive these population changes and on the impact such changes make on residents' social networks and sense of community (Buffel et al. 2014, 817; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 417). Here research paints a complex picture of social change in depleted communities but overall points to a gradual weakening of community spirit in these communities (perhaps by a process of hysteresis), which obviously increases the difficulties for any restoration project. Community development and enterprise cannot hope to succeed until the lowered morale of the community is reversed, and that must involve practices of animatorship.

## ***Animatorship in depleted communities***

Johnstone and Lionais (2004) provide illuminating case studies of three depleted communities where animators created innovative organisational structures to harness community resources, set within a supportive, solidaristic context.<sup>5</sup> Animatorship here starts with a vision of a restored, revitalised or depleted community (notably at regional or national level), with an emphasis on employment, housing, amenities and general prosperity. This vision is described and communicated to others in the area, in ways that attempt to fit with the attachments and relationship networks within the community. In the subsequent negotiation process, the animator identifies people who share this vision (some from outside the community) and can play key roles in realising it. This creates a team, which identifies resources to realise the vision (Johnstone and Lionais 2004, 225).

These animators also act as entrepreneurs (Johnstone and Lionais call them 'community business entrepreneurs'), specifically in: 'identifying and gaining access to new sources of capital; tapping into the significant value-added contributions of volunteers; and modifying the business structure to ensure pursuit of community benefit over personal gain' (Johnstone and Lionais 2004, 229). They are concerned with much more than business, however, namely



the identity and spirit of the community as a whole – ‘business’ is merely a means to that end both in social and political terms. These studies are certainly helpful and have utility; however, they fail to capture the delicate difference between actual entrepreneurial activities (new combinations of resources) and animation. Our research addresses this issue.

Lack of recognition of the importance of animatorship helps to explain the failure of approaches to community development such as the EU ‘LEADER’ rural development programme (Ray 2000; see also Shortall 2004, 2008) and the vulnerability of community resources to commercial exploitation (Mitchell 1998). Our argument here is that the tendency of policy to ignore or by-pass potential animators within a community is at least partially responsible for such failure. This is not to say, however, that communities do not need help from outside – particularly, depleted communities, which are least able to develop themselves (Barke and Newton 1997). Somerville (2016), for example, argues that much of the literature on community development exaggerates the capacity for poorer communities to advance without significant outside assistance, and points out that successful initiatives tend to have very specific and practical objectives related to community enterprise, community learning and community health and social care.

## Methodology

This research explores how animatorship adds value to communities by detailing the views and observations of actors concerned with community development, in distinctive rural locations throughout Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, about what animatorship means to them and to the communities within which they operate. Whilst researching the VSOS project we realised that there were actors who were important for entrepreneurial processes to be initiated/proceed. This research involved face-to-face qualitative open-ended interviews to develop descriptive multiple case studies (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2004) using a qualitative, evidence-based practice approach (Given 2006). This approach enabled us to minimise the risk of prejudging the nature and quality of animatorship and to analyse data within and across cases to achieve replication logic to produce theoretical observations that are novel, testable, and empirically valid (Eisenhardt 1989).

Prior to elaborating on the methodology, data collection and analysis it is helpful to discuss the VSOS programme which formed the backdrop of our study as all the respondents were engaged in such active projects. The VSOS programme advocates animation as a community development process. They consider it a process of assisting a depleted community to crystallise its ideas and move those ideas on to form a clear deliverable plan for implementation and consequently accelerating the processes of community development (VSOS 2015).<sup>6</sup> This is a process of animatorship, embedded in the following themes identified in VSOS work streams. VSOS advocate a 6-stage process based on:

- *Structured facilitation* – whereby the animator delivers a facilitated and structured process for communities to take their ideas to the planning stage. Animators work with individuals and communities to achieve results but do not do the work themselves as entrepreneurs and consultants would.
- *Flexibility* – Animators are very flexible in their approach to the application of their advice and expertise.

- *Partnership and Networks* – Animators work in and deliver results via genuine partnerships and networking locally. They adapt to and adopt local rural network and infrastructure bodies such as community councils, and they work to strengthen partnerships and networks.
- *Cross-sectoral partnership* – the role of the animator generally is to complement and strengthen existing skills and initiatives, providing a backbone of expertise imbued with common sense and practical advice, which bolsters the additional delivery capacity.
- *Low cost delivery* – the approach enables low cost delivery because much of the work is unpaid, albeit animators may receive a wage for a separate associated job.
- *Expertise* – Animators can be subject-specific experts (specialists) but are more likely to be generalists with a comprehensive and extensive network of rural community expertise and a knowledge base to draw on. The animator develops a communication network, which adds a further reservoir of valuable independent expertise.

The stakeholders participating in the study were identified through discussions with a UK charity – Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). We articulated to ACRE that we were specifically interested in researching the phenomenon of animatorship and agreement was reached. The aim of these discussions was to identify and interview the kinds of actors who could be described as typical animators – that is, those who are providing the energy to inspire localised change, often with limited or no formal management skill or training. We arranged interviews with ten respondents working with VSOS projects. The interviewees consisted of Village Mentors appointed by ACRE and representatives of rural community councils.<sup>7</sup> We interviewed them *in situ* in their respective villages between November 2015 and January 2016.

The questions were sent to the respondents by the ACRE administrator in advance of the interviews to provide them with an opportunity to think through the questions. In the introductory letter, we introduced the concept of animatorship. The authors did not previously know the respondents. We considered that including this acknowledgement of our focus on animatorship was necessary because of the conceptual confusion and multiple terminologies in play. We wanted our respondents to be able to articulate their work in terms of animatorship if the term resonated with their understanding of their everyday work practices.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of each interview, we outlined what we considered an animator to be (reinforcing what had been said in the email to them) and began each interview by asking the respondents if they viewed themselves as animators.

The following questions drove the interviews:

- What are the key skills of an animator?
- What do they do and how do they do it?
- How do they network/learn/share with animators in other communities? How might this help us to conceptualise and describe knowledge transfer in the context of community-to-community learning?

The questions were developed prior to the interviews to elicit information relating to their everyday activities. We made a conscious choice not to link the RQs to theory, but to practice. We therefore draw on empirical research on animation, and use this to describe animation in relation to rural entrepreneurship.

## Data collection and analysis

In total, we interviewed ten respondents using audio recording which we then transcribed. To conduct a balanced and objective analysis, we adopted a team based, analytic approach. Two of the authors read the transcripts and listened to the recordings in their entirety before conducting separate analysis and compiling separate lists of comments and observations. They then compared and contrasted these observations to reach a consensus via a constant comparative and iterative approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Intuitive, qualitative open coding was applied by breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data to draw out and develop emergent themes. In this manner, the data was interpreted using qualitative data techniques (Miles and Huberman 1994). These themes were written up on post-it-notes and grouped according to their potential fit to the themes and topics. Five of the ten interviews were then compiled as cases. We concentrated on two levels of analysis: 'animators' at a personological level and 'animatorship' at a processual level. To achieve another level the third author conducted a review of the joint analysis for logic, clarity and objectivity. This process was repeated until consensus was reached and the observations and findings were summarized in tables.

## Results

### The case studies

In Table 1 we present five illustrative case studies: an animator, a consultant facilitator, a community worker, a community enterprise worker and community radio volunteer.

We use the empirical material to illustrate and demonstrate animating as/in practice. The cases elaborate our concept of animatorship and the empirical material acts as simple, short stories to question established assumptions and relations (as per Gaddefors and Anderson 2017) relating to entrepreneurship and animatorship.

Table 2 provides an analysis of the main emergent themes from the interviews.

In analysing the empirical data it became apparent that much of the material coalesced around the categories and issues of (1) background and motivation and (2) activities and outcomes. We use these as organizing themes.

### Background and motivation

Initial analysis of the five cases reveals the following. Different types of animator emerged, according to whether their work was paid (animation as a formal part of their job) or voluntary (informal), and whether animation related to a specific community issue or to community development more generally. Paid animators included those who worked for the county council and had a specific role, for example in transport, libraries, and older people, or were self-employed consultants but also charity workers desirous of mobilising people around a particular issue. Volunteers tended to be *single issues people* whose activity related to a single campaign or issue,<sup>9</sup> or *serial animators*, involved in a wide range of issues.<sup>10</sup> Cases 1–4 were paid and case 5 unpaid. Each case is different but one important distinction seems to be between animatorship *within* a community (case study 1) and animatorship *across* communities (case studies 2–5). Interestingly, the only animator (a volunteer) to offer clear evidence of impact was case 5, while the paid workers were less forthcoming (we noted some conceptual vagueness). Many respondents' comments were vague in terms of what value was

**Table 1.** The cases and initial analysis.

The Cases – background and motivation		Actions, activities and outcomes	Relevance
<p>This experienced CLD Consultant lives in the village where she works, and has children of school age. She acknowledges the close-knit nature of the community. She works hard to integrate into community and village life despite being considered an outsider. She joined the School Board and Community Association and engages with people of all ages and walks of life. She patronizes local shops and pubs. Membership of local networking clubs and classes helps her understand the Village history and heritage. She engages in social settings enthusiastically, forming bonds with groups and looking for opportunities to network later. Social settings break down barriers. She achieves more through a chat at the bingo, the community council or at a youth group. She is an <i>active listener</i> and when ignored/rebuffed she persists until she breaks down barriers. Failure can lead to support evaporating but success leads to further community engagement. A small kindness or offer of help ensures trust and result in cooperation. Her qualities include <i>persistence, drive</i> and an ability to <i>multitask</i> and <i>see the bigger picture</i>. She is <i>flexible</i> and can act as sole animator, or work with other key people with power and standing in the community</p>		<p>Whilst university educated, she avoids using theories and concepts of community enterprise or education in her community work. She avoids formal events and works within existing village/community networks. She shuns writing papers, consulting or giving unwanted advice, but utilises emails, texts, Facebook, WhatsApp and face-to-face conversations. She achieves multiple outputs from the same work stream, working with and through people in the community helping them achieve their outcomes or learn how to do a particular task or new life skill. She builds group confidence and courts community gatekeepers including them in her work. She uses social media to good effect and appreciates the power of <i>sociality</i> in building trust more quickly and effectively than reliance on professionalism and knowledge bases. She manages community relationships instead of delivering programmes or campaigns. Working on personal <i>relationships</i> with other animators is an important but difficult, slow process, as these are usually strong-willed and well-established in village hierarchies. Such individuals influence success or failure, delivering on promises. She watched and learned from them, developing a network of <i>volunteers</i> to help her achieve. Talking to people and encouraging them to support ideas and events must occur naturally as talking in business terms, of networking destroys group cohesion causing locals to withdraw. <i>Informal conversations</i> over cups of tea are productive in gaining access to gatekeepers, animators, their friends and relatives and ensure they act willingly, without complaint</p>	<p>She only realised that she was an animator after receiving our email. Internet search persuaded her that she was operating as an animator. She fully buys into the theory and practice recognising its power as a practical enterprise based methodology. She is engaged in community entrepreneurship by supporting villagers active in their communities. She uses bricolage and brokerage in her work. Her motivation is outcome based but she also derives a sense of personal worth from her successes. Her formal status is her job title but informally she gets things done in the village</p>

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued).

The Cases – background and motivation		Actions, activities and outcomes	Relevance
<p>This respondent views herself as a facilitative consultant and mentor who manages other mentors to achieving her aims and objectives via a consultancy-based delivery model. Her role is to <i>empower</i> individuals and communities through active listening and <i>engagement</i>, rather than presenting ideas and recommendations. She strives to be involved in the life of her communities and their development despite not actually living there. Her skills include <i>approachability</i>, <i>active listening</i> and <i>reliability</i> coupled with <i>close communication skills</i>. They must be <i>passionate</i> about their subject matter, have a <i>questioning</i> and <i>inquisitive mind</i> and hold the interest of clients. There is no one size fits all model for dealing with villages and communities</p>		<p>She works with and through <i>community buy-in</i> to make informed trade-offs based on client-driven information. She manages others (mentors and volunteers). She espouses two distinctive strategies for delivering community-based enterprise. (1) Formal through public consultation and formal papers; and (2) Informal via <i>face-to-face</i> meetings and chats. When operating at a management level, as distinct from fieldwork, she utilises traditional modes of communication e.g. telephone, letters and formal papers. She cannot rely on Wi-Fi and Internet and other social media in rural areas so she achieves her objectives by regular <i>chats</i> and follow-up <i>telephone calls</i>, acting as an informed friend, mentor and independent arbiter of ideas and confidence builder. She reviews business plans, listens to ideas and suggests sources of funding, operating at a practical level to pass on experience and good practice rather than deliver a theory-based knowledge base. She <i>adapts</i> working practices to fit the target group – e.g. internet and social media versus traditional methods of communicating. She utilises <i>sympathy</i> and <i>empathy</i> to facilitate her expert CLD status. She utilises paid mentors and <i>volunteers</i> to engage in <i>face-to-face</i> meetings with clients. She avoids sounding theoretical as this damages her status with clients and villagers. She dare not talk of animatorship to peers in the village but <i>facilitates</i> learning by bringing individuals and groups together via <i>shared experiences</i></p>	<p>She engages in bricolage and appears to be motivated by her mentorial and management roles and her formal status as network coordinator. She relies heavily on traditional formal structures, communication mechanisms and business tools</p>



This community worker ensures that people do not work in isolation but take the community with them. She appreciates that some people prefer to do everything but often it is not the people who are 'in power' (e.g. members of the parish council) who are best placed to *mobilise* the community. In her experience, villagers often expect the parish council to take the initiative but often it is a management committee dealing with an unrelated issue that brings together people with new ideas and with skills from other experiences. She is careful to move at a pace where she carries people with her

She appreciates the concept of animator and defined it as somebody possessing an individual *vision, energy and knowledge* to address problems. She understands the need for facilitation. She described it as a sort of *maturity* to draw other people into the problem to build effective relationships. Good animators have very good *communication skills, enthusiasm, encouragement*, and ability to illustrate potential options, *negotiate*, and include people. Animators bring people together based on *personal relationships* and not merely a strategic plan. They have *vision and patience* and are respected. She identified village hall networks as being vitally important for rural communities as people involved with them often came together in crisis. In terms of knowledge transfer, learning might often be deferred and used at a later date. Animatorial activity is often blind and based on individual relationships until an effective network is in place. Animators recognize and facilitate people like themselves, with similar problems and cross-cutting solutions. Self-preservation is a common factor, as is looking after each other in order to solve problems arising from remoteness

This respondent is a social enterprise advisor in a rural cooperative 'Enterprise Centre' in a high unemployment area where the main industry is agriculture, with few jobs for young people. She provides training and support to create jobs and stimulate enterprise. The Centre combines separate businesses, with surpluses reinvested in the community. Her insulation initiatives and encouraging after School Clubs. She is part of a wider organization with 100–120 employees. Her main project is helping to redevelop a library earmarked for closure. Her job crosses over into community work, setting up social groups, businesses and social enterprises. The recession acted as a motivator to counter a lack of 'joined up thinking' at governmental level, deterring enterprise development

Her priority is to work with anyone in the community interested in setting something up. She avoids a 'one size fits all' approach and treats everyone as individuals. People with whom she had worked successfully are characterized as possessing a 'keen *commitment* to their community and a particular personality'. She considers 'country folk' enterprising people who make things happen despite poor odds. She *energizes* people to do something with few resources and no public funding. She believes that without community animation new ventures may not happen and avoids unnecessary replication of under-utilized and expensive facilities. She engages in knowledge transfer via *word-of-mouth* and not through group training courses acting as coach, mentor and critical friend. *Sharing* information, enthusiasm and resources was essential but happened in an organic not formalized manner. It must be made to happen when and where necessary

This respondent is embedded in the community and uses her social capital and contacts to animate change. She does not view herself as an entrepreneur or an animator but is nevertheless engaged in community entrepreneurship. She listed different types of animators: (1) Parish councillors, usually well-known local personalities who draw people to themselves and nurture personal relationships. Their professional background helps but passion for improvement is essential. Village initiatives often start from an economic development issue but those involved were usually single issue people who want to make a difference; (2) Willing volunteers with a low level of involvement; (3) Natural network facilitators with semiformal positions such as counsellor or broker, with networks who facilitate and share resources; and (4) Brokers with a formal role in local involvement with two types of knowledge

She engages in animatorship on an informal basis in conjunction with her formal job title. Like respondent 1 she utilizes informal methods of communication and focuses more on coaching and mentoring

(Continued)



**Table 1.** (Continued).

The Cases – background and motivation		Actions, activities and outcomes	Relevance
<p>This community radio volunteer has a full-time job but is <i>passionately</i> committed to part-time social enterprise. Her town suffers from high unemployment and social deprivation. As a hobby and to give back to the community, she became treasurer of a local volunteer radio station, with 78 <i>volunteers</i>, nine of them under 20. One youth opportunity in the town, created by another animator, is a thriving theatre, popular with young people. The radio station acts as broker to support others to develop their ideas. It is a powerful vehicle for identifying good practice in certain communities and villages surrounding the town. The radio station and its social activities allow volunteers and clients to share with and learn from others. She also brokers photography classes and an Arts Centre as well as work to counter cyber-bullying. She sees potential in the volunteers and works to unleash their <i>positive energy</i>. Her <i>motivation</i> stemmed from appreciation that the community radio was competing against other grant funded bodies, newspapers and free newspapers. She saw the station as the hub of the community. She recognised that she had to work with others on an ad hoc basis. Most worked within sports – particularly football. The volunteer run girls' football club with 270 members</p>		<p>She is an animator in that she made things happen around her. She enjoyed developing the volunteers and ensuring that their eclectic mix of skills (from technically proficient to novice) was directed to the business of running the radio station. Animating other volunteers to provide community services is an essential part of her vision for change. To achieve this, she focused on young people. Her underpinning philosophy was to improve the health of the community and keep people away from crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour. <i>Sharing</i> is a key part of being an animator. Because of her high community profile people approach her with ideas, and she then encouraged others to make these ideas a reality. She abhors formal meetings that become 'talking shops' and avoided them as a waste-of-her-time. Her key to achieving success is identifying common causes to be owned by the community and not foisted upon them</p>	<p>This respondent clearly uses and understands social animatorship and animation. She uses bricolage and brokerage on a daily basis and appreciates the power of the informal to achieve results</p>

**Table 2.** Emergent themes from the interviews with the respondents.

Key skills of the animator?	Main themes ↓	Organizing themes from the quotes →	
			Congruence to animatorship.
How do they network /learn/share with animators in other communities?		Passion for change	These mostly personal traits are either action or communication based or are behavioural strategies or practices. A key theme is bricolage. Amongst the important processes identified from the empirics are active processes e.g. – capacity building, engagement, enabling, empowerment, facilitation, inspiring, moderating, mobilisation, negotiating, orchestrating, participation, and stimulating action
		Vision	
		Risk-taking	
		Tenacity	
		Personal Skills	
		Motivation	
		Knowledge/Experience	
		Communication./Persuasion	
		Negotiation	
		Strategies and commitment and mobilising resources	
		Bricolage	We see a shift from the personal to collective practices and to situational and external factors. Key themes and practices are informality, sociality and brokerage. To achieve change necessitates working together to remove impediments and boundaries preventing change. Successful animation results in 'catalytic' change; increased social and political capital spanning the personal, social and communal; new combinations of social value; and added value from an entrepreneurial perspective
		Informality	
		Uncertainty and experience deficits	
		Informal sharing across time and space to reduce waste and replication	
		Knowledge transfer, sharing and success	
		Facilitation and change processes	
		Appropriate skills and experiences	
		The role of management and committees	
		Movement and pace to match village rhythms and engender buy-in	
		Sociality, relationships and networking	
		Networking and the importance of place(s)	
		Knowledge transfer and informal learning	
		Networking and knowledge brokerage	

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Main themes ↓	Organizing themes from the quotes →	Congruence to animatorship.
How might this help us to conceptualise and describe knowledge transfer	<p>Common causes and consensus</p> <p>Informal and formal dichotomies. Event driven nature of village enterprise</p> <p>Effective sharing and organic working practices</p> <p>Destructive animation, agency, skills, meetings and mediation. This refers to animators who are too prescriptive in their approach</p> <p>The Village Hall: Village halls, grants and new opportunities to host community events</p> <p>Individual agency and autonomy combined with collective community knowledge</p> <p>The role of church and religion as a community resource</p> <p>Brokerage, mobilisation, community politics and a multiplicity of approaches</p>	<p>Here we encounter group dynamics as conceptual interfaces and dichotomies and importantly the role of events and places where bricolage, brokerage and individual and group mobilization or politicking can occur. Animation works by scaling up individual traits and characteristics and transforming them into collective traits and characteristics for the benefit of the community and the individuals</p>

actually added to communities as a result of their efforts, and what resources they were able to mobilise. However, this is probably no different from what every other interview-based study confronts in terms of validity and clarity of data material. The vagueness could, at least in part, be due to the animators' position as inspiring others to add value rather than adding value themselves – that is, as animators rather than entrepreneurs. It could also result from their unfamiliarity with the conceptual underpinning of animatorship. We are uncertain what to conclude from this but it seems disappointing that paid workers are not very clear about what they have achieved in their work, apparently preferring to focus on inputs, activity and processes rather than on outputs and outcomes (case 3 is unclear about her input).

Our analysis of the interviews suggests that four types of animator can be identified, as in Table 3 below (a 2 × 2 typological matrix). An animator could fit into more than one of the types because of the multiple vs single issue and public vs non-profit sector dimensions in the matrix.<sup>11</sup>

It is of note that of our five featured respondents all were type 'A' serial animators and none were type 'B' single-issue animators. Animators 1 and 4 are examples of type 'C' Agency animators and 2 and 3 are examples of type 'D' public sector animators. Animator 5 is an atypical volunteer. Moreover, many animators hold multiple positions of power within the community and perform leadership roles in the Church, Community Centre, Community Council and youth groups. This level of knowledge would be useful to funders to determine the potential success of projects ranging from single issue to serial with previous experience of animation being rewarded.

In making sense of this wide diversity of responses, we make the following observations. First, the motivation of animators seemed to derive from a number of specific sources, such as their personal (psycho-social) characteristics, their environment and their work-based experience. This is probably related to the respondents being a varied sample (including a parish councillor, a management consultant and a research worker). Most respondents considered themselves consultants, mentors or community activists, and were initially unfamiliar with the term 'animator', but we suggest that is what they are because they animate others to achieve community regeneration. All are concerned with creating social value, and saw this in terms of specific practices of *bricolage* (orchestrating a variety of available resources, especially relational resources, in order to solve new problems – Lévi-Strauss 1962) and *brokerage* (e.g. facilitating access to funding opportunities to support bricolage). Those identified as animators were usually well-known, well-connected and well-respected local personalities, who drew people to them and exuded passion for and commitment to their communities to bring about economic or social change. Some active animators were retired entrepreneurs or business people with positions within the community council and other local groups.

### **Activities and outcomes**

It can take months or even years to move from idea to realisation. In this context, traditional enterprise advice and delivery styles are unlikely to be as successful as animatorship, because advisors and consultants cannot spend the quality time required. One respondent articulated (in relation to the animators they worked with) that 'Their skills sets are very much like those of an entrepreneur. I think they have strategies, commitment and are able to mobilise resources'. Another remarked: 'Although they do not use the term, they understand and intuitively practice bricolage, making something from often very little'. Another respondent

**Table 3.** A 2 × 2 grid of types of animators.

<p><i>Type A: Serial animators.</i> These work informally and are likely to be well respected in their community – for example, an elected politician or a retired entrepreneur. They get involved in multiple issues, and are usually well networked, with high levels of self-efficacy. They are more likely to succeed, knowing from experience what will work or not</p> <p><i>Type C: Agency animators.</i> These work for government agencies with their community role being a formal part of their job. The role of broker, for example, involves two types of knowledge: (1) of technical issues such as rates, licences and how to deal with councils and planning authorities; (2) of how to provide access to sharing of resources both informally and sometimes formally. Many type C animators have a Council and/or Community Education background imbuing them with a specific <i>modus operandi</i>. Logic dictates that they may be multiple or serial animators</p>	<p><i>Type B: Single issue animators.</i> These work informally to resolve an existing issue. They are likely to have networks around that issue and may be frustrated at a lack of political resolution. Particular examples are often associated with a long-term ambition such as sport or generating interest for an event, which might be repeated. They are less likely to succeed, because they tend to be less experienced change agents</p> <p><i>Type D: Public sector animators.</i> These individuals work for NGOs and charities and may also work on single or multiple issues but often the direction of their work is dictated by meeting a funding target or delivering on an outcome. They are often <i>in situ</i> across many initiatives and build up extensive local networks. The rationale for distinguishing between types C and D is that not all type D animators or agents have a Council or Community Education background</p>
--	---

argued that 'The key thing is to identify common causes which will be owned by the community of people interested and not foisted upon them'.

Respondents emphasised the importance of time and an ability to organise, prioritise and control their time. Many animators were older people with the time to guide others, suggesting that older people are a vital community resource. One respondent (an experienced consultant) remarked that animators who were prepared to work with a community and their ideas, irrespective of their own personal preferences, were often versatile enough to manage community expectations and work towards a community resolution. In her experience, single issue animators often failed to communicate and operationalise their ideas within the community and so seldom succeeded, being too focused on the issue itself and not enough on the wider means and community processes by which that issue could be resolved.

Community learning took place largely in an informal way, through word-of-mouth and personal relationships, but also formally, through management committees<sup>12</sup> and paid brokerage. Village hall networks were particularly highlighted here. Clearly, there is scope for strengthening such peer support networks both within and across communities. Churches were also identified as an under-used resource for community learning and rural community development more generally. We appreciate that learning is an integral part of the emerging concept of animatorship.

We argue that animatorship succeeds through practices of bricolage and brokerage. One respondent narrated: *In a brokerage role, animators can only point out what has worked well in their own communities. What is clear is that there is no one size fits all. In certain communities, political considerations will supersede the need for change or will block good ideas. A good animator is able to mobilize certain resources in order to minimize negativity.* Animatorship involves working with existing animators, mentoring new animators and entrepreneurs and improving access to appropriate support for community development generally. This includes traditional management practices, such as in managing volunteers, but it is not the usual kind of management insofar as these relationships include their own relations with community members (both individually and collectively) and the relations between the community as a whole and the world outside the community; moreover, the management task itself is a complex combination of bricolage and brokerage. Nevertheless, one must take cognisance of the dynamics of individual communities and the strength of ties within such communities in determining success. Some communities may appear to do everything wrong (theoretically) according to established belief, but still succeed because of appropriate community infrastructure.

The stories collectively highlight the extraordinary effort involved in exercising animatorship, especially for outsiders. What the respondents say they do, generally fits with our concept of animatorship, and adds further nuances, for example:

- In relation to the management of animatorship processes;
- The importance of informality;
- The seamlessness of the move from bricolage to brokerage;
- Reliance on gut instincts;
- The depth of responsiveness and commitment to community and community service; the relevance of women-centred organising (Stall and Stoecker 1998);
- And the sheer force of community spirit.



These are powerful factors and it is no surprise that the examples of animatorship narrated above have idiosyncratic elements and contexts to them, making it difficult to compare one example of animatorship with another. Animatorship is perhaps best understood as a social process that spurs entrepreneurial processes to ignite/mature particular entrepreneurial practices.

It is of note that the respondents were all female. This was not the result of a purposeful, gendered research decision but merely an artefact of the research design and the names supplied to us.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, we argue that, in contrast to the dominant/conventional narrative of entrepreneurship as that of the man, the myth, the legend (Ogbor 2000), our concept of animation points to an understanding of entrepreneurship as a collective endeavour, giving voice to those who stand by, supporting, cheering, etc., but who are usually not included in the conventional tale of entrepreneurship. So, animation gives voice to the entrepreneurial 'ante' narrative (Boje 2011). In terms of a person the woman has traditionally been (de)constructed as an 'other' to the self-made entrepreneurial man. She has been separated from the entrepreneur and disconnected from the practices of entrepreneurship. We not only add to an understanding of entrepreneurial processes in community development, but also to how traditional understandings of entrepreneurship may hinder entrepreneurial processes from taking place if and when those processes are understood as individualistic rather than as collective action (Berglund, Johannisson, and Schwartz 2012; Bjerke and Karlsson 2013). Thus the 'ante' narrative angle adds to the nuances of animation whilst adding to the critique of traditional management/entrepreneurship discourse by considering the social inscription of enterprise. It may not be a coincidence that the animators we met were women, because they perform traditional women's roles. Moreover, the background setting of the study is in community learning and development work and circles where anecdotally a high number of CLD workers are women, which may also account for the skewed sample. Moreover, the actions of the animators we encountered remind us of the traditional supportive role of women (*animus versus anima* – Jung 1983) and how gender affects behaviour and relationships in everyday society.

Animation can be differentiated from related concepts but particularly from community entrepreneurship. We have demonstrated clearly that community entrepreneurship as currently articulated and theorised is inadequate or imprecise in terms of describing the phenomenon of animation. The above analysis confirms this because community entrepreneurship cannot explain all examples of entrepreneurial behaviour in a community context. Entrepreneurial animation emphasizes both entrepreneurship and animatorship, as being something good, or virtuous. We argue that in practicing animatorship our respondents were engaging in a type of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom relating to the practical everyday side of community engagement (Flyvbjerg 2002; MacIntyre 1985). Thus, entrepreneurial animation requires experience and virtuosity and mirrors the processes of conscientization (Berglund and Johansson 2007). To return to the literature and the discussion of animatorship possibly having contradictory impact, repleting the community in some ways while depleting it in others (Johnstone and Lionais 2004), we argue that the notion of *phronesis* strengthens animatorship as an analytical concept because it deals with practice and the practical and avoids interrogating or understanding other higher level theories such as practice theory.

We recognise that we have only considered the respondents as being facilitators or animators and not from other salient and relevant perspectives such as them being ordinary

or atypical villagers, or as incomers, or by their upbringing, or occupational or personal skill sets. Our questions did not elicit such information. Whilst the respondents were all obviously committed and passionate about their communities, there was a less positive side to being involved in village life which is not always as idyllic as it is portrayed.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, these results confirm explicit theoretical distinctions between animators and entrepreneurs that are novel, testable, and empirically valid, having logical coherence because they are convincingly grounded in the evidence (Eisenhardt 1989).

## Conclusion

The empirical results confirm the usefulness and utility of the concept and practice of animatorship. We have argued that there is a lack of explicit consideration, in both the literature and in policy terms, of the notion of animatorship and how it contributes to community enterprise and development. We conclude that our research illustrates how animators inspire and nudge others to be entrepreneurial and that is our main contribution. We also add to our understanding of entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon. A major strength of this work is that it identifies a form of activity that is important for entrepreneurship and which we have observed ourselves on many occasions in the village setting, yet has not been captured sufficiently well in existing studies.<sup>15</sup> This study therefore describes a new concept, which can explain something hitherto overlooked. This study also fulfils an identified need to learn more about how entrepreneurship and context interact (Gaddefors and Anderson 2017).

From the empirical evidence and analysis of their stories we argue that the respondents were all skilled and skilful facilitators but, despite theorising animatorship as a useful explanatory tool, there remains much conceptual confusion that we have yet to uncover in the concept.<sup>16</sup> Animators depend upon and energise existing networks, infrastructure and expertise. They do 'manage' in a sense but their actions are implicitly a critique of traditional management and entrepreneurship in that they exist to serve the community rather than impose a vision on the community or extract value from the community. The practices of animation we have uncovered have considerable potential for showing the different ways in which entrepreneurship is mobilised. Informal communication (e.g. face-to-face and social media interactions, Apps and blogs) is patently key to successful animatorship – animators seldom use formalised learning or online materials. Within village settings, animators assist in: building skills and capacities; inspiring communities to address gaps in services; ensuring communities have access to the right support; establishing community or social enterprises to support service delivery; improving incomes; and enabling support agencies and funders to gain an improved understanding of the needs of rural communities. We acknowledge that evidence to prove much of this *aperçus* is limited in the study and requires further research. The claims made by the animators require further research to support them.

The interviews confirm the importance of animatorship and begin to answer our questions about how animators manage to move communities from ideas to a clear plan. Animators work with purpose and their work has to be effectively signed off democratically by village 'buy-in'. More consideration is required of the individual projects and delivery models and also the style of animatorship. Since many funded projects overlap with other service providers in the community, there is also a need to map local enterprise provision to avoid duplication, and animators appear to do this naturally. Animators need to be

particularly sensitive with regard to when and where they introduce new ideas because animatorship is all about space, timing and context. These have been discussed in the literature on entrepreneurship but not with an animation focus. We theorise that, whilst entrepreneurship helps create local development in rural areas, experience tells us that simply promoting entrepreneurship is not enough. Moreover, the concept of community entrepreneurship is often confusing as, if not used carefully, it conflates entrepreneurship with other social processes including animatorship: confusing the creation of value for oneself with the creation of value for others. Consequently, introducing the concept of animatorship helps us clarify and expand our understanding of issues of entrepreneurship and rural development.

- The relationship of animatorship to entrepreneurship and related concepts is worthy of further study. We acknowledge several limitations to the study. Our small sample size, which challenges the external validity of our findings but does not limit the practical value of the research.
- The theory of animation remains relatively undeveloped and there is a need for further theorisation regarding the mechanisms through which animation enables entrepreneurship-driven rural development.
- Regional and cultural variations require further exploration. This will be addressed in subsequent research. We acknowledge that the limited geographical scope may have impacted on the issue of external validity.

Finally, we are convinced of the theoretical and practical utility of animatorship, in helping to make sense of village-based and community enterprise, as well as enterprise development. However, the power of this study lies not so much in the importance, or impact, of animatorship per se, but in what it aims to achieve, what it involves, and how it does this. Animatorship aims to animate others to achieve communally agreed objectives, whilst developing and empowering the communities themselves via animating members of the community who choose to engage in the processes. Invariably this involves working together to remove impediments and boundaries which hitherto prevented necessary change. Successful animation results in: 'catalytic' change; increased social and political capital spanning the personal, social and communal; new combinations of social value; and added value from an entrepreneurial perspective. The transformation from aims to achieved objectives is brought about by marshalling active processes (in addition to the more traditional forms of brokerage, bricolage, mentoring and management) such as capacity building, engagement, enabling, empowerment, facilitation, inspiring, moderating, mobilisation, negotiating, orchestrating, participation, and stimulating, in the furtherance of community interest. This increased processual understanding justifies the study of the phenomenon. We have established animatorship as a new and interesting concept which allows us to highlight and explain certain forms of entrepreneurship and community development.

## Notes

1. In the Oxford Dictionary, there is no definition listed for the term 'animatorship' and the correct word as listed is 'animateurship' after the French definition. An animateur is defined as 'a person who enlivens or encourages something, especially a promoter of artistic projects'. In Smith (2013) and Annibal, Liddle, and McElwee (2013) the term 'animateurship' was used to distinguish and differentiate this context as used in an entrepreneurial setting. However, for the purposes

of inter-disciplinary clarity, and because the term *animateurship* may not be understood by all readers, we will refer only to 'animatorship' hereafter. Likewise, in the Oxford dictionary, the cognate terms 'animator' and 'animation' are listed in relation to their usage by cartoonists.

2. Given the context of their research (two depleted communities in north-west Ireland), this reification of place may reflect a sectarian mentality, but we do not know because the paper does not indicate the composition of these communities. There is a reference to 'politically active entrepreneurs' but there is no information about their political activities or political allegiances. One could ask: did they bridge the sectarian divide? And, if so, how did they do so?
3. The term 'neo-endogenous development' captures the sense of this but does not explain what kinds of combinations of factors might be responsible for such development. The concept of animatorship draws our attention to the role of a particular kind of actor or action in stimulating community development.
4. Community organising is mainly associated with American cities and is not radically different from animatorship but is more explicitly political in its style and practice. A similar argument occurs in relation to community learning, where Freirean practices analogous to community organising have been criticised as ignoring communities' own knowledge and organisation (Blackburn 2000) but then have been adapted to take full account of these realities (Somerville 2016, 157).
5. Cape Breton, Canada; Mondragón in the Basque country; and the Grameen Bank, Bangladesh.
6. The VSOS literature recognises that no two villages are the same – so what works in one village setting may not work in another nearby village.
7. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, we compiled the cases so as not to identify individuals or villages.
8. We acknowledge that there is a slight risk that we influenced the responses in favour of our understanding, not in a tautological sense but in terms of potential reification. However, it is telling that only the respondents presented in the cases engaged with the term. It is also of note that they were more formally educated than other respondents and four had university degrees. The other respondents were more traditional village activists of an older generation and hence less likely to conceptualise their articulation. Talking to potential animators about what animatorship means to them provided insights relevant for our RQ. Their perceptions are important because they are closer to the actuality of being an animator and conducting animation. Obviously those unable to relate to the prompt were unable to evaluate the potential of animatorship because they did not relate to it.
9. Sometimes, single-issue people might set up a centre, their subsequent activity being focused on making that issue successful and sustainable.
10. These included so-called 'village elders' who normally dealt with issues which were organic and germane to the village in terms of content and context.
11. The typology itself has limited utility unless related to 'practice' and 'practices' used to mobilise entrepreneurship in different ways.
12. Perhaps not so much in the formal business of the committee as through the networking opportunities offered by committee meetings.
13. There was one male respondent in the sample but the interview was cancelled at short notice and was not followed up prior to the interim report being submitted.
14. From post interview discussions with respondents we are aware that this can manifest itself as the darker side of animatorship and village life. This may simply be related to being regarded by some villagers as being an outsider. Nevertheless, it could be a direct result of taking an active part in village life and politics. Animators may therefore be subject to negative politics and politicking in choosing to engage with communities and change. This may take the form of minor vandalism or having the air let out of vehicle tyres, for example. It can involve minor threats and taunts from teenagers. Also relationships with neighbours can become strained. Feelings of pressure and self-doubt can intrude. This may merely be part and parcel of everyday village life or may result from being visible and active in community affairs. Villages often contain different factions, and animators can align themselves with the 'wrong' faction or fail

to recognise the divisions within the community. There are many risks in 'going native', which are rarely mentioned in the literature.

15. A local context, such as a village, has a unique set of characteristics, including particular values and norms, which generates a particular, often normative, perspective on enterprise, and a particular range of possibilities for animatorship. Village life and experience tend to shape the ways of thinking of villagers and how they interact and communicate with animators. Although the context of the study has been animatorship in a village setting our findings are relevant to urban settings too.
16. For example animation undoubtedly accelerated development activity in their respective villages but also acted as a 'social carburettor' or 'throttle', thus facilitating individuals and groups to operate at a speed they were happy with. Animation is not just about acceleration but also about reaching a destination and ensuring that a project has the time it needs to reach fruition. From a reflection on the analysis it became apparent to us that animators have to fit with the 'rhythms' of people's lives and the routines of village life – they have to be an integral part of the village habitus. The involvement of experienced mentors and delivery partners enables this to occur in most cases, but the animators provide the original 'spark'. These are all very subjective elements worthy of further study.

## Acknowledgement

Sincere thanks to Ivan Annibal.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## References

- Agamben, G. 2009. *The Coming Community*. Translated by Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Alsos, G. A., T. H. Clausen, and U. Hytti. 2016. "Entrepreneurs' Social Identity and the Preference of Causal and Effectual Behaviours in Start-up Processes." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 28 (3–4): 234–258.
- Alvarez, S. A., and L. W. Busenitz. 2001. "The Entrepreneurship of Resource-based Theory." *Journal of Management* 27: 755–775.
- Annibal, I., J. Liddle, and G. McElwee. 2013. "Animating 'Bottom-up' Sustainable Strategies in Village Settings." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 33 (11–12): 742–761.
- Barke, M., and M. Newton. 1997. "The EU LEADER Initiative and Endogenous Rural Development: The Application of the Programme in Two Rural Areas of Andalusia, Southern Spain." *Journal of Rural Studies* 13 (3): 319–341.
- Barth, F. 1963. *The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway*. Bergen-Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press.
- Berglund, K., J. Gaddefors, and M. Lindgren. 2016. "Provoking Identities: Entrepreneurship and Emerging Identity Positions in Rural Development." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 28 (1–2): 76–96.
- Berglund, K., B. Johannisson, and B. Schwartz. 2012. *Societal Entrepreneurship: Positioning, Penetrating, Promoting*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Berglund, K., and A. W. Johansson. 2007. "Entrepreneurship, Discourses and Conscientization in Processes of Regional Development." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development: An International Journal* 19 (6): 499–525.
- Bjerke, B., and Karlsson, M.. 2013. *Social Entrepreneurship: To Act as if and Make a Difference*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

- Blackburn, J. 2000. "Understanding Paolo Freire: Reflections on the Origins, Concepts and Possible Pitfalls of his Educational Approach." *Community Development Journal* 35 (1): 3–15.
- Blokland, T. 2003. *Urban Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boje, D. M. 2011. *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Boud, D., and N. Miller. 1997. *Working with Experience: Animating Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Budge, A., W. Irvine, and R. Smith. 2008. "Crisis plan – What Crisis Plan? How Micro Entrepreneurs Manage in a Crisis." *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business* 6 (3): 337–354.
- Buffel, T., L. De Donder, C. Phillipson, N. De Witte, S. Dury, and D. Verté. 2014. "Place Attachment Among Older Adults Living in Four Communities in Flanders, Belgium." *Housing Studies* 29 (6): 800–822.
- DeFilippis, J., R. Fisher, and E. Shragge. 2010. *Contesting Community: The Limits and Potential of Local Organizing*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. 1989. "Building Theory from Case Study Research." *Academy of Management Review* 14 (4): 532–550.
- Engler, M., and P. Engler. 2016. *This is an Uprising: How Non-violent Revolt is Shaping the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Nation Books.
- Flyvbjerg, B. 2002. *Making Social Science Matter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gaddefors, J., and A. R. Anderson. 2017. "Entrepreneurship and Context: When Entrepreneurship is greater than Entrepreneurs." *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 23 (2): 267–278.
- Gilroy, R., and C. Booth. 1999. "Building an Infrastructure for Everyday Lives." *European Planning Studies* 7 (3): 307–324.
- Given, L. 2006. "Qualitative Research in Evidence-based Practice: A Valuable Partnership." *Library Hi Tech* 24 (3): 376–386.
- Glaser, B. G., and A. L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Harvey, D. 1985. *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*. Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins Press.
- Johannisson, B. 1990. "Community Entrepreneurship – Cases and Conceptualization." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 2 (1): 71–88.
- Johannisson, B., and A. Nilsson. 1989. "Community Entrepreneurship – Networking for Local Development." *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 1 (1): 1–19.
- Johnstone, H., and D. Lionais. 2004. "Depleted Communities and Community Business Entrepreneurship: Revaluing Space through Place." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 16 (3): 217–233.
- Jones, G. 1992. "Leaving Home in Scotland: Choice, Constraint and Strategy." *Youth and Policy* 3: 34–43.
- Jung, E. 1983. *Invisible Partners: How the Male and Female in Each of Us Affects Our Relationships*. Washington, DC: Spring Publications.
- Jupp, E. 2012. "Rethinking Local Activism: 'Cultivating the Capacities' of Neighbourhood Organising." *Urban Studies* 49 (14): 3027–3044.
- Kibler, E., and T. Kautonen. 2016. *The Moral Legitimacy of Entrepreneurs: International Small Business Journal* 34 (1): 34–50.
- Korsgaard, S., R. Ferguson, and J. Gaddefors. 2015b. "The Best of Both Worlds: How Rural Entrepreneurs use Placial Embeddedness and Strategic Networks to Create Opportunities." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 27 (9–10): 574–598.
- Korsgaard, S., S. Müller, and H. W. Tanvig. 2015a. "Rural Entrepreneurship or Entrepreneurship in the Rural – Between Place and Space." *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 21 (1): 5–26.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1962. *La pensée sauvage* [The Savage Mind]. Paris: Pion.
- Lindgren, M., and J. Packendorff. 2006. "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Work: Deviating from and Belonging to Community." In *Entrepreneurship as Social Change: A Third Movement in Entrepreneurship Book*, edited by C. Steyaert and D. Hjorth, 201–230. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Livingston, M., N. Bailey, and A. Kearns. 2010. "Neighbourhood Attachment in Deprived Areas: Evidence from the North of England." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 25 (4): 409–427.
- MacIntyre, A. 1985. *After Virtue*. London: Duckworth.



- Mascarenhas, J. 1991. *Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Learning Methods: Recent Experiences from Myrada and South India*, RRA Notes Issue 13, 26–32. London: IIED.
- McKeever, E., A. Anderson, and S. Jack. 2014. "Entrepreneurship and Mutuality: Social Capital in Processes and Practices." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 26 (5–6): 453–477.
- McKeever, E., S. Jack, and A. Anderson. 2015. "Embedded Entrepreneurship in the Creative Reconstruction of Place." *Journal of Business Venturing* 30 (1): 50–65.
- Miles, M. B., and A. M. Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell, C. J. 1998. "Entrepreneurialism, Commodification and Creative Destruction: A Model of Post-modern Community Development." *Journal of Rural Studies* 14 (3): 273–286.
- Ogbor, J. O. 2000. "Mythicizing and Reification in Entrepreneurial Discourse: Ideology-critique of Entrepreneurial Studies." *Journal of Management Studies* 37 (5): 605–635.
- Palmer, P. J. 1998. *The Courage to Teach*, 73–77. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ray, C. 2000. "Editorial – The EU LEADER Programme: Rural Development Laboratory." *Sociologia Ruralis* 40 (2): 163–171.
- Sampson, R. J. 1988. "Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multilevel Systemic Model." *American Sociological Review* 53: 766–779.
- Shortall, S. 2004. "Social or Economic Goals, Civic Inclusion or Exclusion? An Analysis of Rural Development Theory and Practice." *Sociologia Ruralis* 44 (1): 109–123.
- Shortall, S. 2008. "Are Rural Development Programmes Socially Inclusive? Social Inclusion, Civic Engagement, Participation, and Social Capital: Exploring the Differences." *Journal of Rural Studies* 24 (4): 450–457.
- Smith, M. K. 2009. 'Animators, Animation and Fostering Learning and Change', *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*. [[www.infed.org/animate/b-animat.htm](http://www.infed.org/animate/b-animat.htm)].
- Smith, N. 1990. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith, R. 2013. "Developing and Animating Enterprising Individuals and Communities: A Case Study from Rural Aberdeenshire, Scotland." *Journal of Enterprising Communities, People and Places in the Global Economy* 6 (1): 57–83.
- Somerville, P. 2016. *Understanding Community: Politics, Policy and Practice*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Somerville, P., and G. McElwee. 2011. "Situating Community Enterprise: A Theoretical Exploration." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 23 (5–6): 317–330.
- Stall, S., and R. Stoecker. 1998. "Community Organising or Organising Community?" *Gender and Society* 12: 729–756.
- Stockdale, A. 2006. "Migration: Pre-Requisite for Rural Economic Regeneration?" *Journal of Rural Studies* 22: 354–366.
- Strauss, A., and J. Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Terluin, I. 2003. "Differences in Economic Development in Rural Regions of Advanced Countries: An Overview and Critical Analysis of Theories." *Journal of Rural Studies* 19: 327–344.
- VSOS. 2015. <http://villagesos.org.uk/how-it-works/the-basics>.
- Watson, T. J. 2013. "Entrepreneurship in Action: Bringing Together the Individual, Organizational and Institutional Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Action." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25 (5–6): 404–422.
- Watt, P. 2016. "A Nomadic War Machine in the Metropolis." *City* 20 (2): 297–320.
- Williams, C. C., and S. Nadin. 2013. "Beyond the Entrepreneur as a Heroic Figurehead of Capitalism: Re-representing the Lived Practices of Entrepreneurs." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25 (7–8): 552–568.
- Yin, R. 2004. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: Sage.